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## ***Representation of Gender in Colonial and Post-Colonial Algerian Literature***

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of Doctorate in Literature***

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## **Dedication**

I DEDICATE THIS THESIS TO MY FAMILY

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I am much indebted to my Supervisor, Prof. Melouk Mohammed, and my co-supervisor, Dr. Benneghrouzi Fatima Zohra, for their guidance and patience.

## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with the representation and misrepresentation of gender in both colonial and post-colonial literatures. This has been done by examining a number of novels authored by Algerian and French writers. The latter were born in Algeria, like Albert Camus and others. The aim is to show that oftentimes the representation given of gender, especially during the colonial period, was a distorted image, and subsequently object of sharp criticism. This thesis highlights the enterprise not only women but also a number of men embarked on to reassess this image and in so doing give new dignity to gender. A number of writings penned by to name a few, Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Feroun, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar and Djamila Débêche among others were examined. These represented gender and particularly women in two ways; a symbolic, figurative representation and a socio-cultural representation. The first vision delineates women as lovely, sweet, pretty women. In so doing they conveyed the image of women as an object; a symbolized object that subsumes many aspects, a woman, a stranger, and a goddess. Whereas, others ascribed them to a phallogentric society, where women are perceived as the inferior gender that owes obedience and submission.

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## **General Introduction**



## General Introduction

It is undeniable that the Algerian War of independence (1954-1962) has become an emblem that mirrors an irreconcilable clash, the one between feminist and nationalist movements. This particular war represents at a time not only a victory of the colonized over the colonizer but also the beginning of an insidious subversion of women's roles and rights. At a given point, it became quite unconceivable to see a group of "women", who had played a pivotal role in the revolution, be so swiftly "suppressed." Such a shift led to questioning.

Many writers, be they native or foreign, were induced, given the shift, to scrutinize the situation of the Algerian woman who, it seemed, were, to borrow, treated as sacred possessions, and represented the oppressed of the oppressed. These writers gave an extensive representation of women and attempted to depict women's roles in society through literature which is the theme of this doctoral dissertation but since there was little arabophone literature during that period of time the paper will try to answer some questions regarding the representation of women in Algerian literature through an analysis of some francophone Algerian novels during the colonial period and the post-colonial literature. Novels of male and female writers were analyzed in order to highlight different and contrasting perceptions of this particular "inclusion or exclusion" of women.

Among these writers one can find Frantz Fanon's novel "Peau noir Masques Blancs" (1952) in which he presents an analysis of the symbolic importance of women to Algerian identity. Fanon contends that the Algerian society is based upon fixed values and notions such as honor, respect and complete submission of women under the control of their men.

According to Fanon, in the Algerian society women's attitudes and behaviors are deemed to be everyone's business. In his novel he genuinely describes the potent effect that the French played by trying to undermine men's control over their women by raising their awareness, advocating their independence at both economic and social levels and educating them according to French values. Fanon explains in that during the war women were perceived differently and that men's attitudes toward women and more particularly fighters like Hassiba Ben Bouali and Djamilia Bouhired changed; these women were on the contrary revered.

Marguerite Taos Amrouche's novel "La rue des tambourins, 1960" is another explored novel, among others. In this novel, Amrouche is interested with the daily struggle of a young woman confronted to a choice between her French education and her traditional upbringing. The writer

tries to show in this novel the awareness of the protagonist of the privilege she has by receiving a university education and at the same time a cognizance that this privilege is only skin-deep. After all, the Algerian society was not yet ready to integrate the educated women.

Another different representation of women can be found in Assia Djébar's first novel *La soif* (1957). *La soif* makes the reader assist to a quite striking reality that portrays women as a body that must carry progeny and particularly male progeny. The plot of the novel is about two women, one of these; Jedla to her great despair has a miscarriage and wrought with anxiety if her husband will divorce her.

Djébar denounces the patriarchal system that turns women into their own enemies and oppressors, that raises fears of sterility and repudiation. Two years later Assia Djébar wrote a story "*Il n'y a pas d'exil*" of a young woman, a divorcee who lost a child and whose mother is trying by all means to marry her regardless of her remonstrance. Djébar explains that this was normal despite the fact she was an adult woman who had already been through this ceremony before, by this example Djébar hopes to make clear to readers that women were expected to remain silent and to have all decisions made for them.

To that intent, Miriam Cooke an associate professor of Arabic Language and Literature at Duke University writes "The cynical pessimism of this piece" (reference to novel). She explains why Djébar waited 21 years to publish it. The novel subsumes a vivid depiction of women's continued powerlessness and silence during the war. In the same spirit, other novels by male authors were analyzed such as Kateb Yacine, *Nedjma* 1945, Mouloud Feroun, *Les Chemins qui montent* 1957, Mouloud Mammeri, *La Colline oubliée* 1952, and Mohammed Dib, *La grande maison* 1962.

Therefore from these few novels written by female writers one can construe that the revolution marked a turning point and fundamentally altered their perceptions and convictions of what they fully believe on women status, through their literature women saw an opportunity to opine.

It is as if these women were using their writings to shunt the readers and particularly male readers by denouncing the equity of the laws, precepts, ideologies, and cultural practices created and sustained by men.

In this line of thought, this dissertation was divided into six chapters *The first chapter is entitled "Algerian Literature, "Algerian" Writers and Gender*, it subsumes the origin of the Algerian

literature delineating the different stages it went through and manifests how it was first dominated by whom are known as Algerian-born European writers, in the same spirit, it sketches The Effects of the Use of French in Algerian Literature and the recourse to it as a means of expression which was framed by the political situation of a colonized Algeria. It also displays the different genres entailed in the Algerian literature swinging from oral, written, colloquial to end up in classical Arabic and French. It finally, explicates the essence of gender which is based on the premise of a status attributed to men and women as a social entity rather than a biological one.

The second chapter treats the Re/misrepresentation of Gender in Colonial period. It scrutinizes pivotal novels that had a direct or indirect effect on the Algerian literature. To name these, as Gustave Flaubert's *Voyage to the Orient* and *Salambo*, Benjamin Gastineau's *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*, Alexandre Du-mas's *Le Véloce, ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*, Guy de Maupassant's *Au Soleil*, Eugene De-lacroix's *The Women of Algiers (In Their Apartment)*, Edouard Drumond's *La France Juive*, and Hubertine Auclert's *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*. These authors depicted the world with which they came in touch, a world which smelled more exoticism and mystery than reality. In so doing they opened the door for personal fantasies and drew in many cases a distorted image that crystallized in stereotypes

The third chapter, which is in fact a following enquiry of the second one, is done through the perspective of three main authors, namely, Edward Said on *Orientalism*, Malek Alloula and the *Colonial Harem*, and Frantz Fanon's *Algeria Unveiled*. Said's key approach ponders the implications of the concept "understanding Western literature." He in fact upholds the assumption that there were authors whose depictions were aimed to understand the Orient for the sake of co-existence whereas other authors were one of the intellectual catastrophes of history. What induced him to call them catastrophes was grounded in the fact that they managed to construe images of the Orient that have become stereotype.

In the second novel *Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula, tackled the issue of stereotypes in postcards sent by French soldiers to their families and relatives; after scrutiny, he came to sharply criticize the distorted image of the Algerian woman conveyed through these postcards. In the same way, Frantz Fanon shows how colonialism succeeded in unveiling the Arab female and thus shaking the position of males

The fourth chapter is entitled The "Algerian" Literary Movement from Zahia Smail's Perspective, a Professor of Modern Arabic Studies at the University of Manchester. In her thesis she ex-

pounds on a pivotal concept that of The Emergence of the “Algerian” Literary Movement led chiefly by Louis Lecoq and Robert Randou. She explains how Lecoq fought for a genuine Algerian literature, that is to say a literature, which had to be distinct from the metropolitan one, both in style and content. She also identified a new literature “the indigenous” one that neither, as the former writers did, hailed colonialism nor sustained the portrayal of fascinating and alluring places to engage their French perusers. Smail divided then the Algerian literature into three pivotal periods, which she entitled, the Period of Assimilation and Imitation (1908-1947), Where authors were deemed to be in a dependable imitation, and portrayed in a comparable way); the Transitional Period (1947-1950). In the latter, Algerian authors mediated between the two periods. The Period of Revelation (1950-1952), here one sees clearly a shift from novel of impersonation to a novel of dissent and disclosure in which the authors uncovered their thoughts and portrayed their people in their persistent battle for existence, they in fact became fully fledged

At this particular juncture, it is pivotal to limn that the present study is an attempt to answer two main questions. First, how is gender represented in Algerian literature, both in colonial and post-colonial period? And second, do male and female writers share the same gender representation? If not to what extent. Thus, the hypotheses set up as regards these research questions are as follows, the representation of gender in Algerian literature prominently focalized on the portrayal of women rather than men ascribing them a symbolic and a socio-cultural parameter. The conspicuous reason is the recurrent depiction of these as patriarchal and hegemonic individuals, and a disparity in perspectives has been discerned, which ensued divergence in representation.

## **Chapter One**

### **Algerian Literature, “Algerian” Writers and Gender**

- I. 1. Defining Algerian Literature
- I. 2. Algerian and Algeria-born European Writers
- I. 3. The Effects of the Use French in Algerian Literature
- I. 4. Different Genres in Algerian Colonial Literature
- I. 5. Defining Gender

## Chapter One

### Algerian Literature, “Algerian” Writers and Gender

#### I. 1. Defining Algerian Literature

What is Algerian literature? Who can be called Algerian author? Many scholars have, in the course of time, attempted to answer these brainracking questions. These deemed very important to deliver a clear-cut definition of Algerian literature and of Algerian author. The reason is simple; it lies in the fact that the very notion of identity and of interests were at stake. Under this head, it is worthy to note that the independence of Algeria in 1962 meant for its natives not only freedom but also the return of a formerly monopolized identity. At this juncture it became all too clear that a new terminology had to emerge.

Starting from 1962 and onwards, the term Algerian had no longer to refer to the colonists and their descendants but rather to those who used to be called the indigenous. However, that was done without the impact of colonization which had in the meantime, bred myriad new terms such as “Native, Arab, Kabyle, French-Moslem born in Algeria, Algerian-born European”, and subsequently bred discrepancies.

The above mentioned explanation of Algerian identity and all the details concerning the term Algerian were substantial. This is due to the fact that even after the independence of the country, the writers of anthologies on North-African literature oscillated between Algerian and Algerian-born European authors.

Insofar as Algerian author and Algerian literature are concerned, it is contended that the term either of Mediterranean Community or Mediterranean School would be more appropriate. In fact, the Maghrebi authors who resorted to the French language were nothing but extending a typically French literature. This led Albert Memmi to ask: « Ne vaudrait-il pas mieux ouvrir davantage le chapitre et parler de Communauté Méditerranéenne? »<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Albert, Memmi et al, *Anthologie des Ecrivains Maghrébins d'expression française*. 2eme Ed, (Paris. 1965), p. 12

Memmi even moved further. He advised to « [...] renoncer a une classification particulière: le mouvement Littéraire nord africain ne serait qu'un rameau français, surgi aux hasards d'une graine folle a la limite du désert ? » In much the same spirit, Pierre Boisdeffre regarded such authors as being part of what he called the “Mediterranean School.”<sup>2</sup> Outraged, the Algerian Malek Haddad and Mourad Bourboune, to name a few, swiftly lambasted that his idea “Mediterranean” totally excluded the Algerian specificity.

Haddad is an Algerian poet and novelist born in Constantine on July 5, 1927. After he had finished his secondary education in Algeria, he went to France for further studies. He enrolled at the University of Aix-en-Provence but soon abandoned his studies. Haddad is regarded as one of the most sensitive of all Algerian writers.

In an article titled *Face à une Littérature authentique nationale*, which appeared in the magazine, *Révolution Africaine*, dated March 20, 1965, Haddad argued that “The Algerian-born European writers must not be considered Algerian because they were not victims of the colonial domination but its beneficiaries.”<sup>3</sup> Bourboune had the same opinion.

Bourboune-born in Djidjelli in 1938-finished his school education in Algeria and undertook further studies in France. He graduated from the Sorbonne University with a licence in Political-Science. He was a staunch supporter of Arabization although he wrote in French. Insofar as literature is concerned, he rebuked any tendency aiming at depriving Algerian literature of its specificity with the view to make it a pure reliant of French literature.

Bourboune had no doubt such a tendency would unquestionably lessen its value and importance. He expressed his apprehension in an article “Je ne puis garder le silence” which appeared in a weekly French magazine, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, dated, March 4. In that article, he declared: « En utilisant la langue des colonisateurs les écrivains

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<sup>2</sup>Pierre, Boisdeffre, *Une Histoire vivante de la littérature d'aujourd'hui*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1964 ), p. 471.

<sup>3</sup>Malek, Haddad, *Face à une Littérature authentique nationale*, (*Révolution Africaine*, March 20, 1965), p. 22.

Algériens n'ont pas commis une 'Littérature colonisée', mais imposé une littérature Libre et Libérée, une qui Leur est propre et qui n'est pas l'arrière salle ou le prolongement exotique de la littérature française. »<sup>4</sup>

Bourboune's assumption was backed by the eminent poet and novelist born in Tlemcen on July 21, 1920, Mohammed Dib. Dib stated in an interview in Paris, September, 1968 : « Je pense que s'il ya une littérature a laquelle on ne peut ne peut nous annexer, c'est la littérature française. » At this particular juncture, who can be termed Algerian writer? And what is Algerian literature? Plethora of answers is proposed by various writers all of them concerned with this issue.

To start with, one finds Jean Sénac, who, in his book "Le Soleil sous les armes" states: "Est écrivain algérien, tout écrivain ayant définitivement opté pour la nation algérienne."<sup>5</sup> Henri Krea is another writer whose ideas were similar to those of Sénac. Krea was born in Algiers on November 6, 1933 to an Algerian mother and French father.

Playwright, poet, and author of one novel titled, *Djamel*, Krea contended : "A mon sens et a celui des écrivains de la génération de 1954, l'expression écrivains algériens signifie dans l'absolu que l'on a choisi la partie algérienne de quelque origine ou de quelque appartenance religieuse ou philosophique que l'on soit."<sup>6</sup>

As per literature, the authors of the *Diwan Algérien* came up with one definition which takes into account the approaching and undeniable link between historical events and literature. They contended : « Est algérienne toute forme de Littérature ou de culture qui assume ces événements (historical events) d'une part, qui maintient son existence a la communauté algérienne d'autre part. »

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<sup>4</sup>Mourad, Bourboune, *Je ne puis garder le silence*, (Le Nouvel Observateur, March 4,1965), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Jean, Sénac, *Le Soleil sous les armes*. 2eme ed. (Paris. Rodez. 1967), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup>Jean, Déjeux cf Henri Krea, *Littérature maghrébine de langue française*, (Quebec, Naaman, 1974), p.27.



Both Sénac and Krea's definitions had the weakness of being either too inclusive or too exclusive. In the same spirit, the definition the authors of the *Diwan Algérien* gave confined them to historical and sociological boundaries of their country. Consequently, it would be better to define and consider Algerian literature, even if it were either unfair or unsatisfactory, in the view of some scholars, as any literary work written either in Arabic or in French by any autochthonous Algerian.

## I. 2. Algerian and Algeria-born European Writers

The aim of the present part is not to limit the Algerian literature to the Algerians proper and to reduce consideration for the Algeria-born European writers. However, one might convene that to classify Albert Camus and Mohamed Dib in the same category, more than less likely, will not help the case of the definition of Algerian literature.

The reason for not putting such authors in the same category is quite plausible. The fact that both of Camus and Dib had dealt and chosen Algeria as a background for their writings does not mean that they served and contributed to Algerian literature in the same way. To prove the validity of the advanced assumption and show the profoundness of the disparity, a short survey of Camus' works becomes necessary.

Camus, born on November 7, 1913, in Mondavi, French colonized Algeria, is best known for his works on the absurd which included *The Stranger* (1942), whose setting took place in Algiers and *The Plague* (1947) with Oran as a setting. In these particular novels, Camus chose Algeria only as a frame that enclosed characters. The only peculiar point having trait to the country in *The Stranger*, is the hot weather: « Autour de moi, c'était toujours la même campagne lumineuse gorgée de soleil. L'éclat du ciel était insoutenable. »<sup>7</sup> And surprisingly, the Algerian native is always referred to as "L'Arabe", a stripped character and a man without any physical description.

In his other novel, *The Plague*, Algeria is described as "*Notre Pays*", which means our country, and Oran, a city in Algeria, as "*Notre Ville*" meaning our city. It is

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<sup>7</sup>Albert, Camus, *L'Etranger*, (Gallimard, Paris. 1957), p. 27.

important to point out that the book fails to name a single Algerian victim, even though the Algerians were like the colonists hit by the same devastating disease.

Camus might have viewed such omission but as an insignificant detail but it did not go unnoticed, and therefore, un-denounced by the Algerians; most conspicuous, by Mouloud Feraoun. Born on March 8, 1913, in Tizi-Hibel, Great Kabylie, Feraoun succeeded; his father's financial situation was precarious, in pursuing his education at the Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs of Bouzarea thanks to a grant he won.

Feraoun wrote to Camus blaming him for not having spoken about the situation of the Arabs in Oran. This is why in order to show the difference between Algerian writers and Algerian-born European writers, Haddad in his *Face à une littérature authentique et nationale*, also mentioned in Memmi's "The Colonizer and the Colonized", demanded for a study of the relation between the society of colonizers and the colonized people.

It is not sufficient for two persons to be born on the same soil and under the same sky to be able to say the same things, to feel the same way and to see a situation from the same angle. What then if those two persons belong to two different classes, that of the masters and that of the subjects, that of the colonizer and that of the colonized.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, all these diametrically opposite personalities, with different backgrounds necessarily imply disparity and contrast in attitude, thinking, reacting, and concluding. To this intent, Bourboune contends that Camus represented a folkloric Algeria worthy of a book of tourist. Camus, he wrote, fault of language, could not feel the Algerians and "[...] la remontée vertigineuse de tout un peuple."<sup>9</sup>

One of the reasons that could explain why the Algerian and the Algerian-born European writers did not react in the same way to the same situations is grounded in the fact that the latter did not suffer from the injustice, humiliation, and mistreatment the natives were confronted to. Besides, their deliberate ignorance of Arabic, be it

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<sup>8</sup>Malek, Haddad, *Face à une littérature authentique et nationale.*, p. 22

<sup>9</sup>Claude, Fléouter. *Rencontre avec Mourad Bourboune*, (Témoignage Chrétien. Décembre 14, 1962), p. 20.

colloquial or classical, would have acted as a barrier in fully understanding and in being understood by the “Other.” Assia Djébar demonstrated this deliberate ignorance in an interview in which she explained : « [...] les écrivains français d'Afrique du Nord, restent, dans une certaine mesure, extérieurs au peuple, au pays, dont ils parlent. La réalité arabe leur échappe. »<sup>10</sup> Consequently, she continued to explain,

this resulted in “an absence of a genuine concern and involvement with the real problems of the country [...] where the majority showed merely an exotic love for Algeria and its people regarding it as a ground of escape.”<sup>11</sup>

So if one has to define and to summarize the literature of the majority, it would be epitomized as “literature of North-African feelings” in which the authors had much the feeling of French people residing in Algeria rather than Algerians writing in French driven by a love of exoticism. Yet, some European writers like Jule Roy, Jean Pélégri, and Emmanuel Roblés tried to deal with Algerian topics and showed a great interest in the issues they dealt with.

These authors even proposed some solutions. Unfortunately they failed in expressing their feelings with the same sincerity. More importantly, they failed to express them with the same bitterness. Following the same spirit, nothing can justify why some Algerian writers like Kateb Yacine, Dib, and Feraoun were included in *The Dictionnaire des literatures* and referred to as *French writers of Algerian Origin*

### I. 3. The Effects of the Use French in Algerian Literature

It is agreed on all hands that in any literature one can attend examples of writers who make the decision to write in a language which is not theirs. This decision emanates either from a personal choice or is rooted to a country’s political situation. The Algerian literature could be classified among these: writers who wrote in French; others in Arabic. And the recourse to the French language as a means of expression was framed by the political situation of a colonized Algeria.

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<sup>10</sup>Assia, Djébar, *Les enfants du nouveau monde*, (Jeune- Afrique, June 4-10, 1962), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

These writers, with little freedom and means, contributed largely to the cause of their country by raising world consciousness. It is of the utmost importance to underline that the French-written Algerian literature should not be considered as a regrettable issue because both of French and Algerian literatures had credited from this case, which contributed to a mutual enrichment.

This was shown by the Algerian writer, Mouloud Mammeri. He explained how he benefited from western culture; he said in substance: « C'est à nous de faire retrouver en quelque sorte les valeurs réelles de notre propre culture qui avait tendance à rester un peu pour nous lettre morte. »<sup>12</sup> He also pointed out that culture had become for him « [...] un instrument de libération extraordinaire. »<sup>13</sup>

The same writer argued that the existence of two languages, and subsequently, two cultures in Algeria, was an auspicious case for authors. He explained this thoroughly in an article titled “Les Ecrivains Algériens débattent les problèmes de la culture” which appeared in the Algerian daily, *El-Moujahid*,

Je dirai presque que c'est une chance. Peut être qu'en définitive la valeur d'un écrivain qui joue sur deux claviers est plus grande que celle de quelqu'un qui se contente de produire dans sa propre langue ce qu'il ressent. Il faut considérer que c'est une richesse algérienne; il faut qu'on en enrichisse la culture algérienne. Il ne faut pas s'amputer de toute cette partie qui, je crois, est absolument une chance unique pour l'Algérie.<sup>14</sup>

In consonance with Mammeri, Algerian writers preferred their literature and undertook to make of it an original one, that is, a literature that was different from all other literatures of the Arab countries, with different reasoning and logic. Eventually, French critics had come to acknowledge the existence of an Algerian literature and to admit its contribution to the French one. They argued that it had become a source of inspiration when writers were short of new ideas, topics, and originality.

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<sup>12</sup>Mouloud, Mammeri, 1962. *Rencontre au Maroc de l'Orient et de l'Occident*, (Confluent, No. 23-24 September-October, 1962), pp. 567-8.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Mouloud, Mammeri, 1962. *Les Ecrivains Algériens débattent les problèmes de la culture*, (El-Moujahid, No. 113, February 2, 1962), p. 13.

As it is attested by many critiques, each situation has an advantage and a disadvantage. The particular Algerian case did not escape this rule. In this light, manifold writers faced a language barrier that prevented them from communicating with all the people, and a political hurdle that coerced them to omit parts of their works, especially all elements that criticized French colonial policy in Algeria. In order to acquire the right to publish, sacrifices had to be made.

Mammeri was one of the writers who had to sacrifice big parcels of the Algerian reality because of coercion. He admitted in an article titled « Le rôle de la Littérature algérienne d'expression française » : « J'étais contraint à la litote, à certaines ambiguïtés, parfois même- et cela est plus grave –à certains choix qui eussent été autres dans un contexte politique différent. »<sup>15</sup>

This was a burden for the writers as they could sometimes satisfy neither the Algerian readers nor the French ones. Some found their tone strident; others found it too conventional. Given these data, they had to face a bitter reality, to try to reach different social classes, and simultaneously, to juggle between two disparate cultures.

#### I. 4. Different Genres in Algerian Colonial Literature

As it was debated in the afore-mentioned pages, Algerian literature is not the outcome of “un coup de tonnerre dans un ciel serein” as Mammeri put it. It was rather a compendium which started mostly orally. Algerian literature did not prosper in the beginning of the French occupation because of the resistance movements which prevented and distracted people’s attention from any cultural activity. The Algerians were preoccupied by the war and had no leisure time to devote to poetry, mainly the *gawwalin* and the *meddahas* (two of the most prominent genres of poetry at that time).

Besides, the changes that France brought and imposed on the Algerian education weakened the forms of literature. The whole syllabus was destined at forming

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<sup>15</sup>Mouloud, Mammeri, *Le rôle de la Littérature algérienne d'expression française*, (El-Moujahid, October 28, 1966), p. 6.

administration employees which resulted in an elementary and insufficient literary production. This was not the case insofar as oral literature was concerned.

The reasons that could explain this lies in the fact that since it was not a written production, the French could not have access to it, and thus be able to censure it. Be it in Arabic or in Berber, this genre of literature could circulate freely because the authorities could not understand it and did not want to learn it as they despised it. The oral literature subsumed political and historical events during the French occupation. Poets used to react openly and spontaneously to the events. Thus, it atoned for the absence of a genuine national press until its foundation in the late 1920s.

This poetry did not escape the issues of French presence. It could not go beyond popular literature because of the irregular situation it lived in. It is undeniable that it was easily understood by all the people and used to faithfully express their emotions. But the fact that it was written in colloquial language, geared it to lose much of the sophistication of classical Arabic. Furthermore, prose (another literary genre) did not receive the same auspicious opportunities and “vegetated because of the state of stagnation in which it lived till the appearance of a national Algerian press.”<sup>16</sup>

It is in these particular national papers that one must look for the Algerian literature per se. Consequently, in order to track the French-written Algerian literature, one must go back to the period between the two World Wars, “when the national and political awakening opened a dialogue between the French administration and the Algerian people.”<sup>17</sup>

After that period, one could attend an outburst of new publications in different literary genres: essays, articles, poems, and short stories. The other origin of Algerian literature can be found in the works of Algerian-born European writers, who can be credited with the enhancing and encouraging the Algerians proper to express themselves, demystify their emotions, and talk about their people. This was clearly shown in Feraoun’s book, *Lettres à ses amis*, where he wrote:

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<sup>16</sup>Op.cit.

<sup>17</sup>Op. cit.

Ce sont les premiers, Camus, Roblès, etc. qui par leur talent ont su nous ouvrir un horizon littéraire qui nous était fermé...Vous, (the European writers) les premiers vous nous avez dit: voilà ce que nous sommes. Alors nous, nous vous avons répondu: voilà ce que nous sommes de notre côté. Ainsi a commencé entre vous et nous le dialogue.<sup>18</sup>

After this dialogue, a plethora of literary works which were put aside because of the political and cultural conditions emerged. The French language was not yet used as medium because of its association with the colonizer. After many years had elapsed, several writers lost hope for independence and resolved to study French language. They, of course, soon faced rejection on the part of the colonizer but had to study it and they did fight for it.

This choice, made after a long period, was chiefly for practical reasons, to obtain a job for instance. A grand-mother, whose son, Hadj Ali, was a writer summed it up in the following: “Apprends le Coran pour L’au delà et le français pour ici-bas.”

Another pre-eminent writer, Kateb Yacine, whose parents received a purely Arabic education, was sent to the French school for the same reasons. Yacine divulges the circumstances behind his decision. He writes: « Quand J’ai eu sept ans ... mon père... prit tout a’ coup la décision de me fourrer sans plus tarder "dans la gueule du loup », c’est-a"-dire a l’école. »<sup>18</sup> His father's argument was:

... tu ne seras pas une victime de la Medersa...La langue française domine. Il te faudra la dominer et Laisser en arrière tout ce que ce que nous t’avons inculqué dans ta plus tendre enfance. Une fois familiarisé avec la langue française tu pourras sans danger revenir avec nous a ton point de départ.<sup>19</sup>

This new generation of writers, those who received a French education, were allowed to write literary works; see them published, and be read by both Algerians and French. Another writer, Dib, describes the long span of time he had to wait in order to publish his first book which became well known, *La Grande Maison*, (1952).

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<sup>18</sup>Mouloud, Feraoun, *Lettres à ses amis*, (Seuil. Paris, 1969), p. 154.

<sup>19</sup>Kateb, Yacine, *Jardin parmi les flammes*, (Alger-républicain, June 13, 1963), p. 5.

A ce moment-la, pour de jeunes amateurs Algériens de... littérature, il n'y avait guère de possibilité de publier des livres ....c'était un peu comme un royaume inaccessible, évidemment plus parce que j'étais un Algérien qu'un jeune écrivain.<sup>20</sup>

The second issue they faced was the availability of readers

...qui allait lire les Arabes parlant d'eux- mêmes: les autres Arabes? Ils ne savent pas lire. Les Français? Ils ne s'étaient pas encore aperçu les que Arabes existaient et de toutes façons ils les distinguaient mal des chameaux, des dunes, de la crasse et du mensonge.<sup>21</sup>

Gradually, the number of Algerian novels accelerated. Thus, the young educated Algerians fighting in the ranks of the French army were equal to the French soldiers in duties but not in rights. Offended by the bitterness and injustice they went through, they found peace in one of two mediums: armed resistance and/or writing. The outcome was a perspicuous reality based and denunciation literary genre born on “a virgin ground.”

## I. 5. Defining Gender

It is agreed on all hands that the use of the word “gender” is age old. It can be traced to the 14<sup>TH</sup> century. As a grammatical term, it then referred to classes of nouns which were designated as “*masculine*” “*feminine*”, or, as in German, “*neuter*.” In German, the French word “book” (le livre) is neuter; the article becomes *Das* instead of *Der* (le). The word gender also entailed a status, which suggested male or female.

Although traced to the same century, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that it became common. At that time, women were engaged civically and politically. In this light, the word female, which suggested weakness, had to be replaced and popularized by another word that would give women new dignity.

In the United States, the popularization of the word gender is attributed to a Supreme Court Associate Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933- ). The latter was

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<sup>20</sup>Op.cit.

<sup>21</sup>Lia, Lacombe, *Deux écrivains algériens de passage à Paris: Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib*, (Les Lettres Françaises, February 7,1963), p. 5.



appointed to that office by President William Jefferson Clinton (Bill). Ginsburg took the oath of office on August 10, 1993.

As Associate Justice, she was the one who administered the oath of office to Vice-president, Al Gore, during the Second Presidential Inauguration of Clinton on January 20, 1997. Amazingly, Ginsburg was the first female to such an office after Sandra Day O'Connor (1930- ).

Women still faced hostility from male counterparts. The males deemed that such offices, of right, had to go to them and not to females. As a liberal, Ginsburg dedicated herself to the advancement of women's rights. A conspicuous step on that behalf was to co-found in 1970 a quarterly, *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, the first law journal, which focused, as the title imports, on women's rights and the "feminist criticism" of law. The second step was to act as counsel for the *American Civil Liberties Union* (ACLU) and to co-found in 1972 the *ACLU Women's Rights Project*.

The reasons that led Ginsburg to such activism were manifold. At first, there was the advice of her mother. She insisted, time and again, on the fact that her daughter should strive to be a lady and to be independent. Ginsburg recalled that while it was far easier for her to be a lady; to be independent, on the contrary, would prove rather difficult.

During the 1940s, the majority of girls were reminded that "the study of law was rather unusual" and "the most important degree was not your B.A., but your M.R.S." To put it simply, a female had to strive to be a good mother and a good wife; to take care of the household: cook, sew, mend, and take care of her children and of her husband. Males were and had to be the breadwinners and providers of the household. Ginsburg swiftly soon grasped the meaning of such a message. Despite her doing well, the dean of Harvard Law School made it plain to her, as well as to her nine female classmates, that they were occupying seats that had to go to their male counterparts instead.

After graduating from Harvard University, she joined Columbia University. Although ranking first, she was refused clerkship by Supreme Court Chief Justice, Felix Frankfurter. The reason he invoked for refusing her application was his not being ready to hire a woman. Consequently, it was at Columbia University that she started writing

about sex discrimination that was widespread. Her writings would spill much subtle controversy, and behind the scene, manifold jokes.

When composing her legal briefs about sex/gender related matters, her secretary remarked that the nine men on the Supreme Court did not view the word “sex” the same way as she did. Sex meant for her female; it meant something completely different for those men. Consequently, amazed by an overuse of the term ‘sex’, her secretary, Millicent Fenwick, advised her to replace it by another word that would stir less jokes and less controversy; she advised her to use “gender.” Millicent told her

I've been typing this word sex, sex, sex, and let me tell you, the audience you are addressing--the men that you are addressing"--and they were all men in the appellate courts in those days—"the first association of that word is not what you're talking about. So I suggest that you use a grammar book term; use the word `gender.' It will ward off distracting associations.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, it appeared that both sex and gender had different meanings. Ginsburg resolved to follow *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2.12) which points out that gender is rather cultural whilst sex is biological.

*Gender* is cultural and is the term to use when referring to men and women as social groups. *Sex* is biological; use it when the biological distinction is predominant. Note that the word *sex* can be confused with *sexual behavior*. *Gender* helps keep the meaning unambiguous....<sup>23</sup>

The dissimilarity between both words, gender and sex, can be easily perceived in the few characteristics listed below. Insofar as sex characteristics are concerned, one will notice that they are even through all societies:

- Women menstruate while men do not.
- Women have developed breasts that are usually capable of lactating, while men have not.
- Men generally have more massive bones than women

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<sup>22</sup> Ruth Bader, Ginsburg. *Sex/Gender/Whatever*, ( NY Times, July 22, 1993), P. A14.

<sup>23</sup> Tomás , Rivera, *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th Edition Writing Style Workshop. 2012.

On the contrary gender characteristics are not even.

- In the United States (and most other countries), women earn significantly less money than men for similar work.
- In Vietnam, many more men than women smoke, as female smoking has not traditionally been considered appropriate.
- In Saudi Arabia men are allowed to drive cars while women are not

Whatever the terms used, many women, determined to reject the status of inferiority to which they had been relegated, felt the need to react by asking for more independence, and in the course of time, for equality. To this intent, the next chapter is an attempt aiming at scrutinizing the status of women in literature through different periods of history.

## Chapter Two

### Colonial Literature and the Re/Misrepresentation of Gender

- II. 1. Gustave Flaubert and the *Voyage to the Orient* and *Salambo*
- II. 2. Benjamin Gastineau and *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*
- II.3. Alexandre Dumas: *Le Véloce, ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*
- II.4. Guy de Maupassant: *Au Soleil*
- II. 5. Eugene Delacroix and *The Women of Algiers (In Their Apartment)*.
- II.6.Edouard Drumond and *La France Juive*
- II.7. Hubertine Auclert : *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*

## Chapter Two

### Colonial Literature and the Re/Misrepresentation of Gender

Many French writers, painters, photographers had been attracted by the Orient—here North Africa—namely, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Their stay in those countries enabled them to depict the world with which they came in touch, a world which, after analysis, and given its harems, veiled women, apartment barred windows, belly dancers, smelled more exoticism and mystery than reality. In so doing these “artists” opened the door for personal fantasies.

The outcome of the picture these people drew crystallized in a distorted image that contributed in the emergence of stereotypes. Among such Orientalist literature and art, one can find for instance Gustave Flaubert’s books, *Voyage to the Orient* and *Salambo*; Benjamin Gastineau’s *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*; Alexandre Dumas’s *Le Vélote, ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*; Guy de Maupassant’s *Au Soleil*; Gustave Flaubert and the *Voyage to the Orient* and *Salambo*; Eugene Delacroix and *The Women of Algiers (In Their Apartment)*.

It should be pointed that although scarce, there was a colonial literature, which, at times, more than less likely politically motivated, had given a totally different picture of the Arab—be he male or female—a picture that extolled his/her merits as in Edouard Drumont’s book, *La France Juive*. One more author, who deserves mentioning, is the feminist, Hubertine Auclert, who penned *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*

## II. 1. Gustave Flaubert and the *Voyage to the Orient and Salambo*

In 1849, the French writer Gustave Flaubert, then aged twenty-seven, travelled with a close friend, Maxime Du Camp (1822-1894). Flaubert had some time earlier, in 1841, undertaken law studies, which, against his parents' will, he soon abandoned because he found them boring. What attracted him was writing; he settled to write short stories, and soon after, a book, the *Sentimental Education*. Like him, his friend Ducamp was more interested in writing and in having leisure than in studies.

An unexpected inheritance helped Ducamp to live the way he pleased; money worry was no more an issue. Du Camp met Flaubert in Paris in 1843. A long friendship, tinged by affection, started between the two men and so did the desire to travel together so as to discover the world, namely the Orient. Due to Flaubert's health problems, they had to cancel their trip; they toured France instead.

Du Camp and Flaubert visited several French cities. They went to Anjou; Brittany, and Normandy for three months in 1847. This three-month long journey crystallized in a literary account in which both collaborated, *Par les champs et par les grèves* (1847-1848). Two years later, in 1849, they undertook their trip to the Orient. They visited Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lybia, Asia Minor, and Greece.

Du Camp and Flaubert left Paris for Marseilles, and then embarked for Cairo. Their trip was aboard a mail boat, *Le Nil*. During this voyage to the Orient (1849-1851), Flaubert seized the opportunity to give an account which appeared in the shape of a series that lasted from 1849 until 1851. After they had returned, Du Camp, who became editor of the *Revue de Paris*, undertook to cut several passages from Flaubert's series, later turned into a book, *Madame Bovary*. He explained his decision by the fact that many paragraphs were rather "risqués." The cuts bred the author's anger. But even the cutting of passages did not prevent censorship and trial; a trial they eventually won.

Egypt was the "passage obligé" for French young writers. To visit Egypt was to find a different civilization with all that the word entailed: culture, history, religion, traditions, and of course people. And as the ship was moving, the excitement of those on board climaxed.

Flaubert wrote: “Everyone is on intimate terms. We chatter and we talk and we tell jokes. The gentlemen flirt with the ladies. We all throw up together and in the morning, looking deathly pale, we all laugh at one another again.”<sup>24</sup> After eleven days, Flaubert and Du Camp set foot in Alexandria, where the sight of a negress deely impressed the latter. Flaubert wrote: “Scarcely had we set foot on land when the infamous Du Camp experienced an erection at the sight of a negress drawing water from a fountain.”<sup>25</sup>

During their stay in Egypt, he noticed that the Egyptians took the superiority of the European for granted. There was no need to explain to Arabs that the Westerners were by far more civilized and superior; they inspired respect; foremost, they inspired awe. This could be perceived in Egypt, where the author, who roamed the streets, sometimes used to see a group of a dozen Arabs give way to a passing Frenchmen. And anyway, Alexandria given its number of aliens, French, English, Italian, had become almost European.

Flaubert and Ducamp headed for Esneh, a small town located between Louxor and Assouan, and famous for its Cairo's exiled prostitutes. Shortly, after their arrival, a blue-veiled woman with painted eyelids asked them if they wanted to see women dancing to whom they replied they certainly did. In the evening, she led them to a house, where they met Kuchuk-Hanem.

The encounter was later reported in a book, *Voyage en Orient*, and in two letters. He addressed one to his friend, the poet Louis Bouilhet (1822-1869) dated March 13, 1850, in which described the encounter saying in part that Hanem was: A courtisane fort célèbre. Quand nous arrivâmes chez elle.... Elle sortait du bain...elle se tenait au haut de son escalier, ayant le soleil derrière elle, et apparaissant ainsi en plein dans le fond bleu du ciel qui l’entourait. C’est une impériale bougresse, tétonneuse, viandée, avec des narines fendues, des yeux démesurés, des genoux magnifiques, et qui avait en dansant de crânes plis de chair sur son ventre. Elle a commencé par nous parfumer les mains avec de l’eau de rose. Sa gorge sentait une odeur de térébenthine sucrée : un triple collier d’or était dessus. On a fait venir les musiciens et l’on a dansé.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Gustave, Flaubert, 1974-1976. *Oeuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert. Correspondance*. [2]. 1850-1859 / de Gustave Flaubert, (Club de l'honnête homme. Paris), p.17.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

Flaubert addressed his second letter to his mistress, the poet-writer, *Louise Colet* (1810-1876). Fearful to hurt her, he undertook to reassure her as to the encounter he had had, more precisely, on his relationship with Hanem. He wrote in part:

Pour Ruchiouk-Hânem, ah ! Rassure-toi et rectifie en même temps tes idées orientales. Sois convaincue qu'elle n'a rien éprouvé du tout ; au moral, j'en répons, et au physique même, j'en doute fort. Elle nous a trouvés de fort bons cawadja (seigneurs) parce que nous avons laissé là pas mal de piastres, voilà tout. La pièce de Bouilhet est fort belle, mais c'est de la poésie et pas autre chose. La femme orientale est une machine, et rien de plus ; elle ne fait aucune différence entre un homme et un autre homme. Fumer, aller au bain, se peindre les paupières et boire du café, tel est le cercle d'occupations où tourne son existence. Quant à la jouissance physique, elle-même doit être fort légère puisqu'on leur coupe de bonne heure ce fameux bouton, siège d'icelle.<sup>27</sup>

After analysis, one notices that Hanem, curiously, was a prostitute. And more curious was the fact that the epithet had to apply to all Arab women. After he had spent two nights with her during his voyage, Flaubert took notes about the encounter.

The reproach made to Flaubert lies in the fact that the description he made had to fit Kuchuk Hanem, in particular, and oriental women, in general. Flaubert was not the only one. Another author who deserves mentioning is Benjamin Gastineau and his book, *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie* (1861). Whatever Flaubert's stand, insofar as stereotypes are concerned, the overall image was a positive one. While numerous Orientalists stuck to their standpoint, the inferiority of the Arab and superiority of the European colonizer, Flaubert granted that Arabs had a civilization which impacted Europe, more precisely, Spain.

For him, while people, north of the Pyreneans, were living in darkness, those in Spain were living in light. Thus, in his *Influence des Arabes d'Espagne sur la*

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<sup>26</sup>Op.cit., p.17.

<sup>27</sup> Flaubert., p.337. See also *Lettre à Louise Colet*, 8-9 août 1846. See also Emile Auriant. 1926. *Histoire de Safia, dite Koutchouk Hanem. Almee d' Esneh*. Les Marges. Juin and Flaubert, *Correspondances*, (Editions de la Pleiade, Gallimard, 1973-1991) and *Lettre à Louis Bouilhet*, 13 Mars 1850.



*civilisation française du Moyen Age* (1831-1846), he writes how the Arabs crossed the desert and arrived in Spain. But in Africa, the Arabs deemed they had but to pass; they seized a village, burned it, and escaped shouting their victory ‘Allah.’<sup>28</sup>

Once in Spain, the Arabs founded an empire. For Flaubert, it was in no manner a conquest. To back, he referred to the first calife, Abderrahmane I who managed to separate from the *Abbasid* Caliphate (the third of the Islamic caliphates to succeed the Islamic prophet). Once separation effected, he put emphasis on Letters and Arts. His separation bred the wrath of Europeans towards their rulers whose backwardness they settled to denounce. Flaubert writes

Pendant que le roi des Francs chantait au lutrin, apprenait à lire, s’étudiait à signer son nom, ce calife des Arabes d’Espagne avait à sa cour des savants et des artistes, la collection des canons de l’Église se traduisait en arabe, l’arabe et le roman étaient indistinctement parlés, les savants de l’Europe passaient tous par les académies d’Espagne. Alvano de Cordoue, au IXe siècle, se plaignait de ce que ses compatriotes parlaient mieux l’arabe que leur langue maternelle, et Jean de Séville, pour la commodité de ceux qui connaissaient mieux la langue des vainqueurs, traduisait en arabe les Saintes Écritures.<sup>29</sup>

One contribution of the Arabs’ genius was without contest in architecture. The manner castles were shaped, designed, and built reminded of sunset in the Orient. This architecture was not without an impact as it is found in the Provence (a geographical region and historical province of southeastern France). This did not mean that in such a region castles did not exist but for Flaubert they were cold; they lacked joy. And it was the Arabs, who, thanks to their architecture, palliated the lack. They made out of the castles musical notes and poetry.

In short, for Flaubert, rhythm, poetry, music, and so on, came from the Orient. And while the Arabs were dominating the Provence with their poetry, they, at once, had a Hold on the world thanks to their science; they brought Arabia at the head of civilizations and made of Spain a huge library and academy, where they taught medicine, chemistry, philosophy, and law; they made of it a cradle for sciences.

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<sup>28</sup> Gustave, Flaubert, *Oeuvres diverses*. [1] ; Fragments et ébauches ; *Correspondance*, 1830-1850, (Club de l’honnête homme. Paris, 1974), p. 134.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135;

Insofar as women are concerned, Flaubert argued that the lack of liberty was proper to Turks and so was brutality; not to Arabs. The latter, he explained, kept women slaves in their seraglio and deprived them of their liberty but they simultaneously offered them another life full of love, poetry, and ecstasy:

Les Arabes laissaient la femme plus libre que les Ottomans de nos jours. Elle était leur esclave, en effet; ils la retenaient dans son sérail, mais lui ôtaient tous les soins de la vie privée, lui donnaient une vie de poésie, d'extase et d'amour, et ne lui laissaient d'autre soin que de se couvrir de fleurs et de se soigner dans les parfums.<sup>30</sup>

During another voyage, Flaubert wrote an historical epic, *Salammô* (1862), whose scene was mainly in Algeria and Tunisia. One scene took place in Carthage during the *Mercenary War* (240 BC – 238 BC), also called the *Libyan War*. The cause for that war revolved round the Carthaginian control. The mercenary armies employed by Carthage undertook to wage an uprising; they received backing from Libyan settlements. At a given time, during the conflict *Salammô*, the priestess of the moon, goddess and daughter of Hamilcar, whose beauty wondered the barbarians, appeared; gender was here was no distorted image.

Regarding Flaubert's orientalism, it is commonly agreed that the fascination of the land he visited, in this case Egypt, outweighed his opinion and feelings. The monumentality of Egypt was unexpectedly to put the worldly vanities at the bottom. In his book, the *Homoerotics of Orientalism* (2013), the critic, Joseph A. Boone, writes that in the end, it was writing that gave Flaubert "more voluptuous joy."<sup>31</sup>

## II. 2. Benjamin Gastineau and *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*

Among other writers of Orientalist literature, though little known, one finds Benjamin Gastineau (1823-1904). He was a French socialist militant. Gastineau was sued by his government due to his revolutionary articles which appeared in various newspapers, *La Vraie République*, *La Voix du Peuple*, *National de L'Ouest*, and

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<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., 136.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph, A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*. 5Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 200.

*L'Ami du Peuple*. In 1852, after he had fought against the military coup of 2<sup>nd</sup> July of the same year, he was sued one more time on the ground he had breached the law on liberty of the press.

The outcome of his trial resulted in his condemnation and exile in Algeria. After he had been pardoned, he returned to France, where he was condemned and exiled for the second time in 1858. In 1878, *The Commune*, a socialist and revolutionary government that ruled Paris for approximately two months, March 18 to May 28, appointed him director of the *Mazarine Library*. The appointment cost him a third indictment and banishment in Algeria.

While in Algeria, Gastineau penned *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie* (1861). He undertook to study gender, both male and female, and to represent it. In truth, the title does not speak for itself as only chapter one deals with the Arab female. Furthermore, since the Arabs accepted to offer hospitality (*diffa*) to the exiled, as he put it in his preface, the portrayal had to take into consideration the welcome. In this light, the portrait he drew, though aiming at being objective rather fell in the category of Orientalist literature.

. The outcome of his enterprise was his reporting that the Arab female constituted what he termed “the stumbling block of Mahometism who created the gynaeceum but did not start a family, which is the civilizing power by excellence”<sup>32</sup> Given her nature, Gastineau saw no wonder to see the Arab male hold her as an article of merchandise which could be sold and bought by her husband, more precisely, by whom he viewed as her master. For the latter, Gastineau writes, it was sheer logic that beauty and strength of the female automatically impacted the price.

The sum of money a would-be husband was ready to give to the would-be father-in-law would easily reach dizzy heights. He would accept to pay between to 1,000-1,500 Francs while an ordinary woman who lacked beauty and strength, a “mouker” would induce him to pay only 200 Francs. Gastineau concluded that such transactions occurred, in reality, when buying a horse. He reported a question asked to an Arab who

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<sup>32</sup>Benjamin, Gastineau, *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*, (Michel-Levy Frères. Paris. 1861), p.14

had lost his wife: “Do you regret the death of your wife?” asked a French man to an Arab. The latter’s reply was: “Yes, I do; she cost me 1,000 Francs.”<sup>33</sup>

Gastineau’s conclusion was that the reply portrayed the peculiar place of the woman in the male’s heart, in particular, and within Algerian society, in general. The husband lost money; he did not lose a wife, and money was more important than feelings. As an article of merchandize, a woman’s fate depended also on the goodwill of the owner.

Gastineau continued to point out, that it was not unusual to see martyred women go on foot in front of their “Lords”, and at once husbands, who went on horseback. The aim of the journey was to pay a visit to the “cadi” in order to seek justice and ultimately divorce. Once in front of the *cadi*, such husbands were ready to do their best to put to the fore the presumed misbehaviour of their wives. The key motivation was to obtain reimbursement of their money. In case a husband succeeded in convincing the *cadi* that he was in his right regarding the plea, the reimbursement that ensued would enable him to buy another woman. Such behaviour was, of course, sanctioned by the Koran.

The Koran, in Gastineau’s opinion, granted males full power over females. Since they were “his field”, the males were authorized to act the way they pleased. Even more, the Koran enabled the husband to smack them whenever they rebelled against his will. It is true, Gastineau stressed, that a number of Imams, like Chouchaoui, managed to ease the severity of the Koranic law. These imams advised husbands to reprimand first; the next step was to forbid the conjugal bed. It was not until these steps failed that it was right to smack them.

This piece of advice remained dead letter. In fact, the males took for granted what they must do with rebel women. Consequently, it was not uncommon to see a wife have her nose cut or her feet burned and then be sent back to her parents when she was suspected either of the seeming of adultery or of calumny. The judges, on their part, had the tendency to ignore their complaints and to side with the defendant rather than with the plaintiff. The pre-eminence of males was also perceived in work ethics.

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<sup>33</sup>Op.cit.

Insofar as work ethics is concerned, women, unlike their males played the role of workers and responsible of the household. They cooked, baked, cleaned, mended, and sewed. On the contrary, the males, who considered themselves as demi-gods and identified with their prophet, were rather preachers, voyagers, and traders. They hated any manual work, and most of their time was spent in sun burning or in “fantasias.”

Such discrepancy induced women to ignore the very meaning of the marriage bond. Arab women, presumably, were by far more afraid of their failing to make a good cous-cous than committing adultery. Under this had, Gastineau remarked: “Had it not been for the stick, all of them would have become adulterers. In douars and under tents, there is more dissolution than in our towns. The desert has its licences too.”<sup>34</sup>

Gastineau observed that unlike Arab women, the Kabyles enjoyed a completely different treatment. First, their faces were not veiled. Second, the husbands took from the Koran only what they found convenient. They left to the wife part of their authority and granted her freedom. In this light, Gastineau explains that “if a chain were to be established between Africans and French; Kabyles, assuredly, would form its appropriate link”<sup>35</sup>

When it came to make a comparison regarding beauty, Gastineau saw that beauty was the lot of the Jewish female. The Arab female, he wrote, notwithstanding her height, beauty of eyes, remained by far inferior to the Jewish woman who was the queen of the indigenous women. As per a comparison with the French, the Jewish woman was superior to the Arab in the same manner the French European was superior to the European Africans. In sum,

The Arab woman, almost all the time married before the age of consent, withers early; woman at twelve, she becomes a matriarch at thirty. As a beauty, she is by far inferior, despite her height, her large voluptuous and expressive eyes, to the Jewish, the queen of the African indigenous women.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Gastineau, *Les Femmes et les Moeurs en Algérie*, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> Op.cit., p. 28.

To sum up, the eagerness to inform went in reality along distorted images. The Arab- be he male or female- stood as different and antagonistic entities in both behaviour and body. For Gastineau, women were confined within a dual space, the home and the veil, and stood as victims. Regarding males, they were the oppressors who had the chance to see religion, Islam, on their side. He was not the only one; another author who shared the same is Alexandre Dumas.

### II.3. Alexandre Dumas: *Le Vélôce, ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*

Alexandre Dumas (father), in his book, *Le Vélôce, ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis* (published in four volumes between 1848 and 1851), set the tone. In 1846, upon a request from the French ministry of public instruction, he toured North Africa -November 1846– January 1847. It was aboard a battleship *Le Vélôce* that he parted for Spain, more precisely, Cadix, which he left for Morocco, Tunisia, and then Algeria. The purpose of the trip was to make Algeria known to the French so that to encourage their emigration.

About two decades after the French troops had disembarked in Sidi Ferruch, twenty-seven kilometers west of the capital, Algiers, French men and women were showing reluctance to settle in the new colony. Such a fact posed a problem to the French authorities. They were worried to see Spanish and Italian immigrants, who had settled in western and eastern Algeria respectively, outnumber the French. Even more, both Spanish and Italians seemed on the verge to take hold of both areas. That could not be accepted.

France, it was argued, provided the money; she provided the soldiers; waged a war and those who were benefiting were the Spanish and the Italians. Consequently, France had to make clear that she was not prone “to hack a Spanish egg in the East and an Italian one in the West”, hence the need to send artists like Dumas. His reporting on the land might, it was expected, induce the French to immigrate.

Dumas visited a number of Algerian towns and took notes on all that he saw. He visited Bône (Annaba); Philippeville (Skikda), El Arrouch, Constantine, Blida, and Algiers. It was in Morocco that he encountered the first Arab. No sooner had he met him that he challenged him on his cleverness to shoot with precision at game.

The Arab accepted the challenge. Having lost, he moved off. The superiority of the French made no doubt. Dumas wrote: “it was obvious that he [the Arab] was moving off, crushed by his inferiority, and at that moment had doubts about everything, even the prophet [...] All Morocco was humiliated by its representative.”<sup>37</sup>

The stereotype, inferiority of the Arab male, remained deeply entrenched. In the course of time, even after they had accepted to die for France and had showed courage when they faced the Germans, the widespread idea was that the Arab was not and could never be the equal of the French. Under this head, one general, Paul Azan (1874–1951) pointed out that equality itself was unimaginable. As to the proponents of equality, he put it plain that they were assuredly “wrongheaded” because for him,

The native is not like the French; he has neither his physical fitness nor his qualities, his education or traditions, his customs or his civilization [...]The mistake is a very generous one and a very French one: it has already been made by those who drafted the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,” rather than more modestly drafting a “Declaration of the rights of the French citizen.” It is not possible to mould humanity thanks to a single formula, even an excellent one, because the races do not change with the sound of few phrases, but take many centuries to evolve.<sup>38</sup>

Dumas wrote in his chapter entitled *Arabs and French* that during his stay in Algiers he noticed that the whole city, except the mosque, had become French. The Arabs sold all that they had. At this point, when they found themselves broke, they sold their girls. That was prostitution, which suggested that those girls gave themselves to the French. As to a likely link between Arabs and French it was impossible. There was a divide that could never be bridged for the simple reason that it was built on deeply rooted contrasts.

One main difference lay in polygamy. It was argued that it allowed the Arab male to afford four women and to afford as many concubines as he pleased, depending on

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<sup>37</sup> Alexandre, Dumas, *Le Véloce; ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis*. 4 vols, ( Cadot. Le Joyeux Roger. Paris.1st ed. 1848–1851. Last ed. 2006), p. 34.

<sup>38</sup> Paul, Azan, *L’armée indigène nord-africaine*, (Charles Lavauzelle.Paris), p. 39.

the means. Having several concubines was synonymous of wealth. Insofar as the status of the Arab woman was concerned, the conspicuous feature was that of a prisoner, jailed in her house; to leave it implied the obligation to go veiled.

Peace in the household was settled thanks to the stick. In a battle, men were cowards. Thus, while the French used to advance valiantly, Arab men saw no dishonour to flee. In sum, according to Dumas, much opposed Arabs and French insofar as the status of both males and females was concerned; He wrote:

Mahomet promises to Moslems a sensual paradise; Jesus-Christ promises an immaterial one. The French can marry but one and has a full range of laws against him Moslems can marry four wives and have as many concubines depending on his wealth. French women walk unveiled and are all the time out, Arab women are prisoners in their homes, if they leave them it is veiled...An Arab brings peace to the household thanks to the stick; a French who hits his wife will be dishonored. The more women an Arab has, the richer he is; one woman is enough to ruin a French man.<sup>39</sup>

Much to his credit, Dumas admitted unfairness of French justice, which played in favor of the colonizer rather than the native. Taking the example of a confiscated field, Dumas wrote that after he had been dispossessed, an Arab's alternative was to file a suit to justice but that he would find himself compelled to incur expenses, which he could in no manner understand. He could not understand that he had to pay a lawyer to defend his cause.

The Arab's astonishment would not stop here. Even when a decision was ruled in his favor, he would utterly not understand that the French, who dispossessed him, might appeal to court, and in this case, he would be compelled not only to pay his lawyer but also to go to France to track his suit and therefore incur more time and expense. In the meantime, his field was left unplanted. This implied an increase of his debt and more chance for the French man to dispossess him.

On the contrary, for Dumas, during the Ottoman presence, the farmer would have

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<sup>39</sup>Op.cit., p. 39.



complained to the caid, who in turn would have informed the cadî. The latter would have summoned both plaintiff and defendant. The tribe's chief would have decided to whom the field belonged. The culprit would have been easily reckoned and punished. For Dumas, it was a mistake to prefer French to Turkish justice.

#### II. 4. Guy de Maupassant: *Au Soleil*

Likewise, the French novelist, Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), visited Algeria for the first time in 1881. In passing, five years later France would impose on Arabs a peculiar piece of legislation, the *Native Code*, a series of offenses, which though not illegal under the common law in case Frenchmen committed them, were nevertheless, punishable in case they were committed by Arabs. One can easily understand why the Arabs came to label this peculiar code the "truncheon code."

De Maupassant, contrarily to Gastineau, went at the request of a metropolitan daily, *Le Gaulois*. It was curiosity as to an encounter with Africa that motivated him to undertake such a trip.

On rêve toujours d'un pays préféré, l'un de la Suède, l'autre des Indes; celui-ci de la Grèce et celui-là du Japon. Moi, je me sentais attiré vers l'Afrique par un impérieux besoin, par la nostalgie du Désert ignoré, comme par le pressentiment d'une passion qui va naître. Je quittai Paris le 6 juillet 1881. Je voulais voir cette terre du soleil et du sable en plein été, sous la pesante chaleur, dans l'éblouissement furieux de la lumière.<sup>40</sup>

As per the aim, it was to collect information on behalf of *Le Gaulois* regarding uprisings in progress in Algeria. The uprisings were staged and led against French colonization by one of Algeria's renowned chiefs, Cheikh Bouamama (1833? 1840?-1901). He wrote :

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<sup>40</sup> Guy, Maupassant (de), *Au Soleil*, (Victor Harvad. Paris. 1st ed. 1884), p. 14.

préparaient une insurrection générale, qu'elles allaient tenter un dernier effort, et qu'aussitôt après le ramadan la guerre éclaterait d'un seul coup par toute l'Algérie. Il devenait extrêmement curieux de voir l'Arabe à ce moment, de tenter de comprendre son âme, ce dont ne s'inquiètent guère les colonisateurs.<sup>41</sup>

Further to different trips he undertook between 1881 and 1890, de Maupassant wrote a number of novels and essays. Among the latter, one can find: *Marrocca* (1882); *Au Soleil* (1884); *Mohamed Fripouille* (1884); *Allouma*, and *Un Soir* (1889). In *Marocca*, the author settled to depict the colonial world, more precisely “its people, and mostly its spell-binding, lascivious women.” It should be pointed out that both “short stories, *Allouma* and *Marrocca*, elicit several types of exoticism: temporal, geographical, and ethnographic.”

Thus, in *Allouma*, the author is made familiar with the experience of a French man with an Algerian woman, Allouma, in colonized Algeria. And like former Orientalists, de Maupassant did not fail to bring to the fore a distorted image of the “Other”, in this case Arab females.

At first, Auballe told him that the difficulty of being acclimated to the country vanished with time, and surprisingly, one came to love this country, whose trait was to arouse what he described as “a lot of small we ignore in ourselves”<sup>40</sup> animal instinct. He described the Arab women; Flaubert used the word machine, as sexual beasts, who, as such, could never be satisfied. Allouma, he wrote “is fire.” In *Marocca*, the author writes that black women, like Marocca, “[...], it is well known, are strongly solicited in harems, where they act as aphrodisiacs.”<sup>42</sup>

Besides the physical appearance, de Maupassant referred to the nature of her behaviour. The most conspicuous feature he found proper to Arab females was their being liars; males, it went without saying, behaved in the same manner. Thus, Allouma accepted to tell him her story, or

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<sup>41</sup> Op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Richard, Fusco, *Maupassant and the American Short Story: The Influence of Form at the End of the Century*, (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 62.

plutôt une histoire, car elle dut mentir d'un bout à l'autre, comme mentent tous les Arabes, toujours, avec ou sans motifs. C'est là un des signes les plus surprenants et les plus incompréhensibles du caractère indigène : le mensonge.<sup>43</sup>

This feature, which he found proper to Arab males, was grounded in the probable influence and impact of their faith that gradually shaped their very instinct. For de Maupassant:

Ces hommes en qui l'islamisme s'est incarné jusqu'à faire partie d'eux, jusqu'à modeler leurs instincts, jusqu'à modifier la race entière et à la différencier des autres au moral autant que la couleur de la peau différencie le nègre du blanc, sont menteurs dans les moelles au point que jamais on ne peut se fier à leurs dires. Est-ce à leur religion qu'ils doivent cela? Je l'ignore. Il faut avoir vécu parmi eux pour savoir combien le mensonge fait partie de leur être, de leur cœur, de leur âme, est devenu chez eux une seconde nature, une nécessité de la vie.<sup>44</sup>

The love affair between the author and Allouma as well as with any Arab woman was exclusive of sentiments, in this case, the idea of love. In this light, any relationship between a Westerner and an Oriental was impossible since he held the Oriental as primitive people and short of any intellect. To put it simply, while he viewed western females sensitive; the Arab ones were close to animal nature. In short, the Arab female would never be capable of love.

Consequently, the author himself, as a westerner, would have been unable to imagine the same. De Maupassant wrote about the absence of feelings, in this case love, towards such people:

Je ne l'aimais pas – non – on n'aime point les filles de ce continent primitif. Entre elles et nous, même entre elles et leurs mâles naturels, les Arabes, jamais n'éclot la petite fleur bleue des pays du Nord. Elles sont trop près de l'animalité humaine, elles ont un cœur trop rudimentaire, une sensibilité trop peu affinée, pour éveiller dans nos âmes l'exaltation sentimentale qui est la poésie de l'amour. Rien d'intellectuel, aucune ivresse de la pensée ne se mêle à l'ivresse sensuelle que provoquent en nous ces êtres charmants et nuls.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Guy, Maupassant (de), *Contes et Nouvelles*, volume I, (Paris, Gallimard, La Pléiade, 1974), p.16.

<sup>44</sup> Guy, Maupassant (de), 1891-1892, *Contes choisis*, (Société des bibliophiles contemporains. Paris. 1891-1892), p.10

<sup>45</sup> Op.cit., p.11.

The overall picture of the Algerians was that of a primitive people. He saw them as passersby in a land towards which they had no tenderness. The lack of feeling entailed the right of the colonizer to lay claim upon the land and automatically on its inhabitants. For de Maupassant the Algerians were:

Peuple étrange, enfantin, demeuré primitif comme à la naissance des races. Il passe sur la terre sans s'y attacher, sans s'y installer [...] Les nègres ont des cases, les Lapons ont des trous, les Esquimaux ont des huttes, les plus sauvages des sauvages ont une demeure creusée dans le sol ou plantée dessus; ils tiennent à leur mère la terre. Les Arabes passent, toujours errants, sans attaches, sans tendresse pour cette terre que nous possédons, que nous rendons féconde, que nous aimons avec les fibres de notre cœur humain [...] Leurs coutumes sont restées rudimentaires. Notre civilisation glisse sur eux sans les effleurer.<sup>46</sup>

But Algeria also was a land of contradictions and so was de Maupassant. At times, he was a loss to reconcile both West and East. His view was deeply attached to the western world and could not be detached from it. For brief instants, the author unconsciously put aside his subjectivity and gave room to a more objective portrait. His civilization, which he claimed was at first hand superior, given the damage it caused to both the “Other” and to his land did not deserve praise.

The savage for him was no longer the colonized but the colonizer whose “civilizing mission”, to borrow from Jules Ferry, proved inappropriate. For de Maupassant, it was all too clear that

Dès les premiers pas on est gêné par la sensation du progrès mal appliqué à ce pays. C'est nous qui avons l'air de barbares au milieu de ces barbares, brutes il est vrai, mais qui sont chez eux, et à qui les siècles ont appris des coutumes dont nous semblons n'avoir pas encore compris le sens. Nos mœurs imposées, nos maisons parisiennes, nos usages choquent sur ce sol comme des fautes grossières d'art, de sagesse et de compréhension. Tout ce que nous faisons semble un contresens, un défi à ce pays, non pas tant à ses habitants premiers qu'à la terre elle-même.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>47</sup>Maupassant, Guy (de), *Au soleil*, 9th ed, (V. Havard. Paris. 1884), p. 18.

## II.5. Eugene Delacroix and *The Women of Algiers (In Their Apartment)*.

In 1832, the French painter, Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863), then aged thirty-four and on his way to fame, was all enthusiasm and excitement at an unexpected invitation.

The invitation came from the king of France, King Louis Phillippe. He invited him to accompany the Comte Earl Charles Edgar de Mornay on a diplomatic mission. The king himself may have followed the advice of a stage actor, Anne-Françoise-Hippolyte Boutelet, commonly known as Mademoiselle Mars, who suggested sending an artist with de Mornay.

It was the first time Delacroix went to Africa, a voyage that was to impact his life and his paintings. Some time earlier, he had visited England but found there, much to his disappointment, no inspiration. To back, “the letters he wrote prove that he did not see and did not want to see in England but paintings of Lawrence and Constable.”<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the mission de Mornay had been assigned was to deliver a peace message to Morocco’s sultan, Moulay Abderrahmane. The French invasion of Algeria two years earlier angered him. France subsequently sought not to have an enemy on the western border. De Mornay and Delacroix left the port of Toulon on January 11, on board a light battleship, *La Perle*; they disembarked in Tangiers on January 24.

The mission was a success. Moulay Abderrahmane accepted peace with France and invited de Mornay to inform his king that he was not only giving up his claims on Tlemcen and Oran but also that he would remain neutral and order his troops to leave the cities.

Delacroix left France full of dreams and great expectations. Although it was pretty cold, windy, and long; the journey lasted thirteen days, his thoughts and feelings were

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<sup>1</sup>John Constable, (1776– 1837) was an English Romantic painter, known principally for his landscape paintings of Dedham Vale, the area surrounding his home—now known as "Constable Country. Sir Thomas Lawrence.( 1769 – ) was a leading English portrait painter and the fourth president of the Royal Academy. Source Wiki.

elsewhere, across the Mediterranean. They were in the encounter with the Orient. The day he disembarked, he found himself, as he put it, ‘thrown in full Goya.’<sup>ii</sup>

His referring to Goya, whom he admired, was grounded in the fact de Lacroix saw in Morocco the “living, colorful, and howling scenery” found in the paintings of this artist. His hotheadedness was soon stopped. He saw Jewish women, and like Arab ones, he realized that they were not within reach

These “pearls”, he explained, could not be approached; all that he could do was to paint them. And painting them was not without risks, he continued to explain given the Oriental prejudice to paint living beings. It was in Meknes, where the king was to meet them that he fully grasped the risks due to what he perceived and depicted as anti-artistic fanaticism.

C'est surtout à Méquinez, en mars, lorsque la caravane française arriva de Tanger, après dix jours de chevauchée éreintante, pour être présentée à l'empereur, que Delacroix constata ce fanatisme antiartistique. En vain se cachait-il derrière les moucharabiehs pour croquer, il risquait chaque fois le coup de fusil ou le coup de poignard. A la fin, cependant, quelques douros bien placés lui obtinrent un peu de complaisance, et il ne put pas revenir du Maroc tout à fait bredouille. Heureusement, il put se dédommager quelques mois plus tard, à Alger, d'où il rapporta ces Femmes d'Alger et cette Noce Juive qui font époque dans notre orientalisme.<sup>48</sup>

After the mission was over and on his way back to France, Delacroix stopped over at Algiers. He roamed Algier's old town from sunrise to sunset. And, as in Morocco, he noticed that everything smelled the Orient: the scent of spices, of houses, of the never ending stairs of the *Casbah*, and above all, the perfume of women hiding under their peculiar piece of clothing, the haik and who seemed to him so close, but he lamented,

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<sup>ii</sup> Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes. 30 March 1746 – 16 April 1828. Was a Spanish romantic painter and printmaker. He is considered the most important Spanish artist of late 18th and early 19th centuries and throughout his long career was a commentator and chronicler of his era. Immensely successful in his lifetime, Goya is often referred to as both the last of the Old Masters and the first of the moderns. Source [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco\\_Goya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Goya)

<sup>48</sup>S. Rocheblave, *Au Maroc en 1832*, (Journal des débats politiques et littéraires. 1926-07-15. [s.n.] Paris).

alas, so far. That was too much for that dreamer's heart; something had to be done to get closer.

It was a French engineer, Victor Poirel, in charge of the harbor of Algiers; in 1838 he was assigned the task to enlarge it, who introduced him to a Turkish privateer who accepted to do him a favor by opening his harem.

Delacroix could not believe his eyes. He found himself at loss to tell whether he was in Greece among goddesses or in Algiers. He exclaimed "It's like in Homer's times; women in the gynaeceum sewing marvelous silk; this is woman as I understand her." In exchange for those unforgettable swiftly elapsing moments, he painted the everlasting *The Women of Algiers (In Their Apartment)*. The space in Delacroix's painting was a harem while those represented were Algerian concubines. The harem, an Arabic term, which means forbidden, applies not only to a forbidden space, household, but also to the woman.

Thus, a woman wearing the veil was forbidden in that the piece of cloth she wore suggested the impossibility to enter and constituted in the eyes of Europeans, a symbol of oppression on the part of males. No woman was free to leave the house without a veil. The apartment, like the haik, implied a forbidden space, closed to the outside gaze, be it European or native. There was no room for intrusion. The reproach lies in that in his quest of exoticism, Delacroix opened ground to phantasms, and in so doing, distorted reality.

As per the harem, there exist two versions. On the one hand one found the Turkish palace, where roamed a number of female concubines all of whom waiting for the return of the male, who was husband and at once master. On the other hand, the harem was associated with prison, where the husband exercised an all-out control on the women, more precisely on those he regarded as his slaves. The harem was also often depicted as a "site of debauchery" suggesting it was more a brothel than a household.

In the painting, the spectator could see three women sitting around a narguile, while a fourth, a black servant, seemed about to leave the room. The women shown seemed idle and were sitting lavishly. The harem, as commonly accepted, and here lies the re-

proach made to Delacroix, did not mushroom with children. Furthermore, the image of those women suggested it was the way they used to spend their time. Even more, their very posture suggested their preparedness to be taken. In this light, Delacroix's harem induced the foreigner, that is the conqueror, to view it as a "private brothel"; and subsequently divided opinions breeding thereby a combination of pleasure and anger.

The painting bred pleasure, since it would unfold memories of beauty, not only for him but also for mankind; the painting is presently held as a masterpiece and is worth millions of dollars. It bred anger, since, two decades later, Toulon, where Delacroix embarked, reminded of the "welcome" of a peculiar prisoner, Algeria's most renowned chiefs, Emir Abd El Kader who would remain captive for five years in France and was never to see his homeland again.

There was anger, since *The Women of Algiers* smelled an *Orientalism*, which was "more reflective of European's sexual fantasies of "Oriental" women than of domestic realities of the regions it supposedly depicted." Such depiction was deliberate with aloof in the background religion.

The intention was to criticize Islam as a hypocrite religion, which, unlike Christianity, permitted polygamy and thus encouraged debauchery. However, polygamy and the status of women, it has come to be agreed, predated Islam. With the coming, of Islam, dignity was returned to women and so was their right to live. Islam forbade their burying alive and requested, in case of marriage with four women, to show fairness towards all, a request that was impossible to grant and hence the need to avoid polygamy, which has become one means to misrepresent and stereotype gender. In sum, the harem Delacroix visited had much to do with imagination and phantasm rather than reality.

Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* together with the *Noce Juive* received applaud and praise in France. They were shown at the Salon of 1834, and later, became part of the Louvres Museum collection. All hands were agreed on the fact it was a beautiful, if not, the most beautiful painting of the century. The praise came from writers as well as from fellow painters like Auguste Renoir.



In an interview, Renoir explained that that there was no more beautiful painting in the world than Delacroix's. What particularly attracted him was the Arab woman with a rose on her hair and the black woman. Both, he told his interviewer, smelled the Oriental female, and "to stand in front of this painting made Renoir imagine himself he was in Algiers."<sup>49</sup>

## II.6. Edouard Drumont and *La France Juive*

Not all French colonial literature confined to writing books that misrepresented the Arab males and females. One might refer to the French journalist, writer, and politician, Edouard Drumont (See Appendice Two). In 1886, he penned a two-volume book, *Jewish Algeria*, which ensured him unprecedented fame; the book sold the same year 62,000 copies and swiftly reached 150 editions. Drumont also penned *Jewish France* before the *Opinion* (1886), and *An Anti-semitic's Testament* (1891). In 1889, he founded the Ligue Nationale Antisémite de France (*Antisemitic League of France*). In *Jewish France*, it was the Jews, not the Arabs who came under harsh criticism and misrepresentation.

Jews have been living in Algeria along with Greeks, Romans, and Amazighs (natives) since 117. Most of them settled in the Aures and the M'Zab (Eastern Algeria and Northern Sahara desert respectively). With the coming of armies in the mid-seventeenth century (647) that intended to spread a new faith, Islam, all four communities resolved to unite in order to stop a common enemy. It was a woman of Jewish background, Dihya ben Tabet, whom Moslems nicknamed the Kahina (in Hebrew priestess, sorceress, and fortune-teller) who took the lead and showed fierce resistance to that spread.

Her struggle, despite her efforts, did not last long, barely five years. In fact, the Kahina succeeded in hampering the advance; she eventually failed to stop it. The reason was twofold. Ever increasing troops, coupled with allies having given up fighting

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<sup>49</sup>F. Ambroise, Vollard, *Ambroise En écoutant Cézanne, Degas, Renoir*, (B. Grasset. Paris. 1938), p. 276.

because on the verge of bankruptcy due to her scorched-earth policy, caused her defeat. The Kahina escaped with her people to the Aures Mountains where she was killed in 702.

The fugitive Jews surrendered; some converted to Islam and accepted to follow an Amazigh chief, Tarik Ibn Ziyad on his way to Europe to spread Islam. An historian, Henri Garrot, writes in *Les juifs algériens: leurs origines* that “the conquest of Spain by Islam was rather a Jewish enterprise.”<sup>50</sup> The conquerors remained in Spain for seven centuries, from 711 to 1492.

After the Arabs had been driven out of the last stronghold, Grenada, the Spanish monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand, saw to leave no room for any other faith except Catholicism. Jews had either to come to the same or to leave. Their refusal induced these monarchs to issue an edict on March 31, 1492 (the Alhambra Decree) ordering their expulsion. According to estimates, 800,000 were expelled.

The Jews who went to Algeria, although put under close surveillance, had a free hand in managing their own affairs, especially all that regarded their faith. They had the right to be clerks and merchants; many served as middlemen with Europe. Besides, they had, unlike in Spain, the right to walk without bells round their necks.

Certain restrictions were nevertheless applied on them. They had no right to work in the customs because of tax evasion; to dress like Arabs; to wear the green color; to ride horses; mules and donkeys were permitted. Notwithstanding the restrictions, the Algerian Jews, the indigenous and those expelled from Spain, were regarded as *ahl edhim-mah* (protected people). With the invasion of Algeria, this protection disappeared.

Drumond was surprised to see that the Algerian Jews seemed to exercise an all-out control over Algeria. His feeling was that the situation pretty much resembled Spain's. But Spain, he pointed out, took radical measures on that behalf; it expelled them. Consequently, lest France did something, its colony, he feared, would turn into the land

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<sup>50</sup>Henri, Garrot, *Les juifs algériens: leurs origines*, (A. Savine. Paris. 1898), p. 26.

of Judaea. Consequently, he wondered if France would be as courageous as Spain. As per those who dared criticize the inquisition and moan on the fate of Spanish Jews, it was, he remarked, “above all an institution based on a survival instinct. It saved Spain.”<sup>51</sup> In this light, their piece of advice was that:

The history of Spain should serve as an example[...] It is not on behalf of the Saracens that Jews betray [...] Presently they work for our most dangerous enemies; those who have but one object, the heroic and valiant Spain, how to get rid of Jewish invasion? It is a hope and at once a wish from the inner heart hoping that we will start the work to freedom for our country by taking against Jews energetic measures for preservation in the name of the unsung superior interest of the motherland, of justice, and of law.<sup>52</sup>

Drumont’s criticism of Jews which, he explained, was social, in no manner denominational, was grounded in the fact they were were involved in despicable business that aimed to suck the blood of all those who came their way. Furthermore, the usury they practiced in France, he explained, was a trifle to the one in progress in Algeria. He denounced their vice and their being neurotic; immune to epidemics; having a smell which indicates their race and that enables them to recognize one another.

Other traits he found proper to Jews were: mercantilism, greed, intrigue, subtlety, and ruse. On the contrary, he saw the Aryan as an enthusiastic individual, heroic, knightly etc. To back the attributes he found proper to Jews, referred to de Maupasant’s *Au Soleil*. Regarding Adolphe Crémieux who had imposed citizenship on Algerian Jews, Drumont found no difficulty in understanding his policy.

As a Jew, he contended, it was no wonder to see Crémieux suggest what he thought was best for his coreligionists: not to live in another world but rather merge with all communities. It was only in this manner that Jews could impose themselves. On the contrary, the picture he drew of the Arab was totally different. Contrarily to Jews, one feature that Drumond found typical to the Arab male was his courage. The latter had

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<sup>51</sup>Op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>52</sup>Op.cit., p. 69.

been noticed during the war with the Prussians whom they impressed given their courage and their readiness to take risks; that was not the case with Jews, whom he depicted as cowards. The Arabs, more precisely, the “black devils”

....As the Prussians used to call them, who jumped under the fire, marveled the enemy in Wissembourg and Woerth. Albert times about the fantastic effect they produced with their savage screams; their joy when they heard powder; their manner to rush ahead like tigers.<sup>53</sup>

One conspicuous figure which was representative of the Arab male was France’s enemy, Sidi Mohamed Ben Ahmed El Mokrani, who had led manifold insurrections French presence. Despite, his role in denouncing and fighting the French, Drumont deemed that El Mokrani personified typical Arab male traits: seriousness, dignity, foremost the fact they always showed sumptuousness when it came to negotiate with French officers.

Given these traits, he was of opinion that El Mokrani’s place should be a no less famous chief, renowned for having fought the Crusaders, Yousouf-ben-Ayoub-Salah-Eddyn. Another trait typical to the Arab is gratitude. Whenever a good deed is done for him, he manages to express his thanks. “A simple deed on behalf of good, or at least to prevent mischief”, Drumont writes, “proves the amount of gratitude he is ready to show.”<sup>54</sup>

Of course, there were faults that were proper to Arabs. One key fault was their incurring debts without weighing the risks. Whatever the percentage asked by a Jew did not matter so long money was ready. The far reaching consequences lay in the Arab’s incapability to discharge the incurred debt and subsequently in his being compelled to sell his land. In case he had no land, he was obliged to sell his camel; his horse; his donkey etc.

The Jew is lord of all southern Algeria. There is not one single Arab who doesn’t owe him money. Because the Arab doesn’t like discharging his debt; he prefers to renew his loan at one

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<sup>53</sup>Edouard, Drumont, *La France juive : essai d'histoire contemporaine*. 2 vol. 43rd éd. C. (Marpon et E. Flammarion. Paris.1886), p.12.

<sup>54</sup>Op.cit, p. 47.

hundred, two hundred percent, he thinks he's saved when he gains time. We need special legislation to change this pitiful situation. And anyway, the Jew, in the South, does not practice anything else but usury.<sup>55</sup>

## II.7. Hubertine Auclert : *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*

In 1900, Hubertine Auclert (see appendix one) published a book which she titled, *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*. Auclert was a French feminist and a campaigner for women's suffrage. Towards the late nineteenth century, more precisely in 1888, she travelled with her husband to Algeria, where they remained for four years. She returned to France alone, her husband having died in Algeria. It was during her stay that she seized the opportunity to study and then to report on Arab women.

As a feminist, she found ground for comparison. For her, Arab women in Algeria, like French women in the metropolis, were both victims of male counterparts' prejudice. However, unlike in France, Arab women suffered from much more prejudice. To this intent, she undertook, after her return, to "pursue legal action to acknowledge their rights. Among the rights she wished to see conferred on them, there was education and the end to polygamy.

What struck this feminist was the young age of brides; she resolved to fight such a practice. She argued that while in France to marry a girl who had not reached puberty was seen as a crime; in Algeria it was a custom. In France, Auclert contended, marriage meant a game for little girls; in Algeria it was reality; they did not play with dolls. As to the motivation for marrying girls at an early age, she pointed out that it found its ground in the fact the fathers saw in them not daughters but rather a source of income. That was due to the dowry which was brought by the future husband.

Furthermore she noticed and pointed out that that there existed an agreement between a girl's father and the future son-in-law whereby marriage was understood to occur until she reached puberty. This agreement was often deliberately ignored by the

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<sup>5</sup>Op. cit.

son-in law as he held her as property. And in case justice had vent of such an arrangement, both father and son-in-law were ready to ask individuals to bear false witness.

Insofar as the dowry is concerned, its amount and nature depended on the location. In cities, the future husband paid in cash; he paid in “douros”; in the country side he paid under a tent, in sheep, camel, and palm trees. In oases, the dowry consisted of jewels and fabric coupons. Dowry also depended on age and craft; youth and ‘savoir faire’ automatically impact the price.

For Auclert, it was very common to buy a bride at the auction sale. And the more beautiful a girl was, the more chance there was for a wealthy old man to afford one. However, it happened that a buyer might be gouged; the bride being either sold or gone with someone else, whence the innumerable suits in court. In the latter, it was the coranic law which was applied. And French law did, most of the time, support the decision. Thus, “very often judges annulled freely consented marriages so as to deliver a woman to the man who bought her while she still was a little girl. Nay! There are even French judges ready to deliver a young girl to the man who bought her before she was born!”<sup>56</sup>

In order to avoid these customs, Auclert advocated severe legislation. She declared that there was need for legislation whereby France would forbid girls to marry before fifteen. She then lamented the lack of any power in the hands of French women. The reason lay in that in case they had power, she explained, they surely would not permit such marriages which she considered but as rape of children; In short, she fought “on a soil that has become French a law that condones the rape of children”<sup>57</sup> She argued that “Man tolerates this crime because he shares those who benefit from it.”<sup>58</sup>

Auclert also viewed the Arab male as polygamous. Most Arab women, she noted, were against polygamy and would prefer prison to the harem. Under this head, they

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<sup>56</sup> Hubertine, Auclert ? *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*, (Société d'éditions littéraires. Paris. 1900), p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> Op.cit., p. 49.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

would “vehemently protest against plurality...They say better give us lizards rather than polygamous husbands!”<sup>59</sup> The impact of polygamy could be perceived in the widespread subsequent prostitution.

As in Algeria there were more men than women, and given that males could afford more than one wife, it ensued that prostitution became “priesthood” and one motive for divorce. Polygamy Auclert, explained, impacted the male’s intelligence and health.

La polygamie ne hâte pas seulement la décrépitude physique, elle amène la dégénérescence intellectuelle. En concentrant toute l'activité cérébrale des arabes sur l'instinct bestial, elle anihile leur intelligence et atrophie leur cerveau. En avançant sa mort et en préparant la perte de sa race, l'homme polygame est-il au moins plus heureux-que le monogame? Nous avons interrogé à ce sujet nombre d'Arabes; tous nous ont avoué que la pluralité des femmes engendrait des dissensions domestiques, et que la guerre était en permanence dans la maison de l'homme qui avait plusieurs épouses.<sup>60</sup>

Polygamy for males was quite normal and formed part of the customs. They would back it on the fact women were made solely for pleasure and since no one woman could provide her husband with it all lifelong, there was need to have more than one; polygamy and repudiation fared together.

To the question why the French authorities permitted polygamy, she found the reason in the fact these authorities were well aware that Arab males had needs totally unknown to Europeans. These needs had come to take the shape of rights which the authorities did not want to deny. Consequently, since they condoned polygamy. Auclert, saw the solution in the education of women which would improve their status. Under this head, she wrote:

Aussitôt instruites et initiées à nos mœurs, les mauresques deviennent réfractaires à la polygamie. Elles aimeront mieux se prostituer que d'épouser un polygame. Cette répulsion instinctive prouve simplement que la polygamie ne fait pas le bonheur du sexe féminin.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.74.

Auclert saw salvation in education. She denounced the fact that the French authorities hailed the merits of education but at once refused it to spread it in their colony. She pointed out that the enterprise would not mean expense, in that, instead of building schools in which the Moslems would find themselves parked apart, it would be more appropriate to open the existing ones. Thus, both Arab males and females would be able to join the French schools, where either an Arab male or female teacher of Arabic would help the headmaster.

For Auclert to merge games, eagerness, and efforts of children would constitute the best means to get rid of the race prejudice which has enabled the French to “hold the superiority of their education as a native superiority.”<sup>62</sup> In conclusion, she wondered how it were possible “to isolate in schools exclusively reserved to their race the indigenous that one wanted to make French? Would separation of children breed the union of adults?”<sup>63</sup>

Her book did not go without criticism. The fact that she talked about Arab women in Algeria, more precisely, about their status and condition, which seemed to undergo sheer degradation, unconsciously and unintentionally induced the colonizer to justify his presence in Algeria, a presence subsequently with the view to put an end to that degradation.

. Julia Clancy-Smith in *Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria*, writes that Auclert, whose thoughts on Islamic culture smelled and were deeply “entrenched in imperial thinking” while attempting to better, thanks to her feminism, the condition of Arab women, had to make the Arab male and his faith accountable for that condition. Furthermore, colonialism and its rebuke of the “Other” made this condition worse.

While her thoughts on Islamic culture were entrenched in imperial thinking, she made clear the negative influence of French colonialism on the society’s in which they settled. She claimed that the oppression from Islamic law was made worse

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<sup>61</sup>Op .cit., p. 68.

<sup>62</sup>Op.cit., p. 142.

<sup>63</sup>Op. cit.



by collusion between the French administrators and Arab men. Arab males, in her eyes, appeared backwards in part because of the effects of racism from the French settlers. Because of the males' oppression, she saw the colonized women as the most significant sufferers. She claimed because of the patriarchy of both the Arabs and the French, the Algerian women were the least advanced socially, morally, and culturally.<sup>64</sup>

The word *Orientalism* had no pejorative connotation in France. The widespread idea was that myriad travelers of the end of the eighteenth century fell in love and painted nature that was not of their country. They travelled first to Italy, then to Turkey etc., and in the course of time, more precisely, in the nineteenth-century, they felt and aroused an interest for the Orient. Under this head, orientalism went along colours on the part of painters in quest for exoticism. That view assuredly was not shared by a number of critics like, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and recently Algerian writers like, Malek Alloula, and Assia Djebar. These, have indeed tried, through their writings, to alter the stereotyped image they have been ascribed. This is shown and explored in the following chapter

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<sup>64</sup>Julia, Clancy-Smith in *Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria*.

## Chapter Three

### Questioning Colonial Literature on the Re/misrepresentation of Gender

III.1. Edward Said on *Orientalism*

III. 2. Malek Alloula and the *Colonial Harem*

III.3. Frantz Fanon and “Algeria Unveiled”

## Chapter Three

### Questioning Colonial Literature on the Re/Misrepresentation of Gender

Orientalism is defined as a term used in literature, art, and aiming at depicting and representing the Orient. The latter has to be taken in its broadest sense. Thus, it involved not only the Far East but also the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Myriad Orientalists visited these regions on their own; at times they visited them further to requests made by their respective governments. The outcome of their encounter with the Orient crystallized in a number of books, paintings, postcards etc. In the course of time, the term Orientalism has come to denote the way the Westerners portrayed the Orient, a portrayal, which instead of being objective, opened room to phantasms and subsequently distorted the image of the Orient and therefore bred stereotypes. Orientalism went through heavy criticism. Among those who denounced the authors of such “literature” one finds, to name a few, Edward Said, who penned *Orientalism*; Malek Alloula’s *Le Harem Colonial*, and Frantz Fanon’s *Algeria Unveiled*

### III.1. Edward Said on *Orientalism*

Edward Wadie Said, a Palestinian American literary theorist, was a graduate of Princeton and Harvard University. After graduation, he taught comparative literature at Columbia University. His book, *Orientalism* published in 1978 is regarded as one of his major works. In *Orientalism*, Said deals, in essence, with the way the West perceived and depicted the East. It should be borne in mind that the “East”, in this case, referred to Middle Eastern, Asian, and North-African societies. After scrutiny, he came with the conclusion that first, Orientalism, was age old.

Said traced Orientalism the Age of Enlightenment; foremost, it can be traced to the period that witnessed the colonization of the Arab World. Second, Orientalism in essence, was a picture that the Europeans, who visited the “East”, drew and then managed to convey. This picture, was different depending on the cardinal points, East and West, and was used “as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts....concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny, and so on.”<sup>64</sup> Conspicuous to that picture, however, was the fact it was altogether subjective and misleading. In short, this picture was not without reproach as there was, deliberately, a will to distort reality.

Said writes in *Orientalism* that the *Orient* and the *Occident* were been man-made. To back, he referred to the remarks put to the fore by the Neapolitan philosopher and philologist, Giambattista Vico. The latter assumed, regarding these two entities, that what men could know was what they made, and in the course of time, what they could extend to geography.

At this juncture, the Orient, like the Occident, appeared, above all, as “an idea with a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, Prof. Said contends that the *Orient* should not be viewed as a myth. Notwithstanding the picture, there was, to a given extent, what he called a “corresponding reality.”

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<sup>65</sup>Edward, Said, *Orientalism*, ( Vintage Books. New York. 1978), p. 20.

Proper to this *Orient* is a culture, a core culture and peripheral one. Language, history, religion are in the former; appetite, way of dressing etc., are in the latter. However, the Orientalism he denounced had trait to “that regular constellation of ideas as the pre-eminent thing about the Orient.”<sup>66</sup> The images have been turned into stereotypes and are becoming recurrent. The intent, as noted, was domination. Thus, according to Said, “The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered common-place by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be—that is, submitted to being—made Oriental.”<sup>67</sup>

In *Orientalism*, Said’s key reproach revolved round the implications of the concept “understanding.” Western literature, he explained, had to be divided in two totally different units. On the one hand, there were authors whose depictions were aimed to understand the Orient for the sake of co-existence. For such authors, the West could not do without the “Other” and the converse of the maxim was true. Complementarities were desiderata as they would enrich one another.

Simultaneously, there were authors, whom Said described as “one of the intellectual catastrophes of history.”<sup>68</sup> What induced him to call them catastrophes was grounded in the fact that they managed to construe images of the Orient that have become stereotypes. As to the motivation, there was behind such construction a will to dominate.

For Said, anyone might concede to the fact that there existed a difference between those animated by the desire to understand the “Other” so as to co-exist and those animated by the desire to seek domination instead of co-existence and enlargement of horizons. Consequently, Orientalism, which in fact coincided with colonialism and implied the need for domination led him to the following remark:

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<sup>66</sup> Op.cit., 22.

<sup>67</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>68</sup> Op.cit.

The European encounter with the Orient, and specifically with Islam, strengthened this system of representing the Orient and, as has been suggested by Henri Pirenne, turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded.<sup>69</sup>

Insofar as the second category is concerned—the authors animated by the will to dominate—Said made reference to the French writer Gustave Flaubert’s work, *Salambo*.

Said’s criticism of the novel lies in that Flaubert in his book *Salammbô*, one more time, managed to associate the Orient with sex. That was not all. The rather peculiar image of the Orient, in this case, the image of the female, simultaneously suggested masculinity of the West. This masculinity conferred, it went without saying, a right to conquer and to rule. In other words, “the feminization of the East allowed the West to play the role of the masculine conqueror, whose intellectual and physical superiority allowed it to rule naturally.”<sup>70</sup>

In much the same vein, another author, Lisa Lowe, aroused the same remark: the feminization of the Orient and the masculinization of the West. Such image rendered partition and colonization by western European comprehensible. Lowe writes in *The Orient as Woman in Flaubert’s Salammbô and Voyage en Orient Comparative Literature Studies*:

The representations of the Orient as cultural opposite of the Occident are eroticized and feminized; the object of the Orient is praised as a female object. The spatial logic we find in 18<sup>th</sup> travel literature, which asserts the geographical centrality of Europe, is in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a gendered relationship; the occidental self constitutes a single, central male position, and non-European others occupy female marginalized positions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Op. cit., 71.

<sup>70</sup>Tara, Mendola, *Magrebines: Historical Representations of North African Women in 19th-Century French Orientalism and Post-1950s North African Narrative*, (University of Pennsylvania. 2006).

<sup>71</sup>Lisa, Lowe, *The Orient as Woman in Flaubert’s Salammbô and Voyage en Orient Comparative Literature Studies*, (Penn State University Press. 1986), p. 1.

The second book that came under Said's heavy criticism was Flaubert's *Voyage en Orient*. Said argued that the author managed to induce the reader to think that the Orient was a "world elsewhere." Typical and proper to this world was its ability to offer the means to escape and the gate to sexual fantasies. The world Flaubert depicted and undertook to convey was a world totally different from the western one given "its harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys, sherbets, ointments, and so on."<sup>72</sup> In short, he associated the Orient with sex.

For Said, Flaubert's Orient was a place for fantasies; for sex, a world, which, unlike the West, was rather permissive. To back, he referred to the main character, the Egyptian Hanem who,

never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental." My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk. Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion, thanks to Kuchuk Hanem, Prof. Said showed that Flaubert succeeded in creating a very "influential model" of the presumed Oriental woman. This model gradually became entrenched in the westerner's mind and came to be taken for granted.

Thanks to such a model, Said gradually succeeded in inducing the western eye to know, and at once, to yield to the idea that Oriental women in general, Hanem, in particular was a woman who was ever ready to offer her body. Kuchuk Hanem, however, was not the sole character presumably reflective and expressive of such a model. The Algerian females, more precisely the *Fatmas*, presumably reflected the same and Malek Alloula dealt with this chapter in his book, *The Colonial Harem*.

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<sup>72</sup>Op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16.

### III. 2. Malek Alloula and the *Colonial Harem*

The novelist, Malek Alloula, was born in 1937 in Oran, Algeria. Shortly after having graduated from the Algerian *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, he went to France, where he undertook further studies at the Sorbonne University. His doctoral dissertation dealt with the French Philosopher, Denis Diderot.

Alloula, who married the famous novelist, Assia Djebbar, penned several poems and novels. Among the latter one finds, to name a few, *Rêveurs/Sépultures* 2008; *Les Festins de l'exil*, 2003, *Le Bec en l'air et Alger*, 2005; *Approchant du seuil, ils dirent Paris*, 2009. One issue Alloula dealt with and that has not stopped spilling much ink regards stereotypes.

Most critics of Orientalism found stereotypes about Arab males and females on books written by foreigners. As per Alloula, he managed to figure out if they could be found elsewhere. The outcome of his research crystallized in noticing them in an unexpected place, in postcards. Alloula, in his book *Le Harem Colonial. Images d'un sous-érotisme* (Paris: Slatkine 1980; reissued Paris: Séguier 2004; English translation 1986 as *The Colonial Harem* by the University of Minnesota Press, in *Theory and History of Literature Series*, Vol 21), tackled the issue of stereotypes in postcards sent by French soldiers to their families and relatives. After scrutiny, he came to sharply criticize the distorted image of the Algerian woman conveyed through these postcards.

Alloula divided his book, the *Colonial Harem*, in ten chapters. It also contained a total of ninety reproductions of Algerian women. In the first chapter, which he entitled the *Orient as Stereotype and Phantasm*, Alloula informs the reader about the foreigner that is colonists, missionaries, scholars, painters, and photographers in quest of exoticism; in quest of folklore and Orientalism, and their gaze on the encounter with the Algerian female.

This gaze enabled them to depict a woman that was more the fruit of their imagination and subsequent phantasm than reality. For Alloula, there was “Behind this image of Algerian women, probably reproduced in the millions, there is visible the



broad outline of one of the figures of the colonial perception of the native.<sup>74</sup>

Chapter Two entitled, *Women from the Outside: Obstacle and Transparency*, tells about the first thing the foreign eye sees when it comes to the Algerian female, her concealment under a piece of garment, the haik. The reader is informed that the foreigner, in his encounter with the Algerian woman is struck by concealment from sight thanks to a piece of clothing, the haik.

However, the garb she wore, the foreigner assumed, had a specific role. It was neither intended at concealing herself nor playing at concealing. In fact, her intention was to tell the photographer about her refusal to give herself. That was not without a consequence. In so dressing, she bred in his mind a feeling of “impotence.” One therefore understands that the foreigner managed to the utmost to unveil her.

In fact, the photographer’s encounter was peculiar. The peculiarity lies in that this foreign photographer’ underwent an initial experience of disappointment and obstinacy.<sup>75</sup> Even more, the woman’s rejection was threefold. She rejected his desire; his art; foremost, she rejected his very place in the Algerian society.

As per the haik, whose color was white, it suggested blindness. While the foreigner could easily guess the contours of women he was at loss to distinguish one female from another. Furthermore this piece of garment suggested closure of a forbidden private space and automatically frustration. In sum “The Algerian society, in particular the world of women, was forever forbidden to him. It counterpoised to him a smooth and homogenous surface free of any cracks through which he could slip his indiscreet lens.”<sup>76</sup>

The frustration was further enhanced in that the veil was widespread and was not worn for peculiar occasions. In this light, these two features rendered it impossible to

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<sup>74</sup> Malek, Alloula, *Le Harem Colonial. Images d'un sous-érotisme* (Paris: Slatkine 1980; reissued Paris: Séguier 2004; English translation 1986 as *The Colonial Harem* by the University of Minnesota Press, in *Theory and History of Literature Series*, Vol 21), p.5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

invent an explanation. The veil, the photographer imagined, was synonymous of take photos. For Alloula, the photographer, loath to yield to this situation, managed to yield to imprisonment. The Algerian woman, he resolved to assume, wore a veil for the simple reason that she was not free but rather imprisoned. The veil imprisoned her outside; the bars inside the home.

In Chapter Three, *Women's Prisons*, the photographer, who had been denied access, found the alternative in resorting to paying women on the margin of society; he could henceforth take all the photos he wanted. The women shown accepted to serve as models given their poor living conditions. As to the photographer, he succeeded, thanks to his art, in showing who the Algerian woman was, for the model “In her role as substitute...presents three distinct and yet closely related advantages: she is accessible, credible, and profitable. This is the three legged foundation upon which will come to stand the whole of the enterprise pursued so relentlessly by the colonial postcard.”<sup>77</sup>

Still in the same chapter, and more precisely on the photographs entitled *Scenes and Types*, one could see two women, Aicha and Zorah. Both were looking through bars set on the window; they were, it goes without saying, looking at the photographer, at the foreigner. Their gaze suggested that they wanted to inform him it was not their fault; they would easily yield, but their home, their prison, the prison designed of course by the males, was the insurmountable obstacle. The photographer’s spirit, however, wandered and he felt compassion with the photographed, whose prison he yearned to share:

The imprisonment of women becomes the *equivalent of sexual frustration*. On the other side of the wall, a man is desperately clutching the bars that keep him from the object of his unequivocal yearning. The grimacelike countenance of his face, the mask of suffering that is imprinted on it, leave no doubt about his intention to be united with the prisoner, the woman in the harem.<sup>78</sup>

In Chapter Four, titled *Women’s Quarters*, the first photo is that of a Moorish woman standing at the door of her home. Thereafter, follows a series showing women inside.

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<sup>77</sup>Op. cit., 18.

<sup>78</sup>Op.cit., 25.

They suggested, although it was later on stressed that studios had in reality served as the inside of the harem, the photographer's success in entering that forbidden space. And in order to take such photos, it was not necessary to fill the studio with manifold ornaments. Likewise, a short, although forced smile, was sufficient enough to suggest complicity between the model and the artist. Alloula writes:

A few young women, seated on mats, posing in front of a hanging carpet will suffice to suggest the familiarity of the photographer with the inside of this female world. The forced smile is there to further emphasize the illusory complicity that the photographer steals from his models.<sup>79</sup>

Amazingly, Alloula assumes that notwithstanding the resort to models, the victim of such photos was without contest the photographer himself. The reason is simple in that this photographer thought that they represented reality when in fact it was his phantasm that was being reflected. Thus, on the photo that showed a group of women gazing at the photographer, there was the feeling that it was a "world of idle women that lie adorned as if ready for unending." They also reminded of Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, which itself was a peculiar exaggeration turning into "madness, harem madness."<sup>80</sup>

In Chapter Five, *The Couple*, Alloula deals with the rearrangement of space and structure further to foreign criteria. First, he notes that the very idea of the couple is totally foreign to Algerian society. It is, to borrow "an aberration" as the tribe, the clan, suit best. Second, the photos, which show a couple with their child titled *Algeria, Native Family, and Famille Mauresque*, are violently symbolic. The spectator may notice coercion when taking them. To make them look real, clothing had been seen to by the photographer and seem to have been taken from everyday life.

Furthermore, the child, he notes, had not link with the parents shown on the photograph. The parents were purely fictional parents and so was the child. Last, the photo suggested the existence of an uncontrolled birthrate attributed by "the colonial

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<sup>79</sup>Op.cit., 34.

<sup>80</sup>Op.cit., 35.

authority to cultural belatedness” and to stagnation. It also suggested the swarming of an anarchic progeny.”<sup>81</sup>

One can safely assume that one of the photos that bred the anger of the author was the one showing a couple with a child on page 42. The spouses, one could notice, were very young. They were aged not more than twelve or thirteen. The photo informed about the colonial misrepresentation of marriage and the subsequent stereotype. The idea was that barbarism, which was a feature of the Algerian society, did not “even spare children” who were forced to marry at a very young, unthinkable age. Instead of playing with dolls, the photo suggested that this married young girl had another occupation: it was to feed the baby she was rocking with milk from “barely formed breasts.”

To the innocent games of adolescence, barbarism substitutes the weight of premature paternity and maternity. Young girls do not play with dolls but already rock flesh-and-blood babies in their arms—when they are not feeding them from their barely formed breasts.<sup>82</sup>

Of course the colonists had to see to avoid such barbarism. It was necessary to bring change; to civilize the uncivilized. The change is easily perceived on page forty-three. It still showed a couple, which had been, this time, Alloula writes “visited by the blessings of civilization.”<sup>83</sup> The photo shows a young Arab with his girl companion. He wears a uniform and amorously holds her.

The intent was to make the spectator understand his “partaking the colonial order”; foremost, it was to show his having succeeded in escaping from the “ambient barbarism.” As per the girl companion, her beautiful dress denoted an undisputable success, that of climbing the social order. Furthermore, the fact that the photo showed no child implied that the colonists had brought order, that is “a good management of sexuality.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Op.cit., 40.

<sup>82</sup>Op.cit., 40.

<sup>83</sup>Op.cit., 44.

<sup>84</sup>Op.cit., 44.

A widespread idea lies in that even Islam was at loss to bring so deep a change. Under this head, one can refer to an article written by the literary critic, Jean Blois, in *Annales politiques et littéraires*, edited by [s.n.] (Paris), dated March 26, 1911. After he had read a book written by Henry and Hean Sansterre, *Les Contes du Bled et du Fouldouk*, he expressed his enthusiasm as to the description of the desert and the women, whom he depicted as perfumed flowers and in whom one found, irony, violence, superstition, mystery, and “a strange barbarism...barbarism that will and not without difficulty be superficially eradicated by the Coran.”<sup>85</sup>

Alloula titled his Chapter 6: *The figures of the Harem, Dress and Jewelry*. One can see a series of photos of young Algerian women. The first four show the *Belle Fatmahs*. They are followed by Kabyle women, women from the South; from Ouled Nail. Alloula notes that the models were requested to dress and adorn themselves as if they were going to attend a feast.

Make up and gold, which appeared on their bodies, were intended to make them beautiful and desirable. And insofar as the photographer is concerned, his apparent aim was to create what Alloula called an “*exhaustive, descriptive catalog of the finery of Algerian women.*”<sup>86</sup> The model he showed “and what she signifies (the Algerian woman) are effaced to become no more than the purport of a *carnavalesque orgy.*”<sup>87</sup>

The title of chapter seven, *Inside the Harem, The Rituals*, spoke for itself. In fact the photographer having been compelled to use model and simulacra found himself trapped. His voyeurism stopped, and the object of his enterprise was not attained, to get inside and have a closer look at a harem. In the end, he succeeds but has to see that the harem in which he stepped remained “symbolically closed.”

The reason, Alloula explains, was very simple and was grounded in the fact that “for the phantasm”, a harem which turned public was no more a harem; it was an incongruity.

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<sup>85</sup> Jules, Blois, *Les Annales politiques et littéraires*. No 1448. [s.n.] (Paris. 26-03-1911), p. 309.

<sup>86</sup> Alloula. *Le Harem Colonial*, 52.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 62.

Three presumably typical features of the harem were the coffee, the hookah, and the odalisque. Regarding the first, Alloula called the attention of the reader on the ceremony that accompanied sipping. The photos showed women drinking it alone and in group. They suggested by their posture and by “their languor and their unending reverie, a metaphysics of refreshment and odoriferous and odoriferous absorption.”<sup>88</sup> Regarding the second, the hookah (hashich), the photographer was in no manner bothered by the fact that it was not widespread let alone typical to Algeria.

However, the hookah, which constituted a stereotype and attributed to the Orient, had to be shown to the foreign gaze. Under this head, there was no Orient without it. Its goal was to extend the ceremonial of coffee, Kaoua sipping, and in so doing it “gave life to a world of dreamy feminine presences, in various states of self-abandonment and lasciviousness, welcoming and without reserve.”<sup>89</sup>

The third trait to the harem was the odalisque<sup>i</sup>. There was for Alloula no Orient in the absence of the odalisque as she was “the symbol and the highest expression of the harem.”<sup>90</sup> Her presence was to fill this forbidden space thanks to the mystery and the luminosity that surrounded her. She could be seen in the recess of the harem and the photographer put to the fore all that she represented, “the personification of the phantasm, its fermata.”<sup>91</sup> And the outcome of the whole enterprise was that it was not necessary,

It is unnecessary for the photographer to capture the pleasure that the odalisque evokes. This is a subject with a long pictorial history which advantages him. But what Ingres's Odalisesques, for example, express in latent eroticism and sensual presence, the colonial postcard displays boldly, filling in the gaps with all the conventional and redundant implements at its disposal.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>89</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>90</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>i</sup> An *odalik* was not a concubine of the harem, but a maid, although it was possible that she could become one. She was ranked at the bottom of the social stratification of a harem, serving not the man of the household, but rather, his concubines and wives as personal chambermaids. *Odalik* were usually slaves given as gifts to the sultan by wealthy Turkish men. If an *odalik* was of extraordinary beauty or had exceptional talents in dancing or singing, she would be trained as a possible concubine. If selected, an *odalik* trained as a court lady would serve the sultan sexually and only after such sexual contact would she change in status, becoming thenceforth one of the consorts of the sultan. Source Wikipedia

<sup>91</sup> Op. cit., p. 78.

Whatever the traits found proper to the harem; the final idea the foreign eye had of it was a world of perversion. Other traits the colonizer depicted as proper were songs and dances.

In Chapter Eight, *Song and Dance, Almehs and Bayaderes*, Alloula explains that the photographs dealt more with the essence of the harem rather than its inner life. As guests, the *Almehs and Bayaderes* role was to animate this closed forbidden space thanks to the dances they accomplished and the songs they sang. However, the postcards that were made of these figures, one more time, distorted reality as the gaze was a colonial gaze.

In *Oriental Sapphism*, Chapter Nine, Alloula concentrates on a peculiar presumably typical trait to the harem: sapphism. After he had explained that the colonial photographer in particular, and colonial literature, in general, had brought to the fore the perverseness of the harem and its limitless pleasure, he dealt with sapphism. The latter comes from the Greek, Sappho, and means lesbianism.

In the case of the postcards, it was, as Alloula, put it a variant in the typology of sexual vice and perversion. The aim of the photographer was to eroticize the harem further and to open room for the western imagination. Since the harem was depicted as a world of women, there ensued for this imagination an idea, that of frustration. And the fact that he took pictures of two naked women that he put side by side, enabled him to arouse another idea, that of sexual perversion.

In the last chapter, *The Colonial Harem, Images of a Suberoticism*, Alloula brings to the fore a series of postcards all of which are conspicuous for their exhibition of breasts; what he termed as an “anthology of breasts.” The breasts were of women from the communities that inhabited Algeria, the Bedouin; Kabyle women, Oulad Nail and so on. The fact that the postcards were sent without any envelope automatically increased the number of viewers and subsequently imagination. The journey to the addressee goes along an invitation. And in sum, the message the photographer sought to convey was

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<sup>92</sup>Op.cit.

the following:

These women, who were reputedly invisible or hidden, and, until now, beyond sight, are henceforth public; for a few pennies, and at any time, their intimacy can be broken into and violated. They have nothing to hide anymore, and what they show of their anatomy—"eroticized" by the "art" of the photographer—is offered in direct invitation. *They offer their body to view as a body-to be-possessed*, to be assailed with the "heavy desire" characteristic of pornography.<sup>93</sup>

For Alloula the messages on the postcards, which were being sent for not less than thirty years, were neither "casual nor incidental." On the contrary, Alloula argues that the photos of the *Fatmas* and other Algerian women suggested the existence, aloof in the background of a will to conquer. Consequently, the French claim on the land had to go first through a claim on the bodies.

In an article which appeared in the American daily, *The New York Times*, dated January 11, 1987, the novelist, Carlos Schloss, says about Alloula's tackling Orientalism. He explains how the Algerian female called by the colonizer, Fatma, was in reality sheer phantasm; she was "a French colonial projection of a world that never truly existed, an oriental mystery, whose secret lies not so much in what her exotic costume hides, as in the imperialistic desires that evoked her image."

The message of the cards was a sign of conquest, of Western designs on the Orient, of violence. Wanting to possess the Algerian land, French colonists first claimed the bodies of its women, using sex as a surrogate for an extension of another larger usurpation of culture. "using sex as a surrogate for an extension of another larger usurpation of culture." And the arrangement of reproductions is a journey into degradation with an "anthology of breasts" that induced him, in writing his book "to return' this immense postcard to its sender."<sup>94</sup>

Schloss also notes that Alloula tried through this book and the issue he tackled to "return the postcards to the sender." What motivated Alloula was a hurt sensitivity due to the peculiar gaze on the Algerian female. He agreed, according to Schloss, with the

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<sup>93</sup>Op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>94</sup> Carlos, Schloss, *Algeria, Conquered by Postcard*, ( The New York Times. January 11, 1987), p.1.



Art historian, John Berger, that the context for such photographs had to be taken into account. But even in this case, the photos opened room to questioning.

Schloss finally noted that the arrangement of all photos was no randomly choice. Schloss writes, that Alloula started his book with degrading photos taken by the colonial photographer and ended it with the most degrading, as noted above, with “anthology of breasts” of women, naked to the waist, peering out of the postcards and accompanied by captions like “Want to party, honey?”<sup>95</sup>

Of course his book did not go without facing some criticism. Central stood the idea that Alloula, in turn, unconsciously disgraced the Algerian woman. The critic declares that the Algerian woman as not free, shown behind bars, was a reality that could, in no case, be denied. Thus, the concern he was showing was directed more to the inexistence of a male society rather than to the portrayal of women. In other words, Alloula’s women remained property and “symbolic marks of (dis)honor or status for the men in their families.”

The challenge Mr. Alloula returns to the French, the cultural dialogue he initiates, remains male-centered and concerned with women as property and as symbolic marks of (dis)honor or status for the men in their families. If Algerian women were vulnerable and disgraced by their original display on colonial postcards, they are once again exposed by their display in this book. Their images leave them still silent and newly imprisoned by the very text that purports to liberate them. I cannot believe that the barred windows of the harem were solely the fictions of a colonial imagination.<sup>96</sup>

The fact that Alloula was, as his fellows, man centered was unquestionable. Worse, women, in his criticism were disgraced not only by the foreigner but also by the native, in this case by Alloula himself. He exposed them a second time leaving them, as at first, “silent and newly imprisoned by the very text that purports to liberate them.” And Schloss concludes by stressing that he could not “believe that the barred windows of the harem were solely the fictions of a colonial imagination.”

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Op.cit.

### III.3. Frantz Fanon and “Algeria Unveiled”

“Let’s win over the women and the rest will follow.”

Among the foreigners who risked their lives for the independence of Algeria, one finds Franz Omar Fanon (1925-1961). Born in the Martinique, Fanon was a philosopher, psychiatrist, writer, and revolutionary. As a revolutionary, he participated in France in the anti-colonial demonstrations for the independence of Madagascar. After graduating in psychiatry, he refused to work in the Martinique given a harsh French hierarchy ever intent on putting emphasis on the colour of his skin. Although he showed much interest in working in Senegal, he never received a reply to the letter he had addressed to President Leopold Sedar Senghor, whence his going to Algeria in 1953; the Algerian War of Independence was two years ahead.

Alice Cherki in, *Franz Fanon: Une vision panafricaine* writes about his joining and crossing North Africa with the Free French Forces (Forces Francaises Libres). While he was fighting with these forces, he was struck by the fact the French army showed no pity towards either the Senegalese or the Maghrebi. What also struck him was the extreme poverty that plagued the Algerian population, in Bejaia in particular that had, in order to survive, to collect and feed on the leftovers round the barracks.

Fanon, if anything, arrived in a country, Algeria, about which he knew almost nothing. The little he knew was some information he collected from Algerian immigrants living in the suburb of French cities. His experience with these immigrants led him to write his first article, *Le Syndrome Africain* (1952). His article appeared in a French journal, *L’Esprit*, and was later, included in a collection of essays titled, *Toward the African Revolution* (1964).

In *Le Syndrome Africain*, Fanon denounces racism, in general, and in the French medical profession, in particular. He brought to light the presumed laziness of Arabs and the emergence of a stereotype that the French managed to entrench in the Arab’s mind; Arabs hated working. This image of the lazy Arab had already been noticed by an African-American expatriate, James Baldwin.

When the Harlem-born novelist, Baldwin, set foot in the City of Light, Paris, where he was to live as expatriate for a number of years, everything, which, at first glance, seemed different from “his” country gave him, in the course of time, a feeling of “déjà-vu.” Penniless and homeless, a hand was offered him; it enabled him overcome the hard times he was facing. It was not the French who offered it; it was the *misérables*, the Algerian immigrants. His living with them enabled him to notice the stereotype affixed to them. He wrote in his essay, *No Name in the Street* (1972) that they:

[...] slept four or five or six to a room, and they slept in shifts, they were treated like dirt, and they scraped such sustenance as they could off the filthy, unyielding Paris stones. The French called them lazy because they appeared to spend most of their time sitting around, drinking tea, in their cafés. But they were not lazy. They were mostly unable to find work, and their rooms were freezing.<sup>97</sup>

His patience to listen to them and to watch from “his own experience regarding racism, Cherki continues to write, “as well as from this position of intellectual will later induce Edward Said to develop and to see in Fanon a constant reference.”<sup>98</sup>

Shortly after his arrival, Fanon was offered a job at Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital. Although the people he came to meet; some of whom were clandestinely engaged in the National Liberation Front (FLN), distrusted him at the beginning. They soon changed their attitudes and showed sympathy. One year after the Algerian War of Independence had broken out; he made the decision to show strong support. The latter crystallized in his joining the FLN. Barely one year later, he chose to resign so that to be able to undertake clandestine activities. The French, however, resolved to expel him.

His being expelled did not prevent him from writing for the Algerian daily, *El Moudjahid*, and, in the course of time, to serve as Ambassador for the Provisional Algerian Government (GPRA). Leukemia compelled him to seek treatment in the former Soviet Union, then, in the United States. He died in Maryland, USA, on December 6, 1961; Independence was proclaimed on July 5, 1962. He wrote

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<sup>97</sup>James, Baldwin. *No Name in the Street*.

<sup>98</sup> Cherki, Alice, *Culture Sud. Maghreb Afrique noire: quelles cultures en partage?* (Revue des littératures d'Afrique, des Caraïbes et de l'océan Indien. No 68. Avril/6 Juin 2008), p.97.

about the Algerian condition:

Madness is the means man has of losing his freedom. And I can say, on the basis of what I have been able to observe from this point of vantage, that the degree of alienation of the inhabitants of this country appears to me frightening. If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man to no longer be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization. And what is the status of Algeria? A systematized dehumanization...A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to his being a psychiatrist and philosopher, Fanon was a writer. He penned *The Wretched of the Earth*, which was prefaced by the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre. In essence, he spoke in favor of seeing Algerians resort to violence in their quest for independence.

His book influenced several liberation fronts as well as African-American activists. It is worthy of note that the founders of the Black Panther Party borrowed the phrase *Black Power* from the above mentioned book. Two other books that deserve mentioning are *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *A Dying Colonialism* (1959).

The latter's title was *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne (Year Five of the Algerian Revolution)*. Its translation in English and publication in 1965 appeared under *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, then *A Dying Colonialism* in 1967. Of particular interest to the present research is chapter one of *A Dying Colonialism* titled, *Algeria Unveiled*.

For Fanon, the veil worn by women was the typical clothing of the Maghreb. It was worn in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. In the case of Algeria, and assuredly, in the above mentioned countries, it served "to demarcate the society"; the female from the male counterpart. While for men there existed a variety of choices insofar as clothing was concerned, women, on the contrary had to veil themselves since it was requested by religion.

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<sup>9</sup> Franz, Fanon. *Towards the African Revolution*, (Grove Press. New York. 1964), p.53.

To this, one has to add that the veil played a particular role; that of concealing a private and forbidden space jealously watched over not only by the wearer but also by the husband. Last, the veil was a manner to defend a culture and a civilization.

The Algerians kept their women behind veils, rejected the doctors, and would not accept the radio. But they were not backward. In their way, they were defending civilization as well as they were able. Civilization, for them, meant first of all to resist imperialism and second to cast it into the sea at whatever cost. And they were right.<sup>100</sup>

The veil, Fanon writes, unlike eating pork or not fasting during ramadhan, is noticed at first glance by all incomers. It undeniably characterizes the Arab society as hats, for instance, characterize other societies. Regarding males, the garment in the urban center is the fez while djellabas and turbans are worn in the countryside.

As per the haik worn by females, it helps “demarcate the colonial society.” Given its role, importance, and symbolism, much was going to be done by the colonizer so as to destroy it, and in so doing, ensure domination and total control.

For Fanon, the status of the Arab woman and the veil she wore were matters of personal choice. The Arab woman’s decision to remain home did in no manner imply her hatred of the outside world. The Arab woman was well aware of the link and the interaction which existed between the family and society.

Consequently, while the home, as Fanon explained was the foundation of social truth; the role of society was to authenticate and legitimize the family. In the absence of either, one attended the dislocation of the home, and as a consequence, the dislocation of society. Fanon writes:

The Algerian’s ardent love of the home is to a limitation imposed by the universe. It is not hatred of the sun or the streets or spectacles. It is not a flight from the world. What is true is that under normal conditions, an interaction must

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<sup>100</sup> Franz, Fanon, *Algeria Unveiled in A Dying Colonialism*. ( Grove Press. New York. 1959). p. 08.

legitimizes the family. The colonial structure is the very negation of this reciprocal justification. The Algerian woman, on imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat.<sup>101</sup>

Both pieces of clothing, those of males and females, reflected an identity whose destruction had to go through their very destruction. Under this head, Fanon argues that behind the emphasis on the presumed subjugation of the Arab woman brought to the fore by the colonizer lies, in reality, a will to dominate. The colonizer undertook to put to the fore her concealment and subsequently her invisibility; the Arab woman could have no say; the veil was a garment to conceal and at once to deny her existence.

To exercise a total control of Algeria, it is no wonder then to see the French colonizer do his best to unveil the Algerian woman. Prior to the decision was his noticing that if he “won the women; the rest would follow.” Furthermore, such a decision was grounded in the fact the colonizer realized that patriarchy was in actuality overshadowed by matriarchy that always reigned although it stood aloof in the background. To put it simply, for the colonizer, despite the man’s presumed preeminent place, it was the woman who played the primordial role within the family.

The Arab male could claim he was the breadwinner and the boss; women ruled instead. In this light, it became of the utmost importance for the colonizer to put the focus on females. These had to be found in their very hidings, which implied under the veil and in their homes. That was the best means to bring about the very structure of the Algerian society. To that intent, it was necessary to push women to submit themselves to the idea that they were subject to humiliation, cloistering, and sequestration, and those that had be held accountable for such a plight were, it went without saying, the males.

To enable women escape from their presumably sorry plight, the French colonizer set up myriad mutual aid societies and societies. The presumed aim was to promote solidarity with these women. These societies had to touch first the indigent and the ‘famished’ women. To this intent, the colonizer settled to distribute semolina. This

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<sup>101</sup>Op. cit.

distribution went along expressing indignation regarding the veil they wore. And as distribution went on “Every kilo of semolina distributed was accompanied by a dose of indignation against the veil and the cloister.”<sup>102</sup>

What mattered, the colonizer used to explain, was to convince the receiver that she had to get rid of an—age old condition of subjection in which her male counterpart put her so as to enter into another status. The status that was mirrored was that of participation and activism. The attention of the Algerian veiled woman was called to the fact that she was capable to overcome her plight and that she could play a prominent role in society.

Indigent and famished women were not the only ones to receive “advice.” The indignation crystallized, in the course of time, in rebellion on the part of the Arab female who would try to move to the new status. The Arab male was also harangued.

Males were also matter of scrutiny and reprimand. Often times, the colonizer would ask if his male employee would join in an invitation to attend Christmas or other feasts. The invitation was followed by a request; the employee could come with his wife. In other circumstances, the colonizer would ask the Indigenous if he went to the movies alone or with his wife.

Still other examples were brought to the fore by Fanon; the case, for instance, of a boss in a company who invites employees to come with their family. And since the company was but a big family, he made it plain to the Indigenous that a spouse who did not join would be regarded as unseemly. In this light, the Indigenous was put in an embarrassing situation.

Before this formal summons, the Algerian sometimes experiences moments of difficulty. If he comes with his wife, it means admitting defeat, it means "prostituting his wife," exhibiting her, abandoning a mode of resistance. On the

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<sup>102</sup>Op.cit., p. 38.

other hand, going alone means refusing to give satisfaction to the boss; it means running the risk of being out of a job.<sup>103</sup>

Harangue and reprimand were also tributary of the status of the colonized. The colonizer understood the status of the fellah, a “passive slave” and his determination to keep his wife hidden from the foreign gaze. It is, however, not the case when the status changed. Under this head, the attitude of an intellectual towards his spouse was denounced and the colonizer’s “aggressiveness appeared in its full intensity.”

Thus, a doctor or a lawyer was sharply criticized for despite his status, he showed that he was not open minded. The lack of open mindedness pushed them to keep their wives “in a state of semi-slavery.” Fanon writes:

The colonial society blazed up vehemently against this inferior status of the Algerian woman. Its members worry and show concern for those unfortunate women, doomed "to produce brats," kept behind walls, banned. Before the Algerian intellectual, racist arguments spring forth with special readiness. For all that he is a doctor, people will say, he still remains an Arab. "You can't get away from nature." Illustrations of this kind of race prejudice can be multiplied.<sup>104</sup>

That the colonizer succeeded oftentimes in unveiling the Arab female and shaking the position of males is too clear for dispute. And each time a female threw the veil; her gesture was hailed by the French authorities and by the settlers. This gesture, in fact, meant that penetration of society and total domination was in progress and that it was doomed to success.

Of course, this did not go without difficulty. Central to the latter was the issue of religion. But even in this case, veils were thrown. This suggested denial of customs, traditions, and at once, the strong desire on the part of the Arab female to agree with “the occupier's direction and patronage.” The colonizer’s move was also a double-edged sword

One year after the Algerian War had broken out; combat became an exclusively male business. Women had to be excluded because of given motives like secrecy. But as war

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<sup>103</sup>Op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>104</sup>Op.cit., pp. 41-42.



was continuing and the French authorities adapted, the males had to follow too. At this juncture, they thought that it was vital to involve the female and devise new tactics. Women had to show the same spirit of sacrifice and conversely confidence on the part of male counterparts. But cloistering played a negative role insofar as mobility was concerned. All in all, a new typical Algerian literature had become essential to put an end to stereotypes and enable women to regain dignity.

## Chapter Four

### The “Algerian” Literary Movement from Zahia’s Smail Perspective

IV.1. The Emergence of the “Algerian” Literary Movement

IV. 2. Creating an Indigenous Literature

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## Chapter Four

### The “Algerian” Literary Movement from Zahia’s Smail Perspective

#### IV.1. The Emergence of the “Algerian” Literary Movement

Zahia Smail, in her thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Modern Literature, which she defended at the Faculty of Exeter in 1991, wrote in detail about the emergence of a new literary movement in Algeria known as “l’Algérianisme.” This movement emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. The latter, she pointed out, was led by many writers such as the orientalist Louis Lecoq and Robert Randou.

The former considered himself Algerian. As such, he undertook to fight for a genuine Algerian literature. By this, he meant a literature, which had to be distinct from the metropolitan one, both in style and content. As per Randou, Smail wrote that he regarded Algeria as a recuperated Latin region which he called “une patrie franco-berbère, fille de la latinité.” As per the colonists, who originated from different Mediterranean countries and settled in Algeria, he called them the new Romans. Randou, she stressed, deemed that these colonists were very different from the metropolitan French in various perspectives.

Given the difference, their writing, had to be utterly different.<sup>105</sup> Randou further emphasized his idea by arguing : “ Il doit y avoir une littérature nord-africaine originale parce qu'un peuple qui possède sa vie propre doit posséder aussi une vie propre doit posséder aussi une langue et une littérature à lui. ”<sup>106</sup>

Following this spirit, these writers created an Algerianist manifesto, whose central object was a typically North-African literature. Their slogan was: “Nous voulons dégager notre autonomie esthétique ... Nous voulons une littérature nord-africaine originale.”<sup>107</sup> Smail also stressed that Randou's desire for such a literature went so far as to connect the Algerianists' writing with the writing of the past Latin essayists like

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<sup>105</sup>Jacqueline, Arnaud cf Zahia Smail, *La Littérature maghrébine de langue française*, 2 vols.Vol.1: *Origines et perspectives*, (Paris: Publisud, 1986), p.28.

<sup>106</sup>Robert, Randou cf Zahia Smail, *Le Mouvement littéraire dans l'Afrique du Nord*, *Les Belles Lettres*, no.17, (Nov. 1920), pp.350-380.

<sup>107</sup>Jean, Dejeux cf Zahia Smail, *Littérature maghrébine de langue française*, (Paris : Éd. Publisud ... Algérie Littérature), p.16.

Lucius Apuleius (c. 124 – c. 170 AD), Quintus Tertullian (c.155 – c. 240 AD), and St Augustine (354-430).

Thus, in his novel, *Les Colons, roman de la patrie algérienne*, Randau tried to show that between these Latin scholars and the Algerianists, there existed a solid bond. He said in part: “ Entre ces écrivains et nous, il y a le même goût de la richesse verbale portée jusqu'à l'outrance. ”<sup>108</sup>

By the end of the 1930s, Smail pointed out, the Algerianist literary movement started losing ground. The style and vision of the new group which emerged were totally different. Central to their style and vision stood the idea that Algeria did not belong in any case to the French. Utterly dissimilar to the Algerianists who used to look at Algeria as a recuperated nation, these new writers adopted a more pragmatic stance. For them, the French conquered Algeria, which they came to consider as an extension of France. In reality it was indisputable that it belonged to the natives and was in no manner an extension. To that intent these writers settled to writing a manifesto.

For Smail, the Algerianists' manifesto was later, in 1924, followed by the creation of an association known as *l'Association des écrivains algériens*. It was followed by the creation of an official review: *l'Afrique in 1924*. Their enterprise gained success. The characteristic of this new literary movement was that it succeeded in gathering several journalists and writers who claimed their Algérianité. It was clear that they did not want to be regarded as French, let alone be assimilated. That was, however, doing without a reaction.

Smail noted that as a reaction, in an introduction to Randau's book *Les Colons*, the writer Marius-Ary Leblond, portrayed this race, the Algerian, as a “race brutale, avide, pratique franche, ayant naturellement en horreur les sentimentalités européennes et l'idéal classiciste qui anémient la France.”<sup>109</sup> Besides, Leblond explained that this new race talked a completely different dialect from the metropolitan French, a dialect which

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>R. Randau, *Les Colons, roman de la patrie algérienne*, (Sansot, 1907 ; réédition Albin Michel, coll. « L'Algérie heureuse », 1926, 1978), p.9.

was common to the Algerian colonists. It was an amalgam of the French, Spanish, Italian, and Maltese dialects. And to back, in his book, *Musette*, he invented an Algerian legend, called Cagayous.

After analysis, one notices that he used the new dialect and supported the idea of the existence of this new movement. In a much broader sense, the dialect used implied the existence of such a literature:

Ici on avait toujours accordé trop d'importance au paysage, on l'avait décrit, admiré; on l'avait fertilisé, embelli. Mais qui s'était intéressé aux hommes? On jugeait qu'ils faisaient partie du décor, comme les cactus, comme les palmiers (Ne les appelle-t-on pas souvent avec un mépris, des troncs de figuiers?)<sup>110</sup>

Smail also pointed out that these Algerianist authors were not “exclusively spurred by aesthetic factors for behind the smoke-screen of literary criteria, there remained a racist political perception led by Bertrand's Latinist topic.”<sup>111</sup> Bertrand said that it was all too clear that such a literature was both a literary and political event as a new race became conscious of itself.”<sup>112</sup>

For Bertrand, a new race was born. Like him, Randau made it plain that such a movement had to include whom he regarded as the assimilated natives since for a long time it was the practice to neglect them. He said: “on ne voulait reconnaître que les assimilés ou ceux qui étaient suffisamment acculturés pour jouer le rôle d'hommes-frontières tout en demeurant dans leur milieu.”<sup>113</sup>

Smail explained that Randau dedicated plethora of efforts to bring the Algerians into the hover of the Algerianist authors. He tried to show them how to compose a writing in which the focal point was the local milieu and the use of the colons' dialect, which incorporated expressions regular of the new race and the new nation.

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<sup>110</sup> Jean, Pélégri cf Zahia Smail, *Les Oliviers de la justice* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p.230.

<sup>111</sup> Zahia, Smail ( Salhi ). *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*. University of Exeter as a Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Modern Literature. (Faculty of Arts. August 1991 ), p.27.

<sup>112</sup> Louis, Bertrand cf Zahia Smail, *Notre Afrique* (Paris: Eds du Monde Moderne, 1925), p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

In any case, such components could not be adequate for the production of an Algerianist writing whose lone connection with the metropolis was the utilization of the French language, as asserted by the advocates of the above mentioned movement. To back, Smail took the example of the novelist Ghani Merad who contended:

Les Algérianistes se voulaient autonomes. Mais en réalité, leur produit est loin d'avoir des caractéristiques spécifiques. Leur personnalité réside dans le fait qu'ils situent leur action en Algérie, ce qui ne suffit pas pour donner à une littérature un caractère national ... De même qu'il ne suffit pas d'ajouter une teinte de couleur locale ou des expressions du terroir pour faire œuvre originale. La spécificité chez les Algérianistes n'est donc qu'une position de principe, une disposition de l'esprit, un acte de foi politique.<sup>114</sup>

Notwithstanding this assumption, Smail felt the need to point out that the Swiss writer, Isabelle Eberhardt, who, in spite of the fact that she was a Randau's companion, did not share the Algerianists' perspective of the natives. She agreed with their political stance and rejected in her works the presumed civilizing mission.

In any case, Smail noted that the Algerianist literary movement started losing ground towards the end of the 1930s. Another group of authors appeared with a different style of writing and a different political vision. These writers rejected the prevailing politics of the 1930s.

Furthermore, they refused to hold Algeria as, as was the practice with their predecessors, as a recuperated nation. These new writers had a more realistic attitude. For them, Algeria was a vanquished land, which in reality, belonged to the natives. But Bertrand and Randau had a totally different attitude vis à vis the fate of the natives.

Bertrand was against France's "civilizing mission", which, in the course of time, had turned out to be a complete failure. Randau, on the contrary advised that all had to be done so as to integrate the natives into the civilization of their colonists. He did not deny that integration was moving slowly but felt confident they eventually would

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<sup>114</sup>Ghani, Merad cf Zahia Smail, *La littérature algérienne d'expression française* (Paris: Oswald, 1976), p.28

embrace France as their mother land. As an acculturated people, Randau trusted part of the French population to bring the Algerians to the same, that is “convertir à notre mentalité avec tact, mesure et intelligence, des peuples encore à l'état barbare.” After having dealt with the 1920s and the 1930s, Smail moved to the 1950s and the creation of an indigenous literature.

#### IV. 2. Creating an Indigenous Literature

Regarding the creation of an indigenous literature explained that some time before, and amid the Algerian War of Independence, another literature emerged on the scene and several books were penned. She mentioned Mouloud Feraoun *Le Fils du pauvre* (1950); *La Terre et le sang*, (1953); *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957). As per Mohammed Dib, he penned *La Grande maison* (1952); *L'Incendie* (1954); *Le Métier à tisser* (1957). Mouloud Mammeri penned *La Colline oubliée* (1952); *Le Sommeil du juste* (1955); *L'Opium et le bâton*, (1965) ; *Kateb Yacine, Nedjma* (1956).

Smail stressed that unlike former Algerian authors, Saïd Guennoun, *La Voix des monts: moeurs de guerre berbères* (1934) and Saad Ben Ali *La Tente noire: roman saharien* (1933) neither hailed colonialism nor sustained the portrayal of fascinating and alluring places to engage their French perusers. These writers wanted to dissociate themselves from the European Algérianistes like Bertrand, Ferdinand Duchene, Randau and those of *L'Ecole d'Alger*, like Albert Camus, Jules Roy and Pélegri. Mouloud Feraoun, Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, and Kateb Yacine put the Algerians at the heart of everyone's attention. They portrayed the sorry plight of Algerians and opened the gates to a new hope.

The production of *Le Fils du pauvre*, however, 1950 was uneventful. While French critics acclaimed it and depicted it as “a beautiful novel” and as “basic, touching, written in a dialect which is accessible to everyone”<sup>115</sup> Algerian critics, on the contrary, showed rebuke.

Smail called the attention of the reader to the fact that when *La Colline oubliée* and *La Grande maison* were published in 1952, the Algerian reviewers, with the exception of the Marxist activist, Sadek Hadjeres, criticized Dib for not going sufficiently far in

his judgment of colonialism. Hadjeres criticized *La Grande maison* for showing leniency towards the occupier. In fact, he criticized both books for being folkloric and barely regionalist and accused their author of playing under the control of the adversary. That was not the case with French critics, who then again, paid tribute to *La Colline oubliée* for its masterful qualities and applauded Mammeri for being “steadfast to his Kabyle roots.”<sup>116</sup>

Then, as far as *La Grande maison*, is concerned critics were divided. While some reviewers denounced it as sheer propaganda, with just negligible scholarly esteem, others, particularly from the Left, adulated it for articulating the worries of Algerians and for blaming colonialism; still others censured it for disregarding peacefully what they thought as the advantages of the French presence in Algeria.

For Smail, the turmoil that took place after the distribution of *La Colline oubliée* helped set the agenda for later research for Algerian writing. For quite a while and with few exceptions, critics dismissed the literary and stylish parts of Algerian books so as to concentrate on political issues. In this light, which books were engaged and what made them so remained big issues in Algerian literature. Some commentators argued that all books were focused on the Algerian cause since they all attracted regard for the predicament of Algerians, and, along these lines, subverted the colonialist philosophy.

Others contended that while few books—by and large *L'Incendie*, *Le Métier à tisser*, *Nedjma*, and *L'Opium et le bâton*—were certainly against colonialism, others—typically *Le Fils du pauvre*, *La Terre et le sang*, *Les Chemins qui montent* and *La Colline oubliée*—were either objective or preservationist. As such they maintained and tended to maintain the status quo. All in all, Smail stressed that the French writers’ “despaired” at not seeing a purely Algerian literature emerge, which they attributed to their not being fluent in French. Consequently, it is no wonder then to see Dejeu say:

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<sup>115</sup> Youssef, Nacib cf Zahia Smail, *Mouloud Feraoun*, (Alger-Paris: SNED- Fernand Nathan, 1982), p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> Zahia, Smail, *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*, p. 70.



Robert Randau...allait jusqu'à corriger avec une admirable patience les fautes d'orthographe ou de grammaire des manuscrits qu'on lui soumettait, et c'est grâce à lui qu'en 1925 parut enfin sous la signature d'un de ses disciples, le mouderrès Abdelkader Hadj Hamou, un roman qui s'intitulait "*Zohra, la femme du mineur*."<sup>117</sup>

Abdelkader Hadj Hamou, however, soon renounced writing novels and started writing books of a socio-political genre. His novel coauthored by Randau brought him acclaim and was written and perceived as “a book in the form of a long dialogue between several voices which, in turn, expressed various tendencies typical of the Franco-Algerian elite.”<sup>118</sup>

Arnaud remarked that Randau considered this co-written book as a proof that the times were mature for the assimilation of the indigenous; he said "les temps sont mûrs pour une assimilation véritable de l'élite indigène, dans une perspective d'autonomie interne."<sup>119</sup> Smail mentioned the appearance in the 1930s of numerous other co-composed works that is books written by natives and French essayists. She gave as examples, to name a few, *La Tente noire, roman saharien* by René Pottier; Saad Ben Ali, Khadra and Etienne Dinet, *la danseuse des Ouled Nai*.

Smail also mentioned the desire of the French authorities to see their language develop. They made the decision to offer literary prizes. One was given to Belhadj Ali for his novel, *Souvenirs d'enfance d'un Blédard*; René Pottier and Saad Ben Ali, *La Tente noire, roman saharien*, (Paris: Les Oeuvres Représentatives, 1933); Slimane Ben Ibrahim and Etienne Dinet, *Khadra, La danseuse des Ouled Nail* (Paris: Piazza, 1910) ; Ali Belhadj, *Souvenirs d'enfance d'un Blédard*, 1941. Although it was given the *Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Algérie*, this novel was never published.

Smail divided the Algerian literature into three pivotal periods, which she entitled, the Period of Assimilation and Imitation (1908-1947); the Transitional

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<sup>117</sup>Dejeux, op .cit., p.17.

<sup>118</sup> Smail. *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*, p. 34.

Period (1947-1950), and the Period of Revelation (1950-1952). The most known writers of the first were Chukri Khodja who penned *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques*; Aissa Zehar, *Hind d l'âme pure, ou histoire d'une mère* and Djamila Débêche who penned, *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Algérie*. Typical to the second period, one finds Aly El-Hammamy and his novel *Idris* and Taos Amrouche's *Jacinthe noire*. Typical to the third, one finds

#### IV. 3. The Period of Assimilation and Imitation (1908-1947)

Regarding the Francophone Algerian novel of this period, the Period of Assimilation and Imitation (1908-1947), Smail says that for many critics, Hadj Hamou's Zohra, *La femme du mineur*, was regarded as the first purely "Algerian" novel. These critics were also agreed on the role played by Randau in that he helped the author write this novel. Other critics, however, declare that the first novel by a native Algerian was Seddik Ben El-Outa's *Fils de grande tente* which appeared in 1908.

After two years, there was Slimane Ben Ibrahim's *Khadra, la danseuse des Ouled Nail*, and in 1920 showed up Caid Ben Cherif's *Ahmed Ben Mostapha Goumier*. In any case, still other critics dismissed these books; they traced the Algerian novel to 1950, when Mouloud Feraoun penned *Le Fils du pauvre*.<sup>120</sup>

Those who rebuked the existence of any Algerian novel before 1950 grounded their rebuke in the fact these novelists were closer to the French rather than to their compatriots, whose sufferings they did not share. The Algerian culture they depicted had a colonial connotation. However, whatever the connotation, the prevailing atmosphere had to be taken into consideration.

This atmosphere induced Smail to claim that one cannot expect the novel of the 1920s to be as politically dedicated as the novel of the 1950s and that it would appear unusual to group the latter as the initial phase in the improvement of the Algerian novel.

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<sup>119</sup> Jacqueline, Arnaud cf Zahia Smail. *La Littérature maghrébine de langue française*, 2 vols. vol.1: *Origines et perspectives*, (Paris: Publisud, 1986), p.28.

<sup>120</sup> Smail. *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*, p.36.

The books that appeared before 1950 impelled some reviewers to blame the novel of the 1950s. Their reproach was that it “defied the categories and predictable progression of traditional literary history, emerging ... fully adult.”<sup>121</sup>

Another pundit she mentioned to portray this novel as rising as completely adult is M'hammed Alawi. She explains that he guaranteed,

Adulte dès sa naissance, elle saute à pieds joints dans l'après guerre de la littérature et de la langue de la métropole, se faisant du jour au lendemain l'héritière des acquis impressionnants du long itinéraire de la littérature française.<sup>122</sup>

Accordingly, to keep away from such mix-ups, one ought not overlook these early books but rather consider them as the real precursors of the 1950s books.

To back, she put to the fore a specialist of North-African literature and Francophone Algerian writing, in particular, Dejeux. The importance lies in that he spent most of his time, more than thirty years, in investigating the origin and development. He found, as she put it, his interest, for the most part, in light of the books composed after WWII and onwards. Thus those prior came either to be in shape of notes or reviews he undertook.

Under this head, Dejeux concedes this early writing is one that, “On passe d'habitude sous silence, qu'on occulte par ignorance ou pour d'autres raisons.”<sup>123</sup> Likewise, she referred to a number of writings entitled *Dissertationes Orientales* by Svetovar Pantucek who deemed that these early books were a definitive consequence of “l'occupation coloniale du pays à une époque où se heurtaient les opinions locales et françaises.”<sup>124</sup>

The similarity Smail found between both Dejeux and Pantucek lies in the fact that both were objective insofar as the approach is concerned. There was of course some

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<sup>121</sup>J. Roumani cf Zahia Smail, *A Literature of One's Own: A Survey of Literary History and Criticism of Maghrebian Francophone Literature*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, Vol.XXVI, no.1, (Spring 1986), p.12

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>123</sup>Dejeux cf Smail, *Situation de la littérature maghrébine*, p.31.

<sup>124</sup> Pantucek, "La Littérature algérienne moderne", *Dissertationes Orientales*, (Prague Academia, 1962), p.90

dissimilarity. She took the example of *Zohra, la femme du mineur*. Among those who disagreed, she referred to Rachid Benouameur, whose PhD dissertation revolved round Algerian writing. He preferred not to give too much attention to the books penned before 1950. Central to his stance was the following claim:

On en trouva un Abdelkader Hadj Hamou...Un autre, Sifi, fut même honoré du fameux prix. Le génie indigène donnait toute la mesure de sa dégradation . plutôt que de s'attarder sur des noms obscurs ou des oeuvres oubliées, interrogeons-nous sur la nature et le degré de l'influence Bertrandienne.<sup>125</sup>

Smail's list of critics also included Aida A. Bamieh who wrote her doctoral dissertation on *The Development of the Novel and Short Story in Modern Algerian Literature*. Bamieh states: "In 1925, appeared the first novel written by an Algerian proper, Hadj Harriou."<sup>126</sup> The reason Bamieh gave as to her reluctance to study this kind of novels was grounded in the fact they described their society in sheer European terms. But Smail disagreed with such an approach because she considered that an objective analysis of the evolution of the novel in Algeria had not to neglect this aspect even though it smelled European.

A second critic she put to the fore who denied any Algerian literature before 1950 is Sheila Collingwood Whittick. The latter's argument in her PhD proposal on Franco-phone Algerian writing, was the sheer want of any novel writing in French by Algerian authors prior to that year. She assumed that "despite more than a century of colonization and fifty years of an Algerian-based French literature, there had been little or no evidence of indigenous Algerians expressing themselves in writing in the French medium."<sup>127</sup>

Whittick grounded her assumption in the "paucity of instructive circumstances and

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<sup>125</sup>R. Benouameur cf Zahia Smail, "Littérature algérienne", (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1965), p.129. *Littérature algérienne*, p.72.

<sup>126</sup>A. Bamieh cf Smail, *The Development of the Novel and Short Story in Modern Algerian Literature*, p.84.

<sup>127</sup>Sheila Collingwood, Whittick cf Smail, *The Colonial Situation in Algeria and its Literary Reflection*, (PhD dissertation, University of London: Birkbeck College, 1980), p. 120.

the non attendance of ordinary social contact between the Europeans and the natives.” Consequently, 1950 marked, in reality, the beginning stage for the Algerian novel although she admitted that before that year “a kind” of novel existed, which she qualified as “odd indigenous novel.” She explained:

Up until this point [1950], there had occasionally appeared the odd 'indigenous' novel, but these, in the main, had been the laborious linguistic efforts of Algerian 'évolués' whose primary concern had been to write good grammatical French, insecure both in their grasp of the colonizer's language and their position vis-à-vis colonial society. These early Algerian authors clearly felt compelled to adopt the Frenchman's' viewpoint along with his native tongue.<sup>128</sup>

Another author and reviewer, Jacqueline Arnauld, shared the same viewpoint. She regarded these books but as a gathering of Muslim essayists who composed for example, *Zohra, la femme du mineur* and Ahmed Ben Mostapha Goumier; Besides, they were “assimilated” Algerians in that they teamed up with their contemporary French-Algerian counterparts like Randau.

Still another group of critics she mentioned as totally disregarding this literature included Claude Yves Meade in his *Le Roman réaliste nord-africain de langue française* (1899-1955) (PhD dissertation, University of California, 1957); Charles Bonn, *La Littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures* (Ottawa: Eds Naaman, 1974) ; Guy Daminos, *Les Nouvelles tendances du roman algérien de langue française* (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1983) ; Albert Memmi, *Anthologie des écrivains maghrebins d'expression française* ; Abdelkabar Khatibi, *Le Roman maghrebin* (Paris: Maspéro, 1968), and Ghani Merad, *La Littérature algérienne d'expression française* .

Notwithstanding their criticism, Smail notes that Meade's theory needs attention given “the ambiguity and paradox it contains.” He based his research on the period stretching from 1899 to 1955, which was no randomly period since the main Algerian books were distributed at that time. And by “Roman Nord-Africain” he meant:

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<sup>128</sup>Op.cit.

Par roman nord-africain, il faudra entendre dans cette étude les ouvrages composés par des français qui ont longtemps séjourné au Maghreb et qui l'ont pris comme matière romanesque; par des néo-français qui ont passé leurs années de formation en Afrique du Nord et qui écrivent sur n'importe quel sujet; enfin par des autochtones qui sortis des écoles françaises, se servent de la langue de l'occupant pour apporter des témoignages personnels sur leur monde africain.<sup>129</sup>

Smail disagreed because Meade said that the first novel by a local Algerian was Fe-raoun's *Le Fils du pauvre*. He gave 1899-1955 as the period for his research but at once put neglected a long span of time, forty-one years, in novel writing by native Algerians. She next contended that he explained that by North-African books he meant any novel by the “autochtones qui sortis des écoles françaises, se servent de la langue de l'occupant pour apporter des témoignages personnels sur leur monde africain.”<sup>130</sup> In this light, it was all too clear for her this would actually comprise the Algerian writers whose novels were published before 1950.

To conclude, Smail writes that these early books were to a great extent overlooked. The reason was twofold. First, they were considered as odd writing. Second, those who penned them were accused of being obsequious, more precisely, of being “domestic animals of colonialism.”<sup>131</sup>

Still, their reading and analysis are necessary in that they help figure out their way of thinking, and the way they depicted their society and prevailing atmosphere. Among these authors, she dealt with Khodja and his *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques*; Djamila Débêche and her *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Algérie*

#### IV. 3.1. Chukri Khodja's *El-Euldj*

Chukri Khodja's *El-Euldj* mirrors a historical case as observed by an acclimatized Algerian, who, trusting France, assumed that this country decided to enter Algeria in order to free the Algerians from the oppression of the Turkish Corsairs. Since Khodja

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<sup>129</sup>Claude Yves, Meade cf Zahia Smail, "Le Roman réaliste nord-africain de langue française (1899-1955)" (PhD dissertation, University of California, 1957), p.11.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>D.M. Gallup cf Zahia Smail, "The French Image of Algeria: its origin, its place in colonial ideology, its effect on Algerian acculturation", (PhD dissertation, University of California, 1973), p.430.

belonged to an Algerian élite taught in French schools, he made no doubt that Algeria had come to know peace and equity only since France had set foot on it. This led Dr. Tahar Bendjelloun to write : "Nous voyons bien ... que l'Algérie à pris un essor prodigieux depuis le jour ou les trois couleurs ont flotté sur la blanche Alger."<sup>132</sup> He was not the only one. For Smail; Jean Amrouche (Jean El-Mouhouv) is another example.

Amrouche absorbed French culture; French history, and data about his so-called ancestors, the Gallomen. And like many compatriots having followed the same path, he found himself trapped between two cultures, an imported one and his, and was subsequently at loss to know with which to identify himself. He wrote :

Nos ancêtres, les Gaulois! Hé oui, on nous les a donnés pour ancêtres et nous avons cru que nous étions leurs fils légitimes, dès lors que nous devenions les fils de la langue française ... D'ou notre ardeur à apprendre cette patrie, notre excessive admiration pour ses grands hommes, notre amour doctrinaire et maladroit, notre exigeant amour de néophyte pour une auguste mythologie.<sup>133</sup>

Along these lines, Smail drew the attention of the reader to the fact that the history that Amrouche and his comrades had learnt at school was not their own.

In spite of the fact they knew their ancestors were not the Gallomen, they favored them to their “uncouth” predecessors, whose past was not as transcendent as that of the Gallomen. Amrouche declared:

... si, le livre parlait tout de même de nos ancêtres. Cela commençait à Poitiers. Le premier fait historique nous touchant, nous l'avons reçu à la figure sous les regards ironiques des écoliers européens, comme une justification anticipée de nos abaissements passés, présents et à venir. Nos ancêtres ne sont entrés dans l'histoire que pour s'offrir à la massue de Charles Martel ... Ils repaîtraient pour opposer une absurde résistance aux croisés bardés d'armures et de nobles ideaux, et prouver leur méchanceté en capturant le bon Saint-Louis. Les siècles perdent à nouveau la trace de notre existence. Alors le méchant Dey Hussein frappe un Consul de France de son éventail. Pour venger l'affront et purger la Méditerranée des pirates

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<sup>132</sup> Med Aziz, Kessous, *La Vérité sur le malaise algérien* (Bône: impr. Rapide, 1935), Bendjelloun. Preface to *La Vérité sur le malaise algérien* (Bône: Imprimerie Rapide, 1935), cf Zahia Smail.

<sup>133</sup> Joseph, Lerichef Zahia Smail, "Les algériens parmi nous", *Cahiers Nord-Africains*, no. special, 70 (Decembre 1958), p. 215.

barbaresques, la France arrive dans ce pays misérable ... Ou Arabes et Kabyles se dévoraient périodiquement...Nous éprouvions un mélange de honte et d'irritation, de désarroi et de colère ...<sup>134</sup>

Smail informs the reader about the content of the novel *El-Euldj*. She explains that the author portrayed Algeria before the entry of the French. He depicted it as a sanctuary of robbery, where confusion, brutality, and insurgency ruled. He set it in the sixteenth century with Algiers, with its ports; incredible mosque, Ketchaoua, its Casbah, its narrow alleys, and its woods and shorelines constituted the environment. Each of these components took part in an imaginary dimension.

Khairreddine Barbarossa entered Algiers with his sibling, Arroudj. His aim was presumably to help the natives against the Spanish conquerors; he soon turned chief of the nation. The latter was then under the control of the Ottoman Empire. In *El-Euldj*, Khairreddine is portrayed as “le terrible Barberousse” who had lost prominence. He was the chief of the Corsairs who assaulted any armada found in the Mediterranean Sea and transformed its mariners into slaves. He was additionally a murderer who used to say: "J'ai soif de sang. Depuis quinze jours le palais chôme."<sup>135</sup> Barbarossa was also a jealous man.

Barbarossa's jealousy was so big that he would kill any individual who tested his notoriety. There is, for example, the case of Catch Diablo, whom Barbarossa sent to death despite his contribution; he had saved Algiers from starvation. The death sentence was meant to serve as a warning to all those who dared put Barbarossa's rule into question; it was a proof of his mercilessness.

Smail's analysis of this novel helps understand that the hypothesis on which Khodja built the plot was the existence of a great gap between the educated and civilized person, “the French” on the one hand, and the uncivilized, savage barbarian people, “the Algerians”, whose lives were built on anarchy, violence and fear, on the other hand. This

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<sup>134</sup>Op.cit, p.215.

<sup>135</sup>Chukri Khodja, *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques* (Arras: I.N.S.A.P., 1923), p. 17.



novel reflects the way this kind of authors used to think during that epoch. She next moved to Djamila D  b  che's *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Alg  rie*

#### IV.3.2. Aissa Zehar's *Hind* and Djamila D  b  che's *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Alg  rie*.

The two other books Smail analyzed were Aissa Zehar's, *Hind, l'  me pure ou l'histoire d'une m  re* and Djamila D  b  che's *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Alg  rie*. Her aim was to highlight the divide between the colonizer and the colonized; foremost, it was to show the difficulty that the native intellectuals faced when trying to reconcile two utterly antagonistic stances: assimilation and naturalization.

The French-taught Algerians, intrigued by the thoughts of the French "civilizing mission" attempted to unite the two groups. It was not without some difficulties. She referred to Cherif Benhabil  s, who, in *l'Alg  rie fran  aise vue par un indig  ne* (Alger: Fontana; 1914), wrote: "Tossed into a society divided into two rigidly antagonistic sides, they were torn between the loyalty towards their native milieu and the attraction of ideas which they had adopted through their education."<sup>136</sup>

The example Smail gives of an erudite taught at French schools and torn in these antagonistic sides is that of Ferhat Abbas. His contact with the French and admiration for his teachers deeply impacted his way of thinking. In this light, once in school he soon forgot the misery that plagued him and the Algerian revolutionaries. He said: "Nos livres ... repr  sentaient la France comme le symbole de la libert  . A l'  cole on oubliait les blessures de la rue et la mis  re des douars pour chevaucher avec les r  volutionnaires fran  ais et les soldats de l'an II les grandes routes de l'histoire. »<sup>137</sup>

However, the French-educated Algerians, like Abbas, did in no manner seek alienation. They tried, simultaneously, to remain faithful to their culture and religion and open to the western civilization, in this case the French. It is no wonder then to see them claim that even if they cherished French culture and human progress, they were

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<sup>136</sup> Cherif, Benhabil  s cf Zahia Smail, *l'Alg  rie fran  aise vue par un indig  ne* (Alger: Fontana; 1914), p. 58.

<sup>137</sup> Charles Robert, Ageron cf Zahia Smail, *Histoire de l'Alg  rie contemporaine*, T.2, p.541

managed to remain attached to their parents' religion. Abbas declared:

...It is French thought which is at the basis of the principles of our moral life. To the empiricism of the patrimony left to us by parents and tradition, the spirit of the **French** writers has added an explanation, a scientific, rational one if I may say so. And yet, parents and tradition, the spirit of the French writers has added an explanation, a scientific, rational one if I may say so. And yet, Islam has remained our pure faith, the belief which gives a meaning to life, our spiritual homeland.<sup>138</sup>

Opinions were divided regarding receiving a French instruction. There were people who held that to join French schools would automatically lead to alienation. In *Hind*, Zehar dealt with fellow countrymen who needed to send their children to this kind of schools. Among the characters, she chose a taleb, Seif-Eddine, who was on the verge to send his two sons, Nacih and Yazid, to a French school.

As a religious man, the challenge for Seif-Eddine was twofold: to avoid seeing his people no longer show him esteem, and to show that one could send children to the colonizer's school and at once keep one's culture and religion. His point was to refute the idea that "envoyer ses enfants à l'école française était les exposer au pire des dangers: la perte de la foi Islamique et l'adoption soit de l'athéisme, soit d'une autre religion qui ne repose sur rien de divin ».<sup>139</sup>

Likewise, in Debeche's book, *Leila, Jeune Fille d'Algérie*, Leila's father, Sheik Ibrahim, was known for his being a dedicated Moslem and for being generous towards the poor of his tribe. Regretting his having been unable to receive an education, he undertook to see that his two children avoided the same. His sending his daughter Leila to Algiers so that she could pursue her studies soon made his tribesmen frown; they remarked that Sheikh Ibrahim's decision was "un événement sans précédent."

This decision, in any case, was not randomly. What he wanted to prove was that he could send her to further her studies and be confident that she would stick to her Islamic heritage. He felt confident that after her studies she would return to her tribe:

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<sup>138</sup>D.M. Gallup, *The French Image of Algeria*, p.430.

<sup>139</sup>Aissa, Zehar cf Smail, *Hind d l'âme pure ou histoire d'une mère* (Alger: Baconnier, 1942), p.71.

Leila resterait attachée aux principes de la religion Islamique; à chaque événement religieux, elle ne manquerait pas de se rendre chez une de ses cousines habitant la Casbah. De son côté, lui-même viendrait la voir tous les mois et la fillette passerait ses vacances aux OuledDjellal; elle y retournerait définitivement à la fin de ses études.<sup>140</sup>

The parents in both books, Smail notes, were to see that their children before going to a French school would master their own language and culture. This would serve as a shield to protect them against alienation. In this light, they expected that Leila, for instance, would move toward becoming, "La jeune fille parfaite ... aussi érudite en langue française qu'en langue arabe"<sup>141</sup>

With respect to Nacih, the outcome would be the same. As it turned out, his being taught French made of him a learned man. He even came to like both the French dialect and the one of his predecessors. Zehar writes : "Il aimait cette langue autant que celle de ses aïeux", even more, he made plenty of efforts which enabled him to develop his insight into this "beautiful" language" since « Ce qu'il cherchait, c'était saisir la clarté de la pensée française, le mot propre pour exprimer une idée ». <sup>142</sup>

Smail summed up by writing that both Nacih and Leila were similarly inspired by both languages. They learned a foreign language and kept theirs. They also learned a foreign culture and had theirs. This capacity, however, was short-lived. Both Nacih and Leila would start changing. Thus, the foreign language and culture came to be more appealing. This crystallized first in their attempting to bridge both communities, the French and the Arab. But that was doing without their parents who did not share their point of view and contradicted their inclination. The parents' key argument had trait to religion; the French were not Muslims and would never be companions.

This is the point which started the contention between French-instructed Algerians and their parents. The education they received from the colonizer impacted them so much that they no longer resembled, let alone wanted to resemble their parents.

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<sup>140</sup>Débêche Djamila, *Leila, jeune fille d'Algérie* (Alger: Charras, 1947), p.19.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Aïssa Zehar cf Smail, *Hind d l'âme pure ou histoire d'une mère* (Alger: Baconnier, 1942), p.95.

They started rejecting their respective families; their education; their culture and all that reminded them of their identity. Back in her tribe, it was no wonder to see Leila refuse to live like her parents for this would have meant to return to darkness. Such a behaviour, of course, could neither be understood nor accepted by leila's parents; they did their best so that she disregarded the instruction she had received. Under this head, Leila's uncle, Sheik Ali, told her:

...Je me chargerai d'assurer ton avenir. Suivant nos traditions, je te donnerai le mari qui- fera ton bonheur ... ton cousin Hamza, mon fils très cher, est l'époux qui te convient ... Le voile et le Haik remplaceront les costumes que tu portais à Alger et il faudra t'habituer à vivre comme tes parents. Nous n'avons jamais approuvé cette éducation et cette instruction que le Sheikh Ibrahim a voulu te faire donner ... il était écrit que tu reviendrais et que tu vivrais comme nous. Il va te falloir oublier toutes tes habitudes, pour reprendre les nôtres celles de tes ancêtres.<sup>143</sup>

That was to no avail. Leila chose to come back to the city and live with the French family of a companion who received her. Before she reached the city, she got rid of her conventional dress, which she portrayed as "Peu pratique pour le voyage."<sup>144</sup> and wore a European suit. With no surprise, such a move was also found in the novel, *Hind*.

Like Leila, Nacih discovered that the jallabah that he was wearing was rather badly arranged. In truth, it reminded him of a status from which he wanted to escape. This is why : "Il ne songeait plus à revêtir désormais les amples vêtements indigènes qu'il avait portés jusqu'à son entrée au régiment. Il jugeait en effet, qu'il avait besoin de vêtements commodes pour travailler et que l'habit indigène ne répondait nullement à cela."<sup>145</sup>

Both Leila and Nacih, Smail remarked, found what she termed as a logical inconsistency between their training and the wearing of indigenous clothes. This was clearly communicated in *Leila*, who was met by "Une dame d'un âge respectable les accueillît. Elle fut surprise de voir cette jeune fille habillée à la mode orientale et

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<sup>143</sup>Débêche Djamil, *Leila*, pp.29-30.

<sup>144</sup>ibid., 121.

<sup>145</sup>Aissa Zehar cf Smail, *Hind*, p.98.

s'exprimant en langue française d'une façon parfaite."<sup>146</sup> Hence, to be liberated and instructed like the French, implied receiving their appearance.

Likewise, Nacih needed to demonstrate to his European companions that "un jeune musulman savait se libérer des idées et des coutumes lorsqu'elles lui paraissaient surannées."<sup>147</sup> In this manner, to him, his past dress was a piece of what he called "coutumes surannées."

The main explanation behind resembling the French was to show that they were good students in absorbing their instructors' lessons. Consequently, the scholars of this period that Smail analyzed had full faith in France and its "civilizing mission." And despite the fact that the French-taught Algerians made a decent attempt to persuade their people that the French purpose was just to offer them a superior and better life and to bring them out of their ignorance, their endeavors were bound to disappointment.

The disappointment was followed by another: the fact that they failed in their mission to bridge the divide between the "civilizer" and the "uncivilized." The consequence was that they soon turned on their people and blamed them. Their key reproach was that their parents were fanatical and inappropriate for any human progress and civilization.

On the contrary, the "civilizers" whom they attempted to imitate in both garment and behaviour tried to attract them. Thus, in the armed force, Nacih found a graciousness which he had never experienced. He admired his French officers who, in turn, valued his dedication and reliability:

Jusque parmi les officiers, en particulier le capitaine de sa compagnie, et le bon père de famille qu'était son chef de bataillon, Nacih avait de bons amis; lui les estimait et les respectait comme des chefs justes et bienveillants et eux appréciaient, comme ils en étaient dignes, sa manière de servir, son dévouement et sa loyauté.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Dêbêche Djamila, *Leila*, pp.121.

<sup>147</sup> Aissa Zehar, *Hind*, pp.98-99.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

The goodwill of his officers induced him to adore what he came to view as this “enlightened” and incredible France. At this juncture, « le bon esprit de ces excellents officiers laissa au coeur du jeune soldat Nacih un souvenir ineffaçable qui allait, tout le reste de sa vie; l'incliner franchement vers cette France intellectuelle dont il aimait déjà la langue. »<sup>149</sup>

France was also cherished and applauded by Leila who rejected her family and embraced one M. Lormont. Even more, at the Marie Curie Institute, Leila found sisterhood and friendship among her French colleagues, who came, in spite of the color of her skin, to regard her as one of them. Smail also noted that it was among her supportive family that Leila discovered the meaning of peace, love, and perception.

Through the pages of *Leila*, the creator drew a parallel between the two families, that of *Leila* and that of Madeleine Lormont. While, the relations among the individuals from the Arabic family were based on false reverence, the individuals from the French family cherished and esteemed each other. They communicated their sentiments and suppositions with opportunity. And though the crevice amongst men and women was wide in the primary family, the individuals from the second cooperated for one common goal, the advance of the nation.

This was expressed in such a way as to glorify the French illustration and reject the Arabic one. Leila did her best to show her appreciation of her “civilizers”, and needed to give something as a return. She said of Mr. Lormont, who had offered her a job in his factory:

...L'industriel André Lormont, était très connu et aimé dans la région. A une époque où l'on ne parlait pas encore d'industrialisation, il avait eu le mérite et le courage de créer une nouvelle branche d'activité et d'affirmer sa confiance en l'avenir économique de l'Algérie. Sous son impulsion et celles d'autres colons, peu à peu, dans la région de Bougie ...des activités industrielles diverses naquirent. Elles se développèrent. Toutes témoignaient d'un désir de progressisme et, si les

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

difficultés se dressèrent sur la route de ses promoteurs de l'activité nationale algérienne, par la suite des résultats magnifiques devaient encourager leurs initiatives.<sup>150</sup>

Much the same as Leila, Nacih also needed to thank the individuals who had given him the opportunity to benefit from their development. For him, French instruction was the main approach to break the hindrance separating the two groups; the natives and the French. Accordingly, Nacih chose to dedicate efforts to break that barrier. In a remote town, Nacih began his work with an incredible energy and blamed the villagers for not showing the same passion and gratitude

Sur quarante-deux inscrits au registre d'appel, une dizaine à peine venaient chaque jour et, évidemment, les résultats s'en ressentaient ... les parents des élèves ne montraient aucun goût pour cet enseignement d'une langue étrangère qui ferait peut-être de leurs fils des mécréants.<sup>151</sup>

The analysis of these books induced Smail to infer that these scholars mirrored the thoughts of the Algerians youth who, in appreciation to their “civilizers”, and entranced by the standards of the French “humanizing mission”, needed their people to overlook their hatred towards the French. In this way, each of these books related the advantages of French progress and the consideration to be given to the French whose intention was philanthropic in that it brought human progress for the advantage of the uninformed natives.

These writers attempted to unite the two sides. This went through educating their people about the advantages of development. It also went through persuading the French that they ought not to surrender their charitable mission to which the “oblivious” natives would, at some point or another, react. This situation, nevertheless, put these essayists in a troublesome position. Their people called them “rebels” and “traitors” for their efforts to serve them. As an example, Nacih, very sad and frustrated, left his vocation for teaching and decided to follow different approaches to serve, and also to “edify” his people.

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<sup>150</sup> Dêbêche Djamila, *Leila*, p.42.

<sup>151</sup> Aissa Zehar, *Hind*, p.84.

The fundamental topics, Smail concludes, tackled in the above mentioned books were utilized as a vehicle to express their writers' dedication to the French, and additionally, their confidence in the French edifying mission. Accordingly, similar to the Arabic books of the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, these books were intentionally didactic. Smail stressed that their authors, each in his particular manner, utilized the novel as a vehicle to pass on his own thoughts on different points. In *El-Euldj*, the writer felt obliged to tell the reader regarding the foundation of the Ketchoua mosque and to quote from different assets as though he was composing a paper on the mosque.

Furthermore, she went on stressing that, in reality, these early books were themselves a dependable imitation of the colonial novel, both in shape and in content. This generated debate and controversy for it was reasonable for a European essayist to portray the local population in a “fascinating” way, but this could not be expected from a native author to do so. Thus, the native essayist made himself in a perplex situation, for he needed to imitate the French without being French, and all things considered, he disconnected himself from his people whom he portrayed in a comparable way to the European authors.

From the specialized perspective, these books can be qualified as the primary, immature try at novel composition by Algerians. Thus, they remain significant records which mirror the situation of the main Francophone intellectuals. It is important to note that the discernment communicated through these books is that of patriot pioneers with Ferhat Abbas as a prime case.

In his book *Le jeune Algérien*, he considered Algeria as a French area and argued for his people to be incorporated into the French “country.” His development as a political pioneer is dependably reflected through the advancement of the Francophone Algerian novel, from its rise in the first three decades of the century until the independence of Algeria in 1962. These novels also mirrored also a key period known as the assimilation period.



#### IV. 4. The Period of Transition (1947-1950)

Regarding the period of transition, Smail referred in her introduction to the politician and nationalist Ferhat Abbas and his book *Le Jeune Algérien*, (La Jeune Parque, Paris, 1931; reissued Garnier, 1981). Abbas, who had accepted the idea that Algeria could be a French province showed much confidence in the assimilation of Algerians and in their receiving French citizenship. In the course of time, however, his confidence started fading.

While Abbas called fellow compatriots to join the army to defend “his” country against Germany, the discrimination, which those who used to be called the indigenes faced on the part of the army officers, made him question France’s humanism. The questioning crystallized in a manifesto, *Manifeste du Peuple Algérien*, in which he demanded for the abolition of colonization and the autonomy for his country.

The Setif massacre and the colonists’s demand to execute him put an end to all hope of reconciliation. Abbas knew, henceforth, that his destiny and that of Algerians would never resemble that of the American Indians. He said in his book:

Nous sommes chez nous. Nous ne pouvons aller ailleurs. C’est cette terre qui a nourri nos ancêtres, c’est cette terre qui nourrira nos enfants. Libres ou esclaves, elle nous appartient, nous lui appartenons et elle ne voudra pas nous laisser périr. L’Algérie ne peut vivre sans nous. Nous ne pouvons vivre sans elle. Celui qui rêve à notre avenir comme à celui des Peaux-Rouges d’Amérique se trompe. Ce sont les Arabo-Berbères qui ont fixé, il y a quatorze siècles, le destin de l’Algérie pour ne pas demain s’accomplir sans eux.<sup>152</sup>

Since it became clear that the colonists would neither assimilate nor integrate the Algerians, especially after the end of WWII, a change in attitudes emerged both in politics and literature. As case studies Smail analyzed two novels: *Idris* and *Jacinthe noire* penned by Aly El-Hammamy and Taos Amrouche respectively.

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<sup>152</sup> Ferhat Abbas, *Le Jeune Algérien*, (Garnier Frères, Paris, 1981), p. 143

#### IV.4.1. Aly Al Hammamy: *Idris*

While in Morocco, Al Hammamy joined the troops of the Emir Abd el Kader's son Abdelmalel, who was then fighting the French. He thereafter joined those of the Emir Abdelkrim El Khattabi, nicknamed "the hero of the War of the Rif" to whom he dedicated his sole novel, *Idris*. His fight against colonialism and the manifold pamphlets he wrote on that behalf led the French authorities to forbid his re-entry in Algeria. Thanks to a helping hand from the famous Lebanese writer, Cheki Arslan, he settled in Baghdad, where he taught history and geography. Al Hammamy died in a plane crash on December 12, 1949.

*Idris* is "an exhaustive history of the past and the present of the Great Maghreb." Idris, a young child grew up in a Moroccan village which was plagued by poverty due to colonialism. His father acquainted him with nationalism and Islam. The studies he furthered and the various trips he undertook made him aware of the necessity to fight colonialism.

Al Hammamy was shot dead, but prior to dying he said: « la vie n'est qu'une lutte perpétuelle et ses lois sont implacables, nous ne reculerons pas. Ainsi, nous ne démeriterons pas de la lourde mission que nous, assumons vis-à-vis de notre conscience». <http://lequotidienalgerie.org> Central to the novel *Idris* stands the idea of « transition from tribalism to nationhood. »<sup>153</sup>

Besides, regarding the mission, it had become clear for him that another transition was of the utmost importance. It was to receive and to convey an education that did not distort reality either of the natives or of the sufferings they were undergoing under colonialism. That was not the stance of a fellow writer, Taos Amrouche.

#### IV.4.2. Taos Amrouche: *Jacinthe noire*

Regarding Taos Amrouche's novel, *Jacinthe noire* (1947), Smail writes that

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<sup>153</sup>Zahia, Smail, *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*, (University of Exeter, 1991), p.80. Ali El Hammamy (1902- 1949) : une plume prolifique et un romancier exceptionnel <http://lequotidienalgerie.org>

contrarily to Al Hammamy, her novel “expressed the complaint of the alienated Algerian whose suffering is caused by her parents' naturalization. Considered as the first Algerian female to write a novel, the Kabyle Marie-Louise-Taos Amrouche was compelled to flee to Tunisia after her family had converted to Christianity.

The dilemma in the novel revolved round the incapacity for the native to know where home was as in both Algeria and France he found himself marginalized. In this light, the main character, Reine, came to live in Paris among a group of French girls. Neither the religion she adopted nor her citizenship, French, could be of any help as the members of the group rejected her. One of them would even declare : "Cette Reine de race mystérieuse, de sang africain, je la trouve dangereuse"<sup>154</sup>

Likewise, Reine, found it hard to adapt. Her longing Algeria and parents, to which one had to add rebuke and humiliation on the part of the girls, induced her to think about the worth of speaking the same language and following the same religion. Consequently, she deemed that her parents' having followed the same was a big mistake. In fact, she realized that she belonged to that

Catégorie de ceux qui se sont séparés des leurs, qui ont rejeté la foi de leurs ancêtres pour suivre le Christ. La solitude des êtres qui me ressemblent ... est particulièrement pesante. C'est une solitude pathétique absolue.<sup>155</sup>

After having made up her mind, Reine, saw the alternative in reconnecting with roots. To remain with the French was a hopeless case as they would never accept to integrate her no matter the change in culture and religion. For Smail,

Taos's literary work....can be called an expression of the dramatic "disruption" experienced by those writers who, although converted, did not become true Christians, but individuals split between Islam and Christianity, unable to abandon their culture as well as their religion."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Taos Amrouche, *Jacinthe noire*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed 1947 (Paris: Maspéro, 1972), p. 267..

<sup>155</sup>bid.

<sup>156</sup>Zahia Smail, *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel*, p.89.

The novelist Taos Amrouche, unlike other fellow novelists who had come to take the civilizing mission and softheartedness of the colonists for granted, had, in the course of time, come to realize that these were a lie. She was not the only one, and the way to revelation was in motion.

#### IV.5. The Period of Revelation (1950-1952)

Before delving into the period regarded as a period of revelation, one has to note that many Algerian writers had contributed to it. For Smail, the conspicuous trait of that period was the evolution, and simultaneously, the transition of the Algerian novel from a novel of impersonation to a novel of dissent and disclosure in which the authors uncovered their thoughts and portrayed their kin in their persistent battle for existence.<sup>157</sup>

For Smail, the novelists of that period acknowledged names like those of Emmanuel Roblès, Albert Camus, Jules Roy, and other French essayists as their predecessors in writing but refused to copy them. Instead, they attempted to describe and write on some angles, which, she contends, neither Camus nor Roblès, for instance, could portray. To back, she referred to a letter Feraoun addressed to Roblès. Feraoun, making no doubt that he was the first Algerian to write about Algerians, said in his letter:

...Ce sont les premiers, Camus, Roblès, etc. qui par leur talent ont su nous ouvrir un horizon littéraire qui nous était fermé. Je n'avais jamais cru possible de faire véritablement entrer dans un roman un vrai bonhomme kabyle avant d'avoir connu le docteur Rieux et le jeune Smail. Tu vois ce que je veux dire. Vous les premiers vous nous avez dit: voila ce que nous sommes. Alors nous, nous avons répondu: voila ce que nous sommes de notre côté. Ainsi a commencé entre vous et nous le dialogue (Smail cf Feraoun).<sup>158</sup>

Feraoun's letter shows that he and his fellow Algerian authors acknowledged the impact of the French novel. This impact crystallized in inducing them to write "genuine" Algerian books. The conspicuous feature of the latter was that these books were utterly contrary to the picture the French essayists had given of the Algerians.

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<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>158</sup> Mouloud, Feraoun cf Zahia Smail. *Lettres à ses amis*. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1969), p.154.

In actuality, if Feraoun needed to expound on his people it was for the most part to state, “voilà ce que nous sommes de notre côté.”<sup>159</sup> In a letter to Camus, Feraoun communicated his disappointment at the nonappearance of the indigenous in the novel, *La Peste*, whose Algerian setting was Oran. He said to him: “J’ai lu *La Peste*, j’avais regretté que parmi tous ces personnages il n’y eût aucun indigène et qu’Oran ne fût à vos yeux qu’une banale préfecture française.”

Feraoun presumed that Camus like other French writers was reluctant to seek acquaintance with Algeria’s natives and subsequently was not well placed to talk about them. At this point, Feraoun and fellow Algerian authors undertook to write about their own people; their customs and tradition. Feraoun made it plain that he had « l’intention d’écrire, de parler de mes compatriotes tels que je les vois. »<sup>160</sup>

In conclusion, for Smail, Feraoun and the Algerian writers engaged on the same wanted to give of their compatriots, although they were ghastly, miserable, and deplorable, a true picture rather than take after the French models in which appealing and colorful spots were portrayed with no say of the local population. In this way, they made truly Algerian books with an Algerian environment; Algerian characters; and resorted to either Arabic or Berber language. In short, their aim was to give their account of the Algerians, their plight; their sufferings since they came to realize that the portrait given by French writers gave a distorted image. Assia Djébar is also among the most committed writers who sought to represent the reality of the Algerian society and women. Her works contest of the degree of involvement and the need to give a realistic and genuine representation.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> M. Feraoun, *Lettres d ses amis* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1969), p.203

**Chapter Five**  
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## Chapter Five

### Algerian Women in Post-colonial literature

#### V. 1. Assia Djebbar: *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*

Assia Djebbar, born Fatima Zohra Imalhayen, is ranked among the most prolific Algerian writers. She is considered as Algeria's most renowned novelist and filmmaker. Her literary notoriety permitted her to be nominated several times for the Nobel Prize and to win international prizes. The latter include, but are not limited to the Special Prize for the best Historical Film at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1982 for *La Zerda ou les Chants d'Oubli*; the International Literary Neustadt Prize in 1996 for her contribution to World Literature; the Biennial of Venice International Critics' Prize in 1979 for *La Noubia des Femmes du Mont Chenoua*; the Marguerite-Yourcenar Prize (1997); the Premio Internazionale di Palmi Medaille Vermeille della Francophonie (1999), and the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels (2000). In 2001, she became Silver Chair Professor of French and Francophone Studies at New York University. Her impressive career was further distinguished when she was elected into the exclusive Académie Française in 2006.

The present chapter is intended as an analysis of Assia Djebbar's selected novels namely, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia*. It should be pointed out that the paramount objective of this analysis is to bring and to present a different attention, a critical gendered analysis of literature, within a specific frame: cultural and historical. To place the analysis into context, some questions were raised. Among the questions:

- ✓ How does Assia Djebbar intervene in feminist and postcolonial studies?
- ✓ How is her contribution viewed?
- ✓ Can one assume that her works are an acute critique of languages, history, and nationalism?

The motivation as to the choice of Djebbar's above-mentioned works was grounded in the following reasons. The first reason lies in the fact that her novels function as histori-

cal palimpsest. To put it simply, she uses different discourses such as Algerian nationalism or French colonizers in order to reframe Algerian history. With little attention on her works, one will notice that she depicts and denude this form of nationalism still based on the premise of patriarchal traditions.

Her works also proffer an inter-textual reading and are a proof of how writing -be it fictive or real- could spot and highlight important colonial, postcolonial, and feminist issues through a “Process of reclaiming identity through history.... [and by doing so illustrates how a novelist] restructures relations between politics and poetics, calling into question French critical norms while simultaneously revaluing Islamic tradition.”<sup>161</sup>

Secondly, her writings could also be deemed as a thesaurus of the Algerian history in that the patriarchal side is scrutinized at rather different periods: during colonization and under Algerian nationalism. Under this head, Djebbar, in order to enact the reconstruction and appropriation of historical silences, had, in actuality, to infringe on deeply entrenched cultural borders and, at once, to speak and unveil those whose voices and lives had been silenced for so many years. In so doing, experiences stood aloof in the background.

Thus, it is worthy of note that her narration of Algerian women’s lived-experiences neither depended on similar identities nor gauged objectivity. In fact, she proffered plethora of *histories* which she based upon socio-historical experiences instead of one history. She accentuated, through the collection and transcription of the narrated past of Algerian women, the heterogeneous reality and the subjective apprehension and interpretation of historical writings. In this

Thirdly, the choice was grounded in the fact that she is reckoned as one of the few Algerian writers who actively contributed to feminist and postcolonial studies. She called the attention, through an accurate and comprehensive analysis, on the way language characterizes subjectivities and represents the socio-cultural values. In the

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<sup>161</sup> Sandi, Solomon of Winifred Woodhull. 1993. *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures in French*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1993), p. 9.



same line of thought, Djébar chose the French language, a language widely associated with colonial legacies, to express and narrate the stories of Algerian women.

This choice was soon to impede the position of her work by rewriting Algerian experiences with French cultural constructs. Nevertheless, notwithstanding her use of the colonizer's language to tell Algerian experiences she still wrote against the obliteration of Algerian women from history.

#### V.1. 1. Frameworks

Djébar is the first Algerian woman to be admitted in a renowned Parisian College, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. Barely one year later, she was part of a students' strike for Algerian Independence, and wrote her very first novel, *The Mischief*. The latter was written under the guise of a penname because of her fears from her father's objection.

*The Mischief* would swiftly become "le premier pas" in a long career of authorship, whose conspicuous feature was the portrayal of female characters and negotiation of gender roles; both were to constitute the basis and substructure of each novel which tackled culture, language, ethnicity and social status in relation to female subjectivities in Algeria all of which were bound by colonization and patriarchy.

Djébar's novels, simultaneously, offer a comparison and entangle some perplexities as to living in French Algeria and in the postcolonial period. They also offer different thematic on feminist, colonial, postcolonial, gendered issues-mainly the roles of masculinity and femininity.

Another point analyzed in this chapter within a particular literary framework has trait to the relation between feminist and post-colonial theories and historiography. Throughout this research, one can attend an illustration of the way the praxis of historiography permitted Djébar to revise and re-draft an account in which she pragmatically questioned, purportedly objective, traditional sociological and historical sides.

### V.1. 2. The notion of Feminism

The word post-colonialism -a compound word- can be defined as a cultural “phenomenon that is translated as “code for the state of undecidability in which the culture of colonialism continues to resonate in what was supposed to be its negation.” In Djébar’s works, the concept of post-colonialism is associated to feminism. The latter is presented through a critical analysis and described as a form of politics which is

Directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become.<sup>162</sup>

Following this wave and with the view to analyze the connection between feminism and a rhetoric question is raised concerning the notion of “subjectivity”

### V.1.3. The notion of Subjectivity

The notion of “subjectivity” might safely be regarded as a recurrent and essential element in all of Djébar’s work from the *Femmes d’Alger dans leur Appartement* to her last work, *Nulle Part dans la Maison de mon Père*. This notion gradually became Djébar’s analytical framework. Through her writings, Djébar retells the stories of Algerian women and in so doing broke social inertia and traditions.

Her position as an opponent to the Algerian society’s stagnation was displayed in different forms. To quote a few, one finds affection, dignity, passion, charity, attachment, and devotion. The aim behind her representation of Algerian women was not only to describe but also implicitly to attempt to change a bitter reality.

In Djébar’s works, we also have an annotation and clarification of diversified subjectivities and different shifts with regard to position and change. She obliquely used Weedon’s

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<sup>162</sup>Chris, Weedon. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 65-87.

Subjectivities, like theories of society or versions of history, are temporary fixings in the ongoing process in which any absolute meaning or truth is constantly deferred.... [Furthermore,] it is important to see subjectivity as always historically produced in specific discourses and never as one single fixed structure. As an effect of discourses which are heterogeneous and often conflicting, the structures of subjectivity within which the individual is constituted as a conscious subject vary.<sup>163</sup>

Inherent to this theoretical configuration, the characters' subjectivities "in Djébar's works like *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, and *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, are expressed as a reflection of lived-experiences beside various perspectives gained from and/or through their engagement with historical moments and changing socio-political locations. Therefore their subjectivities affect and are affected by their interpretations of the world around them and the retelling of their oral histories.

Djébar introduced the corporality of women's distinctive subject-positions to demonstrate conceptualizations of induced subjectivities that are created in the acculturated practices of oral history, narrating, veiling, and sheltering that happen in gendered socio-political areas, for example, pioneerism (French social dominion), anti-colonial battle, Algerian patriotism (ideas of indigenous realness), and post-freedom country constructing (the ideological making of an Algerian-self through social and state-mandated administration).

Djébar's novels also delineate what is called "psychological alterity" in order to demonstrate the lived experiences that shape subjectivities which are in constant change and are influenced by inner and outside constraints that subvert socio-political areas stamped by the encounters of authentic time and spot. In other words, she overlooks and brings an opulent understanding of historical injustice and exemplifies the empowerment of the past situation. In this wavelength, three of her novels have been put under study in order to verify- among others- the incongruent notion of subject

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<sup>163</sup>Op.cit.

Djebar delineates non-unitary subjectivities that are in a condition of steady flux and improvement. All through these writings, Djebar checks the position of the Cartesian subject as well as the homogenization of Algerian women in both customary colonialist and Algerian patriot talks. Her denial of a homogeneous Algerian womanhood demands upon distinguishing the heterogeneity of Algerian women's socio-chronicled areas and, in this manner, expands women's activist and postcolonial creations of knowledge concerning the organization and reasonability of exemplified subjects.

Since the subjectivities of the characters investigated in this study show up as insecure and divided, the delineations of the socio-political subject-positions occupied by the heroes referred to, thus oblige that consideration paid to the particular recorded minute under examination.

#### V.1.4. *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*

*Women of Algiers in their Apartment* is, as the title imports, an interweaving novel of women's stories in the form of compendium of short narrations. The majority of stories supervene during the unsettled years of postcolonial reconstruction of Algeria (1962-1978). During This particular period, Algeria was striving to rebuild itself after three long generations of colonization and a colossal aftermath of the War for Independence.

The novel epitomizes the social, political and most importantly the cultural changes that were taking place in liberated Algeria. The latter is displayed as a postcolonial place that is wrestling to reconstruct an identity that is disparate, unique, and detached from its tumultuous and potent colonial era. Hence, this collection is deemed as an autobiographic account of women's histories of a postcolonial nation where generations of females have been passive, excluded and disenfranchised by patriarchal rule.

The analysis of Djebar pinpoints women's role during the war, their politicized subject-positions during colonization and in the aftermath of war, and their representation in terms of the Orientalizing gaze of colonization. Each character she displays subsumes a relative complexity and depicts political-subject positions that constitute a great part of the Algerian history and reside at the same time within its present-day socio-cultural and political dynamics.

To take an instance, the three respective characters of Leila, Fatima and Sarah cater a clear entry into the manner the novel draws upon Women's commitment with the intertwinements between culture, gender, language, embodiment and nationality.

The abovementioned characters will be analyzed in this chapter as they constitute an acute synergy that takes place between the past and the present converging within women's postcolonial experiences in Algeria. The dialogues interweave the past and the present and simultaneously illustrate women's endeavor to liberate themselves via stories of lived-experiences. Each story shows and portrays the changing roles women are subjected to.

#### V.1.5. Comparison with Delacroix' Painting

Assia Djebar has used for the title of her novel Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix' paintings presented to the public in 1834 and 1849 respectively. In Delacroix' paintings one can see a clear demonstration of the French cultural invasion of Algeria. It is worthy to note that in the beginning 1830's the French colonials sought to invade Algeria in all aspects. In order to reach their aim,, they resorted to their journalists, artists, and even military service to superimpose Algerian society with French socio-political perspective whose main aim was to eradicate Algerian culture.

During Delacroix' trip (1832) which lasted for three days, he was given entrance into the home of an Algerian who was found to be an employee of a French official. After this lapse of time, Delacroix returned to France, where he designed and masterminded the painting relying on his memory and all the artifacts he brought from his chance meeting to re-enact his experience with Algerian odalisques.

Following this, Djebar expounds and delineates the alteration in Algerian women's lived realities in a time span that started in 1832 –when Eugène Delacroix travels in Algeria and paints *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*- and ends until the modern-day accounts written by her in 1979. She clearly notes that the painting carries to haunt the present with its historical past. The painting positions of the

onlookers in front of these women, remind us that ordinarily we have no right to be there. The painting is itself a stolen glance” The painting is an image of an historical event that is a replication of Delacroix’ “stolen glance,” rather than a rightful inheritance.<sup>164</sup>

Djebar reverses the Orientalizing gaze of Delacroix –an artist-envoy of French imperialism who has sailed North Africa to paint his encounters. She alludes in the front of the novel that the painting is still speaking and “has not stopped telling us something that is unbearably painful and still very much with us today” She also aims at presenting these women’s stories from a different angle. Thus, her choice of the title is a very meticulous one, it seeks to recount and reshape the objectification that was represented and delineated by colonial rule and western people.

#### V.1.6. Autobiography in *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*

The notion of autobiography was fully studied by a feminist named Leigh Gilmore. In her book *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, she gives a complete analysis of what she titled autobiographics. According to Gilmore Leigh, “Autobiographics, [is] a description of self-representation and [is] a reading practice, [that] is concerned with interruptions and eruptions, with resistance and contradiction as strategies of self-representation.”<sup>165</sup>

This notion was used by the Algerian writer Assia Djebar in her novel *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*. The novel is a compendium of short stories that juxtaposes diverse narratives from different women. Through this, Djebar assembles accounts that proffer her orators the chance for self-expression in an atmosphere that challenges patriarchal control.

The narrator all along the novel remains cognizant of her presence and the importance of her role as a listener and transcriber. Her aim is to support and at the

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<sup>164</sup>Assia, Djebar, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, cf Anastasia Valassopoulos *Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context*, (Routledge. 2008), p. 137.

<sup>165</sup>Gilmore, Leigh. 1994. *The Limits of Autobiography Trauma and Testimony*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press

same time separate herself from the women whose stories

Don't claim to "speak for" or, worse to "speak on," barely speaking next to, and if possible very close to: these are the first of the solidarities to be taken on by the few Arabic women who obtain or acquire freedom of movement, of body and of mind.<sup>166</sup>

The autobiographic novel that unfurls in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* emerges from the oral portrayal and composed retelling of different Algerian women's encounters through the voice of the storyteller. Assia Djebbar invigorates life into the past backgrounds and experiences of colonialism and the War for Independence and, by adopting such procedure, she uncovers not only histories from the perspective of Algerian women but also the potential that these histories entail.

To further explain that the following passage taken from one of her characters named Sarah (a "fire carrier" during the War for Independence; tortured in a Barberousse prison). The novel begins with her story. Sarah also orates the stories of two other Algerian women, Leila and Fatima. In this quote one can clearly see the apprehension of the latter as she becomes aware of the importance and power of Algerian's women voices and histories.

[...]For Arabic women I see only one single way to unblock everything: talk, talk without stopping, about yesterday and today, talk among ourselves, in all the women's quarters, the traditional ones as well as those in the housing projects. Talk among ourselves and look. Look outside, look outside the walls and the prisons! [...] Sarah desires for women to listen to themselves, to hear one another speak rather than to listen to the] voice of the female vocalists whom they imprison in their sugar-sweet melodies [...] But the voice they've never heard[...] the voice of sighs, of malice, of the sorrows of all the women they've kept walled in[...] The voice that's searching in the opened tombs.<sup>167</sup>

In the above mentioned passage, the character is cognizant of the strength of

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<sup>166</sup> Assia, Djebbar, op.cit.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 50.

Algerian Women's voices. She is adamant about this fact and confident that women's stories have the power to change both the experiences of some other women and also the creation of other's shared histories. In other terms, Sarah represents the work of Assia Djebar as a turning point, a transformative history based on the voices of many Algerian women.

In spite of the fact that the novel comprises of a gathering of short stories about various women, the juxtaposition of these stories and the interconnection between the women's experiences makes an autobiographic record of, as well as authentic fellowship among, the differed voices. Through the development of community that takes place inside this autobiographic content, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* gives perusers a contrasting option to conventional types of life account that portray the development of a unitary subject, or what Gilmore assigns as "the male personal self."

The latter contends that, "The traditional development of the male autobiographical self begins in relationship (to a person, a family, a place) but develops into an understanding of his separateness from others" (ibid leigh Gilmore). When traditional autobiographies gear towards the division of self and Other, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* serves as an autobiographic content that exhibits various particular selves with a specific end goal to add to a historical representation of the experiences of an marginalized Other

To give an instance of this adjacency, one finds the story of Leila (another character in the same novel), "a fire carrier" who was imprisoned during the War of Independence. Her story is told in a section of the novel entitled "For a divan of the fire carriers." She was tortured while imprisoned and later becomes a drug addict. Leila meets Sarah while Leila is in the psychiatric ward of a hospital). Sarah realizes her connection with Leila's experiences

I see no other way out except through an encounter like this: a woman speaking in front of another one who's watching; does the one who's speaking tell the story of the other with the devouring eyes, with the black memories, or is she describing her own dark night, with words like torches.... She who watches, is it by means of listening, of listening and remembering that she ends up seeing herself, with her own eyes unveiled at last. <sup>168</sup>



In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* Djébar utilizes autobiographies to revise traditional and conventional history by making a recreated representation of history that neutralizes the eradication and misrepresentation of Algerian women within patriarchal and colonial histories. The novel's short stories make an autobiographic portrayal of Algeria's chronicled scene and are told from multilingual and fluctuated viewpoints.

In Djébar's novel the praxis of narrating and autobiographies are a political site where women's stories subsist. As an "intentional act of appropriation of the symbols and narratives of the dominant culture and [are inverted through] their re-inscription by the...marginalized." To put it differently, Djébar makes elective representations of Algerian women's historical authenticity and socio-political roles throughout the century. Moreover, the scene of the novel makes a personal record out of the nation through a synthesis of women's individual voices and memories.

#### V.1.7. Analysis of Feminine Language

It has been duly noted in the abovementioned paragraphs that Djébar's written work develops characters and occasions that depend on the immemorial nearness of maternal predecessors that go with women for the duration of their lives, living in their recollections and inside the stories that they tell. Her act of change of Algerian women's oral histories into the transcription and interpretation of characters and exchanges in the novel is a combination of poetry, prose and critical thinking...[that] conveys the intricacies of being a female postcolonial writer through a...[revision of the autobiographic genre that creates a space to challenge] traditional notions of subjectivity.<sup>169</sup>

The creation and development of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* as an autobiographic novel delivers a brand-new socio-political and chronicled knowledges through the experiences of perusing what's more, be it as written or read work from a

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<sup>168</sup>Op. cit., 47.

<sup>169</sup>Sandra, Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*, (Albany: State University of New York, 2004), p. 51.

particularly feminine voice exemplified inside the different characters' historical records. This was clarified by a feminist writer who contends that

In the context of these important feminist insights, we could argue that first-person nonfictional narrative offers voice to historically silenced and marginalized persons who penetrate the labyrinths of history and language to possess, often by stealth, theft, or what they perceive as trespass, the engendering matrix of textual selfhood: the autobiographical.<sup>170</sup>

The novel is conceived of a non-linear remaking of history that strings together short stories to create a fragmented, non-direct autobiographic record of Algerian nationhood from a female point of view, using women's experiences of exemplification, voice, and history. The novel is conceived of a non-linear remaking of history that strings together short stories to create a fragmented, non-direct autobiographic record of Algerian nationhood from a female point of view, using women's experiences of exemplification, voice, and history.

Djebar challenges Algerian women's historical section point as the typical misrepresentation inside French colonial and Algerian patriot histories that have depended on the passive and silent picture of women to remain in for Algerian women themselves. Through their stories, the women of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* explain their histories in connection to colonialism, anticolonial fighting, and their portrayals of their postcolonial experiences

*In women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, women's stories and their portrayals of history pass on the feminist ideal that the "very idea of a dynamic voice hints organization, information, and self-determination and prompts the making of new knowledges, histories, and autobiographies. Their stories purport how their postcolonial experiences in Algeria are intertwined with colonial experiences, Algerian patriarchy, patriotism, social changes, and varying collaborations with the representation and objectification of epitome.

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<sup>170</sup>Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*, p. 63.

In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Djebar builds up a disparate feminine language, not through a request a female nature but instead through the re-enunciation of

Algerian women's oral histories and lived-experiences. In her novel, Djébar takes responsibility for oppressive representations and refigures them into historically found socio-political positions with a specific end goal to portray a re-framed history that deciphers Algerian history from a point of perspective that is spoken through a feminine language and vocalized from women's epitomized experiences. In this manner, Djébar proffers an account that runs counter to the customary portrayals of women as figures of the inanimate "Other."

Djébar's fragment[ed configurations] now seem to want to "give voice" to generations of Algerian women who have been denied the privilege of self expression; [she does so through an autobiographic of Algerian history where] they appear to invoke a particularized feminine language that would accurately convey experiences that slip beyond the limits of sanctioned history."<sup>171</sup>

Assia Djébar constitutes a specifically feminine language by "craft[ing] words out of so many tones of voice still suspended in the silences of yesterday's seraglio... Words of the veiled body, language that in turn has taken the veil for so long a time." The feminine language that she uses is enhanced through women's shifted lived experiences and also, types of embodiment. Her elaborate style of representing women is described through exchanges that empower them to have a legitimate and authoritative voice through their oral histories that are interplayed inside their lived-experiences as a feature of Algeria's history

In one of the books' sections titled "For a divan of the water bearer", the readers are presented, to one of the characters named Fatima, (an Algerian lady who was given into marriage by her dad at thirteen years old. She endured a long time of abuse before fleeing. Subsequent to fleeing, Fatima turns into a prostitute in a massage parlor until she meets the proprietress of the hammam and turns into a water carrier there) to a path for

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<sup>171</sup> Jane, Hiddleston, *Assia Djébar Out of Algeria*, (Liverpool University Press. Liverpool UP, 2006), p. 55.

Algerian women to put an end to their silence without disrespecting their honor inside Dar al Islam: in actuality a woman may talk about her experiences without an approval nor a sanction if she is shouting out for all physical agony.

In this particular part, the readers attend to a story display where another character named Sarah hears the "water carrier's story" while she sits alongside her when the emergency vehicle takes Fatima to the doctor's facility after she has been harmed while working in the hammam. In this scene, Sarah is an observer to Fatima's change into a storyteller whose recollections channel the voices of the past that have been hushed.

Her damage drives her to a space where others interpret her "different words" as ridiculousness and delirium, however Djébar takes them and places them into composing and uses them in her development of an autobiographic novel that houses a particularly feminine language. Fatima says,

I circulate, I the woman, all the voices of the past are following me in music, uneven song, broken cries, words in any case unfamiliar, multiple words that bore through the city in metamorphosis at noon.<sup>172</sup>

The agony and pain that wins in her body amid the adventure is the premise for speaking out the emotional and psychological agony that has been with her all these years since she was given into marriage by her dad at the age of thirteen years old.

During her transport to the healing center, Fatima is socially unaccountable for her vocalization. She is given, in a semi-cognizant space, the opportunity to disband her silence and to articulate an encapsulated exchange that is spoken after long years of silence. Fatima's story unwinds in a space where physical agony transforms her into a raving lady whose typified experience permits her to free expressions of anguish and anger against the social structures that made the difficult subject-positions she has explored for the duration of her life.

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<sup>172</sup>Assia, Djébar, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1992), p.38.

Djebar contends that Fatima's voice was without set amid the agonizing trip to the hospital “Liberated words....making a furrow in the ambulance as it tears along. Words in electrified harmony with the ululations of the harem, words transparent with vapors, with echoes.”<sup>173</sup> The journey not only helped Fatima exteriorize her feelings but also helped Sarah recalling memories

[...] At last I ran. One night I fled without a veil, in a red gown and with these words inside me: “run straight...always straight ahead!” The south no longer existed, the north no longer existed, only space and the night, the long night of my life was beginning.<sup>174</sup>

The quotation taken from Djebar's novel *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* represents the author's use of “turn[ing] to the past to revitalize the present.”<sup>175</sup> Djebar utilizes both her interviewees' and her own particular lived experiences as an account strategy that passes on an autobiographic of Algeria that is prefaced on the establishment that each woman has a story worth hearing and reporting. Leila's story is also liberated through pain and physical suffering) are interlaced with the pictures of her maternal precursors and their aggregate histories inside the country.

The feminine viewpoints that are described in the novel are emphasized in the production of a remarkable language that is organized through various echoes [that] intervene in her [Djebar's] prose and...belong neither to a single original language nor to a particular, rooted culture.”<sup>176</sup>

The novel itself is a re-cognizance of Algerian history and an enhancement of a female language through the viewpoint of a feminine look that has been an observer and storyteller for eras. Nevertheless, has ordinarily been denied entry into composed historical records as an authorial voice. The accounts that Djebar weaves investigate the experiences of various women through the retelling of stories described by female characters whose words add to a particularly feminine history and dialect.

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<sup>173</sup> Op.cit., 37.

<sup>174</sup> Op.cit., 42.

<sup>175</sup> Mortimer, Mildred, *Reappropriating the Gaze in Assia Djebar's Fiction and Film*, (*World Literature Today* Autumn 70.4.1996), p. 859-67.

<sup>176</sup> Hiddleston, *Out of Algeria*, p. 57.

#### V.1.8.The Harem

In 1849, fifteen years after Delacroix' authentic *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Delacroix gave the Salon a second form of the depiction in which he changed his viewpoint with nostalgic subtleties that were not a part of the main rendering. Djebbar remarks on the second form of Delacroix' work:

....Women always waiting, suddenly less sultanas than prisoners. They have no relationship with us, the spectators. They neither abandon nor refuse themselves our gaze. Foreign but terribly present in this rarified atmosphere of confinement.<sup>177</sup>

In this perusing of the artistic creation, Djebbar goes into a rationalization that mismatches the limits of time with a specific end goal to approach the colonial imaginary of the Orientalizing look that spoke to French imperialism in Parisian museums close by the development of current and modern harem in postcolonial Algeria, where spouses were the “objects of representation...In both locations, wives are housed in the confinement of “bourgeois spaces.... glassed-in terraces.”<sup>178</sup>

Djebbar's study of Delacroix' colonial gaze converges with her feedback of Algerian patriots who utilized conventional ideologies of veiling to cover women who traversed household limits. She represents how both patriarchal accounts (i.e., French colonial and also, Algerian patriot) eradicate the experiences of Algerian women from history and bar them from dynamic cooperation inside society.

By investigating the works of art by Delacroix in juxtaposition to advanced Algeria, Djebbar represents the following point: French colonialism once sought to stifle voice and memory, denying the colonized the right to their own language and history, Maghrebian patriarchy still attempts to restrict movement and vision, denying Algerian woman her right to circulate freely in public space.

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<sup>177</sup>Djebbar,. *Women of Algiers* , p.36.

<sup>178</sup>ibid., 76

The modern harem secludes women inside the domestic circle and inside segregation that Djebbar's meetings, interviews, and composing raises above with a specific end: to outline that time and space can be bowed to oblige a historical location for feminine language and history. Periods drain into each other and the multifaceted nuance of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* gets to be translucent. It serves as a novel that delineates the battle of current postcolonial Algerian women who are submerged within the insides of apartments that house the silent pictures of women who are "objects of representation"<sup>179</sup> and are publicly noticeable just through their husbands. Djebbar goes further by arguing that

Before the war of liberation, the search for a national identity, if it did include a feminine participation, delighted in erasing the body and illuminating these women as "mothers"...in the course of the seven year war...bodies of young girls, whom I call "fire carriers" and whom the enemy incarcerates. Harems melted for a while into so many Barberousse prisons.<sup>180</sup>

Assia Djebbar's literature contains topics connected to invisibility (i.e., the veil, the harem, and silence). Furthermore, amid colonization, the veil and harem were transformed by Orientalism into hypervisible political spaces of the Other's distinction. In her novel, Djebbar neutralizes this by building an autobiographic of Algeria through the recounting of women' stories. In this socio-political move she revives Algerian cultural history that is bound up in the oral histories that Algerian women tell.

Djebbar frees women from the concealing spots of patriarchal practices. Her procedure of composing an autobiographic novel can be identified with postcolonial hypothesis that spotlights the deletion of indigenous culture and gives a space to reexamine history from the point of view of the confiscated. Djebbar's work is a representation of the engaging impacts that autobiographic accounts have when they are utilized to examine the socio-cultural connections that interconnect Algerian women inside the cultural paradigms that are made by the crossing points of colonial and nationalist philosophies and socio-political power relations.

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<sup>179</sup>Sandra, Solomon, *Giving Silence a Voice. Feminism & Postcolonialism in Novels by Assia Djebbar*, (Utrecht University.2009), p.23.

<sup>180</sup>Djebbar, *Women of Algiers*, p. 144.

## V.1. 9. Subjectivities Strata

*In Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Djébar compares the distinctive historical records experienced by different Algerian women. The aftereffect of the entwining accounts is the making of between subjective strata—or, layers that emerge from the connections between the subjectivities of various women. The notion of multilayered subjectivities gives a technique to arrangements and changes that happen between and among women' subjectivities both inside and through various historical epochs ages (e.g., colonialism, post-colonialism, modern-day nationalism).

*Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* uncovers the utility of the idea of multilayered subjectivities by analyzing the lived-realities of Algerian women while at the same time creating new knowledge through the portrayal of these women' experiences of their authentic narrations of their Algerian pasts. To this intent argues that the conceptualization of Djébar's characters "as multi-layered subjectivities draws upon the articulation of oral histories that are transcribed into a narrative that depicts multi-locations across geographical, cultural, and psychic boundaries."<sup>181</sup>

Djébar's characters outline the heterogeneity of identity formation inside the contrasting gendered spaces that evolve in Algeria amid colonialism (e.g., Orientalism), the War of Independence (e.g., women "fire carriers"), and post-independence governance (e.g., ramifications of the Family Code Law in 1984). Djébar's capacity to utilize the "confluence of narrativity"<sup>182</sup> to demonstrate that gendered spaces are envisioned distinctively under various verifiable circumstances prompts the advancement of a non-linear novel that creates complex exchanges between various subjectivities

It is agreed that Algerian women have been portrayed in traditional representations as "stagnant preservers of Algerian authenticity." They have always been depicted not

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<sup>181</sup>Brah, Avtar cf Sandi Solomon. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.194.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.



as “inhabiting history proper but existing, like colonized people in a permanently anterior time with the modern nation.”<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless, Djébar has a different point of view and thus a different representation.

In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Djébar re-expresses Algerian women's histories, and offers another past that disrupts the homogenous examples of Orientalist and nationalist representations of Algerian women and their experiences. Djébar ruminates on history's examples to articulate that the living present is hardly independent. The self-reflexive author of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* discusses her work as the authorial procedure when she says,

I, then, am the collective voice, who comes and goes from one to the other of these subterranean presences, of these inhabitants of the deep, in the hollow of their immense sound holes of the planet, lightly touching one here, encircling another one there. Who will say why the dead speak?<sup>184</sup>

The quotation is a delineation of how the structure of the novel clarifies the examples of Algerian women's ontological roots that interchange the past and present a significant time span. Djébar re-conceptualizes knowledge and learning generation to encourage a rupture with traditional history and, in this manner, makes new knowledge(s) from the vocalization of marginalized perspectives. Djébar's novel represents how autobiographic composition makes new proficiencies inside accounts that delineate Algerian women's lives in various circumstances that neutralize the homogenization and eradication of their lived-realities.

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<sup>183</sup> Anne, Mc Clintock, *Dangerous Liaisons Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>184</sup> Djébar, *Women of Algiers*, p. 115.

## V.2. Assia Djebar: *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*

Djebar's novel *L'amour, La Fantasia* published in 1985 by Jean-Claude Lattes in Paris was translated into English by Dorothy S. Blair in 1993 with a new title *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. The novel is regarded as one of her four major quartets; the second, third, and fourth being respectively *A Sister to Scheherazade* (1987), *Ombre Sultane* (1987), and *Vaste est la prison* (1995). Furthermore, it is depicted as a historical and autobiographical literary novel.

*Fantasia* records Algerian history starting from the French colonial invasion in 1830 till the War of Independence in 1962. The author presents the novel as "a historical pageant with the use of different kinds of reports: dialectic oral Arabic and written French." This choice-of language- portrays and reflects the nature of the Algerian identity and represents a personal quest.

The novel is based upon two different historical archives: French memoirs, letters, journals of colonial settlers and artists, and Algerian women's oral stories of resistance. Djebar raises and creates a new and provocative genre of narrated history which replenishes lost voices of Algerian women and questions accepted stereotypes present in prototypical Western depictions of Algeria.

Djebar also avails this novel in order to debase the established sexist and colonialist chronicles of Algerian history. This is done through reinterpretations of French archives, through the transcription of Algerian women's personal and lived experiences. She also demarcates herself by using a methodology that permits her to contribute to the feminist and postcolonial literature. She uncovers women's 'voices' and 'experiences' [in a] transparently reconstructed...historian's narrative."<sup>185</sup> The novel serves to provide a new and disparate historiography of the personal experiences of Algerians-chiefly women.

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<sup>185</sup>Jane, Haggis, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Routledge, 2004), p.162

### V. 2. 1. Assia Djebar's Historiography

The novel *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, the first of a quartet has been categorized in the realm of historiography rather than historical novels. This is due to the fact she relies on history and simultaneously gives her interpretation, which she based on three narratives. First, there are accounts of the defeat that occurred in 1830, when the French troops invaded Algeria.

The defeat was recorded by the protagonists, namely French soldiers and journalists. Second, the author got in touch with Algerian women who participated in the war for independence from 1954 till 1962. They provided her with oral accounts related to that participation. Last, the author herself was witness and victim in colonial Algeria whence the need for her to insert her own experience.

### V. 2. 2. Historical Background: The Conquest of Algeria

The French Revolution and the principles it embedded, *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity* spelled doom for the European monarchs. Fear of beheading and of seeing their respective countries turn into republics, impelled them to isolate revolutionary France. Their fear reached its paroxysm when they heard that Napoleon Bonaparte, Commander in Chief of the Armies of Italy and the Orient, had staged a *coup d'état* on 18 Brumaire (November 9, 1799) whereby he overthrew the French Directory and replaced it with the French Consulate.

They were right. Bonaparte, who became First Consul in 1804, and the same year was proclaimed emperor, swiftly showed strong determination to crush them. He waged a number of wars that secured France immense power and territory. In retaliation, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and England resolved to enter a coalition to halt that overbearing, ambitious emperor; the Battle of Waterloo (1815) marked the end of his reign.

The isolation of France had far reaching consequences; famine plagued the population. Bonaparte's armies were not better off. The solution was to ask the Dey of Algiers for help who, in turn, instructed two Algerian Jews, Jacob Bacri and Naphtali Busnach (Ben Moses) to be in charge of the delivery of wheat. It was no randomly choice as both

were no ordinary people. Unlike many coreligionists, Bacri and Busnach belonged to Algeria's privileged class and came to reach the top of the social ladder.

Busnach, for instance, became banker of the Dey, controller of the Algerian Treasury, and monopolist of the ongoing trade thanks to a firm he set up, *Bacri & Busnach*. He became so important that he was nicknamed the "viceroy of Algiers." This status was to cost him his life. For the Algerian janissaries, if any one person had to shoulder the guilt for the shortage of wheat they were suffering from, it was Busnach; they killed him.

The exports of wheat to France lasted for six years, 1792-1798. The debt, interest included, totaled 24 million French francs. Part of it was reimbursed to *Bacri-Busnach* and their heirs. The Dey, as creditor of the firm, neither received money nor was informed by Bacri-Busnach they obtained some payment. The nine successive Deys' request for reimbursement remained a dead letter. The last Dey, Hussein III, infuriated by France's refusal to discharge and that it had dared fortify, without his permission, a commercial warehouse in La Calle (today El Kala, a small town near the Tunisian border) summoned on April 30, 1827, the French consul, Pierre Deval to provide him with explanations. After a stormy discussion, the Dey slapped the consul with his fan.

Humiliated, Deval reported the event to his superiors. Diplomatic relations were cut. France moved farther; she decided to invade Algeria; her troops were ordered to disembark at Sidi Ferruch, twenty-seven kilometers west of the capital on June 14, 1830. The invasion was the answer of France to what she had perceived as lack of good manners. In truth, "The Fan Affair", as it came to be called, was the pretext for an already planned invasion.

The invasion of Algeria and its gradual colonization did not go unchallenged. Djebar is a descendant of the Beni Menacer ethnic group. For almost a century, more precisely from 1830 until 1870 the colonists faced fierce resistance. At this juncture, it is worthy to note that such a resistance did not go without flaws as disunion stood in the background resistance making it hard to drive the French out of Algeria.

The Emir Abd El Kader in western Algeria was doing his best to rally the populations of that area while the Dey of Algiers was undertaking to put a halt to any expansion eastward. However, although both were fighting the same enemy, there was no meeting of minds between both leaders due to conflicting ideologies.

Historians assume that Ahmed Bey was in favor of “reformed hierarchy dominated by an aristocracy”; the latter was in favor of “a more egalitarian vision.” The cliveage between both paved the way for the sending of Abd El Kader in captivity in Toulon and subsequently swift colonization. In the course of time, expropriation of land, poverty plagued the lives of Algerians. To make matters worse a piece of legislation known as the Native Code was implemented; it deprived the native of his rights and made of him a second class inhabitant.

That a number of Algerians had had the opportunity to receive French education contributed to the rise of a different form of resistance. Djebar was well placed to write about such resistance as one of her ancestors, Mohammed Ben Aïssa El Berkani, fought with the Algerian nationalist, Emir Abdelkader. This led the French government to condemn his participation and to undertake retaliatory measures.

The measures crystallized in his exclusion from all areas under French control; the obligation for any individual, be he European or native, to deliver him to the authorities, and the obligation for his family to send a member to Cherchell as hostage. The order that the governor of Algeria issued was regarded as

Severe but fair against old Mohammed Berkani-Ben-Aïssa, who after having laid down the arms last year is presently inciting people to rebellion from Cherchell to à Milianah....ordains that Mohammed Berkani-Ben-Aïssa is excluded from the agalik of the Beni Menasser and all parts of Algeria under French control.... Any European or indigenous is requested to arrest him and to deliver him to the law....In the contrary is declared enemy of France....<sup>186</sup>

Likewise, her great-grandfather, Malek Sahraoui El Berkani, also came to lead a rebellion against the French in 1871 that cost him his life; he was killed in battle.

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<sup>186</sup>Journal des débats politiques et littéraires. 2007.

### V.2.3. The Narrator's Experience

In the novel *Fantasia*, the narrator is a woman. Surprisingly, one cannot fail to notice that the narrator reminds of Djébar's very own life and experience. She herself had been raised in a school compound, where her father taught and encouraged her to study. She recalls "a little Arab girl going for the first time, one fall morning, hand in hand with her father." Furthermore, the novel is a combination of her own memory with those of her fellow "sisters", that is women.

The peculiarity lies in that she was luckier for she had the opportunity to go to a French school. Her father transmitted his asset, the French language, to his daughter, who, in turn would use it as a means of expression and a weapon. *Fantasia* is and has to be viewed as the history of colonized Algeria on the one hand and the hope of its people to be independent, on the other hand. It is both the hope of the Algerian woman for independence from the French colonizer, and simultaneously, from the yoke of her male counterpart.

The narrator's going to school did not go unnoticed and did not go without remarks. The reproach was addressed to the father, who, permitting her to go to school showed that he was weak for the place of women was home. Women had to strive to be good mothers, to cook, to sew, to mend, and to take care of the children. In short, women have to strive to be good mothers and good wives. Such an assumption was accepted and defended even by females.

It is no wonder to see women, one fall morning, start lamenting. When, they saw a little girl go to school; foremost when they saw her go to a French school, they started lamenting what they viewed as lack of audacity on the part of her father and, at once, on the inconsistency of the brother. Their feeling was that both should have stood against her; they should have forbidden her going to school.

In sum, they should bear the guilt for, in so behaving, they certainly did not know that sooner or later "misfortune will strike them because any virgin girl, who turns clever, would one day write 'the letter' and here comes the time when the love she writes

about becomes more dangerous than the confined one.” Cherifa, the little girl, would attend school and do her best to learn the language of the colonizer, French.

Learning French was a double-edged sword. It was and still remains a balance of power. French is viewed as the language of the colonizer, an invader, and a language of alienation. The widespread assumption is that it holds within itself knowledge but also the seeds of a foreign culture, the core culture and the peripheral one; in sum, the seeds of alienation.

Cherifa’s learning this language suggested that she would lose her identity as she would be overborne by both cultures. She would, it was too clear for dispute, fall victim to acculturation and alienation. Arabic, on the contrary, suggested faithfulness to one’s identity, foremost it suggested faithfulness to the the sacred, the holy book, the Coran. To avoid learning French implied avoiding cultural imperialism.

Djebar had to embark on a difficult enterprise, to reconcile the two antagonistic views. She had to act in such a manner so as to be open to a foreign culture and, at the same time, remain faithful to her heritage. Djebar’ feeling was that French was and had to be a means rather than an end. She was not the only one. Her father, she writes, was wearing a typically traditional piece of cloth, a fez, and at the same time a European suit.

The way he was dressed suggested indecisiveness. There was not only his difficulty to choose between two identities but also his endeavor: not to be alienated, “This one her (father) a fez on his head, a tall figure standing right in his European suit, carries a satchel, he is a teacher at a French school an Arab little girl in a village of the Algerian Sahel (Fantasia). Such a feeling had been shared by fellow Algerian writers some time earlier.

A well known Algerian novelist, Mohamed Dib, for instance, pointed out that the French language helped him to construct himself. This construct, he said, did not prevent him from regarding himself as the writer of the people; he was no puppet. Dib in an interview with Said Radjef from the daily, *Le Matin d’Algérie*, told him in substance: “I constructed myself with the French language but I have always been the

writer of the people.”<sup>187</sup> After the interview had been over, Radjef wrote that:

Dib like a scientist of the enlightenment gave all that he had to French written Algerian literature without renouncing identity. Neither Westerner, nor European; Mohammed Dib has translated Algeria but has not given up his values, his beliefs and his traditions.<sup>188</sup>

The use of the first pronoun singular in her narrative denotes the quest of existence. For Djébar, women had been relegated for a long time in the background of history. She is obliged to write in French even though she has some regrets doing it as she considers it as the language of the enemy:

This language was formerly used to entomb my people; when write it today I feel like the messenger of old, who bore a sealed missive which might sentence him to death or to the dungeon. By laying myself bare in this language I start a fire which may consume me for attempting an autobiography in the former enemy's language...<sup>189</sup>

Djébar does not complete the thought, yet she does not need to clarify that writing French makes her, as it were, an outcast as well as a trickster, reburying her kin many times over with her words. She built up a feeling of alienation from her own particular countrywomen, particularly, a phonetic and a linguistic one, because she wrote in French and they did not.

The more she utilized French, the more she felt a sense of guilt. Using French even made her feel disengaged from her own particular mother, whose first language was Arabic and who came to learn it only to be able to speak French not to write it. This feeling is plainly expressed in the introduction of her book, *So Vast the Prison*, in which she says:

Voiceless, cut off from my mother's words by some trick of memory, I managed to pass through the dark waters of the corridor, miraculously inviolate, not even guessing at the enclosing walls. The shock of the first words blurted out: the

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<sup>187</sup> Said, Radjef, *Mohammed Dib, pivot des cultures et civilisations*, (Le Matin d'Algérie, 14 Sept 2012).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Priscilla, Ringrose, *Assia Djébar in Dialogue with Feminism*, (Rodopi, New York, 2006), p. 62.



blurted out: the truth emerging from a break in my stammering voice. From what nocturnal reef of pleasure did I manage to wrest this truth?<sup>190</sup>

The continuous battle to unite what cannot ever or will not ever fit together defines Djébar's intellectualism and moving characters. She perceives that even in case she despised the irreconcilability, without it, her intellect would not have had the lavishness that permitted her to keep in touch with her novel. It is her French instruction that gave her entrance to the French record of the colonization of Algeria which lasted for 132, from 1830 to 1962. Then again, Djébar's capacity to communicate in Arabic enabled her to get oral records of the Arabic experiences during the War of Independence from 1954-1962, particularly the encounter with individual women.

Perceiving that the French and Algerian parts of history, and her own particular life, could in no manner be brought together whatever the way, Djébar chose to display them as a parade of flashing recollections. In the Introduction to *Fantasia*, Dorothy Blair calls *Fantasia* "A historical pageant of the vicissitudes of [Djébar's] native country [which] covers the capture of Algiers in 1830 to the War of Independence of 1954-1962.

As per the chapters devoted to the War of Independence, Djébar, as a historian, drew on the archives and disinterred rather little-known eye-witness accounts. The latter had been written at the time by artists, obscure officers, publicists (presently called war correspondents) and various camp-followers. In sum, Debar, "for the War of Independence, she relied on the oral testimony of women who took part in the struggle [...]"

Being well aware and ever keeping in mind her goal, to make women's stories part of her own, Djébar intentionally obscures all of the recollections in her exhibition. This move also includes the story of her life. The intent was to make it excessively troublesome. Consequently, it became utterly impossible to recognize where one's memory started and the following closures.

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<sup>190</sup>Debra, Kelly, *Autobiography and Independence: Selfhood and Creativity in North African Postcolonial Writing in French*, ( Liverpool University Press, 2005), p.252.

The characters in the story are introduced by the personal pronoun “I.” In this light, it becomes hardly clear who the “I” represents. Regularly, no name is given at all. And, order to add to the perplexity, Djébar mixes the stories in her book. Some chapters examine her own particular life; some tell the story of the showdowns with the French during the 1830s; and some tell the stories of other women. To do this construct, Djébar starts many chapters with “I.” For instance, the second chapter starts, “I could well have been my brother's confidante when he first took to the hills to join the maquis [...]”

By intentionally mingling these “I's” together, one can safely assume that she tried to relate herself with the identity of the harem and of the Sheharazadic days of oral convention and narrating. In the sole way, she would become not only a member of the resistance of Algerian women of the past but also a piece of their oral tradition by recounting their stories.

#### V. 2. 4. Representation of Females Characters

In writing her book, Djébar had to consider the role of her characters. She had to recount the stories of women amidst the war of liberation. Due to the length and force of the battle, Algerian men, in the long run, had no real option except to permit women to join the resistance in 1955. Such a decision constituted an unimaginable stride for an Islamic culture. Women turned out to be part of the mujahedeen or underground resistance associated with the F.L.N (National liberation Front).

After the war had ended, the Algerian undertook to reconsider the women's' support. Their presence was henceforth perceived as a disgrace and a stain on women's honor, and simultaneously, disgrace and stain to their own. Women were partaking in all parts of the war. They conveyed sustenance to the mujahidin, fought in the maquis; in the hills, and carrying weapons over checkpoints.

During the war women would switch forward and back. They wore the veil and wore the westernized apparel. The aim was to move unnoticed by the French soldiers at checkpoints. Getting them at checkpoints or battling in the slopes, the French acknowledged the role they played. They knew that they were primordial to the development of the resistance movement. Given their role, the French automatically came to the conclu-

sion that the best manner to break the FLN moral was to harass and persecute Algerian women

Women detainees could be utilized as the “feeble” connection. They deemed, would break the Algerian resistance. Consequently, women became subject to examination, interrogation, torment; foremost they subject to torture. This policy, if anything, was a French principle of colonization. Any woman, who went uncovered, increased the breakdown of the Algerian culture and made it simpler to force western tenets.

The French authorities realized that the ideal approach to overcome and command the Algerian men was to deal with Algerian women. This was undertaken under the pretense of advancing their equivalent rights. On the off chance that the Algerian women could be made more “French” in their mores and conduct, they thus changed the Algerian societal structure, in particular, the role of Algerian men.

The French set out on an aspiring project: to assign themselves this mission. They utilized three strategies to win women to their side. To begin with, they started a concentrated battle aiming at teaching young girls in French schools. Second, in their endeavors to “socialize” the Algerian women, they pursued a war of purposeful publicity against the utilization of the veil. Last, in 1958, while the war was raging, they granted women the right to vote. As might be expected, for the Algerian male, these campaigns and changes were simply unacceptable.

For the males, each Moslem had to consider the perfect lady to be the “Umm” or Mediterranean mamma. They needed their sisters, spouses, mothers, and grandmothers to adjust to this ideal. The Muslim males held the female as the focal point of the family unit and the core of the family. This was the aggregate of her part. Islamic ladies had dependably been carefully shut away in the harem; kept shielded in a prohibitive world. Yet, interestingly, amid their battle against the French, women were subjected to physical and mental threats. Despite the threats, men, generally, showed weakness and incapability to react.

Indeed, Algerian males reluctantly subjected their women to much risk. The French quickly understood how to utilize their socially instilled authoritative opinion of protecting their women against Algerian men. Putting women in mischievous way pre-

sented Algerian men to their most noteworthy social apprehension. In the meantime, French fixation on unveiling the harem, pushed Algerian men to oppose colonization significantly and all the more fiercely over the country.

Many writers attempted to display their opinion on this issue. Among these, one finds the Martinican-born writer, Fanon. He exhibits the chaos and disorders that resulted from the war in his book entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (French: *Les Damnés de la Terre*; 1961). Fanon gives “a psychiatric and psychologic examination of the dehumanizing impacts of colonization upon the individual, and the country.”

Fanon also presents a case entitled “the impotence in an Algerian following the rape of his wife” by a young man named B. The husband decides to give up on his wife after hearing of her rape by French soldiers and commences a relationship with another woman. This man comes to realize his mistake and admits the following:

I realize that they'd raped her because they were looking for me. In fact, it was to punish her for keeping silent that she'd been violated. She could have very well told them at least the name of one of the chaps in the movement, and from that they could have searched out the whole network, destroyed it, and maybe even arrested me.<sup>191</sup>

Having admitted his mistake, B\_ deemed wiser to take his wife back. This story illustrates how women frequently demonstrated themselves to be significantly more grounded than male counterparts. Regardless of whether men needed to let it out, it was who collapsed, as in B\_'s story, while women accepted their situation with stoicism. Since Algerian women were tormented by the French, at whatever point they entered European environment, they were very anxious, afraid, and uncomfortable. Fanon clarified by saying:

The Algerian woman, the young Algerian woman -- except for a very few students (who, besides, never have the same ease as their European counterparts) -- must overcome a multiplicity of inner resistances, of subjectively organized fears, of emotions.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Fanon, Frantz. *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 46-47.

<sup>192</sup>Op.cit., p. 52.

Given these data, Djébar felt compelled to tackle the act of freeing women. She did this by delicately vocalizing their past ordeal because she was bringing them into the space of the colonizer - that is re-presenting them to their French tormenters. This was effected through expounding on their pain in a book, in French, and accessible to French perusers.

Conventional Islamic Algerian women do not eagerly uncover any piece of themselves to the world, particularly not in a book written in the colonizers "language" as Djébar's may have. They are excessively used to veiling their feelings. To add to this issue, both the French colonists, as hesitant to talk about the subject of torment as Algerians themselves, had been quite unwilling to address this issue.

The main French government ordered accounts of torment. The Wilhelm Report tended to downplay the seriousness and utilized euphemism to blur the offensiveness which was in progress. Even among themselves, Algerian women deliberately utilized euphemistic terms to discuss their torment, particularly rape. This use is due to the fact that in Islamic culture, women are not to talk about such matters; they are taboo; rape plainly being the most exceedingly terrible situation. Djébar's passages on the Independence War represent the utilization of backhanded terms: "To say the private, the Arabic word 'damage', or at the most, 'hurt'; "Sister, did you ever endure 'harm?'" The organization of Djébar's book is another strategy of representing women. The inconclusive "1" not only associates but also ensures.

This equivocal reference to a man without claiming a name is agreeable. It is in light of the fact that in conventional Algerian culture, connections amongst men and women are never to be alluded to by name. Men and women keep a specific separation from each other. This detachedness between genders is likewise upheld by the diverse physical spaces every sex possesses: public for men and domestic for women.

By Djébar's parents' generation, the relationship amongst men and women started changing. Directly after the War of Independence, as yet utilizing the influence, women had picked up from their vital parts in the battling; they were permitted to affirm themselves as they had never done.

Djebar astutely utilizes the Algerian custom of non-naming to disassociate women from the graphicness of their experiences. She does not attempt to “shroud” the realities of torment and enduring. However, she finds diverse approaches to uncover them. She additionally utilizes different sorts of euphemisms: for instance, in the chapter titled “Voice,” she recounts the narrative of a woman who relates her story detachedly. The lady says, “My daughter and my sister (it was before she died) started tailing me.”

In this modest representation of the truth of death is tossed in as though an idea in retrospect. The lady proceeds with her story saying, “[...] they questioned me with electricity until [...] until I thought I'd die!” Djebar leaves all points of interest of the torment. All that we know is that electricity was utilized, which still obviously passes on violence.

The way Djebar treats women's issues again demonstrates why some Algerians have permitted their recollections to stay divided. The fragmentation of time makes the truth of Algerian colonization and the War of Independence “escapable.” Djebar deletes any hint of typical linear time (the sense of time stereotypically connected with occidental or western culture) in her novel and rather revises time to give it a non-direct stream.

The first Chapter, for instance, starts in present day times, and all of a sudden, in the second section, the reader is transported back about 10 years prior to 1830 and right to the start of French colonization. Djebar's non-linear method of organizing out the parts lightens a portion of the greatness of the history she is talking about.

The sections switch forward and backward between the early time of French colonization and modern times. She is eventually ready to escape from the 1840s and is not “caught in the past” to be always compelled to manage the old sufferings of Algerian conquest. So, when Algerians permit their recollections to stay broken, they appear to be less painful to confront.

One can assume that Djebar's main concern was to protect Algerian women from stereotypes and fantasies. Therefore, liberating women from their idealized pictures was the way she attempted to ensure the respect and private space of women in her book.

She sought to counter the language already used to portray the colonization of Algeria which was full of man-women gender symbolism.

For Simpson Fletcher Yael in *Irresistible Seductions: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria Around 1930*, “Not only were French men sexualized and Algerian women eroticized, but also the land, labor, and the 'exotic' were seen in male or female terms.”<sup>193</sup> The Algerian women were attacked on all sides. They were as much bound by the European colonizers' exotic pictures of them as by the traditional perspective of women as maid and mother held by their own particular siblings, fathers, and spouses. In fact, *Fantasia* is a twofold criticism of how both French and Islamic Algerian men tried to utilize the veiled Algerian women as a way to win their fights.

Among the representations Djebbar offers in her book are women's plight and the violence the Algerian males exercised men towards women. An instance of that is one of the stories mentioned in *Fantasia*. In one chapter, she tells the story of a woman who spurns an Algerian man, finding the situation unacceptable and utilizing the *fantaziya*, a custom of shooting weapons noticeable all around and yelling shouts while on horseback, he treads her to death underneath his horse's hooves as he shouts out his victory over her. On the off chance that he cannot have her, no other man will.

Djebbar endeavors to turn the Europeans' dreamlike orientalist picture of the veiled Algerian woman, (the harem woman) against the colonizers themselves. In the meantime, she likewise fights against the desire of her own society, the wish of males to once again veil their women and lock them away in the harem. For instance, the Algerians embraced a voting framework which counted votes by family unit.

Frequently, on the grounds that males were the main educated family individuals, they would vote in favor of all the illiterate women of the house. Opponents like the women's activists and democrats depicted such a move as “a virtual stealing of voices,

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<sup>193</sup>Simpson, Fletcher Yael, *Irresistible Seductions: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria Around 1930*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2011), p.194.

particularly women's voices since they constitute the majority of the uneducated population.”

To permit the illiterate women to speak, Djébar adjusts oral custom to make a composed record of women's sufferings, accounts which may, in one way or another, be lost. As she clarified in an article on women in modern society, the world of women, overshadowed both socially and politically and was affected indirectly by all that went on although, alas, no written testimony of this has survived.

The Algerian female finds herself confronted to a difficulty, for she cannot discover freedom and expression of herself through either her own way of life or the colonizers'. In all probability, the main way that such a freedom (at least a psychological one since a physical one is practically unimaginable) might be conceivable is through a “fantasy.”

At one point, Djébar, in her disappointment, chose to quit writing altogether. As Clarisse Zimra stated “...she (Djébar) told me that she had come to her decision to give up writing because she could not reach her female compatriots” since her first and main ambition was, in reality, to give Algerian women the voice that society had for long denied them.

Novels, like Djébar's *Fantasia* present dramatic cases of the turmoil left by colonization. Djébar's *Fantasia* is evidence that the psychological “wreckage” of colonization exceeded the physical. Be that as it may, picking through the debris of history, calling recollections, and struggling with the French words she writes, to cite Djébar, “I may start a fire which may consume me.” Writers like Djébar walked a fine line keeping in mind the end goal to reconquer history and give a voice back to their kin. At times, as Djébar feared, they could turn out to be excessively consumed by the “fire of their recollections.”

Djébar's works have turned out to be a piece of a vast postcolonial reaction against Algeria's previous colonizers. In any case, her attacks and criticism have included some significant pitfalls, for digging up recollections, has, in truth, demonstrated misleading, frequently bringing about harm when proposing to offer assistance.



It is important to note that Algerian authors have held onto postcolonial literature as an intellectual method for arguing the legacy of their French conquerors, and the claim of this hypothesis is evident. Post-colonialism, has become the most prominent artistic weapon to fight the past dominance of Europeans. In other words, it is a way for Algerians to claim a past in which they were viewed as primitive and uncivilized. To back the overall picture de Maupassant drew of Algerians was that of a “strange, childish population which has remained primitive as in the birth of races”<sup>194</sup> living in a country which was nothing but “awaiting an organizing genius who could make France benefit from its unexploited and dormant resources.”<sup>195</sup>

Post-colonialism literature has provided Algerians with a response. The latter aimed to counter the stereotypes placed on them by France's orientalism. One may safely assume that it is the closest policy to reentering and changing history on the grounds that through writing, Algerians can rebuild the past and reclaim their way of life and language from the French. By far postcolonial literature tried to make another memory of the past in which the Algerians are not the orientalized, oppressed primitives, but rather, the rebels who have defeated their French control.

For instance, in *Fantasia* that Djébar controls the recollections of 1830 and of the Independence War through the dream of her composition. She clearly knows when to start and end the fantasy of the past that she has made, particularly, when it turns out to be excessively nightmarish. Indeed, even in the most violent passages on the Independence War, she can alter the fear of history.

It is also clear that she gives an important chance to women. She granted them an opportunity to tell their “actual story”, a story veiled in silence by the West as well as by their own male-dominated culture. Following this, women got the aspiration to end out their silence. She has given them added impetus to find out another approach to express the pain of the past, and they have turned to postcolonial dialect as their answer. For Algerian women, postcolonial language gave them a space where they could finally talk about their dismissed history.

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<sup>194</sup> Guy, Maupassant de, *Oeuvres complètes de Guy de Maupassant*. Au Soleil (Paris: Conard, 1908-1910), p.90.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter Six

### Re/Misrepresentation of Women and Men in the Algerian Novel

#### VI. 1.Representation of Algerian Women by Male Novelists

##### VI.1.1. The Figurative Representation

VI.1.1.1.Kateb Yacine, *Nedjma*

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## Chapter Six

### Re/Misrepresentation of Women and Men in the Algerian Novel

#### VI. 1. Representation of Algerian Women by Male Novelists

It is undeniable that Algerian women had taken part and fought as equals to men during the Algerian war. In so doing, they have gained a new identity and implicitly imposed a measure of acknowledgment from their male counterparts. They also have been matter of literary controversies, as some authors sought to speak about and represent them while others, deliberately or unconsciously passed over.

It is worthy to note that the majority of Algerian writers had rather opted and concentrated on male characters. Thus, the female characters depicted in these books are not confronted to the same apprehension and angst as male characters. Through their writings, these authors managed to convey the idea that women did not experience the trauma that men had face during the colonial rule.

In actuality, the responsibilities of women were thus restricted either to the endeavours to cater food for the family or housekeeping. For instance, the character Aini in *Algérie*, written by the novelist, Mohamed Dib, describes the daily struggles this female character goes through to feed her family. In other cases, women are mentioned and portrayed only with the view to approach the sterility issue they went through and the manner this private subject affected them both emotionally and socially. The character is better represented in Mouloud Memmri's *La colline oubliée*.

These novelists chose to tackle the subject of women from a socio-realistic point of view as Zahia Smail put it, and thus came to describe them as mothers, wives, and in some instances, as lovers. Other novelists went rather on the journey of a symbolic image. To put it differently, some novelists such as Kateb Yacine in *Nedjma* and Mouloud Feroun in *Les Chemins qui montent* transmitted the image of the Algerian woman as an image of a goddess and a symbol of purity.

## VI.1.1. The Figurative Representation

### VI.1.1.1. Kateb Yacine, *Nedjma*

Nedjma, a totalement bouleversé l'écriture maghrébine. Il y a un avant et un après Nedjma. Que l'on s'y réfère ou pas, après Nedjma on ne pouvait plus écrire sans tenir compte, même si on ne le connaissait pas vraiment. Beaucoup n'ont pas obligatoirement lu Nedjma, c'est sans importance, le livre est là malgré tout. C'est comme ça. L'évidence du mythe est qu'il travaille tout un chacun, consciemment ou inconsciemment (Tengour).

The novel *Nedjma*, which means “star” in Arabic, was written during 1945 and was published two years after the beginning of the French-Algerian conflict. Several critiques perceived it as a direct contribution to the national struggle. In fact, *Nedjma* and other works by Kateb Yacine have been ascribed great political effectiveness. Nevertheless, this does not in any way imply, to borrow, a distortion of “the complex ways in which Kateb Yacine's ongoing literary project has interacted with the causal processes that account for the major historical and political changes that have taken place in modern Algeria.”

During this period the writer had experienced the rise in power of nationalistic claims till the event on May 8, 1945, more precisely, the massacre of Setif when France was celebrating the Armistice. Just as his novel *Nedjma*, Kateb Yacine bears the wounds of this conflict. It is sure, as Jacqueline Arnaud advances, that the novel does not find its referent in the war in Algeria. Yet, the writing process of *Nedjma* had begun at a time, when Algeria stopped dreaming about integration and started considering independence. This novel has therefore a prophetic dimension on the conflict that ensued which gives it a pivotal and legitimate place in the analysis of the trauma of the war in Algerian literature.

*Nedjma* is, beside the definition, the name of an enigmatic woman whose story is linked to the lives of four fundamental male characters: Mustapha, Mourad, Lakhdar and Rachid. All four are altogether connected to this mysterious woman by their affection for her and their companionship. She is the daughter of a French Jewish woman and an unknown Arab man.

As a consequence of the demise of her mother and the deserting of her father, Nedjma is raised by a moderately rich Arab couple instructed in the French framework and who cannot deliver children of their own and instructed in the French framework. When Nedjma's adoptive father, her mother forges a close acquaintance with another dowager in a practically identical social position to her own and weds Nedjma to her son. The wedding constituted an indication of her affection and friendship.

The beautiful and dazzling Nedjma, as Kateb Yacine describes her, goes along keeping in mind her supportive mother. However, she never really likes her bearded and very conservative spouse. In spite of her marriage, she has numerous suitors; one even goes further till abducting her. Actually, the story is to a great extent organized around their yearning for her and the disturbance caused in their lives.

All four pretenders work for M. Ernest, a French colonial settler. The story reports all four had been imprisoned at some time. Mourad had been imprisoned for going on strike in his French business; Mustapha and Lakhdar for their cooperation in the demonstration of May 8, 194, when Algerians went to the street to demand for independence, and Rachid for maintaining a strategic distance from military conscription. At the same time, the novel depicts four different characters: three cousins originating from a similar precursor, Sidi Ahmed, Si Mokhtar and Rachid's father.

It is of an utmost importance to underline the fact that numerous interpretations incline toward perusing Nedjma as a moral story for Algeria referring to her association with her four suitors, Mourad, Rachid, Lakhdar, and Mustapha as the root of this examination. Thus, the four men symbolize each of the four noteworthy historical intruders of Algeria, contending brands of patriotism, and the cultural heterogeneity of Algeria.

After scrutiny, one notices that Kateb Yacine is typical like the Algerian novelists of his era. He like fellow novelists, have seen and considered their national realities through verifiable and emblematic accounts. Kateb Yacine suggests that history can be clarified more adequately by myth and fiction than by history and reportage. Therefore, instead of being just a new literary phenomenon, this assumption is related with a more extensive feeling in the Algerian culture.

All in all, *Nedjma* is the focal character of the novel and it pulls in numerous sollicitors. The metaphoric name had been chosen with great delicacy and intricacy. It also held beneath an implicit message. Yacine attempts to compare it to the light which opens the best approach to predetermination, similarly as Algeria is desired by numerous different nations. Nevertheless and in any case, she remains a fragile lady. She remains a creature from blood who, by some strange thoughtful enchantment, is the question of yearning for four primary male characters and the wellspring of the interest and contentions that gap them.

Similarly as Nedjma's mother caused desire among the individuals from the tribe, Nedjma is a reason for debate between the four opponents. Their exclusive plan of action is to claim Nedjma and send her back to the genealogical site by kidnapping her.

In the same line of thought, the character Nedjma is introduced in the novel in a non-conventional manner. It is a ghostly apparition as it refers to a woman standing all by herself on the terrace of the house. This description is in actuality purposeful as it juxtaposes the idea of haunting the male protagonists. At the same time the main character is not a substantial one with dialogues and consciousness. To this intent, a critique under the name of Bernard Arseu contended that

both the ghostly woman as well as the changing landscape of the space she occupies suggests a sense of fatality: The ghost simile dominating the whole section thus not only stresses Nedjma's elusive condition but also evokes the fatalistic character of the location in the narrator's superstitious mind...as well as the geographical and historical fatality of the land.<sup>196</sup>

Arseu points out to the complexity of the characters and the myriad identities they go through. He uses the example of Mustapha and ascribes him “a superstitious mind” instead of real and logical one. In fact, the awareness of the characters extends their own existence and history. Consequently, the personality of Nedjma—becomes a reality made obvious by the different viewpoints all through the story. Arseu also calls atten

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<sup>196</sup>Arseu, Bernard, *Counterhegemonic Discourse from the Maghreb: The Poetics of Kateb's Fiction*, (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993).

-tion to the impression they confer to her. He also alludes to the way that Nedjma is frequently talked about as far as her clothes are concerned.

All protagonists perceived her even when she was not physically present. When she came and they could really see her, they did not question the legitimacy of their vision. In his book *The Absence of Itinerary in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma*, the critique, Louis Termaine stresses the fascination she exerted on them; she writes:

Nedjma has a tremendous attraction on the men closest to her, disrupting their lives and distorting their ability to think and act purposefully. She does this not because she is consciously and willfully malevolent, but simply because she is Nedjma—beautiful, mysterious, and, as the “star” of the tribe, self-centered in the extreme from the time of childhood.<sup>197</sup>

From the abovementioned quotation, one understands that she is a pompous, spoiled and selfish lady who does not understand that her excellence ruins the lives of the men around her. Uncovering herself to them, and even the fact of giving herself a chance to be spied upon, keeps them from pursuing their lives and acting in agreement with their unrest.

Her personality and character are the center of the book. This is not only because she is the main protagonist but also because of the symbolism she bears. She is, as a critique would describe her, the center where characters converge and diverge. She is mirrored via their perceptions; their realities; actions; reactions, and histories and their language. The four men live in a perpetual state of irritation; they all aspire to a plausible union and know at the same time the impractical and unattainable situation. They all well know that Nedjma can belong to all men.

In this enigmatic mold, Kateb Yacine focuses on the allegory that makes up the amalgam that is the post-colonial national reality. His scope of interest relies on the national identities that in the long run solidified in freedom and demonstrated that he had a strong feeling regarding the national sentiments of the people.

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<sup>197</sup>Louis, Termaine, *The Absence of Itinerary in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma Research in African Literatures*, (10. 1. 1979), p.16.

#### VI.1.1.2. Mouloud Feraoun, *Les Chemins qui montent*

During the 1950s, Algerian literature attended a wave of flowering novels. Many Algerian novelists sought to place the questions of identity and the relationship with the colonial presence at the centre of their concern. Far from reproducing the dichotomy in vogue between France as colonizer and Algeria as a colonized country, these works unfolded, examined, and nuanced the plurality of identities and affiliation that were at the heart of the situations in which were found the characters and their creators. In fact, the majority of these novels bore an autobiographical character, which attests of a preference of these authors for this narrative mode.

The works of Mouloud Feroun are among the best examples of the above mentioned narrative mode. He wrote many books among these, one finds three pivotal. The first novel is entitled *Le Fils Du Pauvre*. Published in the 1950s, it is considered as teaching novel as it delineates the story of the childhood and learning of the young Fouroulou Menrad.

The story is largely inspired of the author's personal life, which has had the same child's journey. In fact, the protagonist's name—Menrad Fouroulou—is a re-arranged word or an anagram of Mouloud Feraoun. The main release of *Le Fils du pauvre* was devoted to Feraoun's preferred teachers, *à mes maîtres vénérés* as he declared.

It is of the utmost importance to underline that before the *French Éditions du Seuil* distributed *Le Fils du pauvre*, editors solicited Feraoun to expel the parts from his account that had trait to the period he spent at the *Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs*. The parts concerned the first couple of years he spent as as an educator in Kabylia and the whole second piece of the book which dealt with the Algerians' circumstances amid and following World War II. This purposeful cut is noteworthy in light of the fact that it is in these segments of the book that Feraoun cruelly examined and expressed his dissatisfaction with France; the Vichy Administration; the Gaulists, and the “roumis.”

His novels, *La Terre et Le Sang* published in 1953 and *Les Chemins qui Montent* in 1957 are the second and third respectively which Robert Elba and Martine Mathieu-Job considered as a "single novel." They successively tell the story of a couple's return to



the Kabylie after an exile in France. They also tell the story of a mulatto's son in search of a proper identity.

The novel is not an ordinary book on a given love story, even if the main characters Dahbia and Amer live a passionate story. The novel verges on the absurd for a multitude of reasons. Unlike other novels, the writer deliberately chose to start his novel with the end, that is to say the death of the protagonist named Amer. When the presumed lover of Dahbia dies, she goes on a multitude of feelings and contradictions.

Actually, it is not as readers often have the habit of reading it. It is not an idyll that begins in a very beautiful way and then ends up falling into the unpredictable vagaries of life with the assurance of an epilogue that ends up in either an unhappy or happy way. It is argued that it cannot be compared to for instance *L'amour au temps du Choléra* by Garcia Marquez, or *A farewell to Arms* penned by Ernest Hemingway where love triumphs at the end

The novel also demarcates itself with regard to its profoundness and complexity. And this is where, one can safely assume, the genius of the author lies. The choice of the characters constitutes another difference as Dahbia, the main character, is not a Kabyle woman, as there were thousands of them at the time. She is from d'Ighil N'ezman and is of Christian faith. She is a complex character who suffered a trauma in her childhood, the day her father abruptly revealed to her that he was not her real father. She was nine years old and was seriously ill; he said to her: "Petite vermine, tu peux crever, tu n'es pas ma fille!"

Dahbia has an unusual sensitivity. It is no coincidence that she falls in love with the son of Madame Amer, a son a kabyle father and a French mother. In fact, she never understands his sense of sacrifice, his rejection of selfishness and his total dedication to the poor and the unfortunate.

Pourquoi passe-t-il sous silence sa générosité, sa bonté pour les humbles, son mépris pour les grands, les riches, l'injustice et le mensonge ? (...) Au fond ce que chacun lui reproche, c'est sa franchise, son refus d'accepter l'hypocrisie générale qui est ici la règle de conduite. <sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Mouloud Feraoun , Les Chemins qui montent, p.121.

Amer is an idealist. He is desperate because the world he dreams of does not exist and cannot exist. Pessimistic too, the novel opens with the mourning of his suicide. Dahbia has forged a strong personality in poverty and emotional deprivation. Actually, her parents were the most deprived of the community. Then, Is Amer her Charming Prince? Nothing is less obvious. It appears to her that Amer does not like her especially although he is good and generous. Consequently, Dahbia comes to conclude that she was but a simple idea in the head of the one she loved.

The author also attempts to denounce through his novels' characters the society's principles. He explains how marriages are arranged and how people like Dahbia and Amer find themselves castigated, pointed out and even humiliated because of their difference. Through the character of Amer, he shows out the hatred that the situation generates. In fact, in his diary, Amer expounds his anger and hatred towards his fellow villagers.

He goes till to wish being never born which at the same time shows his un-attachment towards his origins. Thus, as he put it "j'aurais, peut être moins souffert ailleurs, je ne serais pas si totalement Kabyle. Tu sais, je ne t'en aurais pas voulu."<sup>199</sup> The disappearance of the mother of Amer is indeed a painful event which devastates him. Overnight, Amer finds himself alone.

The fact of being French and Algerian at the same time doesn't help him, on the contrary it brings him embarrassment. He is named and referred to as a "bicot, Noraf or Ratton" and finds himself dismissed by the two sides. Along this, he experiences a protracted personality and identity crisis, raising doubt about his blended origin, his French education and his acclaim for the French "cultivating mission" which makes him declare:

Puis-je d'un seul coup oublier mon origine semi-française,  
l'école française, la justice française, l'intelligence française, la

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<sup>199</sup>Mouloud, Feraoun, *Les Chemins qui montent*, p.127.

force française, toutes mes admirations de semi-français pour l'écrasante supériorité française".les chemins qui montent page.<sup>200</sup>

The French compelled him to comprehend that France is not his country but rather Algeria and that outside it he would dependably be viewed as an outsider Therefore, Amer becomes baffled and deceived to the point that his past acclaim and intrigue transforms into sharp disdain and repugnance compelling him to leave France and come back to his own particular nation Algeria, which now appears dearer and more alluring.

J'ai eu hâte de partir, d'aller le revoir, pour en prendre possession, le fouler de mes pieds, emplir mes yeux de ses différents horizons, respirer son air chaud, recevoir son soleil brûlant, avaler sa poussière blanche, dévorer à pleine dents ses fruits sucrés, courir après ses filles brunes page.<sup>201</sup>

After having made a decision of coming back to Algeria, Amer builds up high expectations tThat of a new beginning and a beautiful free country. Nevertheless, Amer finds to his big surprise and profound disenchantment that Algiers does not belong to Algerians now but rather to the French which makes him shout win appall at the well off colons who took everything.

The situation really impacts him, and thus, his last dreams are obliterated. Now he feels illegitimate, poor, and dismissed by both the French and his own countrymen on the one hand and he feels denied by his very mother country on the other hand. Following this, Amer chooses to come back to his village, where at any rate nobody could tell him "go away." Surprisingly, his neighbours do not endorse of his arrival a fact that breeds his anger and mortifies him.

The novel subsumes another character that plays a pivotal role named Mokrane. The latter is represented as an evil person, someone who hurts people and does them harm. Mokrane likes and is attracted to Dehbia but he would never marry her because of her background. He even thinks that she deserves to be destroyed. Mokrane later marries a

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<sup>200</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>201</sup>Op.cit., 127.

friend of Dehbia named Ouiza. The character of Mokrane does not have issues only with Dehbia but with Amer too. He suspects them to have feelings for each other and tries to intervene in their relationship.

This relationship is dear to Amer. Actually for him Dehbia symbolizes myriad of things such as purity and innocence. He also knows the turmoil she has through been through because of her society. Nevertheless, at a particular juncture in the book, Amer finds himself confused. Despite his persuasion of their love, he strongly believes that neither his community, nor his position in a colonized nation, where occupations are rare, will enable him to make Dehbia happy. To this intent he declares,

Dehbia, tu es faite pour moi. Je ne dis pas non, vois-tu. Mais quoi, j'aimerais bien que tu aies un trousseau de mariée. J'aimerais t'offrir une table, des chaises, et que tu mènes, l'humble existence des filles du peuple, que tu tournes un robinet pour avoir de l'eau, que tu aies des assiettes blanches, toute une pile, et que dans ces assiettes tu puisses mettre quelque chose ... Puis-je te garantir de la faim, du froid, te soigner à l'auréomycine, t'empêcher d'avoir des enfants ou, eux, les empêcher de souffrir.<sup>202</sup>

After having lived in tumult and anxiety, Amer decides that he should not be part of this life and considers that living like his people with the same principles and ethics would be an incredible error. He subsequently declines to father other crossbreeds who might endure like him, if not more. Therefore, he could not be saved from nihilism even by the dearest person that is to say by Dehbia.

The author portrays him as unfit to defeat his isolation and estrangement. The only and permanent thing he thinks about is suicide. He considers it to be a method for dismissing the hopeless condition he needed to persevere in. By this, the author attempts to portray this dismissal as a demonstration of revolt as well as vengeance.

In fact, Amer suffered from adolescence to manhood and encountered a changeless feeling of dismissal. Everything was and had been wrong around him he was dismissed by both the villagers and the French. He could not, in this way, find a shelter on either

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<sup>202</sup>Op.cit., 197.

side. To vindicate himself he rejected the two sides, as well as Dehbia who had sought to help him and urged his opponent Mokrane to put an end to his predicament, to spare him from the overwhelming weight he has needed to convey unwillingly

In this spirit, one can clearly understand that Feraoun's point was to delineate the situation of Algerians, those who believed in France and its "civilizing mission." It is important to note that their impressments were so important that it geared them towards defying their own principles and customs. He explains how these left their country and went to France considering it as a "mère patrie."

Nevertheless, shortly after their arrival, they noticed that everything was just an allure. They were dismissed, rejected, and humiliated. In this way, in the wake of finding that the standards of the "acculturating mission" were minor falsehoods, and that France was not their mère Patrie as they thought, they all ended up by coming back. To this Feroun acknowledges,

Dans *Les Chemins qui montent*, ce que j'ai voulu dépeindre ... C'est le désarroi d'une génération à demi-évoluée, prête à se fondre dans le monde moderne, une génération digne d'intérêt, qui mérite d'être sauvée et qui, selon les apparences, n'aura bientôt d'autre choix que de renoncer à elle-même ou de disparaître.<sup>203</sup>

#### VI.1.2. The Social Representation

In the abovementioned paragraphs were introduced two characters by two eminent writers, Kateb Yacine and Mouloud Feroun respectively. Each writer's novel subsumed a female protagonist. The latter were represented more or less seemingly, they shared many common points. As it was noted, Nedjma and Dehbia cannot trace back their origins as far as their paternity is concerned. In fact, Dehbia is the offspring of an Algerian woman and a Christian man, whereas Nedjma comes from a Frenchwoman and an Algerian man. They both code-switch when it comes to speaking because they talk both

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<sup>203</sup>Mouloud, Feraoun, *Lettres a ses amis*, p.122.

French and nearby Algerian dialects (Dehbia speaks Berber, Nedjma communicates in Arabic). But the most important similitude relies on the restraints they persevere as women in an Algerian society.

It is of an utmost importance to limn the symbolic and figurative representation that these writers gave to women through their novels. Actually, with further analysis, one can clearly notice that both Nedjma and Dehbia were portrayed and represented as lovely, sweet, pretty women, and more importantly, having the energy of pulling in men. The two novels share a similitude as far these characters are concerned. Both of Yacine and Feroun corroborated the theory that these women led men to their annihilation and end. Nedjma was viewed as a “femme fatale.”

Le souvenir de la partie perdue et de la femme fatale, stérile et fatale, femme de rien, ravageant dans la nuit passionnelle tout ce qui nous restait de sang, non pour le boire et nous libérer comme autant de flacons vides, non pour le boire à défaut de le verser, mais seulement pour le troubler, stérile et fatale...<sup>204</sup>

Nedjma is also represented as a “salamambo”, a character that was introduced by Gustave Flaubert, a salamambo that will cause the destruction of Rachid, one of the male protagonists in the novel. To this purpose he writes:

... et moi, le vieil orphelin, je devais revivre pour une Salammbô de ma lignée, obscur martyrologue ; il me fallait tenter toujours la même partie trop de fois perdue, afin d’assumer la fin du désastre, de perdre ma Salammbô, et d’abandonner à mon tour la partie, certain d’avoir vidé la coupe d’amertume pour le soulagement de l’inconnu qui me supplantera...<sup>205</sup>

Through a description of a Nedjma, beautiful, harmful and terribly seductive, the writer attempts to describe especially a body in all its state, a body in perpetual movement. The latter is essential in the strategy of seduction. Thus it will lead other characters to become closed to the outside world; they no longer see, hear or feel. It is as if they had lost their benchmarks and were spellbound or in trance. They were now transported and taken to another world, a vulnerable and disarmed world.

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<sup>204</sup>Kateb, Yacine, Nedjma, p. 132.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 176.

They were taken in the nets of the seductive woman. Following the same spirit, Nedjma accesses also to the status of a magician, or rather a sorceress that will bewitch the four characters, who, from their first meetings will not cease to seek and follow her everywhere. She is therefore not only powerful, but also « splendeur toute brute. »<sup>206</sup>

One can clearly notice that the writer juxtaposes the body with seduction. Indeed, the seduction, based on the stage of the body constitutes a powerful counter-power to the phallocracy exerted by men and allows a real power.

Elles ne comprennent pas que la séduction représente la maîtrise de l'univers symbolique, alors que le pouvoir ne représente que la maîtrise de l'univers réel La souveraineté de la séduction est sans commune mesure avec la détention du pouvoir politique.<sup>207</sup>

In fact, it becomes transparent that Kateb Yacine sought a particular representation, that of an object; a symbolized object which subsumed many aspects. She was a woman, a stranger, a goddess and a “fatale” woman. Mireille Djaidier, attests that for Yacine Nedjma was « une inconnue, et d'autres fois étrangère, elle est aussi une femme, une jeune femme ... la femme », elle est « la gazelle en émoi...la chimère... une belle pharmacie.»<sup>208</sup>

Like Nedjma, Dehbia is a subtle, beautiful and mysterious woman. She is the aim of the two characters Amer and Mokrane. Her grace and beauty go until pushing Amer towards disillusion, whose magnificence turns Mokrane frantic and forceful. The writer demonstrates that attraction is strong feeling which can lead people do the un-repairable. The latter is shown when Mokran, who incredibly wants Dehbia to be his but cannot wed her because of her roots, is going to assault the young woman leaving her in misery and despair.

In this part of the story, Feraoun tries to expound on the current situation of women

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<sup>206</sup> Op.cit., p.185.

<sup>207</sup> Jean, Baudrillard, *De la Séduction*, (Gallimard.Paris. 1988°,

<sup>208</sup> Mireille, Djaidier, *Kateb Yacine* In *La littérature maghrébine de langue française*, Ouvrage collectif, sous la direction de Charles Bonn, Naget Khadda et Abdallah Mdarhri-Alaoui, (EDICEFAUPELF, Paris 1996)

in a patriarchal society, a society, where men could commit anything and remain unpunished. He defines the cult of domesticity that empowers women and sometimes oppresses them. The second theme, which is omnipresent and shown in Feraoun's book has trait to marriage. He explains that every woman's faith and future revolves round marriage. Some women will be lucky enough and would marry a pleasant man while others will have to cope with whom they are proposed to.

The financial situation and the hybridity of Dehbia prevent men from wanting to marry her and she is cognizant of that. She confesses « Les jeunes qui me désirent ne cherchent qu'a me salir »<sup>208</sup> She nevertheless defies the perspective of a sexual want, and decides to ignore and overlook the villagers who put her in a position of a Christian and a pariah, notwithstanding her attractiveness. Her mother knows this is a negligible reason. If Dehbia had been rich, all the town men would have requested her hand. Still, she thinks that Amer, who is seemingly like her since he is a hybrid, would probably take her as a spouse. But after his death, both the mother and daughter are in total despair. Therefore, her mother's alternative is to marry her to an old and rich man who had previously asked for her hand. In fact, her mother decides to marry her because in a society like this every woman is to be married no matter her opinion.

Yacine's novel, *Nedjma*, meets almost the same fate. In this way, the two protagonists, who are perceived as icons to others, wind up in conjugal seclusion. Nedjma is hidden in dark, where she has no right to go out without a motive "... après l'avoir maintenue de force au Nadhor et veillée nuit et jour devant le campement des femmes ... elle voyage parfois sous sa garde, voilée de noir à présent".<sup>210</sup> Dehbia, in the same way turns into the spouse of an old and influential man. She is asked to behave adequately and to regard her new status; she has nothing to do outside her home. Her new obligations are constrained to fulfilling her rich spouse.

One can surely noticed that both writers shared almost the same points of view. They sought to highlight the situation of women and how these were expected to be, to act, and importantly perceived. Both novels feature an important notion, that of objectification. The

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<sup>209</sup>Mouloud, Feraoun, *Les Chemins qui montent*, p.69

<sup>210</sup>Kateb, Yacine, *Nedjma*, p. 183.



latter postulates that women are objectified and have to be assessed for use by others. In the abovementioned novel, both females' bodies are, at a certain point, singled out and separated from them as a person and are viewed primarily as a physical object. They therefore characterize women symbolically.

It is paramount to mention that these representations of women are not the sole ones. In fact, the same writers, as well as many others, have represented them in other novels as spouses or mothers whose only responsibility was to offer, to offspring, and take care of the husband, children, and family. This is clearly shown in novels like Mouloud Mammeri's *La Colline oubliée* and Mohammed Dib's *Un Été Africain*.

#### VI.1.2.1. Mouloud Mammeri, *La Colline oubliée*

It is commonly accepted that any literary work can not reach its fullness without taking into account its receipt by the criticism and the public. From this point of view, "La colline Oubliée" (the Forgotten Hill) by Mouloud Mammeri constitutes one of the best cases in Algerian literature. When the novel first appeared in the Parisian publisher, Plon, in 1952, but a few knew at that time that Mammeri was a young teacher of French letters at the Lycée of Ben Aknoun in Algiers. His book received great applause and welcome, and was thus, cited in Paris to the "Prix Femina" and Goncourt.

The novel met almost the same fame in Algeria and ended up in his winning a prize in four juries. Paradoxically, the wide success of this first novel propelled its author in a sort of plight. A strong reaction, significantly hostile to the work, came from Algerian nationalists. They stamped the novel as politically suspect and so was its author, a stamp that persisted well beyond independence.

With *La Colline Oubliée*, Mammeri ought not to write a typical novel. The novel, which is largely autobiographical, is a chronicle of the life of two groups of young people those of "Taasast" and "La bande", as represented by the author in the Kabyle village of Tasga during the Second World War. Mammeri hoped this story would echo with those who, like him, were sensitive to this world.

The image that he attempted to convey through the narrator, Mokrane, was that of a young student who found after a few years of separation his village. Mokrane was completely immersed in this universe and placed it at the center of his remarks. It is from there that he spoke, appointed men and things as they were perceived in Tasga. It is to this truth that the author sought to be faithful and not to that of a phantasmagoric homeland which used to haunt the minds of the ideologists. Following this Pierre Bourdieu explains,

Il se fait le porte-parole en un sens très singulier, et très rare, il n'est pas celui qui prend la parole en faveur de ceux qu'il est censé exprimer, mais aussi à leur place. Il est celui qui donne la parole, qui rend la parole.<sup>211</sup>

What is peculiar and different from other writers of that era lies in that Mammeri did not at any time try to take advantage of the nature of his work - a fiction - to slide anti-ideological messages that contradicted the reality of the world that was describing. Mammeri has always attested being attached to the truth, including his fiction. It is certain that the story of the narrator, Mokrane, as any other, entailed sections of enchantment and fiction but there was nowhere to alteration of the reality.

The novel immerses us in the life of a small village of Kabylia in the 1940's. Algeria was still a French colony and given this status, France required of its population contribution to the war. The summer holidays marked the end of the school year. Mokrane returned to the village of his childhood. He hoped to find his friends. But all had grown; evolved, and had become adults with very different concerns from their old games of teenagers. To marry; have children, and provide the needs of their families were henceforth their new horizons.

Mammeri does not tell a particular story, where the reader is intrigued but rather depicts the daily life of the village and its inhabitants during the colonial era. He draws a

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<sup>211</sup>Pierre, Bourdieu, « La colline retrouvée », *Le Monde* du 3 mars 1989 in *Awal* n°5, 1989 (Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Paris), pp.1-2.

line of demarcation, where wealthy families can subvert themselves while the majority of other inhabitants cannot. It is a fight of every moment that preoccupies them. Finding a job, keeping it, and especially finding what to feed to their wives and children were the chief concerns. He also depicts how these are sometimes forced to beg from their neighbors since they were not able to bring enough money for food.

Myriad themes are tackled such as hunger, cold, disease, and war. All these will delete old quarrels and would rather build unexpected relations. The relationship between man/woman is also largely discussed: arranged marriages, repudiation and assassination. Another theme that is debated is the status of the woman in such a codified society, where reputation and honor are paramount.

Reputation generated a cleavage between the elders of the village, those who sought to keep the customs; traditions; honor, and an established order at any price on the one hand and the more young people, who were more or less open to western civilization on the other hand. This cleavage appears through several examples such as the relation between Mokrane and his divorced wife, and the abandonment of certain customs.

The novel is also a romance book. It includes love stories and the turmoil these go through, chiefly, the story of Mokrane and Aazi. The evocation of the latter by Mokrane is very poetic; he dates back to the old time of the “Group of Taasast”, when Aazi was not yet his wife, but “the Bride of the night”, haloed with magical beauty; he attests

Aazi foulait doucement devant nous le sable de la grève, elle évoluait dans ses voiles, suivait lentement le cours de l' eau, appelant ses compagnes, leur tendait les doigts effilés de sa main où la lune se jouait, continuait de garder dans la nuit la procession de ses blanches compagnes, suivait des yeux la lune qui tombait derrière les rochers; elle faisait descendre l' obscurité en poussant les deux battants de sa fenêtre, c' est à peine si, par la fente, un mince filet de lumière venait dessiner largement dans l' ombre nos silhouettes et Aazi passant tour à tour et par partie de l'ombre à la lumière, avait l'air d'une magicienne, ses bracelets d' or faisaient dans l' obscurité comme des soleils blafards et son profil, blêmi par cette pâle lumière, avait l' immobile sérénité des momies des dieux morts.

The passage corroborates the strong and deep feelings Mokrane had for his fiancée. Nevertheless, the couple could not escape the anxiety, confusion, and tumult of their society. Consequently, the writer attempts to demonstrate how traditions and customs remained no matter how or what the heart of everything.

#### VI. 1.2. 2. Mohammed Dib, *La grande maison*

The works of Mohammed Dib have been too often reduced to the Trilogy “Algeria” which has made the writer much known between 1952 and 1957. The trilogy stresses both realism in its ethnographic description and the commitment of the writer to the service of his country. The novel is assumed to be “difficult” in that it does not obey to categories of predetermined reading. The work of Dib published since 1962 required in fact from the critique to put himself into question. It required an availability of the reader to the risk of an uncontrollable proliferation of meaning inherent to all major creations.

Amid French colonization, the indigenous writers did not realize that they had to raise their voices through writing. It took them many years before they began to understand that their task was to reveal the truth of colonialism through the description of the problems of their society which remained a suspended society.

Dib is one of the Algerian writers who undertook to take this responsibility. Along with his realism and commitment, he succeeded in making Algeria known in the literary world during the French colonization. It is undeniable that within his works, one attends the birth of a nation. Jean Déjeux declared in that the contemporary Algerian literature that Mohammed Dib sought was to be a witness of his own society “Il a voulu d’abord être témoin de sa société et de son temps.”<sup>212</sup>

The first part of his trilogy is entitled “*La Grande Maison*”, also known as *Dar sbi-tar*. The story takes place in Tlemcen, an Algerian city. It is the main place of all the

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<sup>212</sup>Jean, Déjeux, *La littérature Algérienne contemporaine*, (Presses universitaires de France., coll. Que sais-je ?, n° 1604, Paris, 1979), p. 67.

events of the novel. The house gathers several Algerian families during the period of French colonization of Algeria. Dib describes their miserable daily lives with very realistic details and exactness.

Aïni is a young widow of thirty years. She is the mother of three children, a boy, Omar, and two girls, Aouïcha and Meriem. This family occupies a room in the Big House. Aïni is the only one in charge of her children and her disabled mother. After having tried several jobs, she works, from her home for Spanish people. She is paid with a number of dozens of espadrilles that she arrives to make each week.

In the same house inhabits another widow, Zina and her teenage daughter, Zhor, as well as Fatima, a repudiated woman who has her children at her load. She lives with her brother, Hamid Saraj, a nationalist intellectual tracked down by the police. Menoune is another character who represents the voice of La Grande Maison - Dar Sbitar- through her songs. She is also repudiated and separated from her children because of an inexplicable illness. The author draws the attention on other families and explains that they are not more favored than Aïni and her family. The book entails many other women who are a little more privileged than Aïni but who do not live in Dar Sbitar. They are represented mainly by the cousin of Aïni, Lalla Hasna, who often pays a visit to Aïni.

With a closer look, one will probably notice that there are no more than two or three active male characters. Dar Sbitar's women are altogether exhibited as on edge; no one is better than the other. They all share despair and anguish. The main character that remains very present and around which revolves the story is Aini, a mother in her regular battle to give sustenance to her children. When addressed on this point, Dib expounded the character as follows:

La femme ne commence à avoir une certaine réalité, à prendre une place dans son milieu, à devenir un personnage dans toute la force du terme, qu'à partir du moment où elle est une mère ...  
La femme jouissant d'une autonomie d'identité et de comporte

ment, acceptée comme un fait social n'est pas encore entrée dans nos mœurs, ni donc dans notre littérature. Sauf, une fois de plus, sous l'aspect de mère.<sup>213</sup>

Aïni is an illiterate woman full of determination. She is always in motion; she has no free time except for prayer. She leads a hard battle to survive and ensure her existence as a mother towards her children and as a faithful daughter with regard to her mother. But, the ways to earn the money were limited. From time to time she received help from her cousins, but even that assistance was not really generous.

Given traditions, all relatives had to help each other - but in the case of Aïni who suffered under a heavy burden, the aid was really scarce. Aïni worked at the machine from sunrise to sunset and earned a small sum of money which was not enough to afford a meal every day. She complained when showing her salary to her children: “Vous pensez que c’est peu? Quand on a détruit son existence à force de travail, voilà ce qu’on gagne.”<sup>214</sup>

Aïni finds herself looking in vain for a solution, something that will at least be sufficient enough to make both ends meet. She is so desperate that she attempts to convey secretly and illicitly goods to Oujda, a Moroccan city border. Although, she perfectly knows the risks she does not hesitate to try; « Qui a vu une mauresque se plier à une formalité »<sup>215</sup> she declares. This astonished her son who said:

Elle essayait de lutter. Elle ruminait sans cesse des idées. Par quels moyens gagner plus d'argent? Omar ne pouvait croire que pour augmenter leur revenu, sa mère acceptait, avec cette légèreté d'encourir la prison.<sup>216</sup>

Dib takes time to portray Aïni. He gives her a significant name which means “eye” which attests of tenderness and love. Notwithstanding this name, the reality is different. She insults the children because of an unchanging situation which has made of her a

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<sup>213</sup>Aïda, Bamieh, *The Development of the Novel and Short Story in Modern Algerian literature*, cf *Zahia Smail*, p. 282.

<sup>214</sup>Mohamed, Dib, *La grande maison*, (Edition le Seuil, Paris, 1952), p.110.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., 131.

machine which rolls without reaching a goal. She even curses her dead husband, who rests in peace while she suffers. She no longer feels like women; in fact she has lost all trace of femininity; “Elle était devenue anguleuse, toute en gros os. Depuis longtemps, tout ce qui fait le charme d'une femme avait disparu chez elle. Efflanquée, elle avait aussi la voix et le regard durs.”<sup>217</sup>

Things considered she does not have time for herself or time to think about other things such as love. Love, if any, is for her children yet she does not manifest it. Despite her misery, hunger, anguish and the burden of her mother, she keeps her children at home as united family.

Omar is very attached to his mother. He accompanies his mother when she brings back her pay from the Spanish; he verifies and recounts this miserable salary since his mother does not know how to. The novelist demonstrates how Omar begins at a very young age to occupy his place as the man of the family. The girls help their mother in household work as Aïni orders them, never the boy. This attests of the social gender differences at a very young age.

The two novels constitute a parcel among many books written by Algerian novelists and portray, describe, characterize, and illustrate women. In *Nedjma* and *les Chemins qui Montent*, the authors conveyed the image of the Algerian woman as a symbol of beauty, charm, and delicacy. Others represented and perceived the Algerian woman more like a fertile being, silent, submitted, who have no voice, and no authority on family decisions. However, they are, on the one, hand victims of social constraints, and on the other hand, the guardians of social traditions.

In *La Colline Oubliée*, the author compares two major characters, Aazi and Sekoura. While the latter could bear and have children and thus got the ascription of a fertile, profuse and generous woman, Aazi on the contrary, after several years of marriage could not offer her husband an offspring, received the imputation of a sterile person. It is important to delineate that Aazi was an ideal wife and an honorable daughter in-law.

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<sup>217</sup>. Op.cit., 129

She was happily married and did not receive any ill-treatment from her husband but his mother could not accept “a barren daughter in-law”: “Elle n'a pas d'enfant. Qu'avons-nous à faire d'une femme qui n'a pas d'enfant ...”<sup>218</sup>

After that, his parents take advantage of their son's- Mokrane- absence and repudiate her. Absurdly, a few weeks after her divorce she finds out she is pregnant and immediately tells Mokrane. Unfortunately, the latter dies in a snowstorm and never reaches his wife. In this spirit, it is paramount to indicate that the story's end was purposely chosen. In fact, Mammeri denounces and criminalizes the society for being harsh on women and for blindly following traditions that are unreasonable and ill-founded.

Feraoun scrutinized and firmly criticized “orchestrated relational unions.” He shows that these traditions were not only inappropriate and unfair towards the young ladies but also the eventual husband. Through the instance of Mokrane and Ouiza, whose marriage was organized by their parents, Feraoun demonstrated that such relational unions were troubled as well as improper since neither sentiments of adoration nor feelings were shared between the woman and the man who met each other on the wedding night.

The two scholars tackled, communicated, and expressed their opinions as well as sympathy. Nevertheless, in no part of their analysis did they either influence their characters to rebel against their conditions or depict them as communicating their outrage or disappointment. Hence, these women appear to acknowledge their destiny peacefully and to bear the outcomes of being simply female. Feraoun remains among the very few male essayists of the 1950s who were keen on the status of women. He drew a dismal, yet reasonable, representation and thought that

...Chez nous, la femme est vraiment le sexe faible; elle le sait et se prend en pitié. Elle qui est sensible, la vie la contraint à l'insensibilité: certaines partagent le lit avec une rivale officielle; d'autres sont condamnées au célibat et à la chasteté; et nombre d'entre elles sont tenues d'accepter celui qu'elles n'ont pas choisi, fût-il vieux, difforme ou vicieux. Elles se soumettent, étouffent la voix du coeur; il leur reste, avec une déception parfois sans bornes, non le dégoût qui empoisonne l'existence, mais une espèce de scepticisme

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<sup>218</sup>Mouloud, Mammeri, *La Colline oubliée*. (Paris: Plon, 1952), p. 77.



qui leur fait supporter leur sort et absoudre par avance tout acte de rébellion auquel peut se livrer l'une des leurs.<sup>219</sup>

Another novelist who also gave a particular image of the Algerian woman is Mohamed Dib. In *La Grande Maison*, Dib shows that women rarely leave their homes; in case they do they leave wrapped in a “haik” a white piece of cloth that covers all the body of the female. He outlines that the outside tasks are left to the males even if they are very young.

Omar is the best illustration. Aïni’s only son shares with his mother the responsibilities outside the household. He handles the small tasks from the outside, even for neighbors and accompanies his mother when necessary. In fact, the idea is simply to have a man on the female’s side. A single woman in the street is wrongly and badly viewed by male; this applied even to Aïni although she was a poor widow. Dib also tackles the schooling of children and especially of girls. Regarding the latter, he demonstrates that it is neither necessary nor important. No woman of the trilogy had ever been to school.

Education, if any, was not in a pedagogical context but a deficient education that girls receive from mother to daughter instead. This education consisted mainly of conveying and teaching how girls should play well the role of submitted and obedient wives. A mother had a huge influence on the mores of her daughters. And even if she herself suffered of that statute, she remained attached to the customs and forwarded them to her daughters.

Through his trilogy, Dib reflects a phallogocentric society which enables to oppress the woman from her birth since girls are not really welcome in the world and a mother may be repudiated if she gave birth to girls only. Aïni as any Algerian woman shares this convenience. Aïni puts all expectations on Omar, a boy. In fact, a girl is worth nothing for her; she is a burden that must be fed and closely surveilled during puberty. In a conversation with her cousin she argues

Une fille ne compte pour rien. On la nourrit. Quand elle devient pubère, il faut la surveiller de près. Elle est pire qu'un aspic, à

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<sup>219</sup>Mouloud, Feraoun, *La Terre et le sang*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1953), pp.37-38.

cet âge-là. Elle vous fait des bêtises dès que vous tournez le dos. Ensuite il faut se saigner les veines pour lui constituer un troussseau, avant de s'en débarrasser.<sup>220</sup>

It is undeniable that there is nothing as hard as to hear a mother complain of her own daughters who work relentlessly and help her with their pay. To be a woman is to have no value, worse it might be a curse. Aunt Hasna, who is never happy of Omar, describes him this way: “Ce n’est qu’une femelle. Hon! Et encore une fille vaut mieux que lui.”<sup>221</sup>

The Algerian writers tackled and demystified the Algerian woman. As detailed previously some of them embraced the society’s opinions and thus portrayed them as the inferior gender that owes obedience and submission. Others reported facts on the situation of the woman in a patriarchal society. In sum, they more or less shared tantamount ideas as they themselves belonged to the same society and hence systematically shared at least some of the convenances

## **V.2. Representation of Algerian Women by Female Writers**

### V.2.1. Djamila Dêbêche, *Aziza*

It is widely accepted that today’s Algerian literature subsumes among its famous names a large number of female authors. These are known both nationally and internationally. However, this has not always been the case. Indeed, for plethora of reasons namely, sociocultural, economic and historic, the Algerian female literary production has experienced a strong male domination. Women underwent, besides colonialism and its impact on all the Algerian people, other factors that have led to their exclusion. On the one hand, they have seen themselves denied access to education, and therefore to the world of writing. The patriarchal culture, on the other hand is a determining factor that disallowed them the right to the floor and access to the public domain.

It is pivotal to underline that the limited number of female authors and the taboos surrounding everything that refers to the woman have prevented the publication of any

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<sup>220</sup> Dîb, Mohammed, *La Grande maison*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1952), p. 90.

<sup>221</sup> Op.cit., pp. 73-74.

speech on the reality of the Algerian woman. For a long time, the female characters, if represented, have occupied minors and static roles. Even when the author takes on the theme of the status of women, it is always by the intermediary of a male narrator that history is reported. Besides, these female characters are confined in pre-defined roles.

They are represented and portrayed either as a symbol or an object or as a stereotypical being, in other terms, a person deprived from any freedom of expression. This was clearly exemplified in works like Mouloud Feraoun's *Le Fils du Pauvre* (The son of the Poor; 1950), Dib's *Trilogy*, (1956), Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*; Mouloud Mammeri's *L'opium et le Baton* (Opium and the stick; 1965), and Rachid Boujedra's *The Repudiation* (1969).

Despite this absence, the last decades are important as they have been marked by a proliferation of a new literature: a literature attributed to women. To this intent research was undertaken and the statistics that resulted from it clearly show the increase in the number of works belonging to different literary genres generated by female authors. This was demonstrated by Bouba Mohammedi Tabti. He writes that between 1947 and 1980, we can identify 18 stories, novels, and collections of news; there are 25 between 1980 and 1987 and if until 1989, there are not less than 38 titles that one can identify without including books of poetry.<sup>222</sup>

Following this spirit, this enhancement and prevalence have not been the easiest. In fact, these women had to start from a context full of taboos, prohibition and containment. Indeed, despite their differences and enrolment to disparate generations, a number of female Algerian novelists bore a new look at the history of colonial and post-colonial Algeria through their writings. Maïssa Bey, Assia Djebar, Djamila Debêche, Amrouche; Fadhma Aït Mansour, the mother, Marguerite Taos, the daughter, and others are among those who seem to share the same concern, to arouse the light on the statute of women.

Djamila Débêche, deemed by many critiques as a pioneer in Algerian literature, published in 1947 *Leïla, Jeune Fille D'Algérie* then *Aziza* in 1955. Both novels must

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<sup>222</sup>Nassira, Belloula, *Les Belles Algériennes, Confidences D'ecrivaines*, (Constantine, Média, 2006), p. 8.

be described as very conventional in that the plot is used as a pretext to enhancement on the possibility for the “Muslim woman” to emancipate in colonial Algeria, and on the opposition between traditions and modernity covering an opposition Muslim culture versus French culture.

The first novel resumed the myths of the colonial ideology; the second marked a slight evolution and put in scene a young girl torn between tradition and modernity. The book displays first concerns about the rise of nationalism and the shift by admitting little by little the idea. With the story of “Aziza”, D eb eche attempts to inaugurate the pivotal theme of marriage that will remain paramount in literature for the next decades.

She depicts marriage as an oppressive institution for women. The story revolves round an educated woman “the protagonist”, named Aziza. After finishing her studies she becomes a journalist (as the writer) and marries a childhood friend, a fervent supporter of traditional values as a way to combat the acculturation. The book is also a depiction of the condition of women in Algeria.

The book merits reviewing and underlining. With her first novel, *Leila*, D eb eche became the primary female Algerian author to uncover and examine and thus tackle the subject of women. Her statute as an educated, taught, and liberated person gave her the courage to lead the battle for the privilege of Algerian women to instruction. She stood with Algerian scholars when they vindicated their entitlement to equity with the French; she also vindicated the privilege of Algerian women as equals with Algerian men. To this intent Y etiv Isaac says that through her writings, and mainly her first novel, *Leila*, Djamila D eb eche found herself

  l'avant-garde de la croisade f eministe de sa g n eration et en fit le porte-drapeau de la lutte pour la promotion de la femme musulmane en Afrique du nord, pour sa lib eration des carcans qui la contraignaient   un statut de mineur et la r duisaient   un objet dont pouvaient disposer   leur gr  le p re ou le mari.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>Nassira, Belloula, *Les Belles Alg eriennes, Confidences D'ecrivaines*, (Constantine, M dia, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>223</sup>Issaac, Yetiv, *Le Th me de l'alienation dans le roman maghr bin d'expression fran aise*, cf Jean Dejeux, Vol 17, No 1, (Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la M diterran e ,1974), p.181.

Débêche was intransigent on the fact that in Algeria customs, traditions, and religion were not antithetical to modernization. She demystifies this in her novels mainly through males' characters. For example, in *Aziza* she describes her husband as a nationalist and a less educated person. She explains that his lack of education makes of him a pious person. Just as the rest of his fellows, he is against all kinds of emancipation of the Algerian woman. He contends that women, and especially wives, are possessions that need to be kept under lock. Débêche shows that men do not have time to devote to their wives and this is clearly seen when her husband dispatches her to her village when a rebellion started.

The book was castigated and declared to be antinationalist as it bore and emphasized on women mainly as social issues rather than representatives of opposition against French colonialism. Many nationalists strongly admitted that male oppression was less calamitous if compared to biculturalism, which was the result of colonial oppression.

Débêche expounds on biculturalism and depicts it through *Aziza*. She shows the estrangement the latter feels as a result of it. She explains that *Aziza* cannot find her place either with her community or the one she adopted. She declares "Je n'étais ni dans un groupe, ni dans l'autre, je n'étais pas à ma place."<sup>224</sup> For her Algerian co-workers, she was too westernized; she walked unveiled; did neither follow nor obey the Algerian traditions and customs, and was absorbed and enthralled with French culture.

After being treated as weak person who sought to attitudinize to a culture that did not belong to her, *Aziza* became fed up and declared that her fellows were not really different and were in fact hypocritical and duplicitous as they had first thrown their traditional costumes. She argues that it was not her case as an emancipated person that truly mattered but rather the fixed idea that women should always remain veiled and cloistered.

*Aziza* ends up by meeting an old childhood friend at a French party named Ali. The latter is an educated and emancipated young lawyer who shares more or less some opi

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<sup>224</sup>Djamila, Débêche, *Aziza*, (Alger: Imbert, 1955), p.9.

nions with her. She bonds in relationship with him but the majority of his friends and family do not approve this relation. His elder brother decides then to talk to Aziza and thus tries to dissuade her from marrying him. He contends; "Je sais qu'Ali a un sentiment pour toi ... Mais nous vivons à la mode arabe. Et toi, it vaut mieux que tu épouses un européen." <sup>225</sup>

Even Ali has doubts. He is adamant that he will be criticized and badly perceived. Consequently, to avoid criticism, he decides to take her back to their original tribe and marry her. He ends up by proposing to her what he intended to do and was surprised by her reaction. Indeed, Aziza agrees to quit her job and follows him. Nevertheless, once in Beni Ahmed, their village, she finds herself abandoned by Ali. He willingly leaves her with all the women of the village and goes back to the city. Aziza becomes desperate and enraged. She later on discovers that he purposely did that with the idea that once there she would melt with the traditions and become like these women; Algerian women.

The wedding finally takes place and she stays in Beni-Ahmed for three months. Ali is not there all the time; he bounces between the village and the city and refuses categorically to take her with him. After a short period, he is called back to Algiers, so he decides to take her with him and leave her with her grandmother. He came to realize that he had to sacrifice his marriage for his career.

Tu sais bien ... que ma carrière serait entravée si l'on connaissait notre mariage. Tu es devenue trop occidentale. C'est la raison pour laquelle je voulais te voir rester aux Beni Ahmed. Plus tard le temps fera son oeuvre et ce que l'on ne peut admettre aujourd'hui sera plus acceptable dans quelques années. D'ailleurs, a ce moment-la, ma situation sera changée et mes actes ne seraient pas jugés comme a l'heure actuelle. <sup>226</sup>

For D eb che, Ali is a contemptible person. She delineates this when Aziza talks to a friend of the couple named Arezki and holds comments on the sexist dis-

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<sup>225</sup>Op.cit., 20.

<sup>226</sup>Op.cit, pp. 113-114.

crimination against the Algerian woman by male counterparts. She explains that the latter are not different or better since they are alienated by the colonial regime.

Il est vrai ... que je vis à l'occidentale. Mais pourquoi me reprocher une éducation qui, somme toute me laisse fidèle à mes origines? Vous parlez tous français, et vous en êtes fiers. Vous cherchez l'instruction française pour vos enfants; filles et garçons.<sup>227</sup>

Arezki does not hesitate to explain to Aziza that her way of being and the life she chose pushed Ali to hide their relationship. He further tells her that Algerian men have a reputation, and being married to such a “Europeanized” person, exposed them to harsh criticism,

Tu ne vis pas comme les femmes de chez nous et tout ce que tu fais est en contradiction avec nos doctrines ... Tu sais bien que tu ne peux plus te plier à nos coutumes et vivre comme les nôtres. C'est toi qui as voulu revenir des Beni-Ahmed. Tu vois que tu n'es plus une musulmane, que tu veux vivre comme les femmes d'Europe.<sup>228</sup>

Following this, Aziza realizes that she has built false expectations on Ali and their relationship. She decides to put an end to it and regain her past life. The events take a special turn though; both of her Algerian and French friends disowned her. Humiliated, hurt, and offended she projects to leave the country and follow her life there. While projecting she encounters Ali who asks her back and explains his remorse. Very confident and determined she rejects him and decides to stay after all in her country with the view to live and show to all women that they have the right to be educated and emancipated.

One can describe the novel of *Débêche* as an “advocacy novel.” She shows through the character of Aziza the symbiosis of authenticity and modernity for the respect of the Algerian woman. The author also mirrors the difficult position of the Algerian man. In this, *Débêche* obviously demonstrates the twofold situation of the Algerian woman as she is confronted both to colonial and sexual estrangement.

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<sup>227</sup>Op.cit., p. 123.

<sup>228</sup>Op.cit., pp. 123-124

### V.2.2. Assia Djebar, *La soif*

During the last years, the subject of women in the Maghreb had occupied the front of the scene. Many writers and specialists were inclined towards the subject and extensively wrote about it. Nevertheless, new voices of novelists who came from this particular culture detached themselves in order to describe a reality that contrasted with what was known and portrayed formerly. These voices formed by the French school but have remained forever attached to the language and to the country; sought to transmit, and offer a new vision, a realistic one, that of the woman, her body, her role in society, her status by the tradition, and her links with religion.

Assia Djebar influenced many readers with her enshrined novels. The latter, whose modernity always surprises, displays her full assumption as being an Algerian and a Muslim. Djebar is also very clear and open in her description of the environment. It is pivotal to underline the originality of her novels and to note that she has behind her a literary activity of more than forty years during which she addressed all the literary genres, novel, poetry, theater, and cinema.

The first four novels entitled *La Soif* (1957), *Les Impatients* (1958), *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (1962) and *Les Alouettes naïves* (1967), were considered as immature. They dealt with different themes such as the situation of young girls in society; relationships with men, be they husbands, fathers or brothers; religion; the patriarchal system; and the symbolic vision of these.

At the beginning of her career in 1957 and the new arrival in the literary field of Algeria, Djebar uses a pseudonym which will serve as a veil in order to protect her from the social and political context in which she lived. It would be interesting to trace the origin of this pseudonym.

À vingt ans, le jour où j'ai signé mon contrat, il me fallait un pseudonyme. J'avais rendez-vous à midi ou à une heure chez Julliard, l'éditeur, et, à neuf heures du matin, je me disais: la seule chose que je sais, c'est que je dois trouver un prénom et un nom qui n'aient rien à voir avec moi. Je ne voulais pas que mon père et ma mère sachent que j'ai écrit un roman. J'allais chez l'éditeur. A ce moment-là, j'étais fiancée: j'ai demandé à mon fiancé, bon arabisant, pendant le trajet qu'il me dise, puisqu'on



nous les avait fait apprendre par cœur, les 90 surnoms du Prophète. A chaque fois qu'il y avait un nom, un des épithètes du Prophète qui pouvait être intéressant, je disais: Ça veut dire quoi? A un moment donné il a dit; Djebbar. - Ça veut dire quoi? - Ça veut dire: intransigeant. Vous savez quand on a vingt ans, l'intransigeance ça plaît. Ah oui, ça me convient tout-à-fait. Djebbar, c'est l'intransigeant. Donc je vais prendre Djebbar. J'ai un prénom compliqué, Fatima Zohra, c'est un très beau prénom en arabe, c'est le prénom de la fille préférée du Prophète. Les filles aînées sont souvent appelées Fatima Zohra. Je cherchais un prénom qui ne soit pas déformé de l'arabe au français. J'ai pris le nom d'Assia parce que je le trouvais assez beau. Plus tard quelqu'un m'a dit: « Assia, c'est la fleur immortelle» . Je crois que si on me l'avait dit au moment où je l'avais choisi, par modestie, je ne l'aurais pas pris. Mon prénom Assia est devenu mon vrai prénom. Ma fille m'appelle Assia.<sup>229</sup>

It is important to outline that her first novel has been poorly received by Algerian as well as French criticism. The book was in fact pejoratively compared Francoise Sagan's "Bonjour Tristesse." In fact, this novel has earned her the surname of "The Françoise Sagan" of Muslim Algeria. However, with *La Soif*, deemed both bold and courageous, she attested having a fertile imagination and a lively style which announced the birth of a promising writer in the literary field dominated exclusively by men.

The story of *La Soif* takes place before the beginning of the war of independence, but Djebbar showed that in this novel was developed a process which left to guess the future upheavals that would mark the destiny of her country. She considers her first novel as a good attempt and declares that she really likes it and completely assumes it: "La Soif est un roman que j'aime encore et assume. Je ne lui vois pas une ride. Vous ne pouvez m'empêcher d'avoir préféré lors de mes débuts d'écrivain un air de flûte à tous vos tambours!"<sup>230</sup>

The story revolves round a young girl named Nadia. She is twenty years old and derives from a hybrid couple of an Algerian father and a French mother. Nadia is described as a careless girl whose sole interests are music, cafés with friends, and rides in

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<sup>229</sup> Michael, Heller, Propos recueillis par « Assia Djebbar. Une conversation avec Michael Heller, (Cahiers d'Études Maghrébines, N° 14, Spécial Assia Djebbar, 22 octobre 2000), p. 56.

<sup>230</sup> Assia, Djebbar, *Ces Voix qui m'assiègent*, (Paris, Albin Michel, 1999), p. 87.

her own car. She is a spoiled girl who can do whatever she wants, yet remains a dissatisfied and bored. At the beginning of the novel, Djébar announces that she decides to leave her fiancé for no apparent reason

Mon père avait prit mon ennui pour du désespoir parce que, deux mois auparavant, j'avais rompu mes fiançailles, sans raison apparente. J'eus un sourire indulgent. Il aurait pu voir que je n'avais ni les impatiences, ni les trépignements des chagrins d'amour- même pas les larmes.<sup>231</sup>

After breaking up her engagement, Nadia turns towards her friends' couple. Although she is well aware of her friends' miserable situation, as she tries to commit suicide several times, they describe her as not worthy for Ali, her husband. In fact, Nadia does not equal herself with other women and thinks that she is self-confident and strong. She is also portrayed as the feminine version of "Don Juan", as she tries to attract men to her; she even tries to tempt her friend's husband. Hassen the other character, who is in love with her, sees clearly through her and does not hesitate to denounce it. He contends : Je te connais: it te faut des hommes à tes pieds, même s'ils ne te plaisent pas; ce sont quand même des hommes. Tu n'as soif que d'hommes."<sup>232</sup>

Unable to deny it, Nadia becomes perplex she is hesitant and does not really know her feelings nor herself. This uncertainty makes her admit that she is in love with Ali. Nadia does not comprehend herself. Her thirst is by and large for self-revelation, opportunity, the significance of adoration and hunger for pleasure. Djébar purposely chose to describe her as an endlessly discontent person who is always seeking new experiences. As everything has an end, Nadia will find hers after the sudden and unexpected death of her friend Jedla. She becomes aware and confronted to the bitter reality of life and thus decides to change her life mood. Jedla, likewise, has thirst for something unique; that is to say an ideal life.

In sum, the majority of the Algerian female writers made their heroes taught and educated women. They ended up noticeably mindful of their condition and managed to

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<sup>231</sup> Assia, Djébar, *La Soif*. (Paris: Julliard, 1957), pp.1-2.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

lead the battle for liberation and claim for women's freedom. Disparate, if compared to the women appearing and represented by the male writers, those depicted by D eb che and Djebbar hunger for opportunity and are eager for self-revelation. Their journey is tantamount to that of the estranged men who embrace a protracted mission for self-revelation and national identity.

## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

It has always been admitted by historians that the novel is considered as a paramount source. The reason lies in that it contains elements of truth which can help and be used to write history. Likewise, fiction could be fallacious and truthful at the same time. The first concern of figurative and narrative novels, in general, is the historical analysis; it seeks to include the history of individuals in a collective frame and convey through singular perspectives the experiences of the social actors in a given time-space. The Algerian novel is considered as one of these. It is perceived primarily as a novel of explanation, both by construction and by reference.

The other concern, lies in that more than any other kind of books, it explains and wants to explain; it is the very purpose of fiction. Actually, the involved authors want to fulfill a useful work; they want to show to their readers the Algerian realities and what the real problems and main concerns of the country are. They impregnate with commitment and definitely seek to convince.

It is worthy to delineate that, as mentioned before; Algerian literature is not the outcome of un *coup de tonnerre dans un ciel serein* as Mammeri put it. It is rather a compendium which started mostly orally. Algerian literature did not prosper in the beginning of the French occupation because of the resistance movements which prevented and distracted people's attention from any cultural activity.

In the same spirit, one must underline that this literature went through different stages. It was first dominated by what is known as Algerian-born European writers. It is convenient to separate these writers from native Algerian writers since they did not have the same aims and aspirations while writing about Algeria. A conspicuous example is that of Albert Camus and Mohamed Dib to explain such separation.

Indeed, both Camus and Dib dealt and chose Algeria as a background for their writings. Notwithstanding their setting, Algeria, they in no manner give of it the same description. In *The Stranger* for instance, the only particular point having trait to the country, is the hot weather, and surprisingly, the Algerian native is always referred to as "L'Arabe", a stripped character and a man without any physical description and

subsequently, existence. In his other novel, *The Plague*, Algeria is described as “*Notre Pays*”, and Oran, as “*Notre Ville*.” Nevertheless, his novel fails to name a single Algerian victim even though the Algerians, like the colonists, had been hit by the same devastating disease.

The explanation as to why the Algerian and the Algerian-born European writers did not react in the same way to the same situations, as explained in the aforementioned paragraphs, is grounded in the fact that the latter did not suffer from injustice, humiliation, and mistreatment the natives were confronted to. Besides, their deliberate ignorance of Arabic, be it colloquial or classical, would have acted as a barrier and prevented them from seeking mutual understanding. The Algerian writers, refusing any sort of colonialism were thus more committed and interested in changing the stereotyped image they had been assigned by French writers.

The main concern of Algerian writers was to present the reality of Algerians and denounce the epitomized picture. The only way to do that was the “pen”, which henceforth could be a sword. Following this, the present thesis analyzed their works. The analysis has helped confine these writers within three different periods. The first period is known as an Imitation and Assimilation period; it took place between 1908 and 1948. It is described as such because the novelists of that era were perceived as a group of Algerians who did not partake in the misery of their country and consequently their people. They were also criticized for portraying Algerian culture with an utterly colonial eye.

The second period is referred to as the Transitional Period; it stretched from 1947 to 1950. During this period, Algerians enthusiastically looked at Algeria as a French region and argued for the Algerians’ right to French citizenship with simultaneously an upkeep of their own status. In this way with the appearance of the Second World War, they called for Algerian assembly to defend their “country”, France, against her enemy.

Yet, being subject to racial discrimination by French officers who thought of them as only “indigenes” while they were battling for their autonomy, made them review their priorities and opinions about civilizing and humanitarian France. Their questioning the latter ended up in a *Manifeste du Peuple Algérien*, where they

demanded for the nullification of colonization and for political self-governance of their country.

The third and last period, entitled the Period of Revelation, from 1950 to 1952, is a turning point in Algerian literature. During this period, another literature emerged on the scene with novels written by Mouloud Feraoun (*Le Fils du pauvre*, 1950; *La Terre et le sang*, 1953; *Les Chemins qui montent*, 1957) ; Mohammed Dib (*La Grande maison*, 1952; *L'Incendie*, 1954; *Le Métier à tisser*, 1957), Mouloud Mammeri (*La Colline oubliée*, 1952; *Le Sommeil du juste*, 1955; *L'Opium et le bâton*, 1965), and Kateb Yacine (*Nedjma*, 1956). Unlike former Algerian writers, these new authors neither hailed colonialism nor sustained the portrayal of fascinating and alluring places to engage their French perusers.

Among different aspects tackled by Algerian novelists, the most recurrent theme is the representation and the status of gender. The scope of interest of this thesis was to analyze Algerian literature and determine its representation of gender in both colonial and post-colonial literature. After scrutiny and investigation, one will notice the extensive work undertaken in this field. As a matter of fact, the books chosen to undertake the analysis enabled to examine and nuance the plurality of identities and affiliation that were at the heart of the situations in which were found both the characters and their creators.

At this particular juncture, one can safely assume that gender, and particularly women, were perceived in two ways: a symbolic or figurative representation and a socio-cultural representation. The first portrait these writers gave of women through their novels was that of lovely, sweet, pretty creatures, and more importantly, having the energy of pulling in men. These writers conveyed the image of women as an object; a symbolized object that subsumed many aspects, a woman, a stranger, a goddess and a “fatale” woman.

They also characterized women in a patriarchal society, a society where men could commit anything and remain immune. They exemplified the cult of domesticity which empowers women and, sometimes, oppresses and imposes on them solicitations such as forced marriage. Thus, through these novels, one could notice that every woman’s fate

and future revolved round marriage. Some were lucky enough as they came to marry a pleasant man although proposed while others had to cope. These authors highlighted the plight of women and how they were expected to be, act, and foremost, perceived in society. In short, women were objectified; they were treated as an object to be valued for its use by others.

This representation of women is not the sole. In fact, as explained in this thesis, manifold writers represented them as spouses or mothers, whose only responsibility was to offer an offspring and take care of the husband, children, and family; they belonged and had to belong to a phallogentric society which regards them as the inferior gender that owes obedience and submission.

The contrast was discerned and felt in the same literature but written by female writers. These writers painted special lives and specific to them. Their aim was their seeking the word of the forgotten and silent woman. To do so, they had sometimes to use a pseudonym, which was a mask that deliberately wore since they felt exposed to the reader in a direct way, and were thus, metaphorically naked. Under this head, it is striking to discover that Algerian female writers made their heroines taught and educated women.

The reason of making of heroines educated persons lies in that it was too clear for dispute that education would enable them to end up noticeably mindful of their condition and to lead the battle for liberation and freedom. Totally different from women represented by male writers, those depicted by Algerian female writers hunger for opportunity and are eager for self-revelation. Their journey, which is still ahead, is tantamount to that of the estranged men who embrace a protracted mission for self-revelation and national identity.



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## Summary

The representation of gender, it is too clear for dispute, is until presently a burning issue. Divided in six chapters, the first has trait to the definition of the concept Algerian literature and gender and the effects regarding the use of the French language. Since it was necessary to figure out how gender was perceived during the colonial period, chapter two analyses a number of writings penned by to name a few, Gustave Flaubert, Benjamin Gastineau, Alexandre Dumas, Guy de Maupassant etc. These writings, it should be pointed out did not go unnoticed, let alone criticized. To this intent chapter three deals with the questioning of such literature by the Martiniquan born, Frantz Fanon, Malek Alloula, and Edward Said. Furthermore, such writings which represented gender were not proper to French authors. In this light, chapter four, comes to bring to light such literature; foremost it comes to bring to light the emergence of a purely Algerian literature after a passage through a number of periods, from assimilation and imitation to transition, and ultimately to revelation. In chapter five, with the coming of Algerian novelists, especially female, like Assia Djebar, one attends an analysis and reassessment of the roles and duties of women. Last, the key chapter, chapter six, has trait to this issue of representation and misrepresentation of gender by male novelists like Kateb Yacine and Mouloud Feraoun and female novelists like Djamila D  b  che.



## Résumé

La représentation du genre, male et femelle, n'a pas cessé d'être une issue assez explosive. Divisée en six chapitres, le premier chapitre de cette thèse a trait à la définition du concept de littérature algérienne et du genre ainsi que des effets quant à l'usage de la langue française. Etant donné qu'il devenait nécessaire de comprendre comment le genre était perçu durant la période coloniale, le chapitre deux a été dédié à l'analyse d'un certain nombre d'écrits par, entre autres, Gustave Flaubert, Benjamin Gastineau, Alexandre Dumas, et Guy de Maupassant. Il faudra remarquer que ces écrits ne sont pas passés inaperçus, et encore moins sans subir une sévère critique. A cet égard, le troisième aborde la remise en question de ces écrits par Frantz Fanon, Malek Alloula, et Edward Said. Par ailleurs, le chapitre quatre met en lumière cette nouvelle littérature, purement algérienne, après être passée par une période d'assimilation et d'imitation vers celle de transition, pour enfin aboutir à celle de révélation. Le chapitre cinq, avec cette période de révélation, traite de la venue sur scène d'auteurs algériens telle l'écrivaine Assia Djebar qui s'est attelée à étudier cette représentation, et par la même, à une réévaluation des rôles et devoirs de la femme Algérienne. Enfin le chapitre six, chapitre clé de cette thèse a trait à cette même représentation tant par des auteurs hommes tels Kateb Yacine et Mouloud Feraoun, que femmes, telle Djamila Débêche

## ملخص

ولم يعد تمثيل الجنسين، ذكورا وإناثا، مسألة عابرة إلى حد ما. يتناول الفصل الأول من هذه الرسالة، مقسمة إلى ستة فصول، تعريف مفهوم الأدب الجزائري ونوع الجنس، فضلا عن الآثار المترتبة على استخدام اللغة الفرنسية. وعندما أصبح من الضروري أن نفهم كيف ينظر إلى نوع الجنس خلال الفترة الاستعمارية، خصص الفصل الثاني لتحليل عدد من الكتابات من قبل غوستاف فلوبيير، وبنيامين غاستينو، وألكسندر دوماس، وغي دو موباسانت. وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن هذه الكتابات لم تذهب دون أن يلاحظها أحد، وأقل بكثير من دون التعرض لانتقادات شديدة. في هذا الصدد، يتناول الثالث استجابات هذه الكتابات من قبل فرانتز فانون، مالك العلا، وإدوارد سعيد. وعلاوة على ذلك، يسلط الفصل الرابع الضوء على هذه الأدبيات الجديدة، الجزائرية البحتة، بعد أن مرت بفترة من الاستيعاب والتقليد نحو التحول، مما أدى أخيرا إلى الوحي. لفصل الخامس، مع هذه الفترة من الوحي، ويتناول ظهور المؤلفين الجزائريين على خشبة المسرح، مثل الكاتبة آسيا جبار، الذي بدأ في دراسة هذا التمثيل، وفي الوقت نفسه إعادة تقييم أدوار وواجبات المرأة الجزائرية. وأخيرا الفصل السادس، الفصل الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة يتعلق بهذا التمثيل نفسه من قبل كل من المؤلفين الذكور مثل كاتب ياسين ومولود فيراون، كما النساء، مثل جميلة ديببيش

## **Appendices**

## Appendix One

### Hubertine Auclert's Biography

#### I. Early Life

Born in the Allier *département* in the Auvergne area of France into a middle-class family, Hubertine Auclert's father died when she was thirteen years old and her mother sent her to live and study in a Roman Catholic convent. As a young girl she planned to become a nun but left the convent at age 16. Estranged from her mother, she lived with her uncle for a time but had to return to the convent a few years later. She left the convent for good in 1869 and moved to Paris. There, the ousting of Emperor Napoleon III and the establishment of the Third Republic opened the door to activism on the part of women who began demanding changes to the Napoleonic Code that would provide education and economic independence for women and the legalization of divorce.

#### II. Political Activism and Feminism

Inspired by the high-profile activities of Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer, Hubertine Auclert became involved with feminist work and eventually took a job as Richer's secretary. Influenced by her life in a Catholic convent, and like many of the leading republican feminists at the time, Hubertine Auclert was a militant anticlerical. While the main focus of the French feminist movement was directed towards changes to the laws, Auclert pushed further, demanding that women be given the right to run for public office, claiming that the unfair laws would never have been passed had the views of female legislators been heard. In 1876 she founded the *Société le droit des femmes* (The Rights of Women) that supported women's suffrage and in 1883, the organization formally changed its name to the *Société le suffrage des femmes* (Women's Suffrage Society).

In 1878, the "International Congress on Women's Rights" was held in Paris but to the chagrin of Hubertine Auclert, it did not support women's suffrage. Resolute, beginning in 1880, Auclert launched a tax revolt, arguing that without representation women should not be subjected to taxation. One of her legal advisors was attorney Antonin Lévrier whom she later married. On February 13, 1881 she launched *La Citoyenne*,

a monthly that argued vociferously for women's enfranchisement. The paper received vocal support from even the elite in the feminist movement such as Séverine and socialite Marie Bashkirtseff wrote several articles for the newspaper. In her writings, she also brought the term feminism, a term first coined by Charles Fourier, into the English language in the 1890s.

In 1884, the French government finally legalized divorce but Auclert denounced it because of the law's blatant bias against women that still did not allow a woman to keep her wages. Auclert proposed the then radical idea that there should be a marriage contract between spouses with separation of property.

### **III. Algeria and Feminism**

Auclert and her husband moved to Algeria in 1888 where they would remain for four years until he died and she returned to Paris. While in Algeria, Auclert extensively studied and recorded the daily lives of Arab women. Auclert paralleled the male prejudice against women in France with the racial prejudice against the colonized in Algeria as the “French Algerians... do everything possible to keep the Arabs in a state of ignorance so conducive to exploitation and domination.”

Her activism for the rights of Algerian women paralleled the "familial" or "maternalist" feminism that she advocated for in France. Such prejudice took form as French collusion with Arab males to suppress Arab female education and to respect Islamic practices of child marriages, polygamy, and bride trade which restricted the rights of the Arab female. Auclert acted out of a moral duty to elevate the status of Arab women, as to make it possible for them to obtain the same dignity of a Frenchwomen.

While in Algeria, and continued on her return to France, Auclert pursued legal action to acknowledge the rights of Arab women, such as petitions for improved education, and the abolition of polygamy. While her thoughts on Islamic culture were entrenched in imperial thinking, she made clear the negative influence of French colonialism on the society's in which they settled. She claimed that the oppression from Islamic law was made worse by collusion between the French administrators and Arab men. Arab males, in her eyes, appeared backwards in part because of the effects of racism from the French settlers. Because of the males' oppression, she saw the colonized women as the

most significant suffers. She claimed because of the patriarchy of both the Arabs and the French, the Algerian women were the least advanced socially, morally, and culturally.

She wrote about the consequences Arab females suffered because of Islam in the Algerian press, *Le Radical Algérien*, and in *La Citoyenne*. Unintentionally, her work in Algeria served as further justification for French colonialism as it highlighted the perceived degraded condition of Arab women under Algerian rule. No longer able to financially support *La Citoyenne*, the newspaper closed but she continued her activism. In 1900, she witnessed the establishment of the "National Council of French Women" as an umbrella organisation for feminist groups in France all of which soon came to support suffrage.

#### **IV. Criticisms of Work in Algeria**

Julia Clancy-Smith, author of *Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria*, writes that, though Auclert criticizes the negative influence of French colonialism, she is similar to contemporary British feminists in using a discourse of a "universal sisterhood" that was oxymoronically imperial and hierarchical to protect the colonized populations. While Auclert blamed French men for worsening the "barbarism" of Arab men and, thus, worsening the condition of Arab women, much of her rhetoric to advocate for Arab women painted them as victims of their religion.

Clancy quotes that Auclert claimed Arab men rendered the women "little victims of Muslim debauchery," and must be "freed from their cages, walled homes, and cloisters" to assimilate into Frenchwomen. Auclert's writing about Algerian women focused on, in Clancy's words, "the morally perverse sexual customs of the natives." For example, the most provocative section of Auclert's work detailed her argument that "Arab marriage is child rape."

Clancy also critiques Auclert's success as an activist: all of the petitions that Auclert submitted on behalf of Algerian women were met with indifference, according to Auclert. There are no records of Muslim women's awareness or response to her advocacy. Clancy argues that Auclert returned to Paris in 1892 without "any concrete results,"

other than ironically convincing many that the Algerians were too barbaric and unsuitable for political rights.

## V. Later Activism and Death

In July 1907 married women in France were finally given control over their own salaries due to the lobbying of the *Avant-Courrière* (Forerunner) association led by Jeanne Schmahl. The Act was incomplete. If a woman bought something with her earnings that she did not consume herself, such as a piece of furniture, it became her husband's property unless there was a marriage contract that specified otherwise, normally only the case with prosperous couples. The 60-year-old Auclert continued her push for total equality. In 1908 she symbolically smashed a ballot box during municipal elections in Paris and in 1910 she and Marguerite Durand defied authorities and presented themselves as candidates in the elections for members of the legislative assembly.

Considered one of the central figures in the history of the French women's rights movement, Hubertine Auclert continued her activism until her death in 1914 at age 65. She is interred in the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris; the sculpture on her tomb commemorates the "*Suffrage des Femmes*."

**Source:** [https://wiki2.org/en/Hubertine\\_Auclert](https://wiki2.org/en/Hubertine_Auclert)

## Appendix Two

### Édouard Drumont's Biography

#### I. Birth

**Édouard Adolphe Drumont** (3 May 1844 – 5 February 1917) was a French journalist and writer. He initiated the Antisemitic League of France in 1889, and was the founder and editor of the newspaper *La Libre Parole*. After spending years of research, he synthesized three major types of antisemitism. The first type was traditional Catholic attitudes toward the alien "Christ killers" augmented by vehement antipathy toward the French Revolution. The second type was hostility toward capitalism. The third type was so-called scientific racism, based on the argument that races have fixed characteristics, and asserting that Jews have negative characteristics.

#### II. Early life

Drumont was born in Paris in 1844 to a family of porcelain-painters from Lille. He lost his father at the age of seventeen, and had to care for himself and earn his own livelihood from then onwards.

#### III. Public career

He first worked in government service, and later became a contributor to the press and was the author of a number of works, of which *Mon vieux Paris* (1879) was awarded by the French Academy.

Drumont's 1886 book, *La France juive* (*Jewish France*), attacked the role of Jews in France and argued for their exclusion from society. In 1892, Drumont initiated the newspaper the *La Libre Parole* which became known for intense antisemitism. This newspaper was skeptical of Léo Taxil's anti-Catholic *Diana Vaughan* hoax before Taxil admitted it in 1897.

For the French legislative election of May 1898, the antisemitic activist Max Régis endorsed Drumont before this election from Algiers. On 8 May 1898 Édouard Drumont was elected triumphantly with 11,557 votes against 2,328 and 1,741 for his opponents. Of six Algerian national deputies, four were elected on the platform of Régis's Anti-Jewish League. Drumont represented Algiers in the Chamber of Deputies from 1898 to 1902. He was sued for accusing a parliamentary deputy of having ac-



cepted a bribe from the wealthy Jewish banker Édouard Alphonse de Rothschild to pass a piece of legislation the banker wanted.<sup>1</sup>

Drumont had many devotees. He exploited the Panama Company scandal and reached the maximum of his notoriety during the Dreyfus Affair, in which he was the most strident of Alfred Dreyfus' accusers.

For his anti-Panama articles, Drumont was condemned to three months' imprisonment. In 1893 he was an unsuccessful candidate for the representation of Amiens; the next year he retired to Brussels. The Dreyfus affair helped him to regain popularity, and in 1898 he returned to France and was elected deputy for the first division of Algiers, but was defeated as a candidate for re-election in April/May 1902.

#### **IV. Works**

*La fin d'un monde* (1888)

*Dernière bataille* (1890)

*Testament d'un antisémite* (1891)

*Secret de fourmies* (1892)

*De l'or, de la boue, du sang – Du Panama à l'anarchie* (1896), dealing with the Panama scandals

*Les Juifs et l'affaire Dreyfus* (1899)

*Vieux portraits, vieux cadres* (1900)

*La France juive (Jewish France)* (1886)