

# **An Algerian Paradox? The Emulation of Colonial Visions through Self-Orientalism in Postcolonial Literature**

**By**

**Sonia Lamrani**

A thesis submitted to the

University of Birmingham

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Department of Modern Languages  
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music  
College of Arts and Law Graduate School  
University of Birmingham  
March 2022

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**University of Birmingham Research Archive**

**e-theses repository**

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses self-Orientalist representations in the Algerian postcolonial novel produced in both Arabic and French, using postcolonial literary criticism, and the historical contextualisation of the novels to reveal how colonial tropes have survived in late colonial and post-independence Algerian literary productions. I argue in this thesis that the encounter between the Orientalist and the colonial legacies and the postcolonial literary thrust, together with the influence of the historical and the political interplay between Western-inspired value systems and indigenous contexts, triggered the re-creation of the clichéd representations that dominated the colonial and the Orientalist discourses about Algeria. As a result, self-depiction in Algerian postcolonial literature reveals regular occurrences that display the features of self-Orientalist perspectives. The internalisation of biased representations of Algeria in Algerian literary output is vividly illustrated in many themes which are covered in this thesis through three main parts: the representation of people and places, beliefs and customs, topics related to politics and linguistic identity. Through these three parts, this project establishes different nuances in the perpetuation of the stereotypical renderings of Algeria, varying from fully-fledged, through ambivalent and reluctant self-Orientalist stances, which are continuously influenced by the historical and political circumstances inherited from the colonial era, and subsequent events such as the Black Decade and the process of Arabisation, among others. The analysis of the self-Orientalist discourse in Algerian postcolonial literature will showcase the everlasting influence of the colonial legacy on Algerian literary self-representations and highlight the importance of the Algerian case in the academic debate about Orientalism and self-Orientalism.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate with genuine gratitude this work to my beloved parents, my sisters and brothers for providing love and support throughout my doctoral journey.

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this thesis could not have been possible without the continuous help and support of my lead supervisor Dr Berny Sèbe to whom I owe my deep sense of gratitude for his patience, unwavering support and prompt feedback ever since I started my PhD. I am also thankful to Dr Anissa Daoudi for her guidance and advice. I have greatly benefited from the rigorous discussion and the warm encouragement of the viva examiners Dr Michael Willis and Dr Hany Rashwan whose insightful comments opened for me new avenues for future research. It is impossible to extend enough thanks to my parents and my family for the help and support they have extended throughout the journey of my PhD. I would particularly like to thank my old friends Amina Dahmani and Noussaiba Bouchekara for their insightful suggestions and the illuminating discussions we used to have. I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr Sara Mechkarini and Zeeshan Iqbal for their company and assistance. I am also deeply grateful to Karima Issiakhem, Dr Dounia Hachelaf, and Dr Sarah Hadi for always being there when needed.

## List of Conventions

- When engaging with French-speaking theoretical or critical sources, the English-speaking translation has been.
  - English translation will also be provided for the primary and secondary resources in French and Arabic languages.
  - Arabic proper names are transliterated using the IJMES transliteration system, unless they refer to places for which an English equivalent exists, or they relate to authors who have published in European language (in which case the transliteration that appears on their works will be used).
  - An English translation has been provided alongside original titles in Arabic and French. This will be the official English translation of the title or, in its absence, a translation offered by the author of this thesis.
  - All quotes in Arabic translated into English are my translations.
  - All quotes in French translated into English are my translations except: *L'Amour, la fantasia*, *Ombre sultane* and *Meursault, contre-enquête*.
  - I used the word 'postcolonialism' to refer to the era from late colonialism until the post-independent era.
  - Page number are always included in the references, except when unavailable (e.g., online resource with unpaginated webpage)
  - Book titles originally in Arabic are mentioned in the text in an English translation.
- Below is a table of correspondence between the Arabic original, transliteration and the English translation used in this thesis.

<i>Arabic original</i>	<i>English translation</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>
اربعون عاماً في انتظار ايزابيل	<i>Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle</i>	<i>Arba 'ūn 'ām fī intizār izabīl</i>
اللاز	<i>Alaz</i>	<i>Alāz</i>
ذاكرة الجسد	<i>The Memory in the Flesh</i>	<i>Dhākiratu aljasad</i>
سيده المقام	<i>The Lady of the Place</i>	<i>Sayidatu al-Maqām</i>
مزاج مراهقة	<i>The Mood of a Teenager</i>	<i>Mizāju murāhiqa</i>

# Table of Contents

## Introduction

<b>Beyond ‘Othering the Other’: Self-Orientalism in Algerian Postcolonial Novels .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. (Self-)Orientalism: Definition and historical background .....	2
2. Locating self-Orientalism: academic debates .....	5
2.1. Critique of Said’s <i>Orientalism</i> .....	6
2.2. Orientals’ take on Orientalism .....	10
2.3. From Orientalism to self-Orientalism .....	13
4. Methodology and key concepts .....	18
5. Presentation of corpus and chapter breakdown.....	26
6. Biographies of authors and case studies.....	33

## **Part One: Holding the Mirror on Peoples and Places .....**

**45**

### Chapter One

<b>Individual Identity: Self-Demeaning Representations in Algerian Postcolonial Literature .....</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Conceptualising self-demeaning applied to people .....	47
3. Internalising prejudice : essentialised self-demeaning .....	56
3.1. Collective self-demeaning.....	56
3.2. Individual self-demeaning.....	72
4. Conclusion .....	76

### Chapter Two

<b>Of Cities and Land: Debased and Gendered Representations of Algerian Cities and Landscapes.....</b>	<b>79</b>
1. Debasement of Algerian cities .....	79
2. Feminisation and eroticisation of Algerian cities .....	95
3. Conclusion .....	108



**Part Two: Representing Beliefs and Customs..... 110**

**Chapter Three**

**Gender and Self-Orientalism: Stereotyped Rendering of Women in Algerian**

**Postcolonial Novels. .... 111**

1. The Algerian woman as the ‘other’ in colonial and Orientalist discourses..... 112
2. The rebirth of stereotypes about the Algerian woman: uneven images of sexual objectification and passivity in representations of female characters in Algerian postcolonial literature..... 117
  - 2.1. The reluctance against the clichéd image of the Algerian woman in *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) ..... 119
  - 2.2. The resurfacing of the passive sexually objectified Algerian female character in *Al Laz* (1974) ..... 125
  - 2.3. The partial departure from the essentialised sexual objectification of Algerian female characters in *The Lady of the Place* (1995) and *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) ..... 132
  - 2.4. From reluctant self-orientalism to ambivalent self-orientalism: the trajectory of representations of Algerian women since the late-colonial period ..... 142
3. Active Western women in self-Orientalism: the survival of the Western woman’s elevated portrayal in Algerian postcolonial literature ..... 143
  - 3.1. The Western woman as a motivator for education ..... 145
  - 3.2. The Western woman as a replacement of the passive Algerian mother ..... 147
4. Conclusion ..... 149

**Chapter Four**

**Religion in Self-Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Algerian Postcolonial**

**Novels ..... 153**

1. Historical dimensions of the Western conception of Islam, and the veil as one of its essential components..... 154
2. Spirituality and religion in early Algerian literature ..... 161
3. The rise of radical Islamism and the rebirth of stereotypical portrayals of religion.. 169
4. The veil and its implications in self-Orientalist discourse ..... 178
  - 4.1. The veil as a tool to seclude women in Assia Djebar’s *Ombre sultane* (1987) .. 182
  - 4.2. The veil as one of the facets of patriarchal and political oppression and a sign of women’s passivity and submissiveness ..... 187
5. Conclusion ..... 193

**Part Three: Conceptualising the Community ..... 196**

**Chapter Five**

**When Politics Meets Fiction: Particularism and the Re-creation of Racial Stereotypes in Self-Orientalist Discourse..... 197**

1. The forming of the Kabyle Myth in colonial Algeria: its influence on politics and on widening the divide between ethnic categories ..... 198
2. The influence of the racial colonial myths on the self-conception of the Algerian colonised population ..... 204
  - 2.1. The re-creation of the Kabyle myth's aspects: the persistence of racial divisions between Algerian ethnic groups in *La Colline oubliée* (1952)..... 207
  - 2.2. Rejection of Kabyle Myth's legacies: reluctance against the misrepresentation of Islam in Kabyle society ..... 214
3. The influence of Arabisation and the alienation of the Berber culture : the revival of racial divisions in post-independence literature ..... 220
4. The influence of Arabisation on maintaining particularism in Arabic-speaking literature..... 230
5. Conclusion ..... 234

**Chapter Six**

**Of Words and Identity: Self-Orientalism and the Linguistic Conflict in Algeria ..... 237**

1. The Linguistic identity of Algeria : cultural and political palimpsest ..... 238
  - 1.1. Favours French: Linguicism during the colonial era..... 238
  - 1.2. Linguicism during the post-independence era in favour of Arabic ..... 240
2. Fadhila El-Farouk and the reverse influence of Arabisation on Arabic ..... 246
3. Assia Djebar's linguistic trajectory: from nostalgia towards Arabic to Francophonie as a tool for liberation..... 258
  - 3.1. Before the Black Decade: Arabic as a language of intimate territory and French as a language of colonial linguicism..... 258
  - 3.2. During and after the Black Decade: the rebirth of the stereotypes, French as a tool of liberation and Arabic as a language of postcolonial linguicism ..... 265
4. Conclusion ..... 272

**Moving Beyond the Aporia of Colonialism? Self-Orientalism as an Ambiguous Literary Response ..... 275**

1. The Algerian paradox: critical perspectives on literary production ..... 275
2. Beyond self-Orientalism ..... 280

**Works Cited ..... 284**

## **List of abbreviations**

AIS: Islamic Salvation Army

ALN: National Liberation Army

ANP: People's National Army

AUMA: Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama

FFS: Socialist Forces Front

FIS: Islamic Salvation Front

FLN: National Liberation Front

GIA: Armed Islamic Groups

MTLD: Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties

OAS: Secret Armed Organisation

PPA: Algerian People's Party

## Introduction

### Beyond ‘Othering the Other’: Self-Orientalism in Algerian Postcolonial Novels

*The point here is that for a student of Algeria to know, to read, to understand anything about Algeria, he or she cannot possibly do so without French colonial scholarship. Furthermore, because of the unique prestige of French scholarship by the first half of the 20th century, and because of the close cultural dependency of Algerian nationalist writings, it is extremely difficult to write about Algeria without reproducing colonial understandings, categories and so forth. This is what one calls postcoloniality. It is not beyond coloniality, but it is a cultural condition that is historically, politically and even epistemologically the result of coloniality. What makes this situation even more extreme than others is the “conspiracy of silence” about the recent past, whose legacy continues to shape the present. But to claim that Algeria may be in this situation because of a drastic form of colonialism may be only half of an explanation. Colonialism everywhere had such a powerful ability not only to change and transform, but also to make the changes and transformations everlasting.*

Abdelmajid Hannoum,

In the above passage, the anthropologist Abdelmajid Hannoum offers a perspective that speaks directly to the argument of this thesis, indicating as it does that studying Algeria will unavoidably lead to evoking the colonial understanding and the colonial past whose legacy has an everlasting influence on shaping the present of the ex-colonised Algeria. Michael Willis has cast light on similar dynamics when he highlighted the enduring influence of colonialism on Algeria saying that: “The effect of the French presence in Algeria was to be direct, through the processes of colonisation and imperial rule, and near absolute over the next 130 years, leaving a legacy that was to be still deceptively pervasive even after Algeria had achieved its independence” (*The Islamist* 3). For her part, Zahia Smail Salhi has hinted at the difficulty of erasing the colonial legacy and enquired about “How can one unlearn one hundred and thirty-two years (1830-1962) of domination and subjugation and learn to become a free individual?” (*Occidentalism* 206). While such questions are part and parcel of discussions about the

postcolonial destiny of the country, very little attention has been paid to the impact of the colonial era on the self-conception of Algerians and the extent to which the legacy of colonial and Orientalist discourses still influences Algerian postcolonial literature.

It is, in fact, an aspect overlooked in Edward Said's study of the East-West encounter. Said's *Orientalism* focused only on the Western literature produced about the East whereas it overlooked the so-called Orientals' self-conception. The importance of studying the self-representation of Orientals and how it has been influenced by the colonial and Orientalist discourse has been addressed by academics and critics such as, Salhi who argues that "[...] Western power can often also shape self-conceptions and make the Orientals believe that the constructed stereotypes of the Orient and the Orientals are true. This is especially true when the Oriental is under the colonial domination" (*Occidentalism* 4), which is the case of Algeria as it was a region that has elicited a great deal of Orientalist and colonial literary production throughout more than a century of colonial occupation.

Building on this argument and following the hypothesis that the influence of the long-held colonial and Orientalist stereotypes has remained well significant beyond independence; this project investigates the internalisation of colonial and Orientalist images in Algerian self-representation – a process which this thesis terms self-Orientalism. The concept of Orientalism is fundamental to understand self-Orientalism: the latter has emerged as a consequence of the former. Therefore, it is fundamental to start from Said's *Orientalism*, in which he articulates his analysis of Orientalist literary output.

## **1. (Self-)Orientalism: Definition and historical background**

The main purpose of Said's *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (1978) is to analyse Western representations of the Orient by decoding the colonial and Orientalist tropes, which, drawing upon a Foucauldian framework, he claims sustained European colonialism and

imperialism through the development of a heavily biased system of knowledge. Through a thorough examination of a wide range of literary, historical, and political texts, most of them British and French, Said highlights the methods of the Western construction of the Orient as the “Other”. He summarises the mechanism of Othering when he says that: “Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (*Orientalism* 3).

Said’s analysis also shows that the process of Othering is based on a direct cultural opposition between the Orient and the West, with a persistent emphasis on Orientals’ inferiority and backwardness, as opposed to the supposedly European superiority, development, and ethos of progress. He explains that the Oriental is depicted as “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’ [while] the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (Said 33). The discourse created about the Orient helped accordingly the development of “the nineteenth-century discipline of orientalism, which in due course facilitated Western imperialism” (Macfie 89). This is especially accurate as the knowledge created in this discourse about the Orient “works to support and justify the imperialist project and that helps to legitimate the accompanying power relations” (Minnard 76).

The fundamental hypothesis of this thesis is that this body of knowledge, that consists of a wide range of prejudiced assumptions and stereotypes created about the so-called Orient, seems to have informed some of the writings of the so-called Orientals themselves and resulted in what I call here self-Orientalism. That is, relying on Edward Said’s definition of Orientalism, self-Orientalism denotes the process through which Orientals describe themselves, or the Orient, using clichés and biased assumptions that have emerged as a result of their use by

Western Orientalist writers. The perpetuation of those clichés in literary output from North Africa confirms the idea that some local writers are depicting a prejudiced perspective about their society, which is inspired in large part by the Orientalist and colonialist canons.

The term of self-Orientalism has been used before in different contexts. Mirt Komel, among others, defines self-Orientalism as a “distinct reversal of Orientalism, a complicit adoption of the Western style of thought through a peculiar process of self-othering” (528). However, this is not a generally agreed definition as other critics such as Hassan Hanafi (Ḥasan Ḥanafī) states that the direct reverse for Orientalism is Occidentalism and he argues that it “can be developed in the Orient in order to study the West from a non-Western World point of view” (228)<sup>1</sup>. Salhi for her part has referred to self-Orientalism as the colonised’s imitation of the Occidental discourses when she says: “[d]eeply infatuated with the superiority and the power of the Occident, the colonised end up not only believing in the images and discourses created by the former to orientalise the Maghreb and its native people, but also engaged in a process of seeing their own people through the lens of the Occident” (*Occidentalism* 3). The same process has been described by Sadik Jalal al-’Azm using another term “Orientalism in reverse” and explaining that the image created in the Orientalist discourse about the Orient “has left its profound imprint on the Orient’s modern and contemporary consciousness of itself” (al-’Azm).

Although these definitions are in line with the main argument of this thesis, they can be incomplete definitions if we only consider the colonial impact and disregard the influence of post-independence politics, history, and socio-cultural events on the shaping of the self-Orientalist discourse, as highlighted by Hannoum in the quote that opens this chapter. Therefore, throughout this project, my working definition of self-Orientalism is a type of

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition to Hanafi’s take on the subject, a more detailed definition and analysis can be found about the concept of Occidentalism in Salhi’s *Occidentalism*.



literary discourse that results from the encounter between the Western colonial and Orientalist legacies, on the one hand, and the Algerian late colonial and post-independence literary production, on the other. The emergence of these representations took place against the backdrop of the complex and multi-faceted post-independence historical and political interplay which kept stimulating the currency of biased images of the colonised. The self-Orientalist discourse I am analysing in this project implies a variety of instances of interaction which are captured through a series of sub-themes including the self-representation of people, places, religion, and indigenous women, political and linguistic identity, which we will discuss in more detail in the chapter breakdown.

## **2. Locating self-Orientalism: academic debates**

Said's *Orientalism* is an unavoidable starting point when it comes to engaging critically with clichés and stereotypes in colonial and Orientalist discourses: it is the theoretical work that provides a detailed insight into the way the Orient was seen in Western eyes. Said identified the major prejudiced thoughts and stereotypes that were known about the Orient in most of the Western literary output. Yet, even though Said's contribution is regarded as a cornerstone of postcolonial studies, it has been criticised by many scholars who believe he ignored potential issues in his analysis, such as his disregard of the role of gender, class and nationality in the heterogeneity of representations of the Orient in Western literary writing. Besides, one may also add his disregard of the Orientals' self-representations, which is the focal point of this thesis. My reliance on Said's *Orientalism* entails revising the inadequacies of its analysis too. Therefore, in the following section I critically engage with the contribution of postcolonial critics who tried to bridge gaps left in Said's analysis of Orientalism. More importantly, this project fills the gap in knowledge by critically engaging with Said's theory and providing a new insight into another shortcoming which is the absence, prevalent in classical interpretations

of Orientalist discourse, of the Orientals' self-representations and their own response to, and engagement with, the Orientalist discourse.

### **2.1. Critique of Said's *Orientalism***

Billie Melman's *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718/1918* (1992) added to Said's theory the aspect of gender in analysing the Orientalist discourse and highlighted the way this aspect influenced the diversity in portrayals of the Orient. Although she approved Said's claim that European men presented a biased perspective in their depictions of the Orient, she examined the extent to which Western women were involved in this process. She argued that most women travel writers in the Middle East brought about another re-evaluation by their observations of women's life in another culture (Melman 308). She maintained that women writers criticised the male authors' representations, and unlike them, the women writers "humanise[d] the exotic" (Melman 312).

Melman sustained her arguments with the analysis of female travel writings' discourses about the Middle East in particular, such as those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Anne Blunt, and Mary Garnet, among others. She explained the way those female travel writers were able to escape the prejudiced representation of the Other in their literature which "[...] presents the most serious challenge to Orientalist and patriarchal authority. For what characterises women's representation of the difference is a sense of familiarity and sympathy with the other" (Melman 16/17). Building on Melman's study, I consider the issue of gender in this project by including both male and female Algerian literary writings to highlight the impact of gender on the heterogeneity of the self-representations.

As much as it is important to consider the self-representation of the 'Oriental female' in studying the discourse of self-Orientalism, it is also worth comparing it with the image of the Orient spread by female Western Orientalist writers. In my study of self-Orientalism, it is

distinguishable to take into account stereotypes and colonial tropes created by female Orientalist writers side by side with those found in male Orientalists' writings. This idea has been explored in Reina Lewis' *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation* (1996), in which she shed light on the influence of gender on the heterogeneity of the Orient's representations and she highlighted in her analysis the fact that "Said never questions women's apparent absence as producers of Orientalist discourse or as agents within colonial power" (Lewis 18). Therefore, she showed how women contributed to producing imperialist images of the Orient. Moreover, Lewis focused on the analysis of the production and the reception of representations by women, in order to explain the way they "[...] develop an understanding of the interdependence of the ideologies of race and gender in the colonial discourse of the period" (3).

As the Oriental harem is among the central themes of Orientalist representations, Lewis examines paintings of harem scenes made by the French painter Harriette Browne among others. By comparing Browne's paintings to other male Orientalists' works, Lewis shows how Harriette Browne contradicts the conventional depiction of the Orient, as her portrayal was "[...] less damning and eroticized than that of her male counterparts" (162). More importantly, she explains that "Browne's image of the harem as a social space denies the two most common themes of the Orientalist fantasy harem- sex and idleness" (149). Lewis concludes that Browne's representation "resolves the difference between the fantasy logic of the harem and the observed truth of the woman" (170).

In addition to the issue of gender, it is important to consider Said's implied hypothesis about the homogeneity of the Orientalist discourse, which is the point discussed by Lisa Lowe in her *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalism* (1991). Lowe agreed with Said's claim that British and French cultures practised colonial power through colonial practices even when

“defin[ing] sites or objects as ‘oriental’” which was “a way of exercising colonial domination”, as Patrick Crawley has observed in his engagement with Lowe’s theoretical position (216). However, she disapproved of Said’s assumption that Orientalism was a “monolithic development discourse” that homogeneously constructed the Orient as a direct opposite to the West. Lowe argued that Orientalism cannot be considered as a single tradition but rather it is highly heterogeneous when she says: “My argument for heterogeneity seeks to challenge the tradition that conceives of difference as exclusively structured by a binary opposition between two terms – represented by Orientalist logic of Occident and Orient – by proposing instead another notion of difference that takes seriously the conditions of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and nonequivalence” (24). She explains that the variety of the Orientalists’ nationalities results in a variety of types of discourse produced about the Orient. After her analysis of French and British works about the Orient, she concludes saying that “French and British orientalisms are clearly characterized by different literatures, and by distinct relationships between literary representations and the social situations that produce those representations” (107).

In addition to nationalities, she also takes into consideration the influence of gender and class in the heterogeneity of the Orientalist discourse. Lowe illustrates the relevance of these two criteria with various instances, among them the representation of Turkey in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1717/1718). She sheds light on the way Montagu contradicts the male travellers’ misrepresentations, and “sets herself apart from that tradition by criticizing the representation of women, marriage, sexuality, and customs in the travel accounts of Robert Withers, George Sandys, John Covel, Jean Dumont, and Aaron Hill” (Lowe 31). Lowe clarifies that Montagu regards the accounts of the travel writers who preceded her as “misconceptions and inaccurate representations of Turkish women” (*Critical* 31). Finally, Lowe explains that the reason behind Montagu’s empathy with the Turkish dignitaries’ wives

is the existence of a form of “discourse of class distinction, and an established identity of aristocratic privilege across cultures” (*Critical* 32).

Apart from Western scholars, there are many other intellectuals, Arabs in particular, who criticised Said’s *Orientalism* for many reasons. Among them was the Lebanese author Nadim al-Bitar (Nadīm al-Bayṭār) who wrote a detailed criticism of Said’s *Orientalism* concerning different aspects. Like Lisa Lowe, al-Bitar rejects Said’s definition of Orientalism as a homogeneous discourse that does not change with time and cannot be influenced by social, intellectual, political, and economic criteria (al-Bitar 104). I build my analysis on this argument since it highlights heterogeneity as a compulsory element which I consider in the analysis of the self-Orientalist discourse’s development in Algerian literature, especially because the literary works under study belong to distinct eras of Algerian literature that are characterised with different political, social and economic contexts.

Furthermore, al-Bitar denounces Said’s over-generalisation and essentialisation in his analysis when he puts all the Western authors of Orientalism from 1800 to 1950 under the same umbrella of the imperialist racist authors. Al-Bitar assumes that it is illogical to believe that Said has read all what has been published in this period to decide that they all have the same biased Orientalist discourse (al-Bitar 106). To defend his arguments, al-Bitar provides different examples about Western Orientalist writers, who rejected racist and prejudiced views about the Orient. Among those writers, he mentions Simon Ockleys whose thesis refutes biased Orientalist claims about the Arabs, such as their presumed inferiority compared to the Westerners, and corrects some wrong historical facts about Arab civilisations (al-Bitar 112). Following al-Bitar’s and the previously mentioned critics’ observations about the non-monolithic nature of the Orientalist discourse, this project also opens room for the study of fragmentation more than monolithicism in the analysis of the self-Orientalist discourse. Whilst

Said's pioneering work remains a critical starting point for my thesis, the critics I have just mentioned have highlighted how he has overlooked some key aspects in his definition of the Orientalist discourse, key aspects which I consider when studying self-Orientalism as the two concepts are interrelated.

## **2.2. Orientals' take on Orientalism**

My thesis follows in the footsteps of the above-mentioned projects and intends to consolidate the debate about Orientalism and to foster more discussion of its corollary, self-Orientalism. Indeed, my research starts from a point that Said has neglected – perhaps even excluded in *Orientalism*, which is Orientals' contribution to the debate about the Orientalist discourse, and their role in shaping self-representations, even when these are derogatory. In order to expand and consolidate Said's limited study that engaged merely with Western output on this matter, it is fundamental to capture the entire spectrum and include what has been said about Orientalism by Oriental scholars too. In this context, Daniel Martin Varisco has effectively identified in *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (2007), several Arab critics who appeared in the same period or before Said's concept of Orientalism. Varisco shows that those theoretical works written in Arabic, English and French, by the likes of the poet Adonis, Abd al-Kabir al-Khatibi (ʿAbd al-kabīr Khaṭībī), and Hichem Djait (Hishām Juʿayṭ), discussed similar issues as those tackled by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (144).

Many other Oriental writers, Arabs in particular, discussed topics related to Orientalism before Said's publication of *Orientalism*, with Abdellah Laroui (ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿArawī) or Anouar Abdelmalek (Anwar ʿAbd al-Mālik) among them. A reading of their publications shows that they anticipated many aspects of Said's theory of Orientalism. For instance, Laroui shares similar views with Said on what concerns the accuracy of what is reported about the

Orient in Orientalists'<sup>2</sup> cultural production. Indeed, Laroui questions in *La crise des intellectuels arabes: traditionalisme ou historicisme?* (1974; *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectuals: Traditionalism or Historicism?* 1976) dominant records about the culture of Muslims and Arabs in particular (Laroui 44). He focused on the study of Islamic science, assuming that the dominating ideology (the theory of truth) prevents saying the truth about the Muslim savants, and the theory of history "impoverishes real history and inhibits research in an important area. To say that Islamic science was in any case condemned to come to nothing by no means explains why Ibn al-Nafis (Ibn al-Nafis), working in freedom, was forgotten, while on the contrary Galileo, who was harassed, was remembered" (Laroui 66). Although these are similar perspectives to those that Said developed four years later in *Orientalism*, the latter limited his reference to Laroui's criticism of Gustave von Grunebaum's Hegelian reading of history, and his antagonism to Islam (Varisco 145).

Like Laroui, Abdelmalek was among the rare Arab critics mentioned in Said's *Orientalism*. Abdelmalek's contribution about Orientalism in "L'orientalisme en crise" (1963; *Orientalism in Crisis* 1963) is so close to Said's attitudes in *Orientalism*, that he quotes a whole page from his article. Anouar Abdelmalek explains the way the Orientalists see:

[...] the Orient and Orientals as an 'object' of study, stamped with an otherness- as all that is different, whether it be 'subject' or 'object'-but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character, as we shall see in a moment. This 'object' of study will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a 'historical' subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or 'subject' which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined –and acted – by other (50).

The same point of view is adopted by Said in his study of Orientalist writers and how they inferiorise the Orient and the Orientals. However, we find that Abdelmalek's study of

---

<sup>2</sup> Abdellah Laroui defines the 'Orientalist' as "a foreigner –in this case, a Westerner – who takes Islam as the subject of his interest" (44).

Orientalism was more thorough and cautious while dividing the groups of Orientalists in his analysis, as Donald P. Little has argued: "...whereas Abdel-Malek is careful to distinguish types of Orientalists according to time and place and the evolution of a discipline, Said unceremoniously dumps every Westerner who has ever studied the Arabs into one big basket" (129). Although these critical works contributed to shaping the Oriental response to *Orientalism*, Said did not seem to pay much attention to them.

This can be seen as another shortcoming of Said's analysis, for which he was criticised by some scholars such as Fred Halliday and Chandreyee Niyogi, both of whom claim that Said falls in the trap of the ideology he was denouncing in *Orientalism* with his "denial of the Orient's own power of representation and self-representation" (quoted in Komel 528). In the same vein, Varisco criticises Said's reference in *Orientalism* to the "imagined Orient" created by the West without referring to the literature production from the 'Orient', saying that "it is so bad enough that Oriental voices are absent in a work that purports to deconstruct the Western discourse primarily implicated in speaking for them" (142). Robert Irwin for his part criticises Said for this issue, saying that he "did not want the Arabs to represent themselves and it is he who wishes to deny them permission to speak" (292).

Indeed, Said's disregard for non-Western critics of Orientalism and their self-representation in their literary output prevents the reader from knowing whether the Orientals' self-representations differ, reject or even approve the Orientalist portrayal of the Orient. This also resulted in overlooking the discussion about the impact of the Orientalist discourse on the Orientals' writings and whether there is a possibility that the Orientals can even be influenced by the Orientalist discourse and trapped in what I call here self-Orientalism. Therefore, I focus on self-Orientalism in the framework of the Algerian postcolonial novel to analyse Oriental literature and its relationship with the intellectual trend of Orientalism and to address Said's silencing and marginalisation of the Orientals' response to Western Orientalism.



### 2.3. From Orientalism to self-Orientalism

In order to contextualise my own contribution to knowledge, it is important to engage with the works of scholars who tackled self-Orientalism in a variety of areas, referring to it using different terms such as self-Orientalism, self-Othering, self-exoticism. Among these critics, Robert Hayden uses the concept ‘self-othering’ in his analysis of two scholarly studies and a novel written by Belgrade native authors who left in the 1980s for North America to highlight the way “[s]elf-othering intensified among intellectuals in Serbia [...]” (188). His analysis shows how Serbs write about their country depicting “estranged versions of the Serbs in a form of self-Othering” (Hayden 188). Hayden argues that those writers “exoticize their native land, reproducing Orientalist images of Serbia [...]” (187) as they were writing in English and addressing elites and Western readers and not the native populations of Serbia. Hayden’s study of a process similar to self-Orientalism highlights the language of writing as one of the elements that can stimulate or lead the writer to get involved in the process of self-Othering; this will be a crucial aspect running throughout the present thesis.

On another occasion, self-Orientalism is discussed as a distinct reversal of Said’s conception of Orientalism, as Mirt Komel’s analysis of the novelistic representations of assassins. Additionally, Komel gives further insight when he highlights another type of self-Orientalism and argues that self-Orientalism can involve both Oriental and Western people. He discussed the type of self-Orientalism in which “the subject of self-othering is not the Oriental Other, but rather the Occidental subject itself” (Komel 528). In other words, Komel explains that the Oriental is not the only one who appears to Orientalise himself, but even the Westerner seems attempting to show himself/herself as exotic or “Other”.

In the same vein, Ali Behdad (‘Alī Bihdād) discusses self-othering for a Western subject, using the term self-exoticism. His study shows that even the coloniser can be involved in the

process of self-Orientalism as s/he attempts to show themselves as exotic compared to their own people. In his *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (1994), Behdad argues that some European travel writers attempted to show themselves as exotic compared to other people in their home countries. Behdad illustrates this position with Gustave Flaubert who “wanted to reconstruct his self as an (Oriental) Other” (59); this was achieved through dressing like Orientals, for the “Other’s costume offers a visible locus of transformation through which he can practice self-exoticism” (59). He also sheds light on the significance of the photographs used as covers for, or included in, travelogues of British twentieth-century travel writers. Behdad briefly explains that the photographs illustrate the “unconscious desire for self-exoticism on the part of the colonizer” (75). In other words, Behdad claims that the photographs convey the desire of the travellers to show their mastery over the native populations on the one hand, and to differentiate themselves from “the British back home in England” (75), which means to depict themselves as exotic, as an impersonation of the other, on the other hand.

Not very far from photography, William G. Feighery highlights self-Orientalism in an Omani tourism promotional film entitled *Welcome to My Country* (2013), which shows that the literature is not the only field that is influenced by the process of self-Orientalism. He has identified many features in the film that reflect conventional Orientalist attitudes about the Orient, which are used intentionally to convey a traditional and highly stereotypical picture of the Orient in a bid to attract Western tourists. He explains that the conventional prejudiced discourses persist in official representations of Oman saying that “when Oman speaks for itself within a Western discourse of tourism promotion, what results is a form of self-Orientalism” (Feighery 269).

In the same field, Grace Yan and Carla Almeida Santos discuss self-Orientalism in another tourism promotional video entitled *China, Forever*. They tackle the missing issue in Said's Orientalism and analyse the self-representation of the "Other" in contemporary tourism discourse. Through the analysis of the representation of China in this video, Yan and Almeida Santos argue that the self-representation of China contributes to the process of self-Orientalism by "conform[ing] to Western representational practices" (295). They analyse the way the video shows the influence of Western conceptions on the self-produced images of the Orient, as a result of the "Western Orientalist knowledge [that] has been internalized and self-inscribed by the East" (298). They consolidate their argument by illustrating the visual techniques that were used to convey a picture of "a changeless, nostalgic, mythical and feminized China that speaks to a Western Orientalist imagination" (295).

Salhi addressed another focal point overlooked by Said, highlighting the fact that his analysis focused solely on the mechanisms of Western Orientalism and arguing that "he did not engage with the possibility of the Orientals to believe in the images created by Occident about themselves to the point of adopting them as truth" (*Occidentalism* 5), which is in line with the conceptualisation of self-Orientalism in this project. More importantly, Salhi criticises Said for his exclusion of the Maghreb as she explains that "while he [Said] scrutinised European portrayals of the Orient as meaning the Middle East, [...] the Maghreb was totally overlooked by Said in *Orientalism*" (*Occidentalism* 2). In doing so, Salhi highlights another gap in the study of Orientalism, one that she considers however as a justified fault when she says that "grouping the study of the Maghreb as a part of the study of the Mashriq/ the Middle East would be erroneous due to the fundamental differences which exist between these two parts of what we know as 'the Arab world' – a term Rasheed El-Enany persuasively describes as loose and unscientific" (*Occidentalism* 2/3). She argues that the study of the Maghreb separately from the Middle East "is a means of averting this tradition of overlooking the

fundamental differences which exist between the Maghreb and the Mashriq” (Salhi *Occidentalism 3*)<sup>3</sup>.

Based on this argument, my study of self-Orientalism contributes to examining the two areas overlooked in Said’s *Orientalism*, as my research focuses on analysing Maghreban literature (mainly Algerian), on the one hand, and contributes to making sense of self-representations of the so-called Orientals, on the other. This is especially relevant because, as can be noticed from the above-mentioned literary review, the concept of self-Orientalism has been applied in different areas of interest, but not in the Algerian context. This is in spite of the fact that Algerian literature is more likely to exemplify self-Orientalism because of the impact of the long period of colonialism: this project stems from the realisation that no sufficient attention has been given to analyse Algerian postcolonial literature as a case study. Indeed, postcolonial Algerian authors can be expected, because of their positionality, to give a more accurate self-represented picture while portraying Algeria in their writings. Such a picture would be expected to challenge the Orientalist and colonialist images of Algeria that exoticise it, and debase its people. Yet, this thesis argues that this is not always the case as Algerian postcolonial literature develops a self-Orientalist stance through the internalisation of some aspects of the colonial and Orientalist discourses as will be further explained throughout this project.

### **3. Why study self-Orientalism?**

Being the people who had witnessed more than a century of colonial rule, Algerian authors are very likely to face the challenge of building a literary representation for themselves, for their people and their country that is different from the colonial and the Orientalist renderings.

---

<sup>3</sup> sSalhi’s remark was in fact aligned with Abdelkebir Khatibi’s concept of *Maghreb Pluriel* which he used to differentiate the Maghreb from the Middle East/ the Mashriq and to highlight its own plurality when suggesting to study it “tel qu’il est, site topographique entre l’Orient, l’Occident et l’Afrique, et tel qu’il puisse se mondialiser pour son propre compte” (38/39).

This is a particularly demanding task as Algeria is a part of the Maghreb which is regarded as “a place that is simply the ‘object’ of history rather than the product of its own experiences” (Willis, *Politics* 10). In other words, most of the literature produced about the Maghreb, and Algeria in particular, has traditionally tackled the external historical events that are related to this region, not to its own indigenous history and characteristics. Therefore, in studying the impact of colonialist and Orientalist culture on Algerian literature it is crucial to examine the extent to which the Algerian postcolonial novel departs from stereotypical representations of Algeria in Orientalist and colonialist discourses.

The study of stereotypical writings’ influence on Algerian literature entails a discussion of its results which appear as a self-Orientalist discourse in Algerian literature, as I argue in this thesis. This project attempts to answer another key question to indicate areas or topics wherein the process of self-Orientalism prevails: In which ways do postcolonial Algerian novels participate in the process of self-Orientalism? This question is acknowledged through the themes around which this project is articulated and in the way this thesis is divided as each chapter indicates a different way or area where the self-Orientalist discourse has emerged in Algerian literature.

The corpus used in this project – that vividly illustrates instances of self-Orientalism – includes Algerian literary works of the late colonial and post-independence eras. We must therefore call into question the reason behind the appearance of the self-Orientalist discourse even after the end of colonialism and ask the question: Is the impact of the colonial and Orientalist discourses the only reason behind the resurfacing of clichéd representations in Algerian postcolonial literature? This thesis attempts to answer this question by analysing the influence of the socio-cultural and political aspects in developing the self-Orientalist discourse beyond the colonial era.

Last but not least, the research draws on another key question that is: How much does the period of publication influence the relationship between cultural production and self-Orientalism? In the attempt to answer this question, my analysis examines Algerian literary works from different historical periods of Algeria, with particular attention to the type and the topic in which stereotypes have been recreated. In doing so, the analysis illustrates the influence of historical events of each period on the creation of self-Orientalism in different stances and topics. For instance, the thesis shows that the prose published during the era of Arabisation and Black Decade displayed stances of self-Orientalism that are different from the ones that appear in the prose published during colonialism.

#### **4. Methodology and key concepts**

My thesis draws on four main theories that have contributed to the field of postcolonial studies. As the core concern of my research is self-Orientalism, which I have previously introduced as a process of perpetuating dominant and biased tropes in Orientalist and colonialist discourses by Oriental writers, the reference to Said's *Orientalism*, as well as his predecessors and successors as outlined above, is bound to play an important role in addressing this issue. Said introduces the concepts of the colonial and the Orientalist discourses reflecting Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse", and his view about the influence of power on representation and discursive formation. Starting from this idea, Said has shaped postcolonial theory by "[...] apply[ing] to the close reading of texts in order to point out the tropes of colonialism hidden in their words and perspectives. Said's extensive discourse analysis of texts initiated what came to be known as colonial discourse theory" (Burney 36).

Furthermore, among the major contributions of Said's theory is his examination of the relation between "knowledge" and "power". He sheds light on the strategic way "knowledge" about the Orient was used as "power" to conquer, administer and dominates the Other and he

argues that the West not only constructed the Orient but also controlled it through implanted structures of power and knowledge. Said centres his analysis on representations of the Orient and Orientals, as he argues that “[t]he main thing for a European visitor was a European representation [...]” (*Orientalism* 1), which is in most cases foregrounded on a “regime of stereotype” (Bart 39). With the recurrent link between representations of the Oriental and discriminatory clichés, the word “Oriental” came to connote the pejorative stereotypical characteristics that debase it compared to positive characteristics of the word “Western”. *Orientalism* is well-documented with examples that show the way Said has thoroughly analysed the Western literary output with close reading which makes this theory most useful to apply while discussing self-Orientalism and scrutinising the colonialist and Orientalist discourses in Oriental self-representation.

The use of *Orientalism* also entails a reflection on *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) as it is somewhat a sequel to his seminal 1978 book, wherein Said “continues and corrects” (Jehlen 784) his former analysis. Indeed, Said reconsiders many aspects that he left out in his *Orientalism*. From the opening of the book, Said argues that the resistance of the so-called Orientals is among the major features that he missed out in his discussion of the East-West encounter, which made him highlight in his argument this time, the “response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movements of decolonization all across the Third World” (*Culture* xii). Moreover, after he had presented the discourse of Orientalism as homogeneous, he made room for heterogeneity in the later book, when he argued that “the history of imperialism and its culture can now be studied as neither monolithic nor reductively compartmentalized, separate, distinct” (Said, *Culture* xx).

As a corrective to his previous disregard for the contribution of women in the debate about Orientalism, Said highlights in this book many seminal women’s writings which he considers “undermined the old despotism” and are “intellectually and politically sophisticated, attuned

to the best theoretical and historical scholarship, engaged but not demagogic, sensitive to but not maudlin about women's experience; finally, while written by scholars of different backgrounds and education, they are works that are in dialogue with, and contribute to, the political situation of women in the Middle East" (*Culture and Imperialism* xxiv). However, he has been criticised by some scholars like Harriet D. Lyons who states that Said's analysis of women's writings is characterised by "surprising absences" (102) of some prominent works. She argues that Said's book shows that "women's writings as a whole [got] buried in a list" (103) and superficially discussed.

Despite Said's pitfalls in his discussion of women's writings, his work is fundamental to this project as it vividly illustrates the study of the novel as an aesthetic object that was directly connected or contributed to the expansion of French and British imperialisms. A fact that is expressed by Said who argues that the novel is among the cultural forms that were "immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences" (*Culture* xii). Said's interpretations and literary analysis of Orientalist and colonialist novels is most helpful to showcase the use of postcolonial theoretical framework in the literary criticism which is the core concern of my project. However, the apparent absence of the analysis of the so-called Orientals' works entails the use of other theoretical works which provided a developed understanding of Orientals' self-representations.

My research also engages with Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1956; English translation 1975), to frame the argument concerning the impact of colonialism on the colonised. Memmi, a Tunisian writer and thinker, tackled the intricacies of the coloniser-colonised encounter and relation well before Edward Said did. Albert Memmi introduces in his essay the analysis of the psychological effect of colonialism on both the coloniser and the colonised. On the one hand, Memmi examines how colonialism empowers the coloniser, allows



him to practise his power on the colonised and impose his culture, his religion, and his history. He even demeans and depersonalises the colonised, “[thus], one after another, all the qualities which make a man of the colonized crumble away. The humanity of the colonized, rejected by the colonizer, becomes opaque” (Memmi 128/129). On the other hand, he argues that colonialism smashes the identity of the colonised and drives him to accept to be passive, inferior and subordinate to the coloniser as he considers him the ideal candidate to be the superior race who has complete supremacy, as we will see in some Algerian works which reappropriate colonial demeaning representations.

In the second section of the book, Memmi discusses the effect of colonialism on the colonised which is the aspect that is most useful in my analysis of self-Orientalism. Memmi explains that the process of dehumanising the colonised by the coloniser leads to a level where the colonised comes to accept the claim that he is inferior as he believes that “[h]e is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object” (130). The extent of this effect goes beyond the acceptance of being inferior, even reaching the degree of believing in this inferiority which eventually results in self-dehumanisation. Memmi’s argument is also relevant to my research when discussing the case of Algerian self-representations in the country’s postcolonial literature and relating it to Memmi’s account on the case of the “colonised writer”. He comments on the complexities the colonised author faces when he says that the “role of the colonized writer is too difficult to sustain. He incarnates a magnified vision of all the ambiguities and impossibilities of the colonized” (Memmi 152).

Memmi also explains that the challenge in the situation of the colonised writer lies in the obligation of writing in the coloniser’s language as his native language has been erased, and what remains, is not developed enough to be used in literature. He shows how language is not the only obstacle that hinders the colonised writer, as his positionality also affects the content of the literature he writes and the circle of the readers he addresses. In other words, the

colonised cannot express his resistance to colonialism while using the coloniser's language<sup>4</sup>. Simultaneously, the colonised cannot address his people with the coloniser's language as most of his people are illiterate. Memmi's discussion on the dilemma of the colonised writer and the way he struggles to produce his literature in the colonised country is most helpful throughout the thesis because it reflects the impact of colonialism on the self-depiction of the colonised. Even though Memmi's theoretical framework is important for my research, it is worth noting that his theory has its inadequacies which I intend to highlight in my analysis. To give just an example, Memmi's analysis was broad and, to a high extent, generalised. For he was speaking about the coloniser and the colonised as "he" without the slightest reference to the role of women and their position in the coloniser-colonised encounter. Moreover, Memmi's analysis is characterised by a high extent of under-estimation of the colonised resistance and refusal to be assimilated into the coloniser's culture as he dismisses the agency of the colonised to reject the imposed power of colonisation.

In addition to Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon is one of the major theorists relevant to this project, as he tackled the "[s]ystematic theorizing of colonization and its attendant features such as race, language, resistance and representation [...]" (Ashcroft et al x). I make use of Fanon's book *Sociologie d'une révolution: L'an V de la révolution algérienne (Sociology of a Revolution: Year V of the Algerian Revolution)* as it examines the politicisation of the Algerian woman's role in the colonial era, before and during the War of independence, which makes it the most suitable source for my discussion of the gender aspect in colonial and postcolonial literary output. Fanon explains in detail the strategies used by the colonial administration in their attempt to gain the Algerian woman as a tool to undermine the colonised Algerian family by spreading a batch of stereotypes that highlight the oppression of women in the indigenous

---

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that this is what Memmi has done by writing the book under study in French during the colonial era, although he did not publish it until the independence of Tunisia.

society. In my thesis, I draw on Fanon's account of colonial strategies held against the native Algerian woman to investigate the way these colonial and Orientalist tropes survived in the post-colonial literature, and how they articulated with issues relating to gender.

More importantly, Fanon's book illuminates, in one of the essays, the 'historic dynamism of the veil' in the battleground between the colonised and the coloniser. The primary focus of Fanon in this essay "is the way in which the 'detail[s]' of everyday 'dress' in Algeria are potentially transformed into a form of 'revolutionary fashion'. Fanon immediately turns his attention to what is most visible in Algerian society: the veil – as both dress and mask – of the Algerian woman [...]" (Decker 181). Fanon's theoretical framework helps us to understand the different implications of the veil and their use by Algerian women in the fight for independence. In using Fanon's analysis of the stereotypes created about Algerian women and the veil in particular, I will be able to distinguish which of these clichés survive in the self-representations of Algerian people. Fanon's theory can also be applied beyond the era of colonialism as it tackles both cultural and political implications of the veil which continued to exist in the post-independence era, mainly during the Black Decade.

However, like Said's and Memmi's writings, Fanon's theories were also criticised for falling into the trap of essentialised representations and marginalising of women's agency. Fanon's writings and Algerian revolutionary authorities "are viewed as silencing women, and/or of endowing women with an agency which is merely designated, structural and auxiliary" (Moore 57). Therefore, this project makes use of the theory but with challenging the essentialised representations and addressing the portrayal of the veil by female authors from different eras.

In order to highlight the various other factors which affect self-representations in Algerian literature, I make use of Malek Bennabi's concept of 'colonisabilité'. Bennabi provides another

explanation about the reason behind what he called backwardness of Islamic societies when he considers colonialism as “a lousy little seed, [which] would not have sprouted and borne fruit if the fertile soil is not prepared in our minds and souls”[sic] (Quoted in Patria 59). Bennabi is of the opinion that colonialism was not the only problem for the retarded development of Muslim societies, showing that “this happened because of the inability of the Muslim society to analyze and criticize the root of all the problems they experienced, even before they were colonized. This inability resulted in errors in formulating various actions and policies to rebuild their society and realize their goals” (Patria 57). Bennabi urges in his writings Muslim societies to resolve this problem by “purify[ing] individuals’ psyche from ‘colonisability’” (Ghennam 150). The use of Bennabi’s theory of colonisability opens a space to consider and investigate other reasons behind the emergence of self-Orientalism in Algerian postcolonial writings, which can go beyond the influence of colonial and Orientalist discourses.

Based on Bennabi’s analysis of colonisability as being primarily a psychological attitude as well as Fanon’s ability to draw on psychiatric experiments for his analysis of colonialism and its impact on indigenous populations, I will also engage with recent socio-psychological analysis of the “colonial mentality” which results in the low self-esteem and low social-esteem which were much at the heart of the phenomena analysed by both Fanon and Bennabi. I make use of this concept to explain the reasons behind self-demeaning representations in the Algerian prose I am analysing. The colonial mentality represents one of the major results of “colonialism’s influence on the psyche of African people” which eventually lead the “alienate people from their culture and introduced a sense of inferiority into [their] psyche” (Utsey et al 198). Scholars like Walter Rodney assume that the colonial mentality is caused by the colonial educational system which aims to alter the mentality of the educated colonised and turn them against their culture, which will accordingly alienate them from their own people (248). Such theoretical study is most useful when studying the aspect of self-demeaning and the debasement

of places, indigenous cultures, and languages in my thesis, as it gives a psychological interpretation of the dominant features of the self-Orientalist discourse.

In an attempt to avoid the essentialisation and the prevalence of overly-homogeneous analysis in my research, I coined three main concepts and structured my analysis around them as they vividly demonstrate the different degrees in the expression of the self-Orientalist discourse. These are ‘reluctant self-Orientalism’, ‘ambivalent self-Orientalism’, and ‘fully-fledged self-Orientalism’, which I examine in turn below.

- **Reluctant self-Orientalism** encompasses the kind of representations that manifest an attempt to resist and reject colonial and Orientalist tropes, by ascribing reverse meaning to some demeaning and essentialising stereotypes. This type is sometimes accompanied by casual internalisations of some stylistic aspects conventionally used in colonial and Oriental writings, resulting from the influence of colonialism or colonial education – especially as this type of self-Orientalism usually appears in early Algerian literary output which was published during the late period of the colonial domination.

- **Ambivalent self-Orientalism** covers representations which display a “[...] sign of a double articulation” (Bhabha 122) of the stereotypes. The portrayals in this trend are characterised by the duality of discourse which gathers, at the same time, the adaptation and the rejection of stereotypes. In doing so, the literary production of this trend reflects the impact of the biased clichés and simultaneously shows the attempt to depart from the colonial and the Orientalist conventional representations.

- **Fully-fledged self-Orientalism** refers to the type of representations that fully internalise or perpetuate the biased stereotypes of the colonial and Orientalist discourses, which is a trend that appears mostly in post-independence literature. I argue in this thesis that the reason behind the appearance of this trend was not only a result of the impact of the colonial and Orientalist

literature but it was also triggered by other causes including the process of Arabisation, the discussions of identity and intellectual production, the Black Decade, and the associated questioning of Algeria's future.

## **5. Presentation of corpus and chapter breakdown**

Having defined what is meant by self-Orientalism, and explained the theoretical framework of my research, I now move on to introduce the corpus of my research and the chapter breakdown of my thesis, which includes works in French and in Arabic and move from the late colonial era until the 2000s. As a preamble, I want to highlight the fact that there is a 'core corpus' that cuts across the thesis (hence a reference to the same author or book can be found in several chapters depending upon the themes under study), and a 'complementary corpus' of books that throw light upon specific aspects dealt with in each chapter. Therefore, the analysis will be articulated around the recurrent use of some novels in several chapters, whereas other works will be used in specific chapters and be absent in others. This project is divided into three main parts and each part comprises two chapters. Entitled "Holding the mirror on people and places", the first part places the emphasis on the self-Orientalist discourse created in the representation of Algerian people and places.

Chapter 1, entitled "Individual identity: self-demeaning representations in Algerian postcolonial literature" investigates the resurfacing of colonial and Orientalist stereotypes in Algerian renderings of Algerian people. This chapter argues that self-demeaning is the aspect that dominates the self-representation of Algerian people in the literature that was produced during the late era of colonialism and in the post-independence era. Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) (*The Uphill Roads*) illustrates the influence of colonialism on the colonised intellectual in his/her representation of his own society at the time of early Algerian literature. As a preamble, I use this novel to challenge Albert Memmi's argument about the

influence of colonialism on the colonial writer as Feraoun's representations develop a reluctant self-Orientalist stance despite writing in a period that was highly impacted by colonial and Orientalist stereotypes. Furthermore, using Malek Bennabi's theory in the analysis of this novel, I show that, alongside the legacy of colonialism, there are other reasons behind the echoing of stereotypes in the Algerian literary output, such as 'colonisability'.

Feraoun's novel is also used to discuss two different features in the self-Orientalist discourse which are: the paradigmatic contrast between European and Arab contrast and the collective act of self-demeaning. Being a novel that relates the encounter of the colonised and the coloniser in Algerian society, it is most relevant to analyse the way Feraoun portrayed the difference between the indigenous populations, or his people, and the colonisers, which helps to chart his view on the supposed opposition between East and West, and to establish whether he supported the alleged superiority of the coloniser over the colonised in his representations. As a part of this analysis, the novel shows how a colonised writer can include a derogatory description of Algerians that parallels a flattering depiction of the non-Algerian characters. Despite the reluctance towards self-Orientalism that characterises Feraoun's writings, the novel includes occasional internalisations of colonial and Orientalist aspects such as the collective self-demeaning which is illustrated through an essentialised and deprecating representation of Algerian people in this novel.

Chapter one engages with other post-independence literary works to highlight the presence of self-demeaning representations even after the era of colonialism. In doing so, the chapter follows the appearance of other stances such as fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives in both Francophone and Arabic-speaking novels of the post-independence era, represented by Tahar Ouettar's (Tāhir Waṭṭār) *Alaz* (1974), Kamal Daoud's *Meursault contre enquête* (2013) (*The Meursault Investigation*), and Said Khatibi's *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016). The

use of these novels also points out the absence of immediate correlation between the extent of the adoption of stereotypes and the closeness to the colonial period, as it highlights the fully-fledged self-Orientalist representations in these literary works that appeared late in the period under study.

The analysis of representations of Algerian people paves the way for the discussion of the self-Orientalist's take on the representation of Algerian places and cities in Chapter 2, entitled "Of cities and land: debased and gendered representations of Algerian cities and landscapes". I argue in this chapter that Algerian literature echoes two main colonial and Orientalist tendencies in the representation of Algerian places, namely debasement and feminisation. The incorporation of literary works from the colonial and the post-independence eras illustrates the heterogeneity of self-Orientalist discourse as the analysis shows three different stances that vary throughout the time. Indeed, the analysis of Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) shows how his reluctant stance becomes even more evident in the description of places, as his prose challenges traditional portrayals which tended to feminise and deprecate Algerian cities.

Through the analysis of Kamal Daoud's *Meursault contre enquête* (2013) and Said Khatibi's (Sa'īd Khaṭībī) *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016) from the perspective of places and cities, the chapter sheds light on the fully-fledged self-Orientalist renderings of Algerian cities which recreate a set of feminising and demeaning stereotypes. This chapter contributes to outlining the difference between self-representations in the early and post-independence eras, as the resistance to the conventional colonial and Orientalist images that appeared in Feraoun's account seems to disappear completely in Daoud's and Khatibi's proses.

The chapter highlights another idiosyncrasy when discussing Algerian female writing about this topic. As the analysis of Nina Bouraoui's *La Voyeuse interdite* (1991) (*The Forbidden*



*Vision*) and Ahlam Mosteghanemi's (Aḥlām Mustaghānimī) *Memory in the Flesh* (1993) shows the emergence of another type of recycling of the feminising clichés; the ambivalent self-Orientalist stance, which embodies a different self-Orientalist tendency. The inclusion of female writings in this chapter is crucial as it illuminates the role of gender in the heterogeneity of the self-Orientalist discourse and engages with Billie Melman, Reina Lewis, and Lisa Lowe's contributions to the study of gender in Orientalism.

The need to capture the entire spectrum of the self-Orientalist discourse leads us to the discussion of gender and religion in the second part of this project under the heading "Representing beliefs and customs". Chapter 3, "Gender and self-Orientalism: stereotyped rendering of women in Algerian postcolonial novels", engages with the influence of gendered positionality upon the development of self-Orientalism. The analysis addresses two major tropes that were conventionally ascribed to the representation of Algerian women: their sexual objectification and the emphasis on their presumed inferiority in contrast to the superiority of Western women.

The analysis in this chapter makes use of four novels published in the era between the colonial period until the 1990s. In addition to the heterogeneity of the self-Orientalist discourse about Algerian women, this chapter also highlights the impact of the historical and the political situation on this type of self-representations. Again, Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) exemplifies the reluctant self-Orientalist stance in picturing female Algerian characters throughout the events of the novel. The chapter argues that the withdrawal of Algerian women from the political sphere in the early post-independence era has negatively influenced the image of the Algerian woman in the literary production, which is the aspect that is discussed through the analysis of Taher Ouettar's *Alaz* (1974). The influence of the situation of Algerian women and their absence from the political spectrum in this era is reflected in the

novel through the marginalisation of their role and the dominance of the fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance that perpetuates both stereotypical images about women discussed in this chapter.

The literary works published in the 1990s, mainly Waciny Laredj's (Wāsīnī al-A'raj) *The Lady of the Place* (1995) and Fadhila El-Farouk's (Faḍīlat al-Fārūq) *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) are used in this chapter to illustrate the ambivalent self-Orientalist stance that slightly departs from the full reappropriation of colonial and Orientalist stereotypes. The comparison of works of these authors with their other feminist counterparts elucidates the deviance of these literary works from the main feminist stream that aims to release female characters from conventional weakening and demeaning clichés.

Chapter 4 is devoted to a discussion of the self-Orientalist's take on Islam, which was a much-debated religion in the colonial and Orientalist literary output. In addition to the analysis of the representation of Islam, this chapter also sheds light on another focal point that usually goes hand in hand with the topic of Islam: the veil. The analysis shows that the novels under study display different tendencies in their representations as they belong to different periods: late colonial and post-independence eras. The chapter consolidates the idea suggested in previous chapters, that self-Orientalism was strengthened in the post-independence era, as the prose of this period displays a stance that is closer to the conventionally-biased Orientalist perspectives, in contrast to the more challenging position of the pre-independence literature.

Through works of Mouloud Feraoun and Malek Bennabi, I show how they sought to show the elevated status of Islam in Algerian society during the late colonial era. This commitment to enhancing the place and reputation of Islam is apparent in their challenge to the colonial misconceptions of Islam. The chapter also shows the way Bennabi went beyond rejecting the colonialist and Orientalist discourses about Islam but suggested this religion as an efficient tool

to fight against the colonisability of his people. This stance was rigidly opposed later by Kamal Daoud's prose in the post-independence era, mainly arising out of the Black Decade. This stance appeared in his use of biased and judgmental language that is dominated by some stereotypes that were usually applied to Arabo-Muslim populations (among them Algerians), which supports the idea of self-Orientalism in my research. The analysis of Daoud's writings maintain the argument that the events of the Black Decade were among the aspects that stimulated the re-creation of a demeaning image of Islam.

Assia Djebar's *Ombre sultane* (1987) (*A sister to Sheherazade*) and Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) are used in this chapter to identify a potential different positioning on the part of the Algerian female writers, but also to highlight another different self-Orientalist tendency in the representation of Islam and the veil in particular. The analysis engages with the self-representation of veiled women in Algerian literature, especially as the veil is an aspect that conventionally had political and religious implications throughout the history of Algeria. The chapter also examines the extent to which Algerian female writings contribute to creating the self-Orientalist portrayal of the veiled woman.

The third part of this project, entitled "Conceptualising the Community" examines the relation of self-Orientalism with politics and linguistic identity. Chapter 5 discusses the impact of the colonial and Orientalist tendencies of classifications and policies of 'divide and rule' in the re-creation of particularism in Algerian postcolonial literature. Moreover, the chapter highlights the influence of Algerian postcolonial politics in deepening the divisions in the Algerian population that started to exist with the colonial policies. The chapter sheds light on historical events that showcased the direct influence of the so-called 'Kabyle Myth' such as the Berber crisis in 1949. Indeed, the analysis of the reception of Mouloud Mammeri's *La Colline oubliée* (1952) (*The Forgotten Hill*) by the Algerian political party *MTLD* at that time

showcases the early results of the impact of the ‘Kabyle Myth’ on the division between Algerian Arabs and Berbers.

The chapter uses three main novels which show a trajectory from ambivalent to fully-fledged self-Orientalism reflected through stances of particularism. Mouloud Mammeri’s prose helps to exemplify, at a time, the internalisation of racial divisions in the early Algerian literature and Mammeri’s attempt to partially reject some aspects of the Kabyle myth which generated an ambivalent self-Orientalist stance, as I claim in this thesis. The second half of this chapter depicts the shift in representation resulting from the Algerian post-independence politics which alienated the Berber culture and led to the reviving of the regionalist stance in Algerian literature. The analysis of Nabil Farès’ *Le Champ des oliviers* (1972) vividly illustrates this shift towards the fully-fledged self-Orientalist portrayals that draw on the racial divisions between Arabs and Berbers encouraged under colonial rule. This stance is also identified in Algerian female writing mainly in Fadhila El-Farouk’s *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), which, despite being written in Arabic, shows a direct rejection of the process of Arabisation and alienation of Berber culture and identity, whilst at the same time illustrating the particularist portrayals that are based on conventional racial stereotypes.

The discussion in chapter 5 manages a smooth transition towards the theme of the last chapter in this thesis, which is the self-Orientalist discourse created in relation to linguistic identity in Algeria. Chapter 6 mainly analyses how the colonial and the post-independence linguistic discrimination, or linguicisms, practised by the colonial administration and the Algerian government respectively, have contributed to the re-creation of stereotypes related to languages in Algeria.

The chapter draws on Arabic-speaking and Francophone literary works to illustrate the self-Orientalist discourse created in both literary types. Through Fadhila El-Farouk’s *The Mood of*

*a Teenager* (1999), I discuss the reverse influence of the process of Arabisation undertaken by the Algerian government to restore a form of united Algerian identity after independence. El-Farouk's prose illustrates the influence of linguisticism resulting from Arabisation on the first 'Arabised generation', which paradoxically generated the resurfacing of colonial views which asserted the inferiority of Arabic compared to French.

The second part of this chapter deals with Francophone novels by Assia Djébar's *L'Amour la fantasia* (1985) (*Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade*) and *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003) (*The Disappearance of the French Language*), two novels which highlight the trajectory of self-Orientalist representations of languages in Djébar's prose. I also shed light on the impact of the colonial and the post-independence linguisticisms on the change of representation of both the Arabic and French languages, causing the re-appearance of self-Orientalist portrayals that teem with stereotypical renderings of both languages.

## **6. Biographies of authors and case studies**

The novels and authors examined in this thesis offer a thematic exploration of the theme of self-Orientalism. Specific elements of each novel played a fundamental role in each of the literary works being chosen to feature in the present study. These included the period of publication, the authors' personal trajectory and the reception of the work – all aspects that will be further examined in this section so as to contextualise the corpus with the Francophone cohort coming first, followed by the Arabophone.

The first Francophone author under study, Mouloud Feraoun, features among the most prominent Algerian authors of the late colonial era and exemplifies self-Orientalism within the context of the early Algerian literature. Born on 8 March 1913 in Tizi Hibel in Kabylia, his childhood years saw him succeeding in the French school, starting a distinguished academic career crowned with diploma from Ecole Normale at Bouzareah. There "he made a lifelong

friendship with such Frenchmen as Emmanuel Robles, the man who would eventually edit the French edition of the Journal” (Le Sueur xii). In 1935, he was recruited as a school teacher in his hometown. He moved later to Algiers and was assigned as a school director then as an inspector. He was kidnapped and assassinated by the OAS four days before the end of the War on 15 March 1962. Most of his works explored the Kabyle peasant life during the war of independence and expressed the belief “in decolonisation, but not necessarily in the relinquishment of all French cultural influence in Algeria” (Hiddleston 174).

By adopting the coloniser’s language, he assumed that the colonised and the coloniser’s cultures are “intertwined [...] and that it would take generations to untangle the knots of more than a century of colonization” (Le Sueur xi). In spite of Feraoun’s lukewarm position toward the War of Independence and his defence of the Algerian cause, he “notes that neither side accepts him, rather, both [The Algerian and the French] sides identify him as a traitor to the cause” (Hiddleston 176). More importantly, he was referred to on many occasions from the Algerian side as an assimilationist and a product of the French school. I chose one of his works, not only because he is among the prominent Algerian authors of the late colonial era and to examine the impact of colonialism on his writings but also to raise a counterargument about his absolute adoption of the colonial culture in his writings which is mainly manifested in his *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957).

Like Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri contributed to the early movement of Algerian literature and his literary production proved controversial in the post-independence era. The Kabyle writer, linguist and anthropologist, born on December 28, 1917, in the town of Ait Yenni in Tizi Ouzou province, but continued his studies later in Morocco, France. After independence, his commitment to multilingualism in Algeria led him to volunteer to teach Berber at the University of Algiers from 1965 to 1973. Eventually “a moderate pole of cultural resistance

grew within Algeria [him] [...]” and this is why “by the beginning of the 1973/1974 academic year, the Algerian authorities had abolished [his] teaching” (Baldauf et al 79). Mammeri devoted his career to defend the Berber cause with his novels and his several works on Berber society and anthropology, which were recurrently challenged by the Algerian government. In addition to cancelling his course at the University of Algiers, Mammeri was forbidden to access the University of Tizi-Ouzou in Kabylia to introduce his new collection of ancient poems, which was the reason behind the riots of the Berber spring in 1980 (Aïtel 68).

He died in a car accident as he was returning from Morocco on 26 February 1989, which is the day highlighted by Tahar Djaout in his *letter to Da LMouloud*:

The evening that your death was abruptly and crudely announced on television, I couldn't help noticing—despite my unspeakable grief—that it was the second time your name was mentioned: the first time was to insult you when, in 1980, a shamefully libelous campaign had been unleashed against you, and now this second time, nine years later, to inform us of your passing. Your country's television had no footage of you to show us: it had never filmed you, it had never let you speak” (Quoted in Djébar, *Algerian* 144).

Mammeri's name was related to the Berber cause in Algeria before and after independence. The reception of *La Colline oubliée* (1952), the novel understudy in this project, was closely related to, and influenced by the Berber Crisis (1949) as it elicited a significant number of comments from members of the Algerian People's Party (PPA) accusing him of regionalism (see chapter five). The reception of this novel vividly illustrates the encounter of politics with literature which is at the core of chapter five.

Within the framework of this thesis, this novel offers a way of challenging interpretations that consider devoting literary work to Kabylia as mere regionalism or particularism. Secondly, it illustrates the limitation of self-Orientalism as Mammeri shows some aspects of Berber particularism, yet rejects others which is the aspect overlooked in the study of this novel that I am addressing.

Whilst it has been neglected in the critical literature, female writers also appear to have contributed significantly to the establishment of the Algerian literary canon. Among the first female Algerian authors of note, Assia Djébar stands out as a leading figure in both Algerian francophone and women's writing. Born on 30 June 1936 in Cherchel (Western Algeria) she rapidly exchanged her name (Fatima-Zohra Imalayene) into the pen-name Assia Djébar. Educated in a French school where her father was a French teacher who insisted upon the continuation of her education (unlike the prevalent practices among Algerian girls in French Algeria). She also attended Qur'anic school in Blida where she received Islamic education. Having pursued her studies in France at the Sorbonne for her BA (1956) (to be followed by a PhD at Paul Valéry University (Montpellier III) in 1999). She started her literary production in the mid-1950s producing "novels, short fiction, récits, theatre, poetry, film, an opera, and numerous critical texts and prefaces, many of which have not been translated into English and all of which resist translation" (Gunaratne 116). She rose to prominence in the Francophone world with her being elected a member of the Royal Academy of the French language and Literature in Belgium (1999), and subsequently at the French Academy on 16 June 2005. Upon passing away on 6 February 2015, she left a significant literary legacy that enriches Algerian francophone literature.

*Ombre sultane* (1987) features among the few works which addressed the topic of the veil in Algerian society in that era. Besides, a closer reading of this novel provides examples that demonstrate how Djébar addresses this topic from a very Orientalist angle that excludes the varied historical, political and cultural implications of the veil in Algerian society. Through the analysis of this work, I wanted to highlight the importance of the study of the veil with all its implications in Algerian society to avoid the trap of self-Orientalism.



In order to examine the development of the linguistic identity in Algeria, I chose to work on *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985), and *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003). These two works were published before and after the Black Decade respectively and tackle the linguistic conflict in Algeria. Therefore, I chose to work on these two novels in particular in order to illustrate the influence of politics and the Black decade on the disposition of languages in Algeria by illustrating the trajectory of Assia Djébar from defending Arabic to fully embracing French.

Nabile Farès was also among the Francophone authors who also engaged in the linguistic question through his writing. He was born on 25 September 1940, in El Kala and died on 30 August 2016 in France. During the war of independence, he joined the ALN in Tunisia. After independence, he pursued his career in academia and got his doctorate in France. He started his series of publications with *Yahia, pas de chance* (1970), which revolved around the topic of “disappearance” and the unknown fate of many Algerians during the War of Independence (Beatson 3). It was followed with Farès’ most successive novels—*Un Passager de l’Occident* (1971) (*A Passenger of the Occident*) then the trilogy *La Découverte du nouveau monde* (*The discovery of the New World*) which consists of *Le Champ des oliviers* (1972) (*The Field of Olive Trees*), *Mémoire de l’absent* (*Memory of the Absentee*) (1974), and *L’Exil et le désarroi* (1976) (*Exile and Disarray*). His works were also reflective of the cultural and linguistic conflict developments in the post-independence era wherein the process of Arabisation was a driving element.

Indeed, *Le Champ des oliviers* is a vivid illustration of his reaction to the dominance of Arabo-Islamism and the alienation of Berber culture. After the publication of this novel, some scholars like Marnia Lazreg referred to this work as anti-Arabo-Islamism novel, however without highlighting the surrounding context of that era. Therefore, I chose to highlight the

absence of attention given to the influence of politics on the writings of Nabile Farès among other authors. This is because Lazreg refers only to works which defend the Berber cause without highlighting the dominance of Arabo-Islamism at the expense of other ethnicities, which in my opinion is another type of regionalism/particularism that should be studied. More importantly, even though Lazreg refers to the novel as an anti-Arabo-Islamist piece work, she never gave example or literary analysis that illustrates this, which is the task this thesis has undertaken.

Yasmina Bouraoui is another Algerian francophone writer whose writing was fundamental to study the influence of gender in the study of self-Orientalism. Born in Rennes in France to an Algerian father and a French mother on 31 July 1967 and used Nina as a pen name. She spent her childhood both in France and Algeria, then in her adolescence, her family moved to Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates. In the end, she settled in Paris to pursue her university studies. Despite her young age (25 years old), her first novel *La Voyeuse interdite* (1991) received significant success. The was accepted “for immediate publication in France and went on to sell more than 120,000 copies there” (Aubry 2) and was awarded the *Prix du Livre Inter* in 1991.

The book recounts about the confined and repressed life experienced by Fekria a teenage Muslim girl in an Algerian family. It is considered to be inclusive of “all the ingredients of the social pot boiler: politically charged, graphic as far as the condition of Muslim women goes, it never shies away from dramatic content” (Zuylen 85). Indeed, this novel is considered to be among Bouraoui’s works which “situate[s] her at the forefront of contemporary francophone Maghrebi writing” (Marchi 1). This novel was used in the thesis as a complementary corpus, only on one occasion to compare her gendered representation of Algiers with the feminisation of cities in Algerian male writings. This is because it is among the works that provide with a

detailed feminised representation of Algerian cities which is a fundamental aspect in my analysis of the self-Orientalist discourse about Algeria.

The timeline of this research entails the use of works from the recent post-independence era as well. Kamal Daoud's literary production belongs to the new generation of Algerian writers whose prose elucidates the development or change of the self-Orientalist discourse. He was born on June 17, 1970, in Mostaganem in the west of Algeria and studied in same city. He and pursued his higher education in French literature at the University of Oran. In 1994, he started his career in journalism when he joined *Le Quotidien d'Oran* and published his famous column entitled "*Raina raikom*" (our opinion is your opinion). He subsequently started a weekly column in *Le Point*, in addition to the publication of his articles in *Libération*, *Le Monde*, *Courrier International*.

His first novel *Meursault contre-enquête* (2013) received tremendous attention from Algerian and European literary critics. The novel won awards in France including the *Goncourt First Novel Prize* in 2015 and considered as a response to Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* (1942) (*The Stranger*) or sometimes referred to as "Daoud's postcolonial critique" (Wistler 161) of Camus' work. This is because Daoud revisits Camus' work by telling a story of the "Arab" who was not even given a name in the original novel. However, I chose to work on Daoud's novel to illustrate a different reading for his work. Indeed, my analysis of this novel depicts that Daoud, in his attempt to respond Camus, has recreated colonial literary stereotypes in his representation of people, Algerian places and of Islam, including some clichés displayed in Camus' prose, which emerged under the influence of post-independence political and socio-cultural circumstances.

Unlike the previously mentioned authors, Tahar Ouetar chose to write in Arabic and became one of the leading figures in Algerian Arabic literature. Born on 12 August 1936 in

Sedrata (Eastern Algeria) from a Berber family, his education was spent between Algeria and Tunisia. From 1952 to 1954, he studied at the Ben Badis Institute in Constantine then continued at Zaytouna which maintained his support for Arabic language and culture against Francophonie in Algeria even after independence (Elmarsafy 139). However, he eventually broke up with the religious reformist context and became a Marxist. He joined the Algerian revolution by becoming a member of the FLN during the Algerian Revolution. In addition to his several literary works, he attempted to develop Algerian literature: in 1989, Ouettar with other writers such as Youcef Sebti and Tahar Djaout created al-Jahiziyya, which is a cultural association that “organized public readings and literary colloquia that allowed Maghrebi and other Arab authors to express themselves” (Tengor 545). In the 1990s, and against all odds, Ouettar started supporting the Islamists and their actions which is explicitly demonstrated in his comment about the assassination of Djaout. He responded to the question of whether the assassination of Djaout was a loss for Algeria saying: “It’s a loss for his children, it’s a loss for his wife, it’s a loss for France, certainly” (Leperlier 1033). Ouettar’s association of Djaout with the former colonial country just because he was a Francophone writer demonstrates the complexity of the linguistic question in that era.

Ouettar was awarded the *Sharjah Prize* for his promotion of Arab culture in 2004 before he passed away in 2010. His literary production was directly influenced by the Algerian struggle for independence which is apparent in his first novel *Alaz* (1974), studied in the present thesis. The novel is listed among the very first Arabic speaking works in Algerian literature. Although the novel was published by the state publishing house and its core concern was the Algerian revolution, “the text was perceived as highly subversive and dangerous for its author” (Leperlier 1036). Indeed, the novel brought to attention very sensitive topics when breaking “the mythical unity of the national liberation movement through the figure of Zidane” (Leperlier 1036). Zidane was a Communist activist and an FLN member who was assassinated

by his nationalist religious comrades because of his Communist affiliations. I chose to work on this novel as it belongs to the first generation of Algerian literary production after independence. In addition to being one of the prominent figures in Algerian Arabic-speaking literature, his work *Alaz* is important in my corpus because it identifies the emergence of a new type of literary representation in the era of independence.

Ahlam Mosteghanemi for her part is known for being among the strong defenders of Arabic language and literature in Algeria. She was born on 13 April 1953 in Tunis, where her family was exiled as her father Mohamed El Chérif was a political activist during the War of independence. She returned to Algeria after independence and started her education in one of the first Arabic schools in Algeria which helped her to gain and maintain proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic. She got her B. A in 1973 from the University of Algiers in Arabic Literature but was refused to continue on to the master's program because the assignments she wrote in Arabic were not deemed acceptable by her university. She continued her studies when she moved to France where she was awarded her PhD from Sorbonne University in Sociology. Mosteghanemi published her first novel *Memory in the Flesh* when she moved to Lebanon in 1993 which made her the first Algerian woman who wrote a novel in Arabic and resulted in her being awarded the Naguib Mahfoud Medal for Literature in 1998.

A reader of Mosteghanemi's literary works can easily understand that her "decision to write in Arabic and the themes of her novels are directly informed by this history and as such can be seen as both a statement of independence from the Eurocentric homogenization of language and discourse, and as a feminist political statement" (Baaqeel, *An Interview* 144). Indeed, her focus on Algerian colonial and modern history made her works the first choice for the student of Algeria, which is also the reason behind my choice to work on her *Memory in the Flesh*. The novel manifested several themes that correspond to the ones I am studying in my thesis. For

instance, her focus on Constantine in this novel provides relevant material for the second chapter about the feminisation of Algerian cities where I used her portrayals as an opposing argument to the fully-fledged stance displayed in Algerian male writings. In addition, she tackled complementary topics such as the linguistic conflict which is not a much-highlighted question when it comes to Algerian women literature in literature in Arabic.

As a feminist author, Waciny Laredj devoted huge part of his literature to themes related to the Algerian woman which made his use in this project an essential thing. He was born in 1954 in Sidi Boujnan in Tlemcen. He completed his education between Algerian and Syrian Universities, getting a BA from Algiers and obtaining an MA and PhD – which he wrote in Arabic and French—from the University of Damascus. After that, he taught both at Sorbonne university and at the central university of Algiers. Unlike some Arabic-speaking authors, Laredj writes in Arabic but he is bilingual as “most of his literary works were originally written in Arabic and then translated into French” (Benrabah, *Language* 154). Most of his literary works are related to the consequences of the Algerian Revolution in the post-independence era. His early writings show a clear influence of classical Arabic literature, yet from the 1980s “he has used a language close to the speech patterns of Algerians, mixing colloquialisms and French words with Arabic” (Gikandi 38).

He won *Sheikh Zayed Book Award* for his book *The Prince's Book: The Paths of the Wooden Gates* in 2007, and many of his books were longlisted for other prizes such as the *International Prize for Arabic Fiction* and *Katara Prize for Arabic Novel*. Despite the great success of his works, very little attention has been given to them by literary critics. Therefore, I included one of his works as it illustrates well the themes I am investigating in my thesis. I chose to work on *The Lady of the place* (1995) because it is a novel that demonstrates the situation of Algerian women in different historical periods as the events of the novel extend

from the period of colonialism till the era of the Black Decade. Through the analysis of this novel, I could show the influence of policies such as the family code in the continuation of the self-Orientalist discourse about the Algerian woman.

Focusing on Orientalism and self-Orientalism made Said Khatib's prose among the most suitable works to use because his focus on the portrayal of Algerian in Orientalist writings. He was born in Bou Saada on 29 December 1984, he earned his BA in French literature from the University of Algiers, before graduating with an MA in Cultural Studies from the Sorbonne. Khatibi joined the field of journalism in 2006. He contributed to Algerian literature with a set of literary works which includes: *The Orbit of Absence* (2009), *Book of Sins* (2013), *Flaming Gardens of the East* (2015), *Forty Years Waiting for Isabel* (2016) and *Firewood of Sarajevo* (2018). The latter was longlisted for the *International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF)*2020.

I chose to work on *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016) which won the *Katara Award for the Novel* for its inclusivity of several themes I examine in my research, such as the representation of Algerian people and cities. It is also chosen because the novel revisits the literary accounts of some Orientalist artists and authors such as namely Isabelle Eberhardt and Etienne Dinet who produced important Orientalist works about Algeria. Also, the inclusion of a novel from modern Algerian Arabic-speaking literature allows the study of the development of the self-Orientalist discourse by comparing it to the late colonial era's prose.

Like Khatibi, Fadhila El Farouk is also among the authors of the new generation in Algeria whose work is a broad-spectrum of several themes related to the self-Orientalist discourse. She was born on 20 November 1967 in Batna (Eastern Algeria), as Fadhila Melkemi, but adopted Fadhila El Farouk as a pen name. After she got her Baccalaureate in 1987, she started her higher education in the field of Medicine at the University of Batna. Yet she changed the field after two years and joined the University of Constantine to study Arabic literature. She also worked

in journalism alongside her studies. After she finished her studies, she moved to Beirut in 1995 where she pursued her career in journalism by working with *Al Kifah Al Arabi* newspaper. She published a set of novels in Arabic which placed her among the most prominent figures of Arabic literature, with titles such as *A Moment of Stolen Love* (1997), *The Discovery of Desire* (2005) and *Regions of Fear* (2010).

*The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) is a semi-autobiographical novel that tells of the author's experience with the process of Arabisation and its influence on her career as a Berber person. The novel is also inclusive of several other themes that I highlighted in the self-Orientalist discourse, namely the representation of the veil and the Algerian woman. Most importantly, her reflections on the Arabic language and Arabisation are illustrative of the 'reverse influence' of the dominance of Arabo-Islamism in the post-independence era.



## **Part One: Holding the Mirror on Peoples and Places**

## **Chapter One**

### **Individual Identity: Self-Demeaning Representations in Algerian Postcolonial Literature**

The self-Orientalist discourse shares some dominant features with the Orientalist and colonialist discourses as it is a direct result of their impact they had on colonised societies. One key aspect in the Orientalist discourse is representing the so-called “Oriental Other” as inferior, and a driver element in promoting the colonial project. Therefore, it dominated the colonial discourse as well, as David Spurr argued: “Colonial discourse requires the constant reproduction of these images in various forms -a recurring nomination of the abject- both as a justification for the European intervention and as a necessary iteration of the fundamental difference between the colonizer and the colonized” (78). In the case of Algeria, Algerians have been conventionally seen and represented through colonial eyes because the “Algerian disappears, [and] replaced by the image the colonial majority sought to give of him” (Dunwoodie 63). This image has been recreated and propagated throughout the period of colonialism, and it has been conveyed through constant recourse to a denigrating language, the use of colonial literary tropes, and clichés that have sustained the myth of the inferior “Other”. Thus, its influence on the self-representation of Algerians in the postcolonial era is crucial in my study. Nevertheless, it is also important to highlight the Algerians’ self-representations, and whether they have taken in one way or another the colonial image as a foundation of their portrayals voluntarily or unwittingly.

It is precisely in the light of this idea that I am discussing the extent to which the debasement of Algerians in the Orientalist and the colonialist discourses, has influenced the Algerian’s self-portrayal in the postcolonial period. Therefore, drawing on Albert Memmi’s take on the influence of the colonialist discourse on the colonised, as well as Malek Bennabi’s concept of

“colonisability”, my chapter focuses on the analysis of the endurance of stereotypical demeaning representations of Algerian people in Algerian postcolonial literature. I highlight in this chapter the reappearance of the conventional paradigm around the European/Arab contrast, which was constantly used in the colonial and Orientalist writings to emphasise the inferiority of the colonised as opposed to the superiority of the coloniser. I also examine the restoration of demeaning portrayals in their two forms: collective and individual demeaning assumptions on Algerians – inherited from colonial and Orientalist writings – in novels of my corpus, with particular attention to Mouloud Feraoun’s *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957), Tahar Ouettar’s *Alaz* (1974), Kamal Daoud’s *Meursault contre enquête* (2013), and Said Khatibi’s *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016). But before analysing the novels under study, I first present the theoretical framework which I use to discuss self-demeaning.

### **1. Conceptualising self-demeaning applied to people**

This chapter discusses the way debasing pictures and stereotypes, which were conventionally used in the Orientalist and the colonialist discourses to describe the so-called “Oriental other”, can be internalised, resulting in a demeaning representation of the “self” by Algerian postcolonial writers, which we can term as a type of self-demeaning representation. The close reading of the studied postcolonial Algerian novels shows instances of the incarnation of the inferiorised Algeria. The representations of Algerian characters are associated with demeaning epithets, which show Algerians as denigrated and inferior figures and echo the conventional prejudiced image that is at the heart of the present chapter. Self-demeaning representations discussed here do not stem from an authorial critical or humorous stance but rather are reminiscent, in most cases, of the colonial and the Orientalist stereotypic rendering of Algerians. In addition, self-demeaning portrayals are recurrent in most novels under study and marked with generalised statements.

As a preamble, self-demeaning does not apply systematically to any act of showing or discussing any undesirable aspects related to Algerian people or Algerian society. Rather, it is related to the denigrating portrayal that bears a stereotypical stance, and recalls the colonial conventional depiction of the supposedly inferior colonised. In addition, self-demeaning is not mere criticism of what may be deemed as disagreeable in Algerian society, or about the Algerian people. Instead, it is the representation of the self that is foregrounded on the re-creation of the colonial tropes inherited from Orientalist and colonialist discourses, the inaccuracy of which has been demonstrated and which were used to assert the inferiority of the colonised compared to the superiority of the coloniser. I highlight the possibility that the Algerian author “is becoming accustomed to looking at his people through the eyes of their procurer” (Memmi 167), due to the long duration and the repetition of biased portrayals and stereotypes in the colonial period. In addition to other internal factors such as the ‘colonisability’ which are the aspects that will be demonstrated in the following sections.

I analyse representations that are constructed with stereotypes that were used as a means of sustaining the perceived backwardness and inferiority of the so-called Orientals as explained by Edward Said:

Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, ‘devoid of energy and initiative,’ much given to ‘fulsome flattery,’ intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are ‘lethargic and suspicious,’ and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race (*Orientalism* 33).

Before Said, Albert Memmi explained the way the long-term perpetuation of this demeaning discourse could exert a pernicious influence on the mind of the colonised, and the colonised writer in particular. The latter was taught and brought up in the culture and the traditions of the coloniser, and as a result, Memmi argues, he turns away from all that represents his original

society (152). Memmi shows that the dominance of the coloniser's discourse has a huge impact on the feelings of the colonised as this leads him to adopt the coloniser's thoughts (165), which makes him believe in his own inferiority and leads him eventually to "tearing himself away from his true self" (165).

Malek Bennabi for his part does not only highlight the impact of external influence on the colonised, but paradoxically highlights internal dynamics at work. Unlike Memmi who argues that colonialism and the impact of the colonial discourse cause the self-demeaning that dominate the colonised's spirit, the Algerian thinker argues that colonialism is not always the root cause: the psychology of the colonised itself can generate a hindering effect because of what he calls 'colonisability'. Bennabi explains that: "[...] the inhibiting cause did not come from outside, but was internal, born from the psychology of people, tastes, ideas, customs, from everything that constitutes the post-Almohadian spirit, - in a word: of their 'colonisability'"(81/82)<sup>5</sup>. Bennabi argues that 'colonisability' started with the fall of the Almohad dynasty in North Africa, which he considers as the era that marked the start of the decline of the Islamic civilisation. He also maintains that 'colonisability' is the reason behind "[...] inhibitions which hold back the activities of the modern Muslim world, which keep its development at a slow pace, which sow disarray, helplessness and ultimately chaos in its life" (85)<sup>6</sup>. Although Bennabi does not overlook the destructive influence of colonialism, he urges his people to fight colonisability first if they want to be able to fight colonialism. As he argues

---

<sup>5</sup> [...] la cause inhibitrice ne venait pas de l'extérieur, mais qu'elle était interne, née de la psychologie de gens, des goûts, des idées, des usages, de tout ce qui constitue l'esprit post-almohadien, - en un mot: de leur 'colonisabilité'" (81/82).

<sup>6</sup> "[...] inhibitions qui freinent les activités du monde musulman moderne, qui maintiennent son évolution à un rythme ralenti, qui sèment le désarroi, l'impuissance et finalement le chaos dans sa vie" (Bennabi 85).

that “the fundamental problem is therefore here: to stop being colonised, you have to stop being colonisable” (94)<sup>7</sup>.

By turning our attention to the social psychological field, a deeper explanation of self-demeaning is given through the concept of “colonial mentality” which is considered as a direct result of colonialism and a “broad multidimensional construct that refers to personal feelings or beliefs of ethnic or cultural inferiority” (Utsey et al 198). The concept is displayed in different aspects including “the denigration of the self, and the denigration of the culture or body” (Utsey et al 198). Nhuzi Michael Nnam argues that the colonial mentality affects the psyche of Africans who unintentionally “continue to live and behave like [they] did during colonization, even several decades after their independence. It makes [them] appear to be ashamed of [their] culture, customs, and who [they] are. [...] [They] became estranged to [their] motherland. [They] begin to see everything African as bad and inferior” (xvii). My argument is that this feeling of colonisability that spread amongst Algerian colonised people and the influence of the colonial mentality may have also contributed to making them accept or internalise the colonial stereotypes which depict them as inferior and led them to create the self-Orientalist discourse that includes self-demeaning representations during the late colonial era and beyond.

## **2. The perpetuation of the classic European/Arab contrast in self-representation**

In addition to the debasement of the so-called Orient through erecting its portrayals with demeaning epithets – Said argues that the Orientalist discourse includes another facet, which

---

<sup>7</sup> “[l]e problème capital est donc là: pour cesser d’être colonisé, il faut cesser d’être colonisable [...]” (Bennabi 94).

is the opposition between Orientals and Westerners: this paradigm serves to demean Orientals whilst at the same time elevating Westerners. Said assumes that the description or the representation of the Orient is persistently contrasted with the picture of the West, manifestly through belittling the former and elevating the latter (*Orientalism* 33). He claims that the repetition of this opposition in the Orientalist discourse as its core leads to deepening the division between the Orient and the West when he says that “if the essence of Orientalism is the distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then, we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction” (*Orientalism* 34).

This characteristic is also discussed by the scholar Peter Dunwoodie, who explains that the paradigmatic European-Arab contrast was a spirit of the colonial novel: “[t]he juxtaposition of the native ingratitude/hatred and European gentleness/generosity became the key structuring device in the colonial novel whose ideological function was to divert attention away from the continued violence of conquest and settlement and disguise it as punishment” (144). The perpetuation of the juxtaposition between the demeaned portrayal of the colonised and the elevated representation of the coloniser contributed to giving a greater validity to the myth of the inferiority of Algerians. Memmi pointed to the impact of this opposition in his analysis of the situation of the colonised claiming that “[b]eing considered and treated apart by colonialist racism, the colonized ends up accepting this Manichaeian division of the colony and, by extension, of the whole world” (175). I argue in this thesis that the acceptance of this idea can be echoed in the writings or literature produced by the former colonised even after independence.

Indeed, this paradigm manifests itself in some Algerian postcolonial authors’ writings, with some novels juxtaposing demeaned representations of Algerians and elevated representations

of the French or the European in general. Such examples, emerge in novels that discuss the presence of the colonised and the coloniser in the same context like Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957). The novel illustrates life in a Kabyle village called Ighil Nezman during the era of colonialism. Through a narrative structure divided into two main parts, Feraoun displays complementary perspectives on village life in late-colonial Kabylia. On the one hand, the first half through one of the main characters, Dehbia (Dhahabīyah), reveals the life of a Christian young woman in a Muslim village and sheds light on the patriarchal system that constrains the Kabyle female. On the other hand, through the diaries of Amer ('Āmir), Dehbia's cousin and lover, the second half portrays Algeria from the standpoint of a character who migrated to France and lived there for a long period, before returning and dying in his village. The novel illustrates the representation of Algerian and French characters in colonised Algeria. For instance, Amer, whose full name is Amer n'Amer<sup>8</sup>, is the son of Marie, a French woman who married his father and came to live with him in Ighil Nezman. Amer is the main character in the novel, whose elevated representation is often contrasted with the debased representation of Mokran (Maqrān), who is his rival in the village.

In the first part of the novel, the author gets his character Dehbia to provide a description of both characters: Amer and Mokran. On the one hand, she shares with the reader a laudatory account about Amer, saying "He accepted that I was a Christian, he was good and generous. Wasn't he generous, he who suffered from the misery of others, he who was ready to die for others and who died so stupidly" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 35)<sup>9</sup>. She adds in another passage saying "Basically, what everyone criticizes him for is his frankness, his refusal to accept the

---

<sup>8</sup> Which means Amer the son of Amer in Kabyle language.

<sup>9</sup> "Il acceptait que je fusse chrétienne, il était bon et généreux. N'est-ce pas qu'il était généreux, lui qui souffrait de la misère des autres, lui qui était prêt à mourir pour les autres et qui est mort si stupidement" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 35).



general hypocrisy, which is the rule of conduct here [in the village]” (38)<sup>10</sup>. Dehbia elevates the status of Amer and excludes him from the generalised perspective of her people’s hypocrisy.

On the other hand, she describes Mokran in an opposite representation saying:

He was a big-headed bulldog, with a wide slit mouth and eyes that scare children [...]. He gave a false impression of power because of his big hands, but he was no taller than them. For a man his height was rather below average. Young people did not like him very much, because, for them, he was a retarded who inherited all his mother’s superstitions, all his father’s hatreds and hypocrisy. A worthy descendant of the Ait-Slimane’s, whose spirit he promised to preserve (64)<sup>11</sup>.

In addition to showing his debased manners, Mokran’s physical appearance is dehumanised and demeaned to the extent of comparing him to a bulldog.

It can be interpreted as a mere confrontation between the hero and the anti-hero in the novel.

However, the description of Amer is followed by an emphasis on his French maternal origins.

For instance, in the following passage, Dehbia describes Amer saying:

[...] whenever there was a collective chore, we knew that he was the first to come, dragging all the young people with him. Whenever we needed someone to respond the gendarmes or to not be intimidated by the Administration, we quickly called “our Amer” and he arrived, polite, stubborn and full of assurance. And people whisper to each other:

- He speaks well the son of Lady’s son. He is not afraid (38)<sup>12</sup>.

Dehbia praises Amer in this description, showing him as an active character in the novel. She also emphasises the idea that he is the only one who dares to defend his people in front of the

---

<sup>10</sup> “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” (38).

<sup>11</sup> C’était un bouledogue à grosse tête, avec une bouche largement fendue et des yeux à effrayer les enfants [...]. Il donnait une fausse impression de puissance à cause de ses grosses mains, mais il n’était pas plus grand qu’elle. Pour un homme sa taille était plutôt au-dessous de la moyenne. Les jeunes ne l’aimaient pas beaucoup, parce que pour eux, c’était un attardé qui prenait à son compte toutes les superstitions de sa mère, toutes les haines et l’hypocrisie de son père. Un digne descendant des Ait-Slimane, dont il promettait de conserver l’esprit (64).

<sup>12</sup> [...] quand il s’agissait d’une corvée collective, on savait qu’il accourait le premier, entraînant tous les jeunes avec lui; quand il fallait répondre aux gendarmes ou ne pas se laisser intimider par l’Administration, on se dépêchait d’appeler « notre Amer » et il arrivait, poli, buté et plein d’assurance. Et les gens se disent à voix basse:

- Il parle bien le fils de Madame. Il n’a pas peur (38).

French gendarmes. However, we can notice from the way his people speak about him: “He speaks well the lady’s son”, that Amer when praised is related to his French maternal origins, which stood in stark contrast with the fact that he was called on most other occasions Amer n’Amer which associates him with his Algerian paternal origins. Elsewhere, the emphasis on his French origins appears in Marie’s reaction when Dehbia’s mother proposes her daughter to be the future wife of Amer. Marie refuses saying: “You understand, we are French, we are not Kabyles” (56)<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, Amer is elevated compared to Mokran and shown in a higher status because he is privileged by his French maternal origins. This gives more validity to the myth of the inferior native and recalls the colonial paradigm of opposing the inferiority of the native with the superiority of the European.

Yet, turning our attention to other examples, we can identify a reluctant self-Orientalist stance in Feraoun’s prose because of the nuanced portrayal of Amer’s parental origins. This is because, despite the fact that Amer seems to be elevated on the basis of his French maternal ascendancy, he mentions that he preferred to be called after his father rather than his mother. This is shown in this example where he defends his Algerian parental origins:

Before giving me the name of Amer n’Amer, children of my age used to call me “The Lady’s son”, as if I had no name. It was my grandmother who acted first, when she understood that the men and women were imitating the children and that everyone was determined to forget Amer: Amer my father and Amer myself, as if they wanted to erase this name, to take it from us.

- He is the son of Amer, know that! And cursed be whoever forgets it. Amer n’Amer, of the Ait-Larbi.

[...] I am able to affirm that when people speak of me, they say between them Amer n’Amer and not “the son of Madame”. I like that better: being my father’s son (126)<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>13</sup> “Tu comprends, nous, Français, nous ne sommes pas Kabyles” (56).

<sup>14</sup> Avant de m’appeler Amer n’Amer, les enfants de mon âge m’appelaient « fils de Madame », comme si je n’avais pas de nom. Ce fut ma grand’mère qui réagit la première, lorsqu’elle comprit que les hommes et les femmes imitaient les enfants et que tous s’acharnaient à oublier Amer: Amer mon père et Amer moi-même, comme s’ils voulaient effacer ce nom, nous l’enlever.

Feraoun shows that Amer's French origins confer more privileges on him compared to the paternal Algerian origin. As this French origin allows him to defend himself even in front of French people, for "his hybridity often provides him with ready-made answers with which he can ridicule and thus neutralise racist attacks" (Chouiten, *Hybridity* 360). For instance, in this passage we can notice the way he uses his French origins to challenge the insult of the French people when he says "The mocking Marseillais seemed to tell me kindly: 'go home, child of Saracen woman!'. 'It is true I am a son of a Saracen man but not of a Saracen woman'" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 139)<sup>15</sup>.

Feraoun displays an ambivalent stance in his representations. He recreates the paradigmatic European/Arab contrast when he demeans Mokran compared to the elevation of Amer with the emphasis on his semi-Frenchness, which is in line with Albert Memmi's assumption that the colonised writer can embrace the thoughts of the coloniser about his own people (165). On the opposite end of the spectrum, he nuances his representation by highlighting the attachment of Amer to his Algerian paternal origins, and the use of his maternal French origins as a way of resistance against the French coloniser. This example confirms the hypothesis suggested in the previous section about Feraoun's awareness of the sense of colonisability and his attempt to challenge it in his novel through the character of Amer. This is appearing in his confrontation of colonial insults, using his semi-Frenchness and his French education as a tool of defence, which denotes the attempt of resistance against colonialism and rejection of the state of

---

- C'est le fils d'Amer, sachez-le ! Et maudit soit qui l'oubliera. Amer n'Amer, des Ait-Larbi.

[...] je suis en mesure d'affirmer que lorsque les gens parlent de moi, ils disent entre eux Amer n'Amer et non « le fils de Madame ». J'aime mieux cela: être le fils de mon père (126).

<sup>15</sup> "Les Marseillais goguenards avaient l'air de me dire gentiment: 'Té, va donc chez toi, enfant de Sarrasine!'. 'De Sarrasin, d'accord, mais non de Sarrasine'" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 139).

colonisability. Feraoun's resistive stance differentiates him from the other post-independence Algerian authors as a reluctant self-Orientalist.

### **3. Internalising prejudice : essentialised self-demeaning**

#### **3.1. Collective self-demeaning**

In some cases in the novel, the author provides an accurate picture of the society he describes, which is not based on or influenced by any form of conventional biased portrayal. Yet, we have to take into consideration the way this image is conveyed. For instance, some authors, as I will show, slip in the rhetoric of debasement by recreating prejudiced representations which evoke the colonial or Orientalist stereotypes in essentialised form overlooking any individual portrayal. That is, some authors produce portrayals that may give validity to the clichéd portrayal of debased Algerian society and give the impression that the whole society is monolithic. These representations can be found, as will be shown, in both Algerian Francophone and Arabic-speaking novels.

As we have just seen, *Les chemins qui montent* (1957) is an example of early Algerian Francophone literature that was published by Mouloud Feraoun, who had received French colonial schooling. Despite the fact that Feraoun's works "responded directly to the absence of native characters in the works by the *Ecole d'Alger* [...]" they were sometimes "dismissed as ethnographic and assimilationist texts" (McNair 158). Moreover, Feraoun was criticised for focussing his writings on Kabylia, just like his Kabyle counterpart Mouloud Mammeri (see chapter five). For example, his first novel *Le Fils du pauvre* (1950) "was criticised by Algerian nationalist intellectuals, who saw it as 'regionalist' and as undermining a unified nationalist cause in its attention on the Kabyles. It was further criticised because it did not openly denounce the colonialist regime" (Kelly 62). The analysis of the novel in this section seeks to examine

the extent to which Feraoun's writings are 'assimilationist' and adopt the colonialist tropes, especially when it comes to self-demeaning.

The novel includes some passages that exemplify self-demeaning as it is conceptualised in this thesis. This is illustrated by the main character Amer when he explains what he intends to do when he migrates to France:

There [in France], I will flee the people of Ighil Nezman and all the Kabyles in general because they are *Bicots*. I wonder who can love us? North Africans discourage all goodwill. The good people who care about them are disappointed and heartbroken every time. They give up, discouraged, disgusted, disappointed, soul and heart bitter with the venom of failure (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 221)<sup>16</sup>.

Amer expresses his intention to distance himself from his own people of Ighil Nezman referring to them with the racist epithet "Bicots", which is a derogatory term traditionally used to refer to people from North Africa. The author gets his protagonist Amer to use general statements and descriptions that essentialise Algerians without allowing for any individual characterisation, which is the aspect that is reminiscent of the colonial debasing portrayals of Algerians, as they are usually marked by the use of the generalised statements and racist epithets. More importantly, it recalls Albert Memmi's assumption about the influence of colonial education on the colonised writer, especially because Mouloud Feraoun was among the early writers who were educated in French schools during colonialism. Algerian critics like Mostefa Lacheraf (Muṣṭafá li-Sharaf) and Youcef Nacib (Yūsuf Nasīb) were of the opinion that Feraoun was "a 'successful' product of the colonial school" (quoted in Chouiten, *Hybridity* 352).

---

<sup>16</sup> Là-bas je fuirai les gens d'Ighil Nezman et tous les Kabyles en général parce que ce sont des Bicots. Qui est-ce qui peut nous aimer je le demande? Les Nords-Africains découragent toutes les bonnes volontés. Les braves gens qui s'intéressent à eux, sont chaque fois, déçus et navrés. Ils s'en détournent, la mort dans l'âme, le dégoût dans le cœur, le venin dans la bouche (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 221).

The novel includes other occurrences where Feraoun's prose echoes conventional demeaning descriptions of Algerian colonised people in the colonial discourse. In the following passage, Amer continues his complaints about his people saying:

[...] I would simply say that we are a kind of canker. The canker settles in the lower, the most secret, the dirtiest parts. It does not like to be seen, but it runs away from corpses. Kabylia is a corpse eaten away to the cartilage. More than a corpse: a skeleton. We have to escape from it. It is very clear. A stubborn canker that will settle in the good cities of France. This is what we are (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 221)<sup>17</sup>.

Amer compares the Kabyle people to a canker and shows the place where they live as places which are the lowliest, most hidden, dirtiest parts, in his own words. In addition to the debased image he delivers of the Kabyles as a people, he uses a plural personal pronoun, which essentialises them – he even includes himself. Moreover, this example illustrates a clear attempt at debasing his region and his people while elevating the French cities, since Algerians are accused of infecting the latter like a canker.

The self-demeaning that dominates Amer's description of his people recalls once again Memmi's hypothesis about the internalisation of colonial stereotypes in the colonised's discourse. It also brings Bennabi's hypothesis of colonisability to the fore, as Amer is not blaming colonialism but he seems to be thinking that it is his people including himself, that are debased. What is more, not only does he believe in the demeaned self, but he also advocates the superiority of the 'other' as he elevates French cities while he debases his people. However, it can be argued that Amer in this passage "refuses the privileges that his semi-Frenchness

---

17[...] je dirais simplement que nous sommes une espèce de chancre. Le chancre s'installe dans les parties basses, les plus secrètes, les plus sales. Il n'aime pas qu'on le voie mais il fuit les cadavres. La Kabylie est un cadavre rongé jusqu'au cartilage. Plus qu'un cadavre: un squelette. Il faut bien que nous la fuyions. C'est facile à comprendre. Un chancre obstiné qui va se fixer dans les bonnes villes de France. Voilà ce que nous sommes (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 221).

could have bestowed on him and chooses instead to endure the same contemptuous attitude and insulting words” (Chouiten, *Hybridity* 360), as he uses the plural personal pronoun “we” and on the basis of his maternal French origins, his observation may also be seen as applying to French people. I, therefore, argues that his own positionality as a Franco-Algerian individual exemplifies Feraoun’s reluctant strand of self-Orientalism, as it reduces the debasing stance towards indigenous populations, and even goes as far as including, to some extent, the French in this appraisal.

In another passage from the same novel, Amer provides an account on a different side of his people’s culture, as he speaks about his language, and the traditional way of sitting to eat. In the first passage, Amer narrates when he was invited to Dehbia’s house. He says: “I put the towel on the ground next to me and said ‘Merci’ instead of the silly, circuitous Kabyle formula. It was also a way of gently teasing her, to tell her that I would like to hear her speak French” (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 164)<sup>18</sup>. The passage shows Amer’s preference for the use of the French language when he wanted to show more gallantry in front of his lover Dehbia, instead of his own Kabyle language that he finds stupid and convoluted. This may signify that Amer’s intention is to illustrate that the French language is the more appropriate language for him to express courtesy. At the same time, he debases his own language which he does not deem to be suitable to show kindness and courtesy.

In fact, the French language or the language of the coloniser was the dominating language at that time (see chapter six). The colonial project aimed to deny Algerians’ cultural identity, and “the French government went so far as to pass a law in the 1930s which classified Arabic as a foreign language, and prohibited its use in schools and official documents” (Rebai 80), the

---

<sup>18</sup> “J’ai posé la serviette sur la terre, à côté de moi, et j’ai dit ‘merci’ au lieu de la formule Kabyle idiote et contournée. C’était aussi une façon de la taquiner gentiment, de lui signifier que j’aimerais bien à mon tour l’entendre parler français” (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 164).

French language was the only taught language in colonial schools in Algeria. However, the native population was still using their Arabic dialects, and the Kabyle dialect for Kabyles, though they were characterised by the intrusion of French expressions. That is, in the case of Amer, he favoured the French language although he was able to use his Kabyle language. Amer's rejection of his father's language can be read as a rejection of his culture, tradition, and even identity "because a language is not merely a medium of communication but also the repository of a cultural tradition, a way of living and of expression which helps to convey a sense of identity upon its native-speakers" (Rebai 82). Amer's reaction in this example may reflect his eagerness to identify more closely with the coloniser, which coincides with Memmi's argument about the effect of the long-term attempt to deny the colonised agency regarding cultural aspects like language, as "[t]he memory which is assigned [to] him is certainly not that of his people[sic]" (149). Amer's reaction reminds also of the colonial mentality which causes a feeling that "can range from admiration of the colonial legacy and culture to feelings of shame and embarrassment about the indigenous culture. Taking either perspective can be deleterious to a person's psychological functioning and self-concept" (Utsey et al 199).

Indeed, the colonised' colonisability and colonial mentality would lead him/her in the end to believe in the presumed inferiority of his/her own language and to become eager to learn and use the colonial language as a superior language. On this subject, Malika Rebai (Malīkah Rabī) argues:

[...] Algerian intellectuals depended upon their ability to imitate the ideology, speech and manners of the French. In their anxiety to obtain recognition from the French coloniser, the Algerian subjects had been constrained to impersonate the image of the coloniser and emulate certain parts of the dominating culture in order to survive in that space within which they existed. And to "be" the Frenchman was above all to speak as he does. Hence, the French language became an object of desire and identification (80).



However, this can also illustrate the ambivalence in Feraoun's representation of Amer. Despite the fact that Amer shows a preference for the French language and belittles his native dialect, his use of the French language in a Kabyle context can be taken as a sign of hybridity between the two cultures. Lynda Chouiten explains that the way Feraoun borrows aspects from his own culture and the coloniser's culture can be read as a proclamation of his hybrid literary identity (*Hybridity* 366). Chouiten explains that the character of Amer is the incarnation of the privilege of the hybrid character in resisting colonialism as "[h]is very familiarity with the French discourse on equality and brotherhood allows him to turn it against French domination by claiming these rights for his own people" (*Hybridity* 359). Indeed, the above-mentioned perspective can justify the choice of the French language –although the deprecation of the native language was not mandatory in this case.

The ambivalence in Feraoun's prose is also depicted when he comments on another aspect of his society. Amer mocks the traditional way in which he is sitting while having dinner in Dehbia's home, saying "it is ridiculous. I am not comfortable in my French pants when eating on the floor, well, but I am used to a convenient position. My feet on the mat and the dish I approach it next to me, near my right buttock [...]" (167)<sup>19</sup>. This passage may have two opposite significations. On the one hand, it shows an example of self-demeaning as it depicts Amer mocking the traditional way his native people used to sit in their houses, and he sees that his French trousers are so sophisticated that it does not suit the uncomfortable position his people used to sit. He is somehow mocking himself for being a native Algerian sitting in a traditional position while wearing a French dress. This stance calls to mind the colonial rhetoric that consists in mocking the non-Europeans in their attempt to duplicate the European coloniser, as

---

<sup>19</sup> "c'est ridicule. Je suis gêné dans mon pantalon français lorsque je mange par terre, bon, mais je suis habitué à une position commode. Les pieds sur la natte et le plat, je l'approche à côté de moi, près de ma fesse droite [...]" (167).

Spurr explains: “the natives are reviled for their non-Western otherness, yet ridiculed for their attempts to imitate the forms of the West” (84)<sup>20</sup>.

On the other hand, it may also reflect Amer’s sarcasm that hints at the intrusion of the French culture’s aspects that do not suit Algerian customs, as they resulted from the colonial encounter after all. Thus, he is somehow illustrating that these two cultures cannot be interrelated or be present together in the same society or environment. This interpretation reflects also Amer’s rejection of the intrusion of the colonial culture. After showing in previous sections that Amer is demeaning his people because he is influenced by his colonisability, this example depicts his attempt to reject this colonisability as he is showing the non-convergence of his own customs with the colonial culture. The same reluctant stance is mirrored in Feraoun’s own personal opinion about the relation between the colonised and the coloniser in his diaries:

Now, an impassable gap separates us, they are no longer masters, models or equals, the French are enemies. They have always been, with so much ease in their manners, so much assurance in their words and actions, and so much naturalness that we were conquered not by their hatred but by their kindness. All their kindness towards us was hatred. But the way they hated us was so intelligent that we did not understand it. We took it for kindness. They were good, we were bad. They were civilised, we were barbarians, they were Christians, we were Muslims. They were superior, we were inferior. That is what they succeeded in making us believe, that is why their small liberalities were for us the effects of their kindness [...]. For our part, we ended up making them believe that they were sincere with us, that they were good and superior. Now they have to be disillusioned. They need to know the truth: they do not care about us and we do not love them anymore (Feraoun, *Journal* 27)<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>20</sup> This case is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad’s ridiculing imagery – expressed through the voice of Marlow - that he used when describing the native African, who dressed like Europeans showing him as “a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs” (109).

<sup>21</sup> Désormais un infranchissable fossé nous sépare, ce ne sont plus des maîtres, des modèles ou des égaux, les Français sont des ennemis. Ils l’ont toujours été d’ailleurs, avec tant d’aisance dans leurs manières, tant d’assurance dans leurs paroles et leurs actes et tant de naturel que nous avons été conquis non-par leur haine mais par leur bonté. Les manifestations de leur bonté à notre égard n’étaient que celles de leur haine. Mais leur haine était si intelligente que nous ne le comprenions pas. Nous la prenions pour de la bonté. Ils étaient bons, nous étions mauvais. Ils étaient civilisés, nous étions barbares, ils étaient chrétiens, nous étions musulmans. Ils étaient supérieurs, nous étions inférieurs. Voilà ce qu’ils ont réussi à nous faire croire, voilà pourquoi leurs petites libéralités étaient pour nous les effets de leur bonté [...] Et à notre tour nous avons fini par leur faire croire qu’ils

Although the novel failed to show direct denouncement of colonialism, Feraoun's perspective was clearly expressed in his other writings as the hitherto cited passage depicts. Like Amer, Feraoun recognised the colonisability of his people and the impact of colonialism in making them believe in their inferiority. Therefore, he argues that the French are no longer an idol to be followed. Such a position tends to contradict his presumed assimilationist stance and depicts him again as a reluctant self-Orientalist.

Taking together the above analysed examples shows a recurrent perpetuation of essentialised demeaning descriptions which depict the persistence of self-demeaning in Feraoun's representations. This gives more validity to the arguments of Bennabi and Memmi about the influence of the colonialist discourse, the colonisability of the colonised and other psychological effects of colonial mentality. However, Feraoun's writings display ambivalence when rejecting the possibility to internalise the colonial culture and to accept the presumed superiority of the coloniser, which denies the assimilationist stance attributed to him. More importantly, the ambivalence in Feraoun's writings conveys his attempt to end his colonisability and distinguishes him as a reluctant self-Orientalist unlike the other subsequent authors.

Capturing the entire spectrum of Algerian postcolonial literature requires the analysis of post-independence and Arabic-speaking novels as well. Tahar Ouetar's *Alaz* (1974) is one of these novels which engages with the colonial-era Algeria despite being written after independence. *Alaz* (1974) is a political novel that pictures the inner conflicts between the FLN's fighters during the war of independence. The protagonist Alaz was brought up with his mother without knowing his father. Despite his bad reputation in his village, Alaz joins the

---

étaient sincères avec nous, qu'ils étaient bons et supérieurs. Maintenant il faut qu'ils déchantent. Il faut qu'ils sachent la vérité: ils ne nous tiennent pas et nous ne les aimons plus. (Feraoun, *Journal* 27).

fight against colonialism with his Algerian comrades where he meets his father Zidane (Zaydān) who was one of the main leaders in the FLN. Shortly after Alaz discovered who his father was, Zidane was condemned to death because of his Communist affiliation, which led Alaz to insanity after the execution of his father. The novel sheds light on many occasions on the circumstances of the Algerian population and provides different examples of the self-representations of the Arabic-speaking Algerian author.

To begin with, on this occasion, the narrator describes the situation of Algerian people saying:

We are like we knew ourselves, since the time we were created, the *Chichans* on our heads almost dripping with dirtiness, our *Bournouses* are old, rampant, and our shoes are just pieces of leather tied with rusty wire, and the faces are blue and dry .. We have nothing from the past but calamities, nothing from the present just waiting, and we will have nothing from the future just death .. We are just eating ourselves like germs, nothing else .. (Ouettar 7/8)<sup>22</sup>.

The author shows the Algerian people trapped outside of any dynamics of development as he says, “we are like we knew ourselves, since the time we were created”, which shows the static situation in which they have been supposedly caught for a long time. The narrator emphasises the demeaned appearance through their dirty clothes and chechias. Besides, he compares his people to the “germs” which “are eating [th]emselves”. He also uses generalised statements that include all his people, therefore blatantly essentialising the Algerian population. The detailed humiliation in this passage conveys a direct debasement of his people’s appearance and show them in an inescapable colonisable status.

Ouettar’s prose does not only reflect the sense of colonisability that dominates his people’s psyche but also reproduces major traits of the colonialist discourse like debasement and

---

<sup>22</sup> إننا، كما عرفنا أنفسنا، منذ خلقنا، "الشيشان" على رؤوسنا تكاد تقطر وسخاً، "البرانس" مهلهلة، رثة، متداعية، والأحذية مجرد قطع من الجلد أو المطاط، تشدها أسلاك صدئة، والأوجه زرقاء جافة.. ليس لنا من الماضي إلا المأسى.. وليس لنا من الحاضر إلا الإنتظار.. وليس لنا من مستقبل إلا الموت.. نتأكل كالجرانيم، وليس غير (8/7).

essentialisation. Such aspects were driving features in the colonial representations of Algerian populations. For example, Guillaume de Champeaux, among other French authors, used the same deprecating strategies in his description of Saharan people's clothes:

Men's clothes are rarely cleaned and washed; those of women as well. They are changed only at the last extremity, when their state of filth, dilapidation and disrepair makes it necessary to do so. Also, if the flea is unknown in the Saharan oases, the louse is far from non-existent. There is no shame in owning a few. Children who are not naked are covered in rags and vermin. On the head, no hairstyle, but often ringworm (42/43)<sup>23</sup>.

The colonial implication of this passage can be perceived through the emphasis on dirtiness as a general and natural characteristic of these people including men, women, and children. Seemingly, Ouettar's narrator conveyed the same demeaning treatment of his people, using the generalised judgement and insisting on their everlasting passivity.

On top of that, as the scene refers to the post-independence era, this description may be included to show the lingering negative impact of colonialism on Algerian society. However, the narrator did not refer or even hint at colonialism in this passage but he says, "since the time we were created", which may refer to a supposed inherent primitiveness of his people. He shows his people as passive and subservient to their miserable situation. This sort of representation, once again, echoes the colonial images that over-emphasise the juxtaposition of misery and inferiority of the colonised natives in essentialised images, which is the idea highlighted by David Spurr who shows that this type of literary technique was used to sustain colonialism and justify it, even through literature, when he argues that "misery and abjection are presented as two faces of the same condition, each serving as the sign of the other, so that

---

<sup>23</sup> Les vêtements des hommes sont rarement nettoyés et lavés ; ceux des femmes également. Ils ne sont changés qu'à la dernière extrémité, lorsque leur état de saleté, de vétusté et de délabrement oblige à le faire. Aussi, si la puce est inconnue dans les oasis sahariennes, le pou ne l'est guère. Il n'y aucune honte à en posséder quelques-uns. Les enfants qui ne sont pas nus sont couverts de haillons et de vermine. Sur la tête, aucune coiffure, mais souvent la teigne (42/43).

the physical suffering of indigenous peoples can be associated with their moral and intellectual degradation” (77/78).

The perpetuation of the colonialist rhetoric occurs elsewhere in Ouettar’s novel in the narrator description: “the village, as the Romans left it, staring at the mountains in its sadness” (Ouettar 9)<sup>24</sup>. This example shows the emphasis on the immutability of the village since the Roman era, which indeed dates back to two millennia ago. This point reminds us of another dominant characteristic in the Orientalist discourse wherein the “Orient [was] synonymous with stability and unchanging eternity” (Said, *Orientalism* 137). Moreover, the narrator’s reference to the Romans instead of any other civilisation echoes a basic feature in writings of some French colonial authors, among them Louis Bertrand, who used the heritage of Rome in North Africa to justify the French imperial project in Algeria. Caroline Ford explains that when Bertrand saw Tipasa’s (Tībāzah) ruins for the first time, he admitted “[h]e saw himself as their descendant, claiming a lost heritage, and admitted to feeling that he was a ‘lost Rumi in an Islamic land’ (68). Through this method, Dunwoodie explains that the French colonialist author “liberat[es] the *petit colon* from the weight of (colonial) history” (269). All things considered, representations of Algerian people in *Alaz* were marked with self-demeaning portrayals which were conveyed through the overuse of essentialised assumptions and the perpetuation of the colonial rhetoric. Most importantly, unlike Feraoun’s, Ouettar’s prose emphasises the everlasting colonisability of his people by stressing their enduring passivity, which develops fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives. A similar debasing stance has been illustrated in Said Khatibi’s novel which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

---

24

القرية، كما خلفها الرومان، تتأمل الجبال، في كآبة ما تزال (9)

Khatibi's novel *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016) traces the life of Isabelle Eberhardt through the main character, Joseph, who migrates from France and settles in Algeria and who is the narrator in the novel. When he discovers her writings, he gets interested in her story and spends forty years following the path of her life. Like Isabelle, Joseph included his observations on Algerian people which sometimes bear demeaning implications. On one occasion, Joseph describes the manners of his neighbours:

I know that the neighbours hear the ant's walking, and the stories that I narrate at home can easily reach the neighbouring houses, this is an Arab characteristic that I learned and I did not ignore, people do not give up their right to eavesdrop on what the neighbours do in secret, they consider it something normal, from their perspective it is not appropriate to live in a village without being aware of what happens behind the walls (Khatibi 23/24)<sup>25</sup>.

Joseph in this passage speaks about eavesdropping as a typical feature of Arabs' nature. More importantly, he does not exclude anybody in his description but instead, he gives generalised representations. This tendency of showing Algerians as innately bad was prevailing in the colonial description of the Algerian colonised people. For example, in his analysis of Arabs, Charles Richard claimed that: "When you question an Arab, even about a very insignificant fact, the first inspiration that comes to him is that of a lie. He lies, not always out of self-interest, but often out of pleasure and simple amusement of the mind. The lie is his poetry; he gives himself up to it with enthusiasm, with charm" (33/34)<sup>26</sup>. This example shows how Khatibi echoes Richard's's description of Algerian people, in the way he focuses on highlighting the bad manners of Algerians and essentialising his descriptions showing eavesdropping as an

---

<sup>25</sup> أعرف أن الجدران تلتقط دبيب النملة، وحكاياتي في البيت قد تبلغ بسهولة بيوتًا مجاورة، هذه خاصية عربية تعلمتها ولم أغفل عنها، الناس لا يتنازلون عن حقهم في التلصص على عادات الجيران السرية، معتبرين الفعلة شينًا طبيعيًا، فمن منظورهم، من غير اللائق أن تعيش في حي دونما تكون على اطلاع بما يحصل خلف حيطانه (23/24).

<sup>26</sup> "Quand on interroge un Arabe, même sur un fait très indifférent, la première inspiration qui lui vient est celle du mensonge. Il ment, non pas toujours par intérêt, mais souvent par plaisir et par simple amusement de l'esprit. Le mensonge c'est sa poésie ; il s'y livre avec entraînement, avec charme" (33/34).

innate characteristic, which are prominent features of the portrayal of the ‘other’ in the colonialist discourse.

Elsewhere, a similar generalised deprecating statement is assigned to Algerians, in which all categories of Algerian society are put under one perspective. On this occasion, Joseph says “[j]ust after the bus has stopped, everybody bounded the door, they attacked the bus, all of them; women, men and children, like hungry cats that attack a slice of grease” (Khatibi 64)<sup>27</sup>. In addition to the conventional tradition of essentialisation, it is worth explaining at this stage that comparing Algerians to cats, sometimes referred to as “the felinity trope” (Chouiten, *A Carnivalesque* 39), is among the major traits of the discourse used in Isabelle Eberhardt’s writing. These tropes, according to Spurr, show the way colonial writings violated the limit between the human and the animal (82). Indeed, Khatibi’s prose paradoxically displays a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance which does not only reuse Eberhardt’s strategies of observing and describing the ‘other’ through the character of Joseph but it also recreates some of the colonial tropes she used in her writings.

It is important at this stage to shed light on the contrasting opinions, which have been formulated about Isabelle Eberhardt’s colonial and anticolonial stance in her writings. Many scholars such as Salah Dembri (Şāliḥ dmbry), Leila Sebbar (Laylá alšbbār), Ursula Kingsmill Hart, and Elise Nouvel have defended and confirmed Eberhardt’s anti-colonial stance while some others like Rana Kabbani (Ranā qbbāny) and Lynda Chouiten have highlighted the colonial implications of her writings. Thus, in my analysis, I do not overlook the fact that she might have implicit colonial involvement and I shall consider the probability of her

---

<sup>27</sup> لكن، مباشرةً، ما إن توقفت الحافلة، حتى التف جميعهم حول باب الصعود، هجموا، نسوة ورجال وأطفال، على الحافلة، كما لو كانوا ققطاً جائعة تهجم على شريحة شحم (64)



commitment to the colonial and the Orientalist discourses in her writings about the so-called Orient. However, Khatibi seems to overlook the controversy of Eberhardt's discourse about Algeria, and instead, he paid tribute to her through the main character of Joseph, even if he highlighted this aspect when speaking about the French painter Etienne Dinet (later known as Nassereddine Dinet after he had converted to Islam) (Naṣr alddyn)<sup>28</sup>.

On the one hand, at the beginning of the novel, Joseph shows Algerians as non-sociable people who refuse the integration of strangers in their society, and he victimises Dinet when he relates the way he was treated: “[...] the Roumi as the old people used to call him, although he had lived here for more than fourteen years, he learned Arabic and the Qur'an, he mingled with these people and consoled them in their times of grief, and fed them from his food, they still regard him as a stranger and an outsider, and they suspect him” (Khatibi 12)<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand, Joseph denounces, on another occasion, the prejudiced portrayals and the bad reputation spread about the tribe of Awlad Nail (Awlād Nāyil) through the writings and the paintings of Dinet. Joseph argues that Dinet “... was pretending the love of people, while deep in his heart, he hated the ancient tribe of Awlad Nail, and mocked it by portraying its men as pimps and its women as prostitutes” (46)<sup>30</sup>.

This point has been a crucial topic in the debate between Linda Nochlin and John MacKenzie. The latter rejected Said's central tenet that Orientalist artists were openly promoting imperialism. Rather, he sought to prove that the rereading of Orientalism in

---

<sup>28</sup> To find more about Etienne Dinet, see Denise Brahimi and Koudir Benchikou, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Etienne Dinet*, Paris, ACR Edition: 1984.

<sup>29</sup> الرّومي كما بسميه كبار السن، فرغم أنه عاش هنا أكثر من أربعة عشر عاماً، تعلم العربية وحفظ القرآن وخالط النّاس ووقف الى جانبهم، في محنتهم وفي ماتمهم، وأطعمهم بعضاً من رزقه، فقد ظلوا ينظرون اليه غريباً، أجنبياً، بعين الرية، يتوجسون منه (12)

<sup>30</sup> كان يدّعي محبة النّاس وبمقت، في عمقه، قبيلة أولاد نائل العريقة ويسخر منها، يصور رجالها كقوّادين ونساءها كهاعرات (46)

“alternative and more convincing ways” (MacKenzie 67) shows that these Orientalists “[...] were culturally conservative and technically innovative. Far from offering an artistic programme for imperialism, they were finding in the East ancient verities lost in their own civilisation. Many of them set out not to condemn the East, but to discover echoes of a world they lost” (MacKenzie 67). By contrast, Linda Nochlin followed the path of the analysis set forth by Edward Said in her theory, and highlighted the need for a critical study of these paintings, claiming that “[...] many painters had adopted the Western view on Oriental lands that vindicated the imperialist expansion of European states to the East and to the South” (quoted in Wojcik 19). She explained the way they recreated the denigrating stereotypes in these paintings, which shows the passivity of the “Orient” and constitutes it as the direct opposite of Europe.

Drawing on Nochlin’s perspective, Joseph exemplifies the impact of these Orientalist paintings on the reputation of some Algerian regions with the story of ‘Khadra’ (Khadrah); one of the characters of Dinet’s works. He assumes that Dinet “has changed her story, he dehumanised her and showed her as a mere prostitute” (Khatibi 51)<sup>31</sup>. Although Joseph is rejecting the biased portrayals of Orientalists such as Dinet, he is, strikingly, excluding Eberhardt’s presumed colonialist implications in her writings. He states that the representation of Khadra’s life would have been more faithful if it had been undertaken by Eberhardt (51), and he overlooks the fact that her writings about the Maghreb in general and Algeria in particular are also considered by some critics as Orientalist literary narratives, which reproduced major biased traits of the colonialist and the imperialist discourse: “In her rhetoric of appropriation as well as in her construction of this space [the Maghreb and the Algerian

---

31

لقد حرّف إيتيان دينيه حكايتها، نزع منها صفاتها الإنسانية وجعل منها عاهرة فقط (51)

desert] as a site of desire and of its people as objects of study, the Russian writer rehearses the Orientalist, commanding attitude all too common in Westerners abroad” (Chouiten, *A Carnavalesque* 80). This contradictory account on Eberhardt and Dinét shows the ambivalent stance of Joseph toward different Orientalist representations of Algeria. This can be considered as a different perspective on the practice of self-Orientalism because Joseph is denouncing the biased portrayals of the male Orientalist artist Dinét while he defends portrayals of another female Orientalist writer like Eberhardt, in spite of the fact that she has been faulted by some critics for her complicity with the colonial project.

In an interview undertaken for this project, Said Khatibi explains the reason behind his harsh criticism of Dinét and his defence of Eberhardt in his novel:

Firstly, Orientalism in history is a patriarchal movement. Orientalists were men, we don't know any woman Orientalist, who came to the region. Concerning Eberhardt, contrary to other Orientalists who came by tanks or were accompanied by armies, she came individually. [...] when I worked on this novel I went back to an important archive in Aix-en-Provence in France, anyone can have a look at it. It is an archive of the colonial police at that time, the French colonial police was describing Eberhardt as a spy. It means it is impossible that somebody who works with colonialism can be described like that. [...] why didn't she settle in one place and was instead transported to tens of Algerian cities? When they (French police) suspected her to be a spy for the native population, they moved her husband's job (she married Sliman Henni who was a 'Méhariste', which means one of the camel-mounted Arab soldiers in the French army) from one place to another, so that she did not settle in one place, and her relationship with the native population could not develop (Khatibi, *Interview* 2018).

Khatibi's answer explains Joseph's perspective about Eberhardt in his novel but also shows that he, like Said in his study of Orientalism, overlooks the role of female Orientalist authors, who just like male Orientalist authors could also be imperialist agents – sometimes, unwittingly. Her admiration and support for the native population did not prevent her from recreating prejudiced perspectives about them. This is the argument defended by scholars mentioned earlier like Rana Kabbani who argues, in her introduction to Eberhardt's diaries, that the Swiss-Russian's discourse was not totally anti-colonialist, as she considers her among

the people who “functioned within [the colons] and ultimately served the design of colonialism” (viii). Kabbani also denounces Eberhardt’s racism and sexism, claiming that she is “a mouthpiece for patriarchy” (ix), which may deny her being a victim of the patriarchal regulations but instead she used them to her advantage<sup>32</sup>.

Paradoxically, the portrayals included in Ouettar’s and Khatibi’s novels illustrate the rebirth of colonial aspects such as the lack of nuances, absence of individual difference, and essentialising Algerians under one single description, which shows them as masses with identical characteristics, in most cases inferior ones. This aspect is highlighted by Said in the Orientalist discourse when he says that “Orientalists are neither interested in nor capable of discussing individuals; instead artificial entities” (Said 94). This idea can be read in a very similar light to what Memmi considers as signs which were used in the colonialist discourse to depersonalise the colonised: he believed saying that among the signs “of the colonized’s depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity (‘They are this’; ‘They are all the same’)” (Memmi 129). Therefore, the overuse of this feature with a constant association with debasing descriptions puts Ouettar’s and Khatibi’s writings among the fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives which involve a constant perpetuation of the colonial tropes in Algerian postcolonial literature, regardless of the language and the period in which these works are produced.

### **3.2. Individual self-demeaning**

In contrast to the previously mentioned examples, Kamal Daoud’s *Meursault contre enquête* (2013) provides another type of description, which is not marked by generalisation as

---

<sup>32</sup> Eberhardt is well-known for her masculine disguise and taking the name of Si Mahmoud, which indulged her with the ability to discover the masculine atmosphere.

the narrator Harun treats each character distinctly. Despite the absence of the generalisation in his portrayals, Daoud's prose perpetuates the demeaning stance of Algerian people.

The novel raised controversy on both sides of the Mediterranean and the themes it tackled attracted many critics. Natalya Vince, for example, considers the novel as “a postcolonial sequel” or a “corrective” novel to Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942), in which Camus has been criticised for his “undeveloped treatment of [...] ‘Arabs’ – peripheral, nameless figures who blur into the background” (Vince). Therefore, Daoud attempts through the voice of Harun (Hārūn) to provide his own rendering of the passivised ‘Arabs’, more specifically, to give an identity to his murdered, nameless, and voiceless brother Musa (Mūsá) who has been referred to throughout Camus' work as ‘the Arab’. Some authors, like Sami Alkayam (Sāmī alqyyām), praised the novel suggesting that Daoud “not only challenges the colonial discursive system the way Edward Said did, but also critiques the foundations of both colonial and postcolonial discourses” (464). Valérie K. Orlando for her part, highlighted the contribution of Daoud in writing back to the coloniser saying that: “Not only does Daoud/ Haroun fill in the gaps left in the narrative of Albert Camus's seminal and famous novel [...] but Daoud also offers a parallel universe in a language that is manipulated in an alternative way. We are, in a sense, forced to move de droite à gauche (from right to left) in a form of French that is infused with dialectical and classical Arabic [...]” (872). However, the novel has also been criticised by other authors who referred to Daoud “as a self-hating Arab and a ‘sellout to the French’” (Alkayam 463). Drawing on this controversy, I examine the extent to which Daoud has challenged the colonialist discourse in his attempt to ‘correct’ Camus's biased representation of ‘Arabs’.

Daoud's novel is narrated by Harun, the brother of the anonymous *Arabe* in Camus's novel. It evolves around Harun's meeting with a French journalist who is searching for the truth of Camus's story. The conversation between the two characters takes place in a bar in Oran and

continues over several successive nights where Harun tells of his brother's death and its impact on his life. The narration is fragmented with flash-backs and flash-forwards in which Harun provides insights into colonial and post-independence Algeria. More importantly and in accordance with the topic of this chapter, Daoud includes several examples where he ensures the presence of the 'Arabs' ignored in Camus's original novel. On one occasion, Harun describes some 'Arabs' by providing a thorough portrayal of each individual and reserving the characteristics of each person, which contradicts the Orientalist and the colonialist generalised rendering of Algerians.

This can be noticed in the following example where Harun portrays different people from his city saying, "Tawi was a heavyset fellow. Dragged his bad left leg, had a nagging cough, smoked a lot. And early each morning, it was his habit to step outside and pee on a wall, as nlithely as you please" (Daoud 17)<sup>33</sup>. He adds about another character called El-Hadj (al-Ḥājj) who was: "the silent type. His main occupations seemed to be striking his mother and eying his neighbours with a permanent air of defiance" (17)<sup>34</sup>. At the end of the paragraph, he adds a description of "the Moroccan" saying that "His sons were liars and petty thieves, capable of stealing all the fruit off every possible tree" (17)<sup>35</sup>. This example reminds of the colonial convention of associating Arabs with bad manners like theft and lying as explained previously in this chapter. Among the very frequent debasing portrayals of Algerians, one can site Auguste

---

<sup>33</sup> "[Tawi] Un bonhomme lourd, à la jambe gauche malade et traînante, toussoteux, grand fumeur, qui, au petit matin, avait l'habitude d'uriner contre les murs, sans aucune gêne" (Daoud 31).

<sup>34</sup> "silencieux lui aussi, il semblait avoir pour vocation de frapper sa mère et de regarder les gens du quartier avec un air de défi permanent" (31).

<sup>35</sup> "[s]es fils étaient des menteurs et des chapardeurs, capables de voler tous les fruits de tous les arbres possibles" (31).

Chosey statement about theft in Algeria saying: “In this country, you are told: I have stolen, just like when we would say in our country: I have a cold” (49)<sup>36</sup>.

Indeed, these passages demonstrate that Daoud’s novel is not repeating the same generalised strategies of Algerian characters, as it is portraying each person separately. However, Harun’s description is putting all these characters in a different kind of debasement and adopting the colonial demeaning stance. This is especially surprising when we know that this novel’s aim is to denounce the marginalisation of Algerians in *L’Étranger*, and that the protagonist Harun is, as explained by Sami Alkayam “the postcolonial intellectual [...] who, unlike his brother, has learned the language and discourse of his master [the coloniser]” (467). Being aware of and acquainted with the colonial discourse, should have allowed Harun to avoid slipping into the colonial rhetoric. Instead, he reproduces debasing images that give validity to the colonial biased portrayal of Algerian people. Thus, it can be said that whilst Daoud’s novel rejects the feature of generalised description, the deprecating stance of the colonialist discourse still survives in his prose through self-demeaning representations of Algerian individuals.

More importantly, it is worth analysing the way Harun describes the non-Algerian character – in this example, ‘the Marocain’ and his sons. This example illustrates that Harun is not specifying Algerian characters with the debasing representation as he is putting the Moroccans under the same treatment. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Harun’s description suggests another paradigm of ‘Othering’ which is also overlooked in Said’s discussion. In other words, this example shows that Harun’s Othering of the Moroccans is not based on “an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’” (Said, *Orientalism* 2), as Said states. Rather, the studied example shows that Harun is opposing the

---

<sup>36</sup> “Dans ce pays, on vous dit: j’ai volé, comme chez nous on dirait: j’ai un rhume de cerveau” (49).

conventions of Orientalist discourse as he is ‘othering’ the Moroccans who are among the so-called ‘Orientals’ themselves like Algerians.

In highlighting self-demeaning representations, this part has questioned the possibility of the application of Memmi and Bennabi’s hypothesis about the influence of the colonial discourse and the sense of colonisability on Algerian literature of colonial and post-independence eras. Despite the persistence of the demeaning tropes in his writing, which conveyed the influence of colonial discourse and the colonisability, Feraoun’s main character Amer appears to demonstrate a reluctant self-Orientalist stance because he has attempted to reject the colonial tropes. Writing in the late colonial era, Feraoun advocated through his writings the need to overcome one’s own colonisability which haunted his people throughout the era of colonialism. Surprisingly however, the analysis has shown that the colonial demeaning tropes and the sense of colonisability were also persisting in the post-independence era and were conveyed through the recurrent collective and individual self-demeaning portrayals in novels of Ouettar, Khatibi and Daoud. More importantly, unlike Feraoun, portrayals of Ouettar, Khatibi, and Daoud novels showed no nuances. This aspect can be read as the absence of any clear attempt to move beyond the colonial image of Algerians, leading us to categorise their novels as plain self-Orientalist writings displaying a fully-fledged attitude toward some colonial tropes.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the influence of colonial and Orientalist discourses, the sense of colonisability and the colonial mentality in the perseverance of the stereotypical demeaning image of the Algerian people and the creation of the self-Orientalist representations in Algerian postcolonial literature. Through the analysis of the novels, I have identified two main literary approaches to the Orientalist legacy when it comes to describing people. Through Feraoun’s



novel, I have examined the position of the reluctant self-Orientalist who challenges the coloniser without being fully able to emancipate himself or herself from the literary tropes which belong to the colonial novel. Through novels of Ouettar, Khatibi, and Daoud, we have seen the figure of the fully-fledged self-Orientalist who fully reappropriated the colonial stereotypes, without any clear attempt to distance himself or herself from them, or challenge them. The analysis of self-representations in these three novels showed that Ouettar's and Khatibi's narrators did not only slip into the rhetoric of self-debasement but they also used the aspect of essentialisation which marked the colonial conventional representation of the 'other'. Whilst Kamal Daoud's narrator has avoided the aspect of essentialisation, the description of his characters individually was still dominated by a demeaning stance.

These two types of literary production influenced by the colonial legacy have also undermined the initial hypothesis of this thesis, namely that self-Orientalism would fade as independence was decided and the gap between the colonial literature and Algerian literary production became wider. Unexpectedly, the chapter has shown the opposite to happen. Through the figure of the reluctant self-Orientalist, Feraoun demonstrated clear resistance to the colonial and Orientalist discourses prior to independence. By contrast, in the post-independence era, the fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspective displayed in Ouettar, Khatibi, and Daoud's novels have shown more willingness to reappropriate the colonial and Orientalist stereotypes and appeared to still display a sense of colonisability.

This chapter has also highlighted some peculiarities in self-representations of the studied authors. Khatibi's novel, for example, shows a non-essentialist account of different Orientalist figures he treats, based on his account of Isabelle Eberhardt and Etienne Dinet. Kamal Daoud for his part demonstrates through his novel a distinctive type of self-Orientalism as he shows a different kind of 'Othering'. He exhibits a type of 'Othering' that is not always based on the

traditional opposition between the Western and the so-called Oriental worlds, but rather 'Othering' among the Orientals themselves.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Of Cities and Land: Debased and Gendered Representations of Algerian Cities and Landscapes**

It is a central tenet of this thesis that self-Orientalist discourse revisits and recycles colonial and Orientalist tropes in many areas, and one of them is the representation of cities and landscapes. This chapter examines how Algerian cities and landscapes are portrayed in postcolonial literature and the impact colonial and Orientalist legacy has had on literature of this era. In particular, I will examine two main patterns which conventionally dominated the portrayal of colonies: the debasement and feminisation of places. The first section is devoted to investigating the colonial demeaning rhetoric used in the representation of places, in Algerian prose. In the second section, I will be discussing the survival of the feminising and the eroticising rhetoric in the representations of Algerian places in Algerian prose, which represents a recycling of tropes conventionally used in colonial and Orientalist discourses in order to validate the myth of the feminised Orient. In doing so, I will be distinguishing the existing categories of self-Orientalism according to the extent of the reappropriation of Orientalist clichés and colonial tropes.

#### **1. Debasement of Algerian cities**

The description of geographical landscapes – or the colonies’ newly discovered areas in the so-called Orient – was a deeply entrenched feature in Orientalist and colonialist writings. In *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), David Spurr conceptualises how colonial authors exercise power on the colonised land by making use of a “commanding view”. That is, the representation of places and landscapes in colonial writings illustrates the way they consider the Orient as a site where they can exercise power through writing. Spurr supports his claim by arguing that the Western writer’s commanding view “[...] conveys a sense of mastery over the

unknown and over what is often perceived by the Western writer” (15). He argues that the description of the writer serves as the initial step of colonialism, as the “writer’s eye is always in some sense colonizing the landscape, mastering and portioning, fixing zones and poles, arranging and deepening the scene as the object of desire” (Spurr 27).

Edward Said states that some of the portrayals of these landscapes were based on showing the Orient as a stable, unchangeable, and ahistorical place (*Orientalism* 136). This was achieved through depicting these cities and places as lethargic, underdeveloped, and only developed through Western or colonial interference. The example of a French *colon*’s demeaning of “a town the French called Bone and the Algerians call Annaba” (Prochaska 297) and simultaneous celebration of the progress of French colonialism offers Said the opportunity to examine the debasing tendency that is generally assigned to colonised cities: “It is not because the ‘old city’ is dirty that it should be kept intact, but because it alone permits the visitor...to understand better the grandeur and beauty of the task accomplished by the French in this country in this place previously deserted, barren and virtually without natural resources, this small, ugly Arab village of scarcely 1,500 people” (*Culture* 171). The debasement of Algerian cities, as illustrated here, was driven by colonial implications which justify and legitimise the French conquest through valorising the changes it brought to these cities mainly through urbanisation projects.

A similar argument was made by Amine Kasmi (Amīn Qāsimī) who argues that such descriptions, based upon debasing the past of the colonised city in order to praise colonial changes more effectively, was used not only to get more financial support for the reconstruction of the city but also to celebrate the power of the colonial empire (32). He exemplifies this process with Dr Catteloup’s<sup>37</sup> account about the early status of Tlemcen: “On our arrival in

---

<sup>37</sup> The chief doctor of the military hospital in Tlemcen at that time.

1842, Tlemcen reflected the gloomy and sad aspect of a ruined city. As before its occupation by the French, there was no public hygiene, we found traces the natives' negligence and carelessness for the improvement of their well-being or the conservation of their health" (Catteloup 20)<sup>38</sup>. The Doctor adds another statement in his book, describing the city after transformations carried out by the colonial administration:

The traveller who has not seen Tlemcen since 1842, when the city was in a state of disrepair and ruins, would today be very surprised to see it so charming and flourishing. New streets have been drilled and stoned; others have been expanded. [...] we can say that Tlemcen, under good administration, had the lion share of the numerous and useful works carried out with a view to the future prosperity of the colony, which must one day attest, over a vast area, the creative power of France (23)<sup>39</sup>.

The two passages underline the importance of the ruinous situation of Tlemcen (Tilimsān) before the colonial project took place, followed by a clear emphasis on the transformations brought to the city by the colonial administration. The author also implicitly debases the native population when he considers Tlemcen's state of decay as reflecting the indigenous people's recklessness and carelessness.

As previous passages show, Algeria, a colony where French imperialism was deployed, was not excluded from the tradition of the debasing portrayal in colonial and Orientalist writings. Algerian postcolonial literature includes descriptions of Algerian places and cities, some of which echo the same deprecating stance that characterised the Orientalist and the colonialist

---

<sup>38</sup> "A notre arrivée, en 1842, Tlemcen présentait l'aspect morne et triste d'une ville en ruines. Comme avant son occupation par les Français, il n'existait pas d'hygiène publique, nous avons trouvé les traces de cette incurie, de cette insouciance qu'ont les indigènes pour l'amélioration de leur bien-être ou la conservation de leur santé" (Catteloup 20).

<sup>39</sup> Le voyageur qui n'aurait pas vu Tlemcen depuis 1842, alors que la ville était dans un état profond de délabrement et de ruines, serait aujourd'hui très-surpris de la voir aussi coquette et si florissante. Des rues nouvelles ont été percées et empierrées; d'autres ont été élargies. [...] nous pouvons dire que Tlemcen, sous une bonne administration, a eu sa large part des nombreux et utiles travaux effectués en vue de la prospérité future de la colonie, qui doit attester un jour, sur une vaste étendue, la puissance créatrice de la France (23).

depiction of Algeria. This results in the creation of a self-Orientalist discourse that is dominated by the demeaning portrayals of Algerian cities and landscapes.

As a preamble, in *Meursault, contre enquête* (2013) Kamal Daoud gets his protagonist Harun to provide a description of the two Algerian cities in which the events of the novel take place, Algiers and Oran. After the death of his eldest brother Moussa, Harun and his mother leave Algiers and move to Oran. Harun expresses what Algiers represents for him and his mother: “For the two of us, the city would always be the scene of the crime, or the place where something pure and ancient was lost. Yes, Algiers, in my memory, is a dirty, corrupt creature, a dark, treacherous man-stealer” (Daoud 21)<sup>40</sup>. Such a demeaning passage, showing Algiers as a source of evil and crime, is followed by another description in which he expresses his fear of the same city: “Algiers was a fearful labyrinth whenever we ventured outside our perimeter, but Mama was able to find her way around” (43)<sup>41</sup>.

The previously cited examples illustrate how Algiers is depicted as a place of danger and source of fear, which is in line with the colonial tradition of associating danger and mystery with this city and especially the Casbah that conventionally “evoked mystery” (Çelik 25) in colonial writings. This is vividly illustrated in Eugène Fromentin’s writings, which highlight the mystery as a characteristic of old Algiers streets: “[...] bizarre streets like so many mysterious stairways leading to silence” (208)<sup>42</sup>. On another occasion, Paul Margueritte, who was born in Laghouat (Alāghwāt), associates mystery and danger with the Casbah (al-Qaşabah) in Algiers: “The Kasbah! ... This magic word intrigued my childhood. He pursued me for

---

<sup>40</sup> “Pour nous deux, la ville restait toujours le lieu de crime ou de quelque chose de pur et d’ancien. Oui, Alger, dans ma mémoire est une créature sale, corrompue, voleuse d’hommes, traîtresse et sombre” (Daoud 36).

<sup>41</sup> “Alger était un labyrinthe effrayant lorsque nous nous aventurions hors de notre périmètre; M’ma sut pourtant y évoluer” (63).

<sup>42</sup> “des rues bizarres comme autant d’escaliers mystérieux qui conduiraient au silence” (208).

years, so much did he evoke mystery and suggest vague and disturbing things to me. When pronounced, it had a particular sound. [...] I imagined a dangerous and enchanted lair of Arabian nights” (27)<sup>43</sup>.

Apart from showing non-Western places as fearful and evil places, the colonial and Orientalist writings emphasise other debasing features such as focusing on the dirtiness and messiness. A relevant example, in this case, can be taken from the French author Pierre Raynal’s account of his stay in Algiers: “The climate is excellent, the land admirable; only civilization is absent...there is nothing to equal the ugliness of Algiers, ...Their customs seem to be tranquil...women seem to have fled Africa ...There is nothing quite as dirty or narrow as Algiers [...]” (Quoted in Dunwoodie 36). This illustrates a sample of the clichéd representation of the colonised Algiers, in which the writer participates in validating the debased picture of the Orient, by emphasising the backwardness and the dirtiness in his description. In his narration, Harun provides another description of the same city in his own style: “God, how I loathe the city of Algiers, the monstrous chewing sound it makes, its stench of rotten vegetables and rancid oil! It doesn’t have a bay it has a jaw” (Daoud 139)<sup>44</sup>. Harun’s representation of Algiers seems to bear the same stance as Raynal’s portrayal, especially in terms of the humiliating tone that dominates his depiction of this city. Indeed, the over-use of a demeaning description of Algiers in Daoud’s prose, as shown in previous examples, can be read as a full reappropriation of the colonial tradition of demeaning Algerian cities which once again, as seen in the previous chapter, categorises his prose among fully-fledged self-Orientalist writings.

---

<sup>43</sup> La Kasbah! ... Ce mot magique a intrigué mon enfance. Il m’a poursuivi des années, tant il fleurait le mystère et me suggérait des choses vagues et inquiétantes. Prononcé, il avait un son particulier. [...] Je me représentais un repaire dangereux et enchanté des Mille et une Nuits” (27).

<sup>44</sup> “Dieu que je déteste cette ville, son monstrueux bruit de mastication, ses odeurs de légumes pourris et d’huile rance! Ce n’est pas une baie qu’elle a, mais une mâchoire” (Daoud 187).

It is important to consider that the novel is meant to offer a corrective work to Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942) (see chapter one). Yet, the description of Algerian cities seems to be another way in which Daoud's prose reappropriates some of the debasing descriptions used in Camus's colonial writings. For example, Harun describes another Algerian city, Oran, and the view from his balcony: "My balcony overlooks the city's public space: broken playground slides, a few scrawny, tormented trees, some dirty staircases, some windblown plastic bags clinging to people's legs, other balconies decorated with unidentified laundry, water cisterns, and satellite dishes" (72)<sup>45</sup>. Like in the previous portrayal of Algiers, this passage illustrates Harun's attentiveness to show the messiness of his city: he displays a picture of it in which every detail is deprecated and lacks any sign of beauty or attractiveness.

When we turn our attention to Camus's writing, whom Said considers "a novelist from whose work the facts of imperial actuality, [are] so clearly there to be noted" (*Culture* 172), we notice the same debasing stance in describing the city of Oran in his novels. In *La Peste* (1947), for example, Albert Camus devotes the first few pages to describe or rather to demean the city of Oran. On one occasion, the narrator points to the absence of natural beauty in the city and wonders how its people can bear living in it:

The town itself, let us admit, is ugly. [...] how to conjure up a picture, for instance, of a town without pigeons, without any trees or gardens, where you never hear the beat of wings or the rustle of leaves – a thoroughly negative place in short? The seasons are discriminated only in the sky. All that tells you of spring's coming is the feel of the air, or the baskets of flowers brought in from the suburbs by hawkers [...] (Camus 5).

Whilst in this novel he emphasises the lifelessness of Oran, in another novel entitled *Minotaure, ou la halte d'Oran* (1950) (*The Minotaur, or the stopover of Oran*) the narrator criticises the

---

<sup>45</sup> "Mon balcon donne sur l'espace collectif de la cité : des toboggans cassés, quelques arbres torturés et faméliques, des escaliers sales, des sachets en plastique accrochés aux jambes des vents [sic], d'autres balcons bariolés par du linge indistinct, des citernes d'eau et des antennes paraboliques" (Daoud 100).



disorganised way in which the city is built, and refers to its citizens as people who contributed to its ugliness by hiding the beautiful landscapes with random constructions:

Obliged to live facing a wonderful landscape, the people of Oran have overcome this fearful ordeal by covering their city with very ugly constructions. One expects to find a city open to the sea, washed and refreshed by the evening breeze. And aside from the Spanish quarter, one finds a walled town that turns its back to the sea, that has been built by turning back on itself like a snail. Oran is a great circular yellow wall covered over with a leaden sky. In the beginning one wanders in the labyrinth, seeking the sea like the sign of Ariadne. But one turns round and round in pale and oppressive streets, and eventually the Minotaur devours the people of Oran: the Minotaur is boredom. For some time, the citizens of Oran have given up wandering. They have accepted being eaten (Quoted in Graebner 206).

The occasional reference to the writings of Camus in this section is meant to highlight the reminiscence between his prose and the representation of Algerian cities in Daoud's novel and show that their portrayals fall in the same rhetorical pattern of debasement. This also confirms the fact that Kamal Daoud's writing develops fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives as the portrayal of cities in the novel does not challenge the colonial tendency of demeaning Algerian cities, in spite of Daoud's claimed intention to develop a postcolonial response to Camus's writings.

The tendency of criticising and demeaning cities prevails as a tradition in premodern and modern Arabic literature and is known as *Hijā' al-mudun*. Huda Fakhreddine (Hudá Fakhr alddyn) and Bilal Orfali (Bilāl awrfāly) explain that this tendency dominated the Arabic poetry. They show that in premodern poetry, "the scathing attacks on cities [...] reveal what one might describe as a rivalry between poets and cities. A poet would relate to a city on an individual level, and as such, it was possible to triumph over a city. This is also why attacking a city, or even insulting it, would carry a direct and almost personal tone" (Fakhreddine et al 48). However, this tendency changed in modern Arabic poetry; it transformed from the expression of personal and individual situations to a reflection of the criticism of the cities' tyranny and apathy which is what made the city in the poets' writings "a metaphor for the oppressive and

corrupt world order that has to be destroyed and overcome” (Fakhreddine et al 50). This stance prevailed in the works of many Arab poets of the modern era among them the Iraqi poet Badr Chakir al-Sayab (Badr Shākir alsyyāb) (1926-1964), and the Lebanese Khalil Hawi (Khalīl Hāwī) (1919-1982). The demeaning of cities took gradually a political dimension as well, as some poets reflected through this tendency their disappointment in their governments. Thus, the demeaning of cities became “associated with [the poets’] convulsion at what the city represents as a locale for the central government, oppressive authority and economic exploitation of the poor classes” (Gohar 8).

However, we cannot assume that this tendency can systematically apply to Algerian Arabic literature without considering the difference in the historical background that differentiates Algerian literature from other Arabic works of literature. Indeed, it is fundamental to highlight the influence of the long-held of colonial literary stereotypes on Algerian Arabic literature, especially because the demeaning of Algerian cities was a driving element in colonial and Orientalist writings. Therefore, I argue that the re-creation of the deprecating representations of cities in Algerian Arabic literature does not only stem from the tradition of Arabic literature but is also reflective of the influence of the colonial legacy. This is especially true when we consider the reminiscence between the Algerian literary representations and the colonial stereotypes about the Algerian cities, as will be shown through the analysis of Khatibi’s prose.

The representation of Saharan places or cities is also another prominent theme in both colonial and postcolonial writings that has elicited plenty of controversial perspectives. In colonial and Orientalist literature, the Sahara was a place which was represented under various guises, as Mortimer puts it: “To the mystic such as Charles de Foucauld, desert landscapes encouraged the development of spiritual life. To the explorer, the desert has represented a space to conquer” (60). In other words, the Sahara in Orientalist and colonial writings was not only

“an environment where a set of positive values, combining triumphant masculinity, spiritual discovery, and national pursuits, could be displayed” (Sèbe 174), it was also a place that was depicted as “un pays de la soif et de la peur” (Depont 218) whereas other writings “focused on its emptiness, its lack” (Fletcher 200). For example, some writers expressed their attachment to the Sahara as a place of redemption and discovery and celebrated the qualities of its people like Danish journalist Knud Holombe in *Desert Encounter* (1931), who described his appreciation of the nomad’s stolidity among the people he met when crossing the Sahara. Yet, there are other colonial writings that created or sustained demeaning stereotypes of the Sahara and its people, such as French writer Jules Verne, who recreated the image of the inferior backward “Other” in his representation of the Algerian Touareg in *L’Invasion de la mer* (1905).

Although there were different trends in the representations of the Sahara, some Algerian authors seem more influenced by a pejorative image of this place and the colonial demeaning of Algerian cities. Such examples emerge in Said Khatibi’s *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016), in which the protagonist and main narrator Joseph Rancher provides accounts of Saharan cities such as Bou Saada (Būs‘ādah) in his journey, following the path set by colonial-era female writer Isabelle Eberhardt. The descriptions of these cities are dominated by a constant stress on the silence and the lethargy of these places. For example, Joseph describes Bou Saada as an “earthy mute city” (Khatibi 12)<sup>46</sup> that is “enclosed on itself like a hedgehog in its sleep [...]” (22)<sup>47</sup>. He emphasises the sleepy mode of the very same city when he says that “nobody would be happier to hear about our leave, in this sighing city, than El-haj Ali” (84)<sup>48</sup>.

---

46

المدينة الترابية البكماء (12)

47

هذه المدينة المتكورة على نفسها، مثل قنفذ في سبات (22)

48

لا أحد سيفرح بسماع خبر مغادرتنا لهذه المدينة المتثابة أكثر من الحاج علي (84)

Then, he expresses his relief as he is about to leave the city and “her noises, her laziness, her gossiping and sorrow” (128)<sup>49</sup>.

Similar debasing adjectives marked the Orientalist and colonial portrayals in which the viewer is given a voice, whereas the described place or landscape is silent, establishing a “relation of mastery predicated between the seer and the seen” (Pratt 200). Such imageries can be seen in Eugène Fromentin’s description of one of the Saharan regions, underlining its silence and sleepiness: “We hear nothing more. There were four hours of incredible calm and amazement. The city sleeps below me, mute and like an all-purple mass, [...]. On each side of the city stretches the oasis, all mute and as if asleep under the weight of the day” (Fromentin 188)<sup>50</sup>. Although Joseph’s description does not imply a sense of mastery over the places described, he is adopting the same rhetoric of silence and inactivity used in colonial writings. The constant recourse to the lethargy and silence of the Sahara in Khatibi’s novel can be read in the same light as the demeaning tendency found in Fromentin’s stress on the muteness and sleepiness of Saharan regions.

The reproduction of colonial demeaning stereotypes occurs elsewhere in the novel as well, for example when the protagonist explains the present situation of Bou Saada (Būsa‘ādah) and how Isabelle Eberhardt would have described it:

If Isabelle had come back to Bou Saada today, she would have written something different, because this city became a ginger queen with violated honour, she sleeps on the edge of the valley so as not to look at herself, or not to be seen by the passer by. The leaves of her almond trees dried up, and lost their nice smell, she is standing few meters away from her downfall, she fears to wake up one day to find herself a castrated city.

---

49

أصواتها وكسلها ونمومتها وكآبتها (128)

<sup>50</sup> On n’entend plus rien. Il y a là quatre heures d’un calme et d’une stupeur incroyables. La ville dort au-dessous de moi, muette et comme une masse alors toute violette, [...]. De chaque côté de la ville s’étend l’oasis, aussi muette et comme endormie de même sous la pesanteur du jour” (Fromentin 188).

This city is full of illusions and anguishes; she looks to her miserable past every now and then. After that, she comes back to the present day to continue her nap [...] (Khatibi 89)<sup>51</sup>.

The overuse of literary tropes, that emphasise sleepiness and inactivity, prevails in the description of Bou Saada. What this passage adds is the stress on the non-developing state of this city, which, based on Joseph's description, appears as a place that is defeated by its sleepiness, laziness, and passivity. Indeed, these representations are echoing what Said explains about the desert, which is "considered to be a locale about which one can make statements regarding the past in exactly the same form (and with the same content) that one makes them regarding the present" (*Orientalism* 235). The previous examples which highlight the focus on Bou Saada's sleepiness echo the colonial deprecating stance, especially when equated with other passages where the narrator expresses his repeated disappointment and belittling of these cities: "Maybe I was mistaken by deciding to come and live in this city that feuds itself" (Khatibi 13)<sup>52</sup>, or: "I am not sure if I want to be buried in this rude ungrateful city" (30)<sup>53</sup>.

In an interview (2018) during which he comments on these portrayals, Khatibi explains that his representations of Algerian cities in his novel reflect his criticism of colonial history, as he holds the opinion that these cities embody a form of colonial legacy: "these cities are not ours. In the novel, I criticise the colonial history and the narrations of Dinét, thus, it is obvious to criticise the colonial architecture. These are not our cities, I wish we built our cities after independence [...] I did not criticise this city, but I criticised the fact that we did not get rid of the colonial mentality". More importantly, he adds that Orientalist writings were not concerned with the places in the so-called Orient, but with the people found in these places (Khatibi,

---

<sup>51</sup> لو عادت إيزابيل الى بوسعادة اليوم لكتبت شيئاً مختلفاً، فهذه المدينة صارت مدينة صهباء منتهكة الشرف، تنام على حافة الوادي كي لا تنتظر الى نفسها، ولا ينظر اليها المازون، أشجار اللوز فيها يبست أوراقها، وسلب منها عطرها، وهي الآن تقف على بعد أمتار قليلة من الهاوية، تخاف ان تستيقظ يوماً وتجد نفسها مدينة مخصية بلا فحولة. إنها مدينة مشبعة بالأوهام والسقطات، [...] تنتظر، من حين لآخر، لقدرها المطعون، ثم تعود لحاضرها لمواصلة قبولتها (89)

<sup>52</sup> ريمًا أخطأت يوم قررت المجيء إلى هذه المدينة المعادية لنفسها! (13)

<sup>53</sup> لست متأكدًا إن كانت لديّ الرغبة في أن أدفن في هذه المدينة الفضة والجادة (30)

*Interview*). Khatibi's comments show that his debasement of Algerian cities is meant to show his rejection of the colonial legacy. However, this does not justify a recurrent re-creation of the same demeaning patterns used in the Orientalist and the colonialist discourses. In addition, the examples discussed do not show any form of criticism of the inherited colonial architecture of Algerian cities; rather, they seem to focus solely on the cities and their people.

Khatibi also seems to have misinterpreted the content of the Orientalist and the colonialist accounts of places and landscapes, when he argues that they were only concerned with the Oriental people. This misinterpretation led him to unconsciously recreating the same demeaning imageries that traditionally dominated Orientalist and colonial writings, aligning himself with Kamal Daoud, as his prose displays features of fully-fledged self-Orientalism. In other words, Khatibi's testimony seems to differ from what we can observe in his literary production. Although the description of Saharan cities in Khatibi's novel leaves space for a rejection of the colonial imprints on Algerian cities, his literary approach is not entirely consistent with his self-proclaimed complete rejection of the colonial legacy, as his prose never criticises the urban features inherited from this period until 1962 directly. As such, one could argue that Khatibi's approach to Algerian cities reveals an atheoretical perspective that allows for self-Orientalist approaches – especially the demeaning and the feminisation, as we shall see later – to emerge in the interstices of his narration.

Unlike Daoud's and Khatibi's writings, Mouloud Feraoun's novel manifested a reluctant self-Orientalist stance in the depiction of people in the previous chapter. This trend is even more acute and evident when it came to the description of cities and landscapes, as they rarely feature self-Orientalist traits. The only passage in *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) in which Amer describes Kabylia using pejorative undertones was when he said that "Kabylia is a corpse eaten

away to the cartilage. More than a corpse: a skeleton. We have to escape from” (Feraoun 221)<sup>54</sup>. In this passage, Amer not only is demeaning his place of origin, also he expresses an urgent need to leave it. This clearly aligns with Harun’s keenness to leave the city in the previously discussed examples. However, one example, in which Amer describes the atmosphere of Algeria in a laudatory language, demonstrates the exact opposite tendency: “[...] I was in a rush to leave, to go see it again, to possess it, to trample it with my feet, to fill my eyes with its different horizons, to breathe its hot air, to receive its burning sun, to swallow its white dust, to devour toothily his sweet fruits and chasing after his dark-haired daughters. So, I took the train to Marseilles. And the boat for Algiers” (138/139)<sup>55</sup>. The passage also shows his eagerness to go back to his country unlike the demeaning passage in which he urges his people to flee from Kabylia.

In other occurrences, Amer affirms his attachment to his country and articulates his complimentary portrayal of the view of Algiers from the sea, whilst at the same time denying the French people’s right to claim that they belong in his country:

And I laughed inwardly at these sons and daughters of colonists who, finishing their vacations, imagined that they would return home and show off in their luxury cabins, in the salons or on the reserved deck. I said to myself: ‘You are mistaken, ladies and gentlemen, you are not going to your home!’. When I saw the high peaks of Djurdjura looming in the morning mist, then Alger-la-Blanche rising like a ‘marble quarry’, all the fibers of my being quivered with joy and I said to myself: ‘My country is beautiful’, and I remembered that when I left for France, just before landing in Marseilles, I found myself next to an Algerian-Frenchman who apparently was in a hurry to see France again.

- Hein, Christiane said to his companion, we are going to tread ‘the quiet land of France’!

---

<sup>54</sup> “[l]a Kabylie est un cadavre rongé jusqu’au cartilage. Plus qu’un cadavre: un squelette. Il faut bien que nous la fuyions” (Feraoun 221).

<sup>55</sup> “j’ai eu la 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 pleines dents ses fruits sucrés, courir après ses filles brunes, et j’ai pris le train pour Marseille. Et le bateau pour Alger” (138/139).

- 'You are lucky, I thought full of envy, and you're right: France is yours, go ahead' (139)<sup>56</sup>.

Amer recreates the conventional way of representing Algiers because "as a part of its own tradition of representation, Algiers was always seen from a distance, from the perspective of a naval invader" (Zarobell 11). Yet, the use of this imagery seems to challenge the traditional way in which Algiers used to be presented. In the previous passage, Amer highlights the vivacity of Algeria by showing his eagerness to breathe its hot air, enjoy its weather, eat its fruits, and chase its brown girls, while describing the other country as: "the quiet land of France". He even reverses the conventional demeaning of Algiers compared to French cities by saying: "I sounded replying to them as I cheerfully climbed onto the bridge, Algiers is more beautiful than Marseille" (139)<sup>57</sup>.

Such portrayals, in which Amer shows a direct confrontation of the colonial tropes validates further the perspective of a form of reluctant self-Orientalism, which is also evident in Feraoun's other writings. One such example is when he calls his French-Algerian colleagues to stop accusing Algerians of being responsible for the violence that broke out during the war:

I could say the same thing to Camus and Roblès. I have great admiration for one and fraternal affection for the other, but they are wrong to address us [...]. They are wrong to speak [...]. It is a hundred times better that they remain silent. After all, this country is called Algeria and its inhabitants are Algerians. [...] Are you Algerians my friends? Your

---

<sup>56</sup> Et je riais intérieurement de ces fils et filles de colons qui, achevant leurs vacances se figuraient qu'ils rentreraient chez eux et faisaient les farauds dans leurs cabines de luxe, dans les salons ou sur le pont réservé. Je me disais: « Vous vous trompez, Messieurs-dames, vous n'allez pas chez vous! ». Lorsque j'ai vu se profiler dans la brume matinale, les hautes cimes de Djurdjura, puis surgir Alger-la-Blanche comme une « carrière de marbre », toutes les fibres de mon être ont frémi de joie et je me suis dit: « Il est beau mon pays », et je me suis souvenu qu'à mon départ en France, juste avant de débarquer à Marseille, je me trouvais à côté d'un Algérien-français qui apparemment avait la hâte de revoir la France.

- Hein, Christiane disait il à sa compagne, nous allons fouler « la douce terre de France »!
- « Vous avez de la chance, ai-je pensé plein d'envie, et vous avez raison: la France est bien à vous, allez-y » (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 139).

<sup>57</sup> "ai-je eu l'air de leur répliquer en montant allègrement sur le pont, Alger est plus belle que Marseille" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 139).



place is next to those who struggle. Tell the French that the country is not theirs, that they have seized it by force and intend to stay here by force (Feraoun, *Journal* 76)<sup>58</sup>.

The passage also highlights Feraoun's attachment to his country as he maintains the fact that Algeria belongs to Algerians in the end, which shows his rejection to the colonial motto 'French Algeria' supported even by his comrades Albert Camus and Emmanuel Roblès. This rejection and resistance to the colonial discourse meant that he could not completely embrace self-Orientalism, and thus his writing is distinguished as reluctant self-Orientalist prose.

In the tradition of Orientalist writings, the Orient was considered as a space of freedom from the legal, moral, and even political constraints of European society, since Orientalist writings "projected onto the Orient [...] fantasies of the West concerning supposed moral degeneracy" (McLeod 46). Colonial literature exemplifies this pattern in the same way that it is conceptualised in the Orientalist discourse. For instance, Joseph Conrad highlighted this aspect in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) through the transformation of Kurtz's behaviour when he freed his savagery and cruelty in the Congolese jungles given the absence of behavioural codes that used to control him when in Europe. Feraoun's novel displays a contradicting opinion in its depiction of Algeria and France.

Feraoun highlights the way Algerians see France in a conversation between Amer and Da Dahmane, who has spent his youth working in France:

Listen, son, the secret to success in France is nerve. When I get up in the morning, before taking my junk, I say to myself: "Do you want to sell? Get rid of shame. You are no longer in Kabylia. No more principles".

- You steal, Da Dahmane!

---

<sup>58</sup> Je pourrais dire la même chose à Camus et à Roblès. J'ai pour l'un une grande admiration et pour l'autre affection fraternelle mais ils ont tort de s'adresser à nous [...]. Ils ont tort de parler [...]. Il vaut cent fois mieux qu'ils se taisent. Car enfin, ce pays s'appelle Algérie et ses habitants des Algériens. [...] Êtes-vous Algériens mes amis? Votre place est à côté de ceux qui luttent. Dites aux Français que le pays n'est pas à eux, qu'ils s'en sont emparés par la force et entendent y demeurer par la force (Feraoun, *Journal* 76).

- Ah! Yes son. You have to steal, lie, whine, make people feel pity for you. Shame? You shouldn't have it.

- They jostle you, they insult you... "Dirty Bicot! »

- This is good! It allows you to sell. Susceptibility, you keep it for the return<sup>59</sup> (222).

This passage shows that France is considered as a place where Algerians can forget about their values and manners or the feeling of shame that controlled them in their home country, which can be understood from Da Dahmane's (Dā Daḥmān) advice to Amer: "Do you want to sell? Get rid of shame. You are no longer in Kabylia. No more principles". However, he specifies the necessity of values to a place or region, in this case his own country, when he says "Susceptibility, keep it for the return". This example contradicts the colonial rhetoric that designates the Orient as a place of free will, as Feraoun reverses this pattern, showing France as a place of freedom where the Kabyles can free themselves from values and morals that rule them back home. He affirms this idea in the following passage, where Da Dahmane explains that France is a place where they find their freedom: "Moreover, there are several people from Ighil-Nezman who no longer want to return to the country. But who knows what they are doing in France! They are free after all. The misfortune is that Paris behaves with them, exactly like the Seine" (225)<sup>60</sup>.

---

<sup>59</sup> Ecoute, fils, le secret de la réussite en France, c'est le culot. Moi quand je me lève le matin, avant de prendre ma camelote, je me dis: « Tu veux vendre? Débarrasse-toi de la honte. Tu n'es plus en Kabylie. Plus de principes ».

- Tu voles, Da Dahmane!

- Ah! Oui fiston. Il faut voler, mentir, pleurnicher, apitoyer. La honte, te dis-je? Rien, rien.

- On te bouscule, on t'insulte... « Sale Bicot! »

- Bon! ça te permet de vendre. La susceptibilité, tu la gardes pour le retour (*Les Chemins* 222).

<sup>60</sup> "D'ailleurs, il y en a plusieurs d'Ighil-Nezman qui ne veulent plus revenir au pays. Mais allez savoir ce qu'ils font en France! Ils sont libres après tout. Le malheur, c'est que Paris se comporte avec eux, exactement comme la Seine" (225).

All things considered, Feraoun's novel appears to be displaying a resistive stance that not only rejects and challenges the stereotypes associated with Algeria as a place of debasement and immorality, but also reverses this appraisal and applies it to France. What emerges from the analysis of the representation of Algerian places and cities in Algerian literature is that Daoud's and Khatibi's writings recreate major traits of the colonial and Orientalist discourses and give greater validity to the myth of debased Algeria. This, paradoxically, distinguishes them from Feraoun whose prose appears again as a reluctant self-Orientalist with less inclination to reproduce the debasing stereotypes – even if he was writing in the colonial era. He rather presents an antithesis to the colonial tradition by reversing the demeaning traits and applying them to the West. The portrayal of places in the Orientalist and the colonialist discourses was not limited to the demeaning rhetoric: it also consisted of incarnating the so-called Oriental landscapes and cities in the picture of a female and recurrently contrasting it with the masculinity of the West, which is the aspect that will be further discussed in the following section.

## **2. Feminisation and eroticisation of Algerian cities**

The conventional feminisation of the Orient was not limited to Oriental people: it also applied to the description of landscapes and places. Pondering on this idea, Billie Melman explains that “[...] the geography of the Middle East in particular was subjected to the erotic fantasies of the Westerners. [...] Oriental landscapes were eroticised and feminised, and elevated to symbols of fertility” (217). The Orient and the Occident were considered as the two opposing sides of the World; the Occident or more specifically Europe “is often portrayed as rule-dominated, male, rational, and increasingly mechanistic” (Dunwoodie 75), while the “other”, more precisely the so-called ‘Orient’, is depicted “as natural, sensual, female, and licentious” (Dunwoodie 75). The repetition of this juxtaposition led to a stereotypical

representation of the Orient and more precisely the colonised areas, as David Spurr highlights: “[the] allegorization of the colonized nations in terms of the female figure (bodily, rhetorical) has been a cliché of colonial history” (171).

In the case of French Orientalism, the cliché of feminising the Orient has dominated French writings for it was “a figuration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century social and political crises in sexual language and rhetoric” (Lowe, *The Orient* 45). Tensions around French identity were “all figured in the concerns with the centrality and coherence of masculine individualism over and against a feminine Other” (Lowe, *The Orient* 45). The portrayal of the land or country as female has been a tradition in Arabic literature as well, but commonly paralleled with the reflection of the metaphor of the country as a mother or wife, which differs from the Orientalist feminisation that aims to sexualise, eroticise, and weaken the Orient in front of the masculinised West as in French Orientalism, in particular, the conventional cultural Other “becomes the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s sexual Other” (Lowe, *The Orient* 45).

There is a broad scholarly agreement that the feminisation of the Orient in the colonial context is directly linked to the will to establish power on the colonised. In the case of Algeria, for example, Zeynep Çelik believes that the feminisation worked in favour of colonialism, as “the gendering of Algerian society and culture became blatantly referential to power structure” (22). Interestingly, France was attributed the masculine figure despite the traditional female representation of the country, in an attempt to emphasise the difference with the colonised feminised figure. This is because the “demarcation of identity and difference functioned to establish the authority of the colonizer” (Fletcher 194). The constant gendered opposition between the coloniser and the colonised thus helped to “naturaliz[e] the colonial relationship” (Fletcher 209). In other words, the gendered opposition between the coloniser and the colonised naturalised colonialism as a “union of Orient and Occident” (Connolly 73). Even when Algeria

was about to claim its independence, it was presented as a “semi-adult, a wife, someone with whom a man cohabits, someone potentially capable of evicting you from your home” (Connolly 54). That is, Algeria was still represented as feminine, even when it proved the defeat of the masculinised colonial France.

Turning our attention to Algerian postcolonial literature shows a recurrence of the feminising trend in representations of Algerian cities, without colonial implications though. Following the examples of Kamal Daoud’s novel recreating the demeaning tendency in portraying Algerian cities, the present section shows that the feminisation is another central tenet in Harun’s descriptions of places, mainly when describing Algiers and Oran. For instance, in his account of Oran, Harun says: “People treat the city like an old harlot, they insult it, they abuse it, they fling garbage in its face, they never stop comparing it to the pure, wholesome little town it used to be in old days, but they can’t leave it, because it’s the only possible escape to the sea and the farthest you can get from the desert” (Daoud 22)<sup>61</sup>. In this passage, where Harun compares Oran to a “old harlot”, he does not emphasise the bodily allegory of the harlot, but shows that this city is treated in the same way as a prostitute, and highlights the eagerness of its people to depart from this city. Harun’s projection of Oran as a prostitute reflects the same feminising stance found in French colonial writings in which the image of Algeria was gendered and eroticised. Such as Jean Lorrain’s figuration of Algeria like “a learned and dangerous mistress” (47)<sup>62</sup> fostering an “enveloping climate of caress and torpor” (47)<sup>63</sup>.

---

<sup>61</sup> “La ville est un butin, les gens la considèrent comme une vieille catin, on l’insulte, on la maltraite, on lui jette des ordures à la gueule et on la compare sans cesse à la bourgade saine et pure qu’elle était autrefois, mais on ne peut plus la quitter, car c’est la seule issue vers la mer et l’endroit le plus éloigné du désert” (Daoud 36).

<sup>62</sup> “une maîtresse savante et dangereuse” (47).

<sup>63</sup> “climat enveloppant de caresse et de torpeur” (47).

In another passage, Harun describes the same city using a more acutely eroticising rhetoric: “This is a city with its legs spread open toward the sea” (12)<sup>64</sup>. In doing so, Harun develops a comparison of the city with a woman in an erotic situation in detail when he says:

Go and visit that garden. I love the place, but sometimes when I’m there I detect the scent of a woman’s sex, a giant, worn-out one. Which goes a little way toward confirming my obscene vision: This city faces the sea with its legs apart, its thighs spread, from the bay to the high ground where that luxurious, fragrant garden is. It was conceived—or should I say *inseminated*, ha, ha! —by a general, General Létang, in 1847 (13)<sup>65</sup>.

This passage shows that Harun’s emphasis on feminising and eroticising Oran is juxtaposed with the masculinisation of the West. He portrays the city in an erotic position and turned towards the sea, that is in the same direction of Europe or rather the “masculine West”. He adds another feminising hint when he prefers using the word “*inseminated*” to characterise the relationship between the masculine General Létang and the feminised city and garden. In other words, the passages re-establish the stereotypical erotic relation between the coloniser and the colonised landscapes that marked the colonial writings, as previously explained.

These examples, analysed together, show that Kamel Daoud’s prose exemplifies on many occasions the reappropriation of the feminising approach of Algerian cities in the same way it was conceptualised in the colonial discourse. This is highlighted by the fact that he recreates the same rhetorical patterns of the colonial feminisation including the eroticised image of the city as a prostitute, and the juxtaposition of the feminisation of Algerian cities with the masculinisation of the West. Indeed, based on the analysed examples in both sections of this chapter, Kamel Daoud’s novel seems to confirm itself as fully-fledged self-Orientalist prose,

---

<sup>64</sup> “C’est une ville qui a les jambes écartées en direction de la mer” (Daoud 24).

<sup>65</sup> Va dans ce jardin. J’aime l’endroit, mais parfois j’y devine les effluves d’un sexe de femme, géant et épuisé. Cela confirme un peu ma vision lubrique, cette ville a les jambes ouvertes vers la mer, les cuisses écartées, depuis la baie jusqu’à ses hauteurs, là où se trouve ce jardin exubérant et odorant. C’est un général – général Létang – qui l’a conçu en 1847. Moi, je dirais qui l’a *fécondé*, ha, ha! (25).

as it perpetuates the main aspects of the colonial description of cities and landscapes: the demeaning and the feminisation.

The tendency to feminise and eroticise is also present in Khatibi's *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (2016). One particular example is the protagonist Joseph's description of Bou Saada: "She flirted with painters and writers, Karl Marx passed by this city, he cut some of his beard here, but she did not beautify herself for him as she did with André Gide, she became a shelter for the honest prostitutes, and opened her thighs to the bastards, then she became miserable, and send away whom she did not want, this is the ginger city [...]" (Khatibi 89)<sup>66</sup>. The passage recreates the conflation of the feminised Orient with the masculinised West, by depicting Bou Saada as a woman who seduces Western male artists or authors. Moreover, Khatibi is using images that convey an erotic feminised portrayal such as "she flirted with", "beautify herself", "opened her thighs", which imply the symbolism of a mistress or a prostitute. Joseph's description of Bou Saada is reminiscent of the erotically charged language that characterises some of the colonial and Orientalist writings, which portray the colonies or the so-called 'Orient' as an erotic woman. This passage provides another example that demonstrates the novel's self-Orientalist discourse on cities and landscapes, which is aligned with Kamel Daoud's novel as fully-fledged self-Orientalist literature, especially as the novel echoes in the description of Saharan cities demeaning and gendering stereotypes.

With regard to Feraoun's relationship with feminisation, it can be said that the stance of feminising Algeria is almost absent in *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957). Instead, Feraoun establishes a reversed relationship that is based on masculinising Algiers and feminising Paris when describing the two cities. In the previously mentioned examples, Amer, the protagonist,

---

<sup>66</sup> غازلت رسّامين وكتّابا، مرّ بها كارل ماركس، حلق فيا بعض لحيته، لكنها لم تتبرّج له كما فعلت مع أندري جيد، وصارت حصنا للعاهرات الشريقات وفتحت رجليها لقرّادين، ثم تحالفت مع البؤس لتطرد من لا يعجبها ولا تعجبها، هذه هي المدينة الصهباء (89)

uses opposed adjectives to describe these cities. Whilst Amer refers to France as “the quiet land of France” (139)<sup>67</sup>, he describes Algeria using contrasting expressions such as “its hot air” (138)<sup>68</sup>, “its burning sun”<sup>69</sup>, “the high peaks of Djurdjura”<sup>70</sup>, “marble quarry” (139)<sup>71</sup>. The adjectives used to describe Algeria as ‘burning, high peaks, marble quarry’ convey greatness, stiffness and strength, all of which are traditionally associated with masculinity; on the other hand, the adjective ‘quiet’ is commonly associated with femininity. The choice of adjectives used to describe both countries shows Feraoun’s undermining of the conventional Orientalist and colonialist gender stereotyping of the Orient and the West. Not only is he trying to reject the traditional representation of Algeria in this example, but he is also applying the feminising representation to the West, which is traditionally associated with masculinity compared to the so-called feminine Orient. In addition to his application of the demeaning tendency to the West—as explained in the previous section of this chapter— reversing the feminisation in his portrayal serves as another example of Feraoun’s reluctant self-Orientalist stance that distinguishes him from the other post-independence writers.

To enlarge the scope of this analysis, this chapter also dwells upon female Algerian writing that exemplifies gendered representations of Algerian cities. In *La Voyeuse interdite* (1991), Nina Bouraoui provides an example that bears the same feminising tropes that marked Daoud’s and Khatibi’s portrayals of Algerian cities. The novel revolves around the forced enclosure of young Fekria by her oppressive family during the era of an ultra-conservative regime in post-independence Algeria. In the novel, Fekria embodies the victim of an unwanted marriage

---

<sup>67</sup> “la douce terre de France” (139).

<sup>68</sup> “son air chaud” (138).

<sup>69</sup> “son soleil brûlant”.

<sup>70</sup> “les hautes cimes de Djurdjura” (139).

<sup>71</sup> “carrière de marbre” (139).



plotted by her parents. The only escape from her family's repression is the use of her imagination, an ability she developed from moments spying on her city from the bedroom's window. On one of these occurrences, Fekria describes the city of Algiers in a detailed passage, saying: "my city is an old sleeping seductress with a slow breath. Her dream is audible but winded, she slumbers on the edge of the bed of her first loves" (Bouraoui 68)<sup>72</sup>. In the following page, she adds "[...] writers, poets, painters, sculptors, fell asleep in the hollow of her belly: the famous bay of Algiers. [...] she was always reborning, like a delicious and enchanting virgin in the midst of all her lovers who greeted her" (69)<sup>73</sup>. The above-mentioned passages show Fekria's perpetuation of the allegory of Algiers as a female figure with the emphasis on the rhetoric of eroticisation in her portrayal by referring to the city as a "seductress" and "delicious vergin".

This allegorisation has elicited controversial criticism. Anna Kemp, for example, refers to this passage as "one example of the text's uncritical appropriation of Orientalist tropes" (243), depicting Algiers as "a one-time adored mistress, beloved of French artists and writers, who is latterly raped by Algerian fundamentalist men" (243). She highlights the act of recycling the colonial stereotypes, stating that "[s]uch [a] description repeats a batch of colonial clichés in its feminization and eroticization of the colonized, [and] its depiction of the colonizing power as ardent lover" (243). Siobhan McIvanney and Gillian Ni Cheallaigh, for their part, criticise Kemp's comment, maintaining that, despite the picture of the seducer in the text, Algiers is also depicted as a city that "appeals to individuals of both sexes, and who is described less as a dependent lover or mistress, and more as the insurgent inspiration for an abundance of

---

<sup>72</sup> "[m]a ville est une vieille séductrice endormie, le souffle lent, le rêve audible mais poussif, elle sommeille au bord du lit de ses premières amours" (Bouraoui 68).

<sup>73</sup> "écrivains, poètes, peintres, sculpteurs, s'endormaient dans le creux de son ventre: la fameuse baie d'Alger. [...] et toujours elle renaissait, semblable à une vierge délicieuse et enchanteresse au milieu de tous ses amants qui la saluaient" (69).

intellectual and artistic projects” (186). The two critics support this argument with Fekria’s description in Bouraoui’s text : “Insubordinate, generous, great lover, drunk with life and happiness, a fulfilled and affectionate lover. She was the emblem of grace in dinners, the interest of the worldly press, the enthusiasm of men, women and children... She was the cradle of darings, joy and glory” (68/69)<sup>74</sup>.

Indeed, although Bouraoui’s erotically charged passage conforms to Kemp’s reading, other passages in the novel give room to the ambivalence suggested by McIvanney and Ni Cheallaigh. This becomes especially evident in the following passage where Algiers is portrayed as a mother. Indeed, Fekria’s description of Algiers differs in one aspect from the description of previously mentioned writers such as Daoud and Khatibi, when she includes the symbolism of the mother in her feminisation: “Her belly, is a refuge of inspired people, a catacomb open to the public. Cosmos of the old world that bears many children and feeds many hungry people. [...] The uneducated children play with the last vestiges of the past in the pupil of her ringed eyes, between two tired thighs, which are still open to bless the rotten fruits of the dying country” (Bouraoui 70)<sup>75</sup>. Even though Fekria emphasises the allegory of a female body while describing Algiers, she incarnates her city in the picture of a mother, which is traditionally displayed in Arabic literature. This passage highlights the difference between the portrayals of the previously mentioned male authors and the description of a female author,

---

<sup>74</sup> “Insoumise, généreuse, grande amoureuse, ivre de vie et de bonheur, amante comblée et affectueuse, elle fut au centre des dîners fermés l’emblème de la grâce, l’intérêt de la presse mondaine, l’enthousiasme des hommes, des femmes et des enfants... elle fut le berceau des audaces, de la joie et de la gloire” (68/69).

<sup>75</sup> “Son ventre refuge des inspirés, catacombe ouverte au public, cosmos du vieux monde, porte trop d’enfants, nourrit trop d’affamés. [...] Les enfants incultes jouent avec les derniers vestiges du passé dans le noir de ses yeux cernés, entre deux cuisses fatiguées, qui s’écartent encore pour bénir les fruits pourris de la patrie mourante” (Bouraoui 70).

which recalls Reina Lewis's analysis (1996) highlighting the importance of gender in the heterogeneity of the Orientalist discourse<sup>76</sup>.

This is significant in this pretext, as Bouraoui's portrayal of Algiers differs slightly from her male counterparts' representations. She gets her protagonist to feminise and eroticise her city in the same way the male writers do, yet she portrays the city as a mother hand in hand with the feminising and eroticising position, which is absent in the male writers' representations. The combination of the feminising position with the allegory of the mother generates ambivalence in the description of Algiers which made the feminising position of the city bear a reduced stereotypical echoing. Thus, it can be concluded that Bouraoui's description of cities differs from the full re-creation of the stereotypes and can be considered as a more ambivalent self-Orientalist stance, which Bouraoui shares with her compatriot Ahlam Mosteghanemi despite their use of a different language.

*Memory in the Flesh* (1993) is the first Algerian novel written in Arabic by Algerian female author Ahlam Mosteghanemi<sup>77</sup>. Through the perspective of Khaled (Khālid), a painter and writer, we learn about his passionate affair with Hayat (Ḥayāt), the daughter of Si Taher (Sī alṭṭāhr), one of the martyrs who served with Khaled during the Algerian Revolution. Through flashbacks and fast forwards in Khaled's narration, Mosteghanemi brings to the reader's attention not only the ravages of colonialism but also the sense of disappointment that prevailed in post-independence Algeria regarding the deviation or the disappearance of the revolutionary ideals. In doing so, Mosteghanemi sets the novel in three main locations: Paris, Tunis, and Constantine, which can be taken as an attempt to "incorporate[...] the anxiety of her personal

---

<sup>76</sup> She explains the way female Orientalist writers or artists displayed portrayals of the Orient that differ and sometimes contradict the representations provided by male Orientalist authors or artists (Lowe, *Critical* 149).

<sup>77</sup> Ahlam Mosteghanemi won Nadjib Mahfouz's Medal for Literature in 1998 in Cairo for this novel.

dislocation into a devoted work” (Gouffi et al 556), as the daughter of an exiled Algerian fighter and Algerian born in Tunis.

Although various critics have tackled the symbolism of Constantine in the novel – such as Tanja Stampfl who discussed the fusion of Constantine with the character of Hayat and Mohammed Gouffi (Muḥammad ghwfy) and Fatiha Kaïd Berraha (Qāyid bālṛāḥh) who analysed Khaled’s sense of “unhomeliness” in the same city – no sufficient attention has been paid to the self-Orientalist implication of the gendering trope in Mosteghanemi’s feminisation of Constantine. Especially since the latter, as I shall outline, is the only city that is credited with lengthy and feminised portrayals. Therefore, this section is devoted to discussing the self-Orientalist take in the feminised portrayal of Constantine in the novel compared to the feminisation of cities in the previously discussed novels.

Constantine takes the lion’s share of interest in the novel compared to Tunis and Paris. This is because it represents one of the main settings of events, and also because it is repeatedly fused with the image of Khaled’s lover Hayat. During their first meeting in Khaled’s painting exhibition in Paris, Khaled calls her Constantine even though he was the one who registered her official name at her birth, following Si Taher’s orders. Khaled compares Hayat to Constantine on many occasions, as “[n]ot only does Hayat make Khaled overlook his French girlfriend Catherine, but for most part, she provokes in him feelings about Constantine, he did not feel for a long time” (Gouffi et al 560). On one occasion, he compares Hayat to his city saying: “Here is Constantine. With cold hands and feet, with feverish lips, with crazy manners. Here she is. How much you look like her today too. If you knew !” (Mosteghanemi 13)<sup>78</sup>. He

---

<sup>78</sup> هذه ذي قسنطينة... باردة الأطراف الأقدام، محمومة الشفاه، مجنونة الأطوار. هاهي ذي...كم تشبهينها اليوم ايضا لو تدرين (13)

adds in another passage: “I was witnessing your sudden change, taking on day after day the features of Constantine and wearing its terrains [...]” (141)<sup>79</sup>.

The course of events shows that Khaled compares Hayat to Constantine not only out of love but also because they share the same negative characteristics. Indeed, in the same way “the love between Khaled and Hayat proves treacherous so does the Algerian city of Constantine emerge. No longer does it live in the beautiful signs like the mother’s bangle or the bridges crossing the city alone, but in corruption, poverty, and jail” (Stampfl 131). In other words, as a way to symbolise the corrupted neocolonialist era in Constantine or in Algeria generally, Mosteghanemi ends the novel with Hayat’s marriage with a corrupt military official as she breaks up once and for all with Khaled. In doing so, Mosteghanemi includes, through the fate of Hayat, “an allegory about the tortured fate of Algeria and perhaps the whole Arab world in its struggle for freedom. When the daughter of an honored revolutionary winds up in a marriage of convenience with a shallow young representative of the corrupt nouveau riche, it makes for a strong indictment” (Jensen). In this context, Khaled evokes another association of Hayat with the city, embodying her marriage to the military official in a picture of “[a] city that was forcibly conquered [in that day] by the military, like any Arab city” (Mosteghanemi 365)<sup>80</sup>.

Khaled’s manifestation of Constantine in Hayat’s description is followed by other passages in which the image of his lover is absent and substituted by Constantine itself including both rhetorical devices, that is the feminisation and the eroticisation. He describes the process of painting Constantine as a way of satisfying her desire saying:

I wanted to satisfy Constantine stone after stone, bridge after bridge, quarter after quarter, the way a lover satisfies the body of a woman who is not his own anymore. I crossed it back and forth with my brushes as if I am crossing it with my lips. I kiss its stones, its

---

79

كنت أشهد تغيرك المفاجئ، وأنت تأخذين يوماً بعد يوم ملامح قسنطينة، تلبسين تضاريسها (141)

80

مدينة فتحت اليوم عنوة بأقدام العسكر، ككل مدينة عربية (365)

trees, and its valleys. I distribute my love on its surface with colorful kisses. I sprinkle her with longing, madness, and love until I sweat (191)<sup>81</sup>.

The allegory of Constantine as a desired woman whom Khaled pleases by painting her presents an example that combines feminisation and eroticisation and repeats a clichéd method in representing Oriental cities. It is also reminiscent of Daoud, and Khatibi's depiction of Algerian cities when they evoke erotic details in the feminisation of the cities they described.

Yet, Mosteghanemi shows more implications of the feminising stance prevailing in her reference to Constantine, which makes her stance more reminiscent of Bouraoui's account. This is because, in addition to picturing Constantine in Hayat's description and in the image of the desired woman, Khaled adds another lyrical portrayal in which Constantine is projected as a mother. We learn from his narration that he joined his comrade fighters just after the death of his mother, as "the loss of the mother result[ed] in an identification of the homeland with motherhood" (Stample 135). He expresses this sentiment by saying: "[t]he revolution was entering its second year and I was in my third month as an orphan. I do not remember exactly when the country took over the character of motherhood and gave me an unexpected strange affection and a compulsive sense of belonging" (Mosteghanemi 27)<sup>82</sup>.

Khaled seeks Constantine's motherly sympathy on another occasion where he was obliged to travel back to this place and attend Hayat's wedding to the corrupted military official: "Constantine, how are you doing *Emima ... wachek*<sup>83</sup>? Open your doors and embrace me, painful is my alienation [in Paris], painful is my return. Cold is your airport that I no longer

---

<sup>81</sup> كنت أريد أن أرضي قسنطينة حجراً .. حجراً، جسراً..جسراً..جياً، كما يرضي عاشق جسد امرأة لم تعد له. كنت أعبّر ها ذهاباً وإياباً بفرشاتي، وكأني أعبّر ها بشفاهي. أقبل ترابها بشفاهي وأحجارها وأشجارها ووديانها. أوزع عشقي على مساحتها قبلا ملونة. أرشها بها شوقاً وحنوناً وحباً حتى العرق (191)

<sup>82</sup> كانت الثورة تدخل عامها الثاني، ويتمي دخل شهره الثالث، ولم أعد أذكر بالتّحديد، في أي لحظة بالذات أخذ الوطن ملامح الأمومة، وأعطاني مالم أتوقّعه من الحنان الغامض، والإنتماء المتطرف له (27)

<sup>83</sup> 'Emima ... wachek', these two words belong to the Constantinian dialect which mean respectively, Mother ...how are you?

remember, cold is your mountainous night which no longer remembers me. Cover me, you lady of warmth and cold together. Postpone a bit your cold, postpone a bit my disappointment” (284/285)<sup>84</sup>. This passage highlights how Khaled parallels of Constantine with motherhood when asking for its shelter and love in order to overcome the dismay he feels upon hearing about his lover’s marriage, and vividly expresses Khaled’s intimate feelings toward Constantine through the use of the Constantinian dialect when addressing Constantine as a mother saying ‘*Emima... wachek?*’

These two examples, taken together, show that the feminisation of Constantine in Mosteghanemi’s novel bears different implications, as it is figured in the image of Hayat, in the image of the desired woman, and as a mother. Feminising Constantine in the portrayal of Hayat and the desired woman conforms to the colonial and the Orientalist tradition, which also appeared in Daoud and Khatibi’s gendering representations of Algerian cities, especially since it echoes erotocising stereotypes. Yet, like her female counterpart Nina Bouraoui, Mosteghanemi adds the allegorisation of the mother as a focal point in the feminisation of Constantine, thus showing that she is less inclined to present a monolithic discourse in the description of Algerian cities. In doing so, Mosteghanemi’s prose distinguishes itself as another ambivalent self-Orientalist work, together with Bouraoui’s novel. Last but not least, Bouraoui and Mosteghanemi’s position also affirms Reina Lewis’ opinion regarding the influence of gender in the type of literary representations offered by self-Orientalist novels.

---

<sup>84</sup> قسنطينة... كيف أنت يا أميمة... واشك؟ أشرعي بابك واحضنيني... موجعة تلك الغربية، موجعة هذه العودة... بارداً مطارك الذي لم أعد أذكره. بارداً ليلك الجبلي الذي لم يعد يذكرني. دتريني يا سيده الدقى والبرد معاً. أجلي بردك قليلاً... أجلي خيبيتي قليلاً (284/285)

### 3. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the self-Orientalist influence on the representation of Algerian cities and landscapes in Algerian postcolonial literature, focusing mainly on two major colonialist and Orientalist traits: debasement and feminisation. The extent of the re-creation of these two traits varied from one novel to another, generating three main literary approaches, in line with the framework applied throughout this thesis: fully-fledged self-Orientalism, ambivalent self-Orientalism, and reluctant self-Orientalism.

Through the analysis of the novels under study, I could examine the echoing of the debasing and the feminising tendencies of Algerian cities in Algerian postcolonial literature. The analysis of Kamal Daoud and Said Khatibi's prose showcased examples of the fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives. This appeared in Daoud's novel which, on many occasions, is reminiscent of the same rhetorical pattern of debasement and erotically charged descriptions that marked colonial and Orientalist writings. Khatibi's prose reflected a similar stance, as the novel's protagonist perpetuates the pejorative demeaning and feminised projection of Saharan cities, and this is done in spite of different trends that exist in colonial and Orientalist writings.

The chapter depicted other idiosyncrasies and paradoxes as well. One of them relates to Mouloud Feraoun who, in his representation of Algeria, contradicts the traditions of demeaning and feminising Algerian places, for he provides a portrayal that reverses this pattern and applies it to French cities in particular. Like his protagonist, Feraoun develops a resistive perspective to the colonial and Orientalist clichés in the representation of Algerian cities, which made him refrain from completely indulging in the self-Orientalist discourse and characterises his writings with a reluctant self-Orientalist stance.

The gendering representation of Algerian cities manifestes itself in female writings as well, especially in Nina Bouraoui's and Ahlem Mosteghanemi's novels. Although both Bouraoui's



and Mosteghanemi's texts recycle the erotically charged feminisation of the Algerian cities they portray, the stance of gendering in their prose is reduced with the imagery of the mother in the feminised allegories they use rather than portraying the eroticised picture traditionally upheld in colonial writings, which characterises their writings as ambivalent self-Orientalist literature. This has effectively illustrated Reina Lewis' argument about the difference existing between female and male writings, and the influence of authorial gender on the heterogeneity of literary discourse. This aspect also serves as an introduction to the discussion of gender in the following chapter.

## **Part Two: Representing Beliefs and Customs**

### **Chapter Three**

## **Gender and Self-Orientalism: Stereotyped Rendering of Women in Algerian Postcolonial Novels.**

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the emphasis on ‘othering’ the colonised generated subjective portrayals. Another area where this process was particularly evident was the depiction of the colonised or the so-called Oriental woman, especially as her inclusion in Orientalist and colonialist discourses became a fundamental constituent of the Western description of the so-called Orient. In this chapter, I analyse the survival of the Orientalist and colonialist traditional biased image of the Algerian woman in Algerian postcolonial literature, such as showing her only as a sexual object, passive or oppressed, which constitutes self-Orientalist perspectives. I also examine the heterogeneity of representations of Algerian women, in the novels of my corpus from different eras including portrayals by male and female Algerian writers. This allows this project to fully engage with the chronological turning points associated with the rendering of gender stereotypes that contributed to the creation of a self-Orientalist discourse.

This chapter is based on the analysis of two major colonial tropes of the stereotypical representation of Algerian women, which depict them as passive sexual objects on the one hand, and oppose their presumed inferiority to Western women’s superiority, on the other. The first part of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of examples, which emphasise the passivity and inactivity of Algerian woman and recall her marginalisation in essentialised representations, simultaneously, with examples that depict her as a sexual object. This is because, colonial writings, as I shall outline later, consisted of clichés that maintained a combination between the passivity and the sexuality of Algerian women. In the second part, I show the difference between the portrayal of European and Algerian female characters, and

examine whether the depicted representations in the novels understudy give validity to the myth of the inferior and passive Oriental woman as opposed to the superior European woman. This being said, I show how these aspects contribute to identifying the self-Orientalist discourse in three distinctive approaches based on the variation of their representations of Algerian women.

### **1. The Algerian woman as the ‘other’ in colonial and Orientalist discourses**

Colonial writings have sustained the re-creation of biased stereotypes about the colonised woman throughout the period of colonialism. In most cases, the colonial discourse has emphasised the image of the passive and oppressed woman, showing her as a submissive creature under the tyranny of the Arab man. Indeed, French colonialism considered Algerian women as the “oppressed of the oppressed” (Leonhardt 44/45). This portrayal has been vividly illustrated in Charles Richard’s<sup>85</sup> detailed depiction of Arab society during colonialism. About the Arab woman, he writes: “the woman, condemned to virtue with a padlock, sold like a pig in the market, esteeming herself what she is esteemed, that is to say nothing, and prostituting herself in the first bush with the first comer” (8)<sup>86</sup>. The passage showcases a batch of stereotypes that were assigned to the Algerian woman and used recurrently by colonialism to affect the structure of the Algerian family.

Fanon argues that French colonialism in Algeria used the myth of the Algerian woman’s weakness and oppression as a tool to facilitate the devastation of the family unit within the indigenous society. Thus, the colonial administration attempted to frame the Algerian man as fundamentally responsible for the unjust treatment of, and exercise of control and tyranny practised on, the Algerian woman. Fanon argues : “the occupier accumulates around the family

---

<sup>85</sup> Principal officer of the Arab Bureau.

<sup>86</sup> “[...] la femme, condamnée à la vertu au cadenas, vendue comme un porc au marché, s’estimant ce qu’on l’estime, c’est-à-dire rien, et se prostituant au premier buisson avec le premier venu” (8).

life of the Algerian a whole set of judgments, assessments, considerations, multiplies anecdotes and edifying examples, thus trying to lock the Algerian in a circle of guilt” (19)<sup>87</sup>. Simultaneously, the colonial administration propagated the image of the degraded and isolated Algerian woman, and positioned itself as the her defender and “describes the immense possibilities of the woman, unfortunately transformed by the Algerian man into an inert object, demonetised, even dehumanised” (Fanon 19)<sup>88</sup>. Fanon also explains that the emphasis on spreading this image of the Algerian woman was part of a political strategy used to gain the loyalty of the Algerian woman as an ally against the Algerian man, which would facilitate the imposition of power over Algerian society. Fanon argues : “In the colonialist program, it is to the woman that returns the historical mission to shake up the Algerian man. Converting women, winning them over to foreign values and snatching them from their status, is both to defeat men and to possess the practical, effective means of destroying Algerian culture” (20)<sup>89</sup>.

As a prominent feature in Orientalist representations as well, the portrayal of the Oriental woman was discussed by Edward Said who highlighted her image in Orientalist writings. He states that “women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all willing” (*Orientalism* 120). Said analysed Gustave Flaubert’s portrayals of the Oriental woman as the latter’s writings were prominent in the discussion of the representation of the Other, especially because he “produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman”, who “never spoke of herself, [who] never

---

<sup>87</sup> “[l]’occupant amasse autour de la vie familiale de l’Algérien tout un ensemble de jugements, d’appréciations, de considérants, multiplie les anecdotes et les exemples édifiants, tentant ainsi d’enfermer l’Algérien dans un cercle de culpabilité” (19).

<sup>88</sup> “on décrit les possibilités immenses de la femme, malheureusement transformée par l’homme algérien en objet inerte, démonétisé, voire déshumanisé” (Fanon 19).

<sup>89</sup> “Dans le programme colonialiste, c’est à la femme que revient la mission historique de bousculer l’homme algérien. Convertir la femme, la gagner aux valeurs étrangères, l’arracher à son statut, c’est à la fois conquérir un pouvoir réel sur l’homme et posséder les moyens pratiques, efficaces, de déstructurer la culture algérienne” (20).

represented her emotions, presence, or history” (*Orientalism* 15), while he was the one who “spoke for and represented her” (*Orientalism* 15). Flaubert’s representation of the Oriental woman provided a prototype that he recreated in his other novels and was adopted and perpetuated in most other Orientalist writings. This image also survived in Algerian novels that will be analysed in subsequent sections.

Indeed, these kinds of stereotypes spread about the Oriental woman through Orientalist and colonialist literary output helped to justify and allow her exploitation. This was particularly the case with regard to the claim about the Oriental woman’s inherent sexuality, which enabled her exploitation, as explained by Rana Kabbani:

They were there [in the Orient] an even more conspicuous commodity than their Western sisters. They were part of the goods of empire, the living rewards that white men could, if they wished to, reap. They were there to be used sexually, and if it could be suggested that they were inherently licentious, then they could be exploited with no qualms whatsoever (90).

Moreover, where Oriental women were not depicted as passive and responsive, they were shown as cruel and were associated with crime. According to Christine Détrez, this association with cruelty, in the case of Algeria, resulted from Algerian women’s resistance against the coloniser. She explains that most women mentioned in French official reports were “corpses, dismembered bodies, burned bodies in caves, a hand or a foot with jewelery [sic] to be taken. When women resist, they are described as barbarians violating French Orientalist demands that they remain passive [...]” (in Hosford et al 207).

The discussion of gender and the depiction of women in Orientalist discourse did not stop at this level where the critics focused only on the representation of Oriental women through the lens of male Western authors, which conforms to Said’s approach. Other postcolonial scholars tried to rectify the lack of attention given to gender in this field, as argued by Reina Louise who queried why “Said never questions women’s apparent absence as producers of

Orientalist discourse or as agents within colonial power” (18). Despite the fact that Said briefly showed how the Oriental woman was assigned to stereotypical representations in male Orientalist writings, he did not explore the females’ Orientalist depictions of the ‘other’, as all the works he analysed were male literary outputs. Since the Orient attracted numerous female European travellers, in Algeria for example, “the French conquest from 1830 allowed many women (especially British) to visit North Africa, for health or exotic reasons” (Sèbe 166)<sup>90</sup>. Eventually, this subject was tackled by subsequent scholarly studies by Billie Melman, Reina Louise and Lisa Lowe, among others.

These scholars attempted to fill the gaps in Said’s study of the Westerners’ representations of the so-called Orient, and they also presented insights that can be considered in the discussion of self-Orientalism in this chapter. At the outset, Billie Melman rejects Said’s assumption about the homogeneity of the Orientalist discourse. She shows that the examination of female Orientalist travel writers, which does not appear in Said’s analysis, displays a plurality of descriptions about the ‘other’. She exemplifies her position with portrayals of the Oriental woman by Western female travel writers or missionaries, saying that they “did not perceive the oriental woman as the absolutely alien, the ultimate ‘other’. Rather oriental women became the feminine West’s recognisable image in the mirror” (Melman 316). Reina Lewis studies the works of Orientalist female artists including Sophie de Bouteiller known as Henriette Brown (1829-1906), and argues that her study contradicts the traditional “cultural histories of imperialism that analyse Orientalist images of the women rather than representations by women” (Lewis 3). She argues that they demonstrate a great difference from representations of the Orient produced by male writers, as female authors produced images of the ‘other’ that were in most cases less demeaning than the males’ accounts. This is especially attributed to the

---

<sup>90</sup> “la conquête française à partir de 1830 permit à de nombreuses femmes (notamment britanniques) de visiter l’Afrique du nord, pour des raisons de santé ou d’exotisme [...]” (Sèbe 166).

observation that unlike most male travel writers, female travellers “were often more inclined to lead an exploration of themselves rather than foreign lands, the discovery of their own emotions were often more important to them than the desire to fill in the blanks of the maps” (Sèbe 170)<sup>91</sup>.

Lisa Lowe<sup>92</sup> in *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (1991), provides similar conclusions in her account about the representation of Oriental women. She shows that there are different accounts on the Oriental woman provided by Orientalist female writers such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose depiction of the Orient challenges the traditional prejudiced representation, especially when it comes to the role of Oriental women. Lowe shows that Montagu in *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1717-1718) not only gives a different account of the Orient, but also denounces the prejudiced images provided by her male counterparts<sup>93</sup>. Such conclusions constitute a central tenet in my discussion of the self-Orientalist discourse as this chapter will also highlight the difference in the female and the male authors’ representation of Algerian women.

Indeed, although many ambiguous topics about gender in the Orientalist discourse have been clarified, another side has not been tackled in postcolonial studies around this subject, notably the enduring influence of long-held stereotypes about Algerian woman on today’s Algerian literature. Therefore, I intend to examine Algerian authors’ rendering of the clichéd image of the Algerian woman. I will discuss the possible survival and re-creation of the stereotypical

---

<sup>91</sup> “étaient souvent plus enclines à conduire une exploration d’elles-mêmes plutôt que de terres étrangères, la découverte de leurs propres émotions étant souvent plus importante à leurs yeux que le désir de remplir le blanc des cartes” (Sèbe 170).

<sup>92</sup> Detailed analysis on the contributions of Billie Melman, Reina Lewis and Lisa Lowe can be found in the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>93</sup> Despite the fact that Turkey was not under British colonialism at that time, still Turkish women were considered as ‘other’ for Europeans, and Montagu denounced the biased portrayals about them in her writings.



image of the so-called Oriental woman or the colonised woman in Algerian literary writings, as “some exotic clichés seem more difficult to abandon” (Hosford et al 215).

## **2. The rebirth of stereotypes about the Algerian woman: uneven images of sexual objectification and passivity in representations of female characters in Algerian postcolonial literature**

In most Orientalist portrayals, the Orient was depicted as a place of “sexual promise [...] untiring sensuality, unlimited desire” (Said, *Orientalism* 111). To construct this portrayal, the Orientalist literary output placed the emphasis on the sensuality of the ‘other’ and the Oriental woman, in particular, was fantasised in different ways. For she was described even by epithets that were not used for her Western female counterpart as Kabbani explains: “[w]hat the narrator felt himself unable to say about European women, he could unabashedly say about the Eastern ones. They were there for his articulation of sex” (102). Despite the fact that European women were also depicted as compared to men at that time, it seemed as if “Eastern women were doubly inferior, being women and Easterners” (Kabbani 90). Gayatri Spivak laid out the same idea, arguing that the Eastern woman is doubly effaced, first by the patriarchal system in her society then by colonialism: “both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (41). This can also be read as a direct result of the influence of stereotypes created and recurrently used in Orientalist and colonial writings throughout the colonial period emphasising the colonised woman’s presumed uncontrolled sexuality, inferiority, submissiveness, and otherness compared to the Western woman.

In the case of the Algerian woman, these representations that sexually objectify her were spread through literature and through photographs and postcards from the 1890s. Julia Clancy-Smith explains that “[b]efore the probing, manipulative camera, Algerian women were

transformed into nudes whether robed or disrobed. The ideal spectator was the European male in Algeria or France, who was denied any contact with respectable Muslim women. Photographic images of these women were contrived to provide visually erotic access to the inaccessible” (157). Pondering on this aspect, in his book *Le Harem Colonial*, Malek Alloula (Mālik ‘llwĥ) collected postcards used by the French in Algeria, which include eroticised images of Algerian women. Alloula criticises the extensive eroticisation of Algeria in these postcards and shows “[...] how Algeria was pacified, eroticized, and appropriated, emulating in the realm of sexuality its sack by the colonizers” (Schick 347). Alloula explains the implicit impact of postcards on the creation and propagation of stereotypes, saying “The postcard is everywhere, covering all the colonial space, immediately available to the tourist, the soldier, the colonist. It is at once their poetry and their glory captured for the ages; it is also their pseudo knowledge of the colony. It produces stereotypes in the manner of great seabirds producing guano. It is the fertilizer of the colonial vision” (4).

Such images dominated colonial writings as well. Some French authors like Guy de Maupassant not only emphasised the passivity of the Algerian colonised woman, but also “mixed the stereotype of the passive woman with erotic phantasm” (Hosford et al 204), which is one of the clichéd representations that is discussed in Algerian writings in this chapter. The perpetuation of these stereotypes – which represented Algerian women as sexual objects and marginalised their role in Algerian society — led eventually to their integration as essential characteristics of Algerian women’s portrayals. These representations “[...] either visually or discursively, functioned as an inverted image or negative trope for confining the European settlers’ distinct cultural identity, while denying the political existence of the other” (Clancy-Smith 156). The constant repetition of these stereotypes during colonialism resulted in their reappearance even in writings of Algerian authors during the late colonial period or in the post-

independence era, in multiple strands including the fully-fledged, reluctant and ambivalent perpetuation of these tropes.

### **2.1. The reluctance against the clichéd image of the Algerian woman in *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957)**

Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) is a novel that was published during the late colonial era in Algeria. Feraoun's prose, as has been shown in the portrayal of people and landscapes in previous chapters, challenged many colonial and Orientalist tropes. The representation of the Algerian woman shows that Feraoun's text follows the same path and displays a reluctant stance. Even though he internalises some traditional images of Algerian women – which were widespread in his period – he releases some of his female characters from passive and objectified portrayals, as will be elaborated. The novel, which was published three years after the start of the Algerian revolution, involves many female characters as central elements in the plot depicting the social situation of Algerian women during the revolution. The representation of women, belonging to Muslim and Christian Kabyle minorities, illustrates Feraoun's approach to gender questions in late colonial Algeria, which reflects what the present thesis defines as reluctant self-Orientalism.

The main female character is Dehbia, a young Christian girl, who came with her mother Melha from Aït-Ouadhou to live in Ighil Nezman after the death of her step-father. She embodies a form of double subalternity as she is both objectified as a woman and alienated as a member of the Christian minority in Kabylia. Feraoun shows the humiliating way Dehbia is viewed in the village despite being presented in the novel as a beautiful and smart character. Feraoun on numerous occasions depicts how the young men in the village, Mokrane in particular, consider her as a mere sexual object: “[t]he little Christian whose beauty taunted him and shocked his soul as a fanatic Muslim... For him [Mokrane], she deserved to be raped

without mercy” (*Les Chemins* 61)<sup>94</sup>. Dehbia expresses this idea through her voice as well, which reflects her awareness of how others regard her in the village. She says “So it is like this, she repeated to herself until evening, the young people want me only to smear me? I am therefore made only for this? Oh! I hate them all. They are all as cowards as Mokrane” (74)<sup>95</sup>. Dehbia epitomises a form of objectification that is reminiscent of the literary strategies implemented by Orientalist writers, with the only caveat, as we shall see later, that she is more empowered through a literary voice of her own.

In the novel, we find another female character who is objectified although she is Muslim. Ouiza (Wyzh), Dehbia’s friend, is represented in as a daughter of the family of Ait-Hamrouche (Āyt Ḥamrūsh) and “who was beautiful and daring, who had a father and a mother: a rich family” (98)<sup>96</sup>. Yet, these criteria do not help her to gain agency. It is revealed that her engagement with Mokrane Ait-Slimane (Āyt Sulaymān) was in reality just a practical arrangement between two rich families. Moreover, Feraoun shows that Mokrane did not care about Ouiza as a wife or because he loved her, he married her merely to assert his masculinity, for according to him, his manhood is confirmed after he raped her while she was sleeping: “She only let out a little cry but could not free herself. He got up triumphantly to leave and addressed her in a superior tone: Daughter of Ahmed, you can cry. I am a man now!” (101/102)<sup>97</sup>. Their marriage did not last long as Ouiza was sent back to her parents’ house after he physically

---

<sup>94</sup> “[l]a petite chrétienne dont la beauté le narguait et choquait son âme de bon musulman fanatique...Pour lui [Mokrane], elle méritait d’être violée sans pitié” (*Les Chemins* 61).

<sup>95</sup> “[c]’est donc ainsi, se répétait-elle jusqu’au soir, les jeunes qui me désirent ne cherchent qu’à me salir? Je ne suis donc faite que pour cela ? Oh ! Je les déteste tous. Ils sont tous aussi lâches que Mokrane” (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 74).

<sup>96</sup> “qui était belle et audacieuse, qui avait père et mère: une famille riche” (98).

<sup>97</sup> “Elle ne poussa qu’un petit cri mais ne réussit pas à se délivrer. Il se leva triomphant pour sortir, lui dit d’un ton supérieur : Fille d’Ahmed, tu peux pleurer. Je suis un homme, moi!” (101/102).

abused her (104). The images that we have of Dehbia and Ouisa conform to demeaning caricatures in the way they reproduce Algerian women merely as sexually objectified subjects.

Such deprecating images were repeatedly used in Guy de Maupassant's texts. Maupassant was known for his sexual objectification of Algerian female characters in his literary output. In the short story *Allouma* (1889), Maupassant shows that the relationship between the French man Auballe and his Algerian mistress Allouma, was not based on love. Rather, he just considered her as an object to satisfy his desires, and he also generalised his opinion to all women of "this primitive continent:

I did not like her - no - we do not like girls from this primitive continent. The little blue flower of the northern countries never blooms between them and us, even between them and their natural males, the Arabs. They are too close to human animality, they have very rudimentary heart, too little refined sensibility to awaken in our souls the sentimental exaltation which is the poetry of love. Nothing intellectual, no enchantment of thought mingled with the sensual enchantment provoked in us by these charming and useless beings (1107)<sup>98</sup>.

Contrary to the silent and dehumanised Allouma in the above-mentioned quote and on other representations, both Dehbia and Ouiza are given voices in Feraoun's novel. Dehbia in particular, narrates the first part of the novel and most characters are presented from her perspective. We notice throughout the novel that she is given higher or at least equal authority as her male counterpart Amer, who narrates the second part of the novel<sup>99</sup>.

---

<sup>98</sup>Je ne l'aimais pas -non- on n'aime pas les filles de ce continent primitif. Entre elles et nous, même entre elles et leur 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 (1107).

<sup>99</sup> In this context, Zahia Smail Salhi compares Dehbia with Nedjma the heroine in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956), saying that "Feraoun's heroine is [the] more active character, who speaks for herself and participates in most of the events in the novel [sic]" (*Politics* 174).

Feraoun has included accounts of other female characters who confirm the fact that females are provided agency and active roles. For instance, Melha (Māliḥah), Dehbia's mother, in spite of her poverty and low social status, is depicted as an active non-submissive woman. In the following passage, Feraoun shows the way Melha revolted against the richest family in the village 'the Ait-Slimane', when their son Mokrane tried to approach Dehbia and kiss her. She revealed the scandalous behaviours of Mokrane and his father Saïd in front of all the citizens:

The next day, finding old Saïd alone at home, she [Melha] sent him to slouch near the large jar of water and went out insulting him and shouting loudly:

-Old monkey! Dirty man! You do not know the Ait-Larbi family? Come and see ô believers, a disgrace! Shame on the Ait-Slimane, a dirty family!

Saïd was shaking with fury and searching for his stick; his wife, who was not far away, ran up, trembling like her husband.

-Melha, curse the demon! He is the one making you talk. Melha, my daughter, do not shout...enemies [the neighbours]...calm down...

[...] The distraught old woman rushed home yelping and the whole audience burst out laughing. Melha laughed like the others and explained to them with forceful gestures that the venerable Vava Saïd had tried to caress her. She made such a grotesque picture of the scene that the young people blushed and began to giggle with shame and joy (Feraon, *Les Chemins* 45/46)<sup>100</sup>.

Melha embodies more than a strong and active character as she rejects the status of the passive woman and challenges patriarchal authority. She confronts the social power of the Ait-Slimane to protect her daughter, despite the fact that she has no allies in the village, unlike the family

---

<sup>100</sup> Le lendemain, en effet trouvant le vieux Saïd seul à la maison, elle [Melha] l'envoya s'affaler près de la grande jarre d'eau et sortit en l'insultant et en criant à qui voulait l'entendre :

-Vieux singe ! Malpropre ! Tu ne connais pas les Ait-Larbi, peut-être ? Venez voir ô croyants, une honte ! Honte sur les Ait-Slimane, une sale famille !

Saïd tremblait de fureur et cherchait son bâton ; sa femme qui n'était pas loin, accourut tremblante comme son mari.

-Melha, maudit le démon ! C'est lui qui te fait parler. Melha, ma fille, ne crie pas ...les ennemis...calme-toi...

[...] La vieille affolée se précipita chez elle en glapissant et toute l'assistance éclata de rire. Melha riait comme toutes les autres et leur expliqua avec force gestes que le vénérable Vava Saïd avait essayé de la caresser. Elle fit de la scène un tableau si grotesque que les jeunes en rougirent et se mirent à pouffer de honte et de joie (Feraon, *Les Chemins* 45/46).

of Ait-Slimane. The character of Melha represents the resisting woman, which is among the features that seem to characterise Feraoun's writings, for he tries to allude to, "in relating the actions of women, [...] the presence of sites and moments of resistance" (Still 3).

Feraoun presents another female character, Kamouma grandmother of the protagonist Amer, who is fundamental in the chain of events. Amer explains that it was his grandmother who intervened to restore his name 'Amer n' Amer' when he was called after his mother 'the son of the Lady': "it was my grandmother who acted first, [when she said] he is the son of Amer, know it! And cursed be whoever forgets it. Amer n' Amer, from the Ait-Larbi family" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 126)<sup>101</sup>. Amer shows in another passage that his grandmother was the one who empowered him:

When I used to come back from the djema or from school, beaten by a big boy, humiliated by a man or a woman and when, hurt, with tears in my eyes, I explained to her what they had just done to me, she found the words that avenged me and I held back my tears. It was my mother who was crying.

- He is weak, said my grandmother. He "ate" his father, but he is a man all the same. He will not be a coward like them. Only girls cry. Do you understand, Amirouche? (127)<sup>102</sup>.

In addition to the strong voice and the agency given to the grandmother, the role she is given in empowering Amer as well, demonstrates the importance of her role in the novel. It illustrates once again the rejection of the archetype of the passive female member in the family and points to the reluctant stance that characterises Feraoun's writing<sup>103</sup>.

---

<sup>101</sup> "ce fut ma grand'mère qui réagit la première, [when she said] c'est le fils d'Amer, sachez-le! Et maudit soit qui l'oubliera. Amer n' Amer, des Ait-Larbi" (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 126).

<sup>102</sup> Lorsque je revenais de la djema ou de l'école, battu par un grand garçon, humilié par un homme ou une femme et que, meurtri, les larmes aux yeux, je lui expliquais ce qu'on venait de me faire, elle trouvait les mots qui me vengeaient et je rentrais mes larmes. C'était plutôt ma mère qui pleurait.

- Il est faible, disait ma grand'mère. Il a « mangé » son père, mais c'est un homme tout de même. Il ne sera pas lâche comme eux. Il n'y a que les filles qui pleurent. Tu comprends, Amirouche? (Feraoun, *Les Chemins* 127).

<sup>103</sup> The same importance is given to the character of the grandmother in another novel of Feraoun *Le Fils de pauvre* (1950) where he highlights the crucial role of the grandmother in holding together all the family even in the presence of the male members of the family.

Such representations show the way Feraoun allows female characters to be powerful and share social authority with the male characters, reflecting their active role in the society at that time, and denying their passivity as propagated by colonial writings. Despite the fact that the novel rarely reflects the political situation, it shows the way women challenged and reacted against the difficult conditions at that juncture. Feraoun reflected the new responsibilities that Algerian women took in society during the Algerian revolution, focusing on those women who were left alone with their families when most of the men immigrated or joined the maquis. Natalya Vince provides an illuminating extract of ‘Diary of a maquisarde’ from *El Moudjahid* about the role of women who stayed at home:

[...] They are the ones who stay in the *duars*, alone with children and old people as the men come and serve in our troops [...] After battles, when the enemy has gone, these women are the ones who welcome us with smiles, despite us knowing that they have just suffered the worst cruelty: torture and rape. I never heard them complain. On the contrary, although they had to put up with much more than us, it was they who encouraged us, who blessed us (77).

The passage shows crucial roles played by women who stayed at home during the revolution, a fact which is reflected by the agency given to some female characters in Feraoun’s novel.

More importantly, Feraoun’s literary representations reflect his attempts in real life to contribute to releasing women from the constraints that shackled them in society. This is vividly illustrated through Amin Zaoui’s (Amīn alzzāwy) article where he calls Feraoun “the feminist” and points to his revolt against the constraints that society placed on women, by teaching his wife at school with his students in 1938<sup>104</sup>. Indeed, Feraoun’s defence of women’s rights is mirrored in his writings through his non-essentialist representations of Algerian

---

<sup>104</sup> Zaoui is of the opinion that “Feraoun remplit le rôle d’instituteur pendant la journée, accomplit le rôle d’époux hors heures d’école. Et assume, avec bonheur, le soir et les dimanches, le rôle du liseur de la littérature universelle, à sa femme. Épouse ou élève !?”. Zaoui values Feraoun’s “comportement féministe” and argues that with this behaviour “Mouloud Feraoun voulait passer un message à la société traditionnelle, un appel pour la scolarisation de la fille. L’indépendance, comme la liberté, comme la révolution, ont besoin de la lumière, et la lumière c’est le savoir”.



women: he highlights the fact that the Algerian woman can be marginalised and considered as mere sexual objects, as has been illustrated by the characters of Dehbia and Ouiza but he also shows through other characters, such as Melha and Kamouma (Kāmwmh), how powerful resisting women can be in society. In doing so, he reflects the characteristics of reluctant self-Orientalism as he confronts the colonial cultural influence and reflects the dynamic role of Algerian women at that time. Yet, this centrality and agency that Feraoun's characters possess seems to disappear in the writings of some other subsequent authors in the post-independence era – among them Tahar Ouettar.

## **2.2. The resurfacing of the passive sexually objectified Algerian female character in *Al Laz* (1974)**

Tahar Ouettar's *Al Laz* (1974) was written and published in the post-independence era. Yet, the context of the novel narrates the events that happened during the War of Independence. The novel gives an account of the struggles among the members of the FLN, the *maquisards* in particular, during the Algerian revolution in the 1950s. Events tell of the relationship of al-Laz, an illegitimate son, with his father Zidane, a Communist leader of one of the FLN units. Ouettar includes in his novel many female characters who are involved in the plot. To begin with, Ouettar provides a portrayal of Hamou's (Hāmww) (Zidane's brother) three mistresses who are sisters: Daikha (Dāykhkh), Mbarka (Mubārahah), and Khoukha (Khwkhhah). Despite the fact that Ouettar mentions their names, Hamou refers to them constantly as "calamities" (22)<sup>105</sup>. Hamou tells his friend Kaddour about his secret meetings with these three sisters. He depicts them as women who are driven by their sexual inclinations especially as they "are queuing for him, they show their extreme kindness and generosity in return for his youth" (Ouettar 22)<sup>106</sup>.

---

105

مصائب (22)

106

يتزاحمن عليه، وتغدق عليه، كل واحدة من جانبها، العطف، والكرم، مقابل شبابه (22) وفتوته

He adds that he used to go and spend nights with three of them by turn, and they also used to come to his cave during the day (Ouettar 22). In these passages, the text never includes the voice of the three sisters, we just hear about them from the perspective of Hamou who describes his sexual relations with them and shows them as women who attempt to outdo each other with their kindness and generosity just to be his partner.

On another occasion, he narrates to his friend how he went to their room and jumped on the bed where they were sleeping: “[...] they were three of them in the same bed, like the women of the card game [...] they were awake the damned, but pretending to sleep. The little one was in the middle, I can easily recognise her, because she was the skinniest as you know. I caressed the chest of Khokha, the one in the middle who was supposed to meet me in the shed” (Ouettar 23)<sup>107</sup>. This passage highlights the emphasis put on the three sisters’ submissiveness and passivity in their relations with Hamou, as the three sisters were shown silent and so passive that they accept to be in relationship with the same man and even at the same time. There is no space given to include their feelings or perspective, they are shown merely as objects for Hamou’s sexual pleasure. Here it can be assumed that what makes the three sisters submissive is the power Hamou has over them. In fact, it should be clarified that the three sisters are the daughters of Hamou’s boss (Ouettar 23), which technically should give them a higher socio-economic status than Hamou. Yet, they are still shown to be submissive and sexually objectified characters, which recalls the stereotypical context of the voiceless Oriental woman who never represents herself or her feelings, and who “is ready to serve her knight with a slavish devotion” (Kabbani 37). It is worth explaining at this stage that Hamou’s case can be taken as polygamy as he is in a Muslim society, which allows him to have more than one wife.

---

<sup>107</sup> كَنّ الثّلاث، متداخلات في فراش واحد، كأثهنّ نساء ورق اللّعب [...] وكَنّ اللّعينات، مستيقظات، لكن يتظاهرن بالنّوم، الصّغرى في الوسط ولا شك... وبسهولة أستطيع تمييزها، فهي كما تعرف أنحفهن، وتلمست ببدي صدر الوسطى، خوخة في الوسط.. وموعدي مع خوخة التي لم تخرج إلى بيت المؤونة (23)

However, Ouettar does not mention that they are his wives, as he says in another passage that he has only one wife and seven children (22), which means that they are included in the text as his mistresses. Also, what matters in this example is not Hamou's relationship with the three sisters, but rather the passivity and the sexual objectification with which they are represented, especially as they are not the only female characters who are depicted in this deprecating way, as shall be outlined in the following sections.

The image of the passive sexual object is displayed through another female character named Hizia (Ḥizyiah). She is the mother of Kaddour (Qaddūr), who joined the FLN unit, and the aunt of Baatouche (Ba'ṭūsh) an Algerian soldier in the French army. After the French army found out that Kaddour was a secret member of the FLN unit in the village, they broke into his house, and as revenge, the French captain ordered Baatouche to rape his aunt (Kaddour's mother). A day after this incident, Baatouche walked back to his aunt's home, blaming her for what happened "damn her. [...] Who told her to be my aunt? Yesterday, she was so cold like a dead person, then she started moaning and hugged me and responded to me in an astonishing way" (Ouettar 153)<sup>108</sup>. Baatouche describes his aunt's fear of him when he went inside the house on another occasion, but surprisingly, he says that "she threw herself on his shoulders, he hugged her and broke with her into his uncle's room [...], he pushed her on the bed, and threw himself on her like a monster [...] she was hugging him and responding to him in an astonishing way" (Ouettar 154)<sup>109</sup>. In these passages, Ouettar repeatedly highlights Hizia's tolerant reaction to her rape which is inferring the image of the immoral and desire-driven female. Despite the fact that she has been raped by her nephew, she seems – through Ouettar's

---

<sup>108</sup> عليها اللعنة [...] من طلب منها أن تكون خالتي؟ البارحة كانت في الأول باردة كالميتة، وفجأة غمرها دفاء عجيب، أنت وطوقنتني وتجاوبت معي بشكل فظيع.. (153)

<sup>109</sup> ألفت بنفسها بين ذراعيه، احتضنها واقتحم بها غرفة عمه، ألقاها على سريره وارتمى عليها كالوحش... كانت تننّ وتطوقه وتتجاوب معه بشكل فظيع.. (154)

description – responsive to him and showing no resistance when being raped for the second time.

The representation of Hizia can be closely associated with the stereotypical portrayals of Algerian women in colonial and Orientalist writings, which place emphasis on their supposedly uncontrolled sexuality and responsiveness to their desires, in most cases depicted as “invariably beautiful, sensual and above all, responsive” (Dunwoodie 79). Guy de Maupassant’s writings are relevant here as well, especially because his prose manifested such portrayals. In his short story *Marroca* (1882), Maupassant speaks of the sensuality and inferiority of Marroca an Algerian woman who betrays her husband with the narrator:

She was truly an admirable girl, of a somewhat bestial type, but superb. Her eyes seemed always to glow with passion; her half-open mouth, her pointed teeth, even her smile had something ferociously sensual. Her strange breasts, elongated and straight, sharp as pears of flesh, elastic as if they had enclosed springs of steel. This gave to her body animalist characteristic, made her a sort of inferior and magnificent creature (371)<sup>110</sup>.

The above-mentioned passage shows the way the narrator combines in his representation of Marroca the epithets which accentuate her sensuality and inferiority as he describes her with demeaning animalistic adjectives<sup>111</sup>. The combination of sexuality, sensuality, passivity, and inferiority in the description of female characters infers the image that fits well within the colonialist rhetoric that assimilates Algerian women to sexual objects. Ouettar’s prose seems to reflect this tendency towards objectification in its portrayal of female characters, especially as it is not limited to one female character, but rather is the major characteristic of most female

---

<sup>110</sup>C’était vraiment une admirable fille, d’un type un peu bestial, mais superbe. Ses yeux semblaient toujours luisants de passion ; sa bouche entrouverte, ses dents pointues, son sourire même avaient quelque chose de féroce ment sensuel, et ses seins étranges, allongés et droits, aigus comme des poires de chair, élastiques comme s’ils eussent renfermé des ressorts d’acier, donnaient à son corps quelque chose d’animal, faisaient d’elle une sorte d’être inférieur et magnifique [...] (371).

<sup>111</sup> In another short story *Alluma* (1889), Maupassant highlights the submissiveness of the Arab mistress, and shows through the voice of the French male character, Auballe the passivity of Alluma and her submissiveness to him through her “attitude de fière soumission” (1101), and her “doux abandons” (1107).

characters included in this novel, which shows it as an essentialised opinion on Algerian female characters.

In addition to the emphasis put on the sexual objectification of these female characters, their silence also prevails as a prominent feature in the novel. This may be read as a perpetuation of another cliché. This aspect is vividly illustrated in the portrayal of Hizia, whose voice is absent in the description of these events. In the end, her presence is silenced in the novel by her death. Even when Baatouche kills her, Ouettar makes sure that it was a soundless death: “[h]e left her lying, he went in a rush to the kitchen, he came back panting and holding an axe. He directly hit her head, she did not scream she did not moan or groan...” (154)<sup>112</sup>. This silent death was also the fate of Meryana (Maryānh), al-Laz’s mother, when Baatouche shot her following orders of the French captain. The narrator says that “Meryana fell without uttering a sound” (Ouettar 111)<sup>113</sup>. Both Meryana and Hizia were silenced in the novel even in their deaths. In this context, Debbi Cox argues that “[t]he novel associates women with vulnerability” (101) which is the case in the representations of most Algerian female characters. Indeed, the novel’s depictions of Algerian female characters were mostly reduced to the image of sexual objects and associated with weakness and passivity. By silencing them, the novel attaches no importance to their presence, exactly like the conventional portrayal of the so-called Oriental woman which was recurrently embodied as a submissive woman who was “rarely associated with resistance” (Dunwoodie 78).

Turning our attention to the historical context of the novel, we see that it paradoxically gives an inaccurate image of Algerian women as it belittles their role during the national revolution

---

<sup>112</sup> تركها مستلقية، وسارع نحو المطبخ، حمل الفأس وعاد يلهث. هوى مباشرة على رأسها فتطاير. لم تطلق أي صرخة، لم تن، ولم (154) تتألم

<sup>113</sup> سقطت مريانة دون أن تلفظ أي (111) صوت

and shows their presence in the novel to be inferior to that of male characters. The contributions of Algerian women were not highlighted and almost marginalised in the novel despite the fact that their role was crucial during the Algerian revolution, as explained by Danièle Djamilia Amrane-Minne when she says: “As soon as war broke out, Algerian women joined in the struggle. [...] Algerian women who joined the struggle consisted, not merely of sympathizers or militants on a short-term basis, but proper fighters who joined the National Army or the Civil Organization of the National Liberation Front” (62/63). Although the role of Algerian women remained limited compared to male *maquisards*, the contribution of female fighters was fundamental and significant, and the novel seems to completely overlook this by focusing only on the deeds of the males and accentuating the females’ passivity. Even those who were not *maquisards* cannot be viewed as inactive, since the “traditional social fabric was ripped apart, and women, often in the absence of their men (who had gone to war), took on new duties and roles” (Blair 37).

However, the period when the novel was published marked a radical change in the situation of women, as Algerian women withdrew from fields in which they had been involved during the Algerian revolution. Chérifa Akache (Sharīfah ‘kkāsh), one of the *maquisardes* in the Algerian revolution, argues that “[j]ust after the war was finished, we had a good time, we said ‘tahya al-jaza’ir [Long live Algeria]’ and everyone went back to where they were before, the relations weren’t the same” (Quoted in Vince, *Our* 128). The freedom that Algerian women gained during the revolution seemed to be cut right back after independence, as the slogan announced at that time was “women go home!” (185 Boariu). The exclusion of women characterised the Algerian economic domain as well, as “after the war, Algeria instituted an economic development program that failed to incorporate women’s needs” (Lazreg, *Gender and Politics* 755). Writing in such circumstances may have influenced Ouettar’s depiction of women even if the setting of the novel is all about events during the Algerian revolution when

women imposed their presence even in traditionally male fields. This is because the novel under study displays a shift in the representation of women and the rebirth of degrading stereotypes about Algerian women which can be taken as an influence of the political sidelining of Algerian women after independence. In other words, Ouettar's representations may have ignored the role of female characters in order to conform with the marginalisation of Algerian women from the political sphere at that time. This is demonstrated notably by the novel's inclusion of several female characters represented through the reappearance of clichéd images with a higher level of marginalisation and objectification compared to representations in Feraoun's prose.

Taking together the examples analysed in Ouettar's novel show that, unlike Feraoun's writings, Ouettar's representations of Algerian women are more in line with the fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance in spite of being an Arab-speaking author and writing in the post-independence era. Although Ouettar's prose gave room to the presence of many female characters, their portrayals showcase a constant recourse to a sexual objectification and the emphasis on passivity and silence, picturing the conventional image of the Algerian woman as a mere passive object of desire. Indeed, no major contribution to the chain of events is assigned to female characters in the novel. They are only referred to when recounting intimate and passionate situations between them and other male characters. These depictions can be read as a belittling and deprecation of the image of Algerian women, especially as the novel presents a general marginalisation of their role compared to the leadership of male characters, which comes strikingly in contrast with the historical context in which the opposite was true. The projection of the Algerian woman in the novel bears no sense of resistance to clichéd images of Algerian women, and leads the text to be identified as a fully-fledged self-Orientalist work. While Ouettar's prose has recreated the image of the passive Algerian woman, who is depicted

as a mere object for the males' sexual desires, Waciny Laredj and Fadhila El-Farouk give other contrasting renderings of the Algerian woman in the 1990s.

### **2.3. The partial departure from the essentialised sexual objectification of Algerian female characters in *The Lady of the Place* (1995) and *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999)**

The publications of Waciny Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995) and Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), which are the novels that are under study in this section, coincided with the Black Decade in Algeria after the economic crisis of 1988 and the ensuing efforts to liberalise political life. The period of the Black Decade has marked changes in the situation of Algerian women in accordance with the tragic events that happened in the country. Women in Algerian society were among the first victims of conflicts between the fighting parties. The novels under study in this section, describe the situation of women in this period and attempt to highlight the critical conditions in their daily lives. Yet, both novels in their representations of Algerian women, seem to deviate from the usual feminist mainstream which aims to strengthen the female characters and denounce their passivity. As will be shown, both authors centre their novels on female protagonists, a choice that distinguishes them from the over marginalisation of women that characterised Ouettar's novel. However, they choose to associate their female characters with misery, weakness, and submissiveness, while other Algerian and non-Algerian feminist authors of the same juncture such as Ahlem Mosteghanemi and Virginie Despentes respectively, choose to empower their female characters and give them agency. On the few cases Laredj and El-Farouk free their female characters from passivity, we notice that this freedom is limited only to the protagonists of the two novels.

Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995) focuses on the figure of a Ballet dancer called Meriam (Maryam), who has been injured by a bullet in her head during the demonstrations in October 1988 in Algiers. The novel relates how she struggles to live with the bullet in her head in spite



of its psychopathological effects, which eventually lead to her death. Her lover, who is the narrator of the novel, also describes the way she fights to achieve her dream of performing the role of Scheherazade (Shahrazād) in the choreography of *A Thousand and One Nights* in spite of her critical health situation and the constraints placed by radical Islamists in that era on artistic activities in particular and on women in general. At the beginning of the novel, Laredj uses flashback moments to narrate the story of Meriam's mother, who was obliged to marry her brother-in-law when her husband was killed by the O.A.S before independence (82), showing the way her in-laws decided her new life without taking her feelings or opinion into consideration. After narrating the unhappy life the mother lived in her second marriage, Laredj uses a flashforward to tell of the daughter's engagement with their neighbour Hamoudah (Ĥmūdah), inferring the idea that the miserable life the mother was living, becomes the same fate of her daughter, which symbolises the immutability of the situation of women from the era of colonialism until the 1990s.

On another occasion, Laredj gets his protagonist Meriam to comment on the situation of marriage in Algeria and describe the miserable conditions of women, who are said to be merely used to satisfy their husbands:

Isn't the marriage in this happy country a sort of self-bankruptcy? [...] the man runs after his female, not because of love in most cases, but to empty his hell and his repressed inclinations on her, after one year he turns his back to her in the bed [...]. After another year he starts his feverish search for another woman who completes his religion and desire, which can never be satisfied only with women (102)<sup>114</sup>.

In this passage, Meriam's description seems to lack nuance as she introduces an essentialised representation of Algerian women depicting them as passive objects of desire, on the one hand, and restores the cliché of the lust-driven Algerian man whose desire can never be satisfied, on

---

<sup>114</sup> أليس الزواج في هذا الوطن السعيد، شكلاً من أشكال إفلاس الذات؟ [...] الرّجل يركض وراء أنثاه في أغلب الأحيان ليس حباً، ولكن ليفرغ فيها جحيمه وكيته. وبعد سنة يعطيها ظهره في الفراش [...]. وبعد سنة أخرى يبدأ بحثه المحموم عن امرأة أخرى تكمل دينه وشهوته التي لا تكتمل إلا بالنساء [...] (102)

the other. Taking the two images together leads to promote the Orientalist perspective about Algeria as a site of desire – being a part of the so-called Orient. Her argument about the objectification of Algerian women is confirmed with her situation in the novel as we learn from the chain of events that her marriage with Hamoudah did not last long as a result of her husband's sexual abuse, when he raped her and abused her physically (Laredj 114), which led to ending their engagement at an early stage.

Yet, in contrast to the passivity and the submissiveness that characterised Ouettar's female characters, Laredj provides his protagonist with more agency as she does not surrender to the authority of her husband. Laredj highlights her resistance as she defends herself and hits her husband back whenever he hits her: “[h]e slapped me another time with all his strength then I fell from the bed. I slapped him in return. My eye became red. From that moment I hated him definitively, everything had been broken. I slapped him with all my strength” (112)<sup>115</sup>. Despite the representation which conjures up the image of the oppressed objectified woman and the authoritative man, Laredj, in contrast to Ouettar, allows his female character to show resistance and refusal of her objectification, though it must be emphasised that this is not always the case in his representation of other female characters. Such agency is only a privilege of the protagonist, as will be shown in the following section.

On another occasion, Meriam narrates what happened during the earthquake in Algiers saying:

During the earthquake of Algiers, he [her uncle] was the first who run away. I was not at home; I went to Anatolia's place. He asked my mother to stay at home lest those in the street can see her. Our neighbour who lives on the higher floors, brought with him his son, his heir as he used to call him, and he left the mother and her five daughters at home scared from the distraction of the roof and the walls. When they were looking at him from the window of the high building, he waved to them from a far distance from the

---

صفعني مرّة أخرى بكلّ قوّة حتّى تدرجت من السرير، صفعته أنا بدوري. احمرت عيني. ومن يومها كرهته نهائياً. كلّ شيء انكسر. صفعته  
بكلّ قوّة (112)

building saying: do not be scared it is just a feeble earthquake. Imagine!! A man runs away and advises others of the necessity to stay home! (101/102)<sup>116</sup>.

During the earthquake, the men – Meriam’s uncle and the neighbour – did not care for the lives of their wives and daughters, which were in danger. They kept their wives at home for fear that other men would see them in the public space, while, by contrast, they (men) left the houses immediately after the earthquake. The passage also illustrates the naivety or somehow the passivity of the females represented here – Meriam’s mother and the neighbour’s wife. Whilst realising that they were in danger, they did not react and instead followed the orders of their husbands even though they were the first to flee from their houses.

Laredj’s novel departs somehow from the image presented by other Arabic-speaking novelists who preceded him mainly Ouettar, as the novel shows occasional appraisal of the female protagonist’s voice. Meriam, in particular, had the ability to speak and was given agency as she shows resistance to the patriarchal system, contrary to other female characters such as her mother. Yet, this agency does not extend beyond the main female character. In addition, the novel contains images that accentuate the objectification of Algerian women in addition to their submissiveness to the authority of men—images that continue to survive since the era of colonialism. Indeed, Laredj’s text showcases the reuse of some images that recall the objectification and the passivity of Algerian women. However, unlike the homogeneous representation displayed in Ouettar’s text, Laredj’s protagonist presents an equivocal image for she shows occasional resistive behaviour against the oppression of the patriarchal system. This fluctuation in Laredj’s text identifies his writings among the more ambivalent self-Orientalist

---

<sup>116</sup> عندما حدث زلزال العاصمة كان أول من نزل يركض. لم أكن في البيت. كنت عند أناطوليا. طلب من أمي أن تبقى في البيت، خوفاً من أن يراها الضائعون في الشوارع. جارنا الذي يسكن في الطوابق العليا، أنزل معه ابنه، ولي العهد كما كان يسميه وأبقى الأم وبناتها الخمس في البيت داخل موجة الدعر خوفاً من سقوط الأسقف والحيطان. عندما أطلوا عليه من علو البناية الشاهق. لوح بيديه من تحت، بعيداً عن البناية : ما تخافوش. هذه زلزلة فايئة. تصور!! رجل يهرب وينصح الناس بضرورة البقاء (101/102)

authors in its portrayal of Algerian women, especially as the text provides room for more power to female characters, which is the central tenet that Laredj shares with Fadhila El-Farouk.

The representation of the Algerian woman is also present in Algerian women's writings and it was the central topic of their novels in most cases. The emergence of Algerian women's literature dates back to the era of colonialism when Djamila Debèche (Jamīlah ddbāsh) published *Leïla jeune fille d'Algérie* (1947, *Leila, a Young Woman of Algeria*) and Taos Amrouche (Tāwūs 'mrwsh) wrote *Jacinthe noire* (1947, *Black Hyacinth*). Assia Djébar was also another writer who published her first works in this period. In 1957 she published her first novel *La Soif* (*The Thirst*) then, *Les Impatients* (*The Impatient Ones*) in 1958 making her "the first-and undoubtedly the only-woman to begin her career as a writer during this period of historical rupture" (Tahon 40). However, because of Djébar's focus on personal relationships in these works, they have been criticised as novels that are "out of step with the nationalist cause" (Cox, *Algeria* 162). In her third publication *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (1962, *Children of the New World*), she showed more focus on the Algerian female characters beyond the territory of her house and family, which is why Jane Hiddleston finds that this novel "marks the beginning of a prolonged interrogation concerning the nature of women's contributions to the war effort and the effects of the conflict on their processes of self-construction and individuation" (Hiddleston, *Out* 34).

Such themes also dominated the Algerian women's Arabic writings which started, in the post-independence era, with the publication of Ahlam Mosteghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* (1993)<sup>117</sup>. What pushed this book into the limelight is the controversial rumours that suggested that this novel "could not be the work of a woman, particularly an Algerian woman, and hinted

---

<sup>117</sup> There are some critics who consider Zhor Wanisi's novel *Min yawmiyat mudarrisa hurra* (*From the Diaries of a Free School Teacher*) published in 1979 as the first Algerian woman Arabic novel.

at Nizār Qabbānī as its author” (Cox, *Algeria* 167), which reflected the negative influence of the absence of Algerian woman Arabic novel. Therefore, this novel is not only considered among the first Algerian women’s books that “explore the representation and imagining of Arab women” (Cox, *Algeria* 167) but also as the first Algerian woman Arabic novel (Twohig 286). The novel was followed by two other works *Chaos of the Senses* (1997) and *Bed-Hopper* (2003) forming a trilogy which articulated “the historical legacy of Algeria’s colonial past, the traumatic memories through which the nation as a collective remembers the colonial period, and the specifically gendered dimensions of traumatic experience” (Baaqeel, *The Kaleidoscope* 1). Other female Algerian writers followed Mosteghanemi’s path and started publishing works which launched Algerian women writing in Arabic. Authors like Fadhila El-Farouk and Rabia Djelti (Rabī’ah Jalṭī), among others, contributed to shedding light on many taboo topics related to Arab women and their situation in Algerian society.

The Algerian woman is still the focus of most Algerian women novelists. They attempted through literature to subvert the stereotypes which were perpetuated about the Algerian woman throughout the colonial era, for French authors considered the Algerian woman as “[...] an inexhaustible subject to quench the public’s thirst for what Fromentin called ‘the bizarre’. They wrote for French audience about women who did not speak or read their language, and therefore could not agree or disagree with what was made of them. Algerian women were thus thoroughly objectified” (Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 39). However, the stage of subverting stereotypes propagated about Algerian women, or Arab women in general, is more difficult to define than it seems at the first sight. This is because “[...] the case of Arab women writers seems to be the site of a double immasculation, one of which results from the Occidental colonization, and the other from Arab patriarchal norms, both of which, in conjunction with their readings since childhood, create stereotypes depicting women as passive or exotic” (Hosford et al 202). As the previously mentioned quote suggests, their readings or receptions of colonial writings on

the social patriarchal conditions sometimes led Arab female writers, among them Algerians, to recreate the conventional images in their representations of Algerian women at the very same time they attempted to subvert stereotypes. It is in light of this idea that I also examine the females' novels and their representations of Algerian women, to analyse the cases in which the biased portrayals are perpetuated while at the same time an endeavour is made to erase the traditional image of Algerian women.

*The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) by Fadhila Melkemi (Faḍīla malkmy) – known as Fadhila El-Farouk – engages with the situation of women in the postcolonial era, particularly during the Black Decade. The novel is a piece of autobiographical literary work, which revolves around the story of Luisa (Lwīzah) and her social and romantic experiences that embody the situation of an Algerian woman in that era. It recounts the tough social, religious and political conditions in Algerian society during the 1990s in which Luisa undertakes her university studies and makes her choices as a female. At the very beginning of the novel, Luisa recounts the death of her grandmother and highlights the importance of her status in the family when she says: “[...] she was a powerful woman, even men of the family were scared of her, apart from that, she was a support for us during the continuous absence of our father. Her absence made us feel homeless” (El-Farouk 11)<sup>118</sup>. This portrayal is reminiscent of the grandmother's representation in Feraoun's writings, as it puts an emphasis on her active role, the essentiality of her presence, and shows her power in spite of the patriarchal atmosphere in which she lives.

However, the dominance of the patriarchal system could influence the fate of the other female characters elsewhere in the novel. The course of events depicts from the very beginning the oppression Luisa suffers since her childhood. Luisa exemplifies the unfair treatment of boys

---

118

وقد كانت امرأة قويّة يخافها رجال العائلة، وغير ذلك كانت سنداً لنا قريباً غطى غياب والدي المستمر عن البيت، أما غيابها هي، فقد جعلنا نشعر أننا صرنا نعيش في العراء (11)

and girls in her narration of what happened to her when she succeeded in the middle school's final exam:

That day I was the second in the sequence of successful students of all the Algerian East, but the circumstances were not convenient to enjoy that success. It would have been more convenient to be hit by a stone on my head. The son of our neighbour threw it on me because he was angry when someone insulted him saying 'she is a female but she succeeded whilst you failed even if you are a man! (El-Farouk 11)<sup>119</sup>.

Through this example, Luisa highlights the lower status of females in her society and the prejudiced image assigned to them, as is shown by the fact that success is deemed to be more appropriate for men rather than for women.

Still, at the beginning of the novel, Luisa describes the sadness and unhappiness that overwhelms her mother who sees her always distressed differentiating her from other women (El-Farouk 13). She compares her to "a rubble of sadness and boredom" (13)<sup>120</sup> because of the infidelity of her father. Luisa describes the way that her father neglects the presence of her mother: "she did not mean anything to him, she was no more than a clean paper with which he wipes his shoes" (14)<sup>121</sup>. Despite her sadness and dissatisfaction, the mother shows no reaction and no significant presence, as she is in most cases represented as silent in her sadness. This is all the more revealing as we can feel the presence of the father's voice in the novel although he is abroad, which highlights the importance of the father and reinforces the marginalisation of the mother despite her being physically present in the setting of the novel.

---

<sup>119</sup> يومها كنت الثانية في ترتيب الناجحين على مستوى الشرق الجزائري، لكن الطرف لم يكن مناسباً لتذوق النجاح، كان مناسباً أكثر لتلقي حجر في الرأس، رماني به ابن الجيران الذي احترق غيظاً حين عبره أحدهم : إنها بنت ونجحت، وأنت رجل ورسبت ! (11)

<sup>120</sup> كانت ركاماً من الحزن (13)

<sup>121</sup> لم تكن تعني له أكثر من ورقة صالحة لمسح حدائه (14)

The text recreates an aspect that was already discussed in Laredj's novel which consists in emphasising the continuity of the miserable status of women between the generation of the mother and that of the daughter. The plot shows how Luisa ended her relationship with her cousin which was her first love experience. Samah (Samāh), Luisa's friend assures her "[y]ou are a continuation to your mother, and your mother is a continuation to your grandmother, [...] be sure that your life will be similar to your mother's, in spite of your careful attempt to choose your partner in this life" (El-Farouk 36/37)<sup>122</sup>. Samah insists on the inevitability of the fate that will befall on Luisa, just like the generations before her. Though Luisa rejects the thoughts of Samah, the text confirms this idea through the development of events. This is because the novel starts with the depiction of the sad and miserable life of the mother and ends with the distress of Luisa after the failure of her romantic experiences with Yousuf (Yūsuf), Toufik (Tawfiq), and her cousin. In spite of her attempt to defy the constraints placed on her by her family and society, like her mother, she could not escape the reality of a miserable life. Indeed, the novel demonstrates a tendency to develop ambivalent self-Orientalist perspectives as she departs partially from the stereotypes which present female characters reductively: she emphasises the power of the grandmother and represents Luisa as a voiced and active character, who confronts patriarchal constraints when she decides to continue her education.

However, the text shows a clear perpetuation of the stereotype of the passive Algerian woman in the representation of the mother: not only through showing her misery and sadness, which will be transmitted to Luisa as well but through stressing her passivity and silence. Like Ouettar's prose, El-Farouk's writing was influenced by the situation of Algerian women during this period especially after the issuance of the family code in 1984 which, according to Marnia Lazreg, "shores up males' authority in matters of marriage, divorce, and child custody" and

<sup>122</sup> أنت إستمرارية لأمك، أمك استمرارية لجدتك، [...] تأكدي أن حياتك، مهما كنت دقيقة في إختيار شريك عمرك ستشبه حياة (34/35) أمك



“places women squarely within the confines of the family, perceived as a social ‘cell’ in need of ‘protection and preservation’ from social ills” (*Gender* 755/756). The limitations on women’s space and freedom in Algerian society after the passing of the family code, influenced the literary representations of Algerian women. This influence is vividly illustrated in the limited agency provided to female characters and the revival of the image of the passive, submissive, and oppressed women in El-Farouk’s novel.

More importantly, the representation offered by El-Farouk seems to contradict other feminist writers’ representations who attempt to restore the agency of female characters in their writings, among them Ahlem Mosteghanemi in Algerian literature and Virginie Despentes in French literature. Ahlem Mosteghanemi’s *The Memory in the Flesh* (1993), shows a different path in its portrayal of Algerian women. The main female character Hayet is depicted as a strong female character, indeed sometimes as even stronger than the main male protagonist Khaled. Mosteghanemi attempts to empower her female character: “[...] rather than upholding the traditional image of the victimized or subjugated Algerian woman who is powerless before male authority, both [Hayet] and the Algerian nation are portrayed in the novel as strong and active figures. Also, within the context of the novel, [Hayet]/Algeria is represented as being responsible for Khaled’s symbolic impotency” (Knight-Santos 23). Such representations not only reject the passive image attributed to the Algerian woman but also suggest new perspectives on female characters as empowered women, an aspect which is almost absent in Algerian literature as has been shown through representations discussed previously. It seems reasonable to argue that Mosteghanemi’s stance aligns more with Western feminist literary output, such as that of Virginie Despentes, who challenges the traditional image of woman’s passivity in her novel *Baise-moi* (1994), which is almost contemporaneous of *The Memory in*

*the Flesh*<sup>123</sup>. Compared to these representations, El-Farouk's writing on Algerian women may be taken as an accentuation of the traditional image of women. That is because the portrayals of El-Farouk end up showing her female characters conceiving themselves as passive and miserable while other feminist writers opt for change by depicting stronger and more active female characters who reclaim their agency rather than the focus on their misery and weakness.

#### **2.4. From reluctant self-orientalism to ambivalent self-orientalism: the trajectory of representations of Algerian women since the late-colonial period**

It can be said that the level of women's objectification in the previously discussed novels varies from one writer to another, as they produced their texts in different eras depicting different trends of self-Orientalist discourse. In spite of the presence of images of the passive and objectified Algerian woman in all novels, we notice that the agency provided to females seems to be more present in Feraoun's female characters with voiced and empowered roles. This identifies his writings with a reluctant trend of self-Orientalism which is marked, above all, by his stance of resisting to colonial representations. This is a position that generates occasional departures from or rejections of conventional stereotypes about Algerian women. Yet, paradoxically, this fluctuation disappears in Ouettar's writing, as his representations are characterised by a mere restoration of the clichéd depiction of Algerian women which places his description of Algerian women in line with a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance. This is because women in his novel conform with the image of passive objectified Algerian women, as they appear as marginalised characters, despite the fact that the plot of the novel involves

---

<sup>123</sup> The novel tells the story of two young women, Nadine and Manu. Nadine works as a prostitute and Manu as a porn actress. They became spree killers of men across France after being sexually assaulted. This novel is considered a "narrative which succeeds in representing the shock and violence of rape, and channeling the experience into a means of reclaiming the female body and using it with agency, even if this agency is often destructive" (El Nossery et al 218). This is because Despentès' female characters are shown to be able to assert their active presence and defending their bodies even if this agency has to be reached with violence.

the era of the Algerian revolution, which offered decisive roles to Algerian women even in domains traditionally limited to males.

Lastly, the novels under study published during the Black Decade displayed ambivalent self-Orientalist representations of Algerian women. Both Laredj and El-Farouk seem to provide their female characters with a reasonable level of agency, which was totally absent in Ouettar's depiction of women. However, both novels show that this occasional agency is restricted to the protagonist while the rest of the female characters are assigned to weakness and passivity. This differentiates their accounts about women from other feminist authors' – Arab or Western – writings that chose to rectify these representations and strengthen female characters. The aforementioned representations from the novels under study show in most cases the adoption of the stereotypical depictions of Algerian women, which eventually generates the self-Orientalist discourse with markedly different stages. Yet, the reader may query whether these pejorative depictions were limited to representations of Algerian women or also applied to portrayals of Western women as well?

### **3. Active Western women in self-Orientalism: the survival of the Western woman's elevated portrayal in Algerian postcolonial literature**

During the colonial era, like Algerian men, Algerian women were also debased and portrayed as inferior compared to Western or particularly French women. In the political sphere, Algerian women were segregated as they were banned from privileges allowed to French or European women in Algeria: "In 1946, French women in France and European women in Algeria acquired the vote for the first time. This right was not extended to Muslim women, supposedly out of respect for 'custom' and 'tradition'. As in 1865, under the cloak of cultural sensitivity, Muslims – this time Muslim women – were excluded from political rights" (Vince 74). The deprivation of Algerian women from their rights was sometimes justified as a

‘respect’ for Algerian culture. On other occasions, it was explained to be a result of their presumed inferiority compared to their European or French counterparts. According to Julia Clancy-Smith, Algerian women “[...] functioned as a trope for indigenous Algerian culture. Increasingly that trope was deployed to demonstrate that the natives could neither absorb French civilization nor merit political or civil rights comparable to those enjoyed by the European settlers” (166). The same segregation was also applied in other domains such as education, as the colonial administration opened schools for native girls under the pretext of ‘civilising’ the native populations, yet, the “[s]chools for native girls were not meant to prepare their students for careers or non-traditional marketable skills. Instead, they reinforced their homebound vocation, thereby revealing the colonial gender-bias in all its starkness” (Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 65). This was because “[c]olonial administrators did not believe in educating native girls” (Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 66). Indeed, the propagation of an image of inferiority attached to Algerian women contributed to asserting the inequality between Western and Algerian women. Thus, it became common during the colonial era that “[a] blonde woman, be she dull or anything else, appears superior to any brunette” (Memmi 165).

The juxtaposition between the denigration of Algerian characters and the elevation of Western or French characters – as has been discussed in the first chapter – was considered among the key features of colonial fictional writings. This paradigm was applied to the representation of Algerian female characters and inferred the ‘inferiorised’ image assigned to Algerian women, compared to the elevated status of Western or French women. Peter Dunwoodie examines this feature in passages from Robert Randau’s *Les Colons: roman de la patrie algérienne* (1907) (*The Settlers: A Novel of the Algerian Fatherland*) among others, where Randau describes the appearance of both French and Algerian women:

Hélène in navy blue, wearing an old felt musketeer, was adjusting her gloves, flattening the godrons of her loose cycling breeches, patting her sateen jacket, constantly preoccupied with a detail of clothing (Randau 99)<sup>124</sup>.

In a field bristling with tawny shale, bumpy with rough clods, women dressed in cotton wool, their spines broken in two, were digging the ground. They raised their heads as the horses passed, showed, under thin turbans resembling dysenteric children's diapers, ravaged faces, more gloomy and browned than the earth (Randau 103)<sup>125</sup>.

This passage illustrates the basics of this paradigm as Randau describes thoroughly the looks of Hélène and reflects her careful choice of all the details in her dress. By contrast, he refers to Algerian women as a mass and gathers the looks of many women in one essentialised portrayal, in addition to using a deprecating tone to describe them. This passage alone exemplifies the colonial fictional writings that propagated the opposition and the inequality of Algerian and Western women.

In the previous section of this chapter, we have seen the re-creation of the stereotypical portrayals of Algerian women in the postcolonial novels under study. I must therefore address the representation of Western or French female characters. I examine in this part the survival of the paradigm, which places emphasis on the elevation of Western women whilst deprecating Algerian female characters. This appears both in Tahar Ouettar's *Al Laz* (1974) and Waciny Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995).

### **3.1. The Western woman as a motivator for education**

Tahar Ouettar's *Al Laz* (1974) provides an active role for the Western woman through the character of Zidane's French partner Suzanne. She is almost the only female character, who is

---

<sup>124</sup> Hélène en bleu marine, coiffée d'un vieux feutre mousquetaire, rajustait ses gants, aplatissait les godrons de son ample culotte de cycliste, tapotait son blouson de satinette, sans cesse préoccupée d'un détail de vêture (Randau 99).

<sup>125</sup> Dans un champ hérissé de schistes fauves, bossué de mottes rugueuses, des femmes enguenillées de cotonnades brenneuses, l'échine cassée en deux, piochetaient le sol. Elles levèrent la tête au passage des chevaux, montrèrent, sous des turbans maigres semblables à des langes d'enfant dysentériques, des faces ravagées, plus mornes et rissolées que la terre (Randau 103).

given agency, as most Algerian female characters are reduced to sexual objects and to passivity in the novel – as I have outlined in previous sections. On many occasions, Suzanne is represented as a powerful stimulator for Zidane to proceed with his education. The prose tells of the time Zidane met Suzanne in France and she was the one, who helped him to live there. Zidane explains the way Suzanne motivated him to learn the French language since their early meetings: “[...] she was asking me, why do not you start learning reading and writing, and she insists that I am young, and I can get a significant academic certificate after ten years” (Ouettar 164)<sup>126</sup>. He adds that she brought him to live with her and her mother in their house, and she convinced him to be educated and helped him until he reached and graduated from the national university: “[w]hen I come back home in the evening, she sits beside me, and starts making me review what I have learned, or explain any text, then she asks me to rewrite a page from the book, or rehearse to her a recitation in the morning before she goes to work” (Ouettar 165)<sup>127</sup>.

Despite the fact that Suzanne is also rarely given a voice to speak, she is depicted in a different way compared to Algerian female characters. Suzanne is represented as an active character who can strengthen the protagonist Zidane with education, which enables him to become a leader of the maquisards later. In addition, unlike other Algerian characters, Ouettar provides a detailed description of her physical appearance: “Suzanne appeared to him in the darkness, she sometimes appears with her blue eyes, at other [times] with her hairy front, or with her straight nose, and once she appeared with all her face” (Ouettar 163)<sup>128</sup>. The reader can notice the agency provided to Suzanne in her representation as she is given a central role for being the reason behind the education of the protagonist and the development of his skills,

<sup>126</sup> تسألني، لماذا لا أنكبّ على تعلّم القراءة والكتابة، وتلجّ على أنني شاب، أستطيع بعد عشر سنوات، أن أنال شهادة محترمة (164)

<sup>127</sup> وما إن أعود في المساء، حتّى تجلسني أمامها، وتشرع في إعادة تلقيني ما قرأت، أو في شرح نصّ من النصوص، ثمّ تطلب منّي أن أنسخ صفحة من الكتاب، أو محاسبتها قبل الذهاب إلى العمل بمحفوظة (165)

<sup>128</sup> تراءت له سوزان في الظلمة، مطلة أحياناً بعينها الزرقاوين، وأخرى بجبهتها المشعرة، أو بأنفها المستقيم، ومرة واحدة أطلت بوجهها كاملاً (163)

in comparison to other Algerian female characters who are silenced and given passive roles in the novel. Moreover, the analysis in the previous chapter has shown that Algerian female characters in this novel were represented as mere passive objects of sexual desire for other male characters, without giving importance to the description of their appearances. By contrast, Suzanne is depicted as an active character in addition to placing emphasis on the description of her facial features to suggest beauty.

These examples illustrate that there is unequal treatment of Western and Algerian female characters in Ouettar's prose. There is a noticeable difference in the way Algerian female characters are portrayed compared to the portrayal of the French woman Suzanne. This is reminiscent of the paradigm of colonial writings that elevates the status of Western women and humiliates colonised women. Such representation does not only recreate the objectified image of the Algerian woman but also highlights her inferiority compared to Western women. Thus, it can be concluded that the presence of this paradigm in Ouettar's text, shows another feature that confirms the fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspective in his prose.

### **3.2. The Western woman as a replacement of the passive Algerian mother**

The character of the Western woman is also present in Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995). Anatolia embodies in the novel the role of a Russian teacher of dance in the school of arts. Just like Suzanne in Ouettar's novel, Anatolia plays a crucial role in educating the protagonist Meriam and motivating her to develop her talents in ballet dancing, as Meriam explains:

She asked me to join the Ballet [school] which she created in Sidi Bel Abbas [...]. I used to spend some time in my studies and the rest in sports and learning Ballet. She told me once: if you progress well, I will take you with me to Moscow. [...] the time I spent between her house and the Ballet school is more than the time I spent in my house. She also insisted and registered me in the closest school to her house. Even when I was ill, she was the one who took me [to the doctor] in her private car. She always says:

-When we do something, either we do it in a perfect way or we leave it to somebody else (Laredj 91)<sup>129</sup>.

Meriam points to the role of Anatolia and shows her as being more than a supportive teacher in the novel. Meriam shows that Anatolia was her only source of support, which eventually prevented her, with her lover, from committing suicide, after the critical psychological crisis that she went through when she discovered the truth about her real father.

She explains this to her lover saying: “My mother did not ask any question. She convinced herself that her husband was martyred and that is all. Am I a daughter of my father or my uncle?! Which uncle and which father. A crazy world [...]. If you were not here, Anatolia and you, I would have committed suicide” (Laredj 129)<sup>130</sup>. The passage highlights Anatolia’s support to Meriam, which is put contrasted with the submissiveness of the mother to her fate as she never questions the truth about the death of her first husband, which caused sadness and ambiguity in Meriam’s life. The passage illustrates a sort of opposition between the supportive role of Anatolia and the moral dereliction and the fatalistic nature of Meriam’s mother regarding such an important matter. This idea is affirmed in another passage through Meriam’s perspective when she says: “[...] I feel sometimes that Anatolia gave me more love than my mother. I opened my eyes on many things when she was with me, and in her presence. I was a rural girl with closed eyes” (93)<sup>131</sup>. This passage repeats the comparison between Anatolia and her mother by giving elevated status to Anatolia compared to the mother and showing her as a person who provided her the motherly affection and with whom she learned what she was

---

<sup>129</sup> طلبت مَنِّي الإنخراط في باليه سيدي بلعباس الذي أنشأته [...] . كنت أقضي وقتاً في الدراسة ووقتاً آخر في الرِّياضة وفي تعلُّم الباليه. قالت لي ذات مرّة : إذا تحسنت أكثر سأخذك معي الى موسكو. [...] الوقت الذي أقضيه بين بيتها وصالة الباليه يتجاوز القت الذي أقضيه في بيتنا. بل أصرّت وسجّلنتني في مدرسة محاذية لبيتها. حتّى عندما أمرض، هي التي تأخذني بسيّارتها الخاصة. تقول دائماً : عندما نقوم بشيء، إمّا أن نتقنه أو نتركه لغيرنا (91)

<sup>130</sup> أمي لا تطرح أي سؤال. أقنعت نفسها باستشهاد زوجها والسلام. هل أنا إبنة أبي أم إبنة عمّي؟! أيّ عمّ وأيّ أب. عالم مجنون [...].  
لولا أناطوليا. لولاك لانتحرت (129)

<sup>131</sup> أشعر أحياناً أنّ أناطوليا أعطتني من الحبّ، أكثر ممّا أعطتني أمي. أشياء كثيرة فتحت عيني فيها معها وبحضورها. طفلة ريفيّة، مغمضة العينين كنت (93)



supposed to learn with her mother. Although Anatolia is the only Western character in the novel – as all the other women are Algerian – she is provided with a laudatory portrayal and agency, which was almost absent in the representation of other female characters, especially the mother. Her active portrayal in the novel is highlighted through the psychological support she offers to the protagonist Meriam, and her contribution to educating Meriam, which are characteristic features that are missing from the figure of the mother, to whom a degraded portrayal is assigned.

The previous examples of representation of Western women in both Ouettar's *Al Laz* (1974) and Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995) demonstrate attempts to restore the conventional binary opposition between the elevated Western and the inferior Oriental or Algerian woman. Both novels show Algerian women as passive or mere objects of sexual desire while they denote noticeable elevations of the few Western female characters included. The Western characters included in the novels are given agency, which rarely accompanied the representation of Algerian characters. In addition, they are provided with central roles in developing and educating the protagonists. This is reminiscent of the traditional picture of the Western or colonial characters who 'civilise' the colonised populations. The survival of such portrayals in postcolonial Algerian literature illustrates the re-creation of the self-Orientalist discourse in the representation of women, as the novels understudy seem to conjure up the image of the objectified passive Algerian woman in contrast to the elevated active Western women on many occasions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The textual analysis of the novels examined in this chapter has revealed varied representations of Algerian women, which however share a common feature— to contribute to creating self-Orientalist discourse. Yet, they differ from each other depending upon the extent

of the perpetuation or rejection of the colonial and Orientalist image of Algerian women. The prose that was analysed shows re-creations of two main elements, which dominated the colonial and Orientalist perspectives about Algerian women: the objectification of Algerian women and the paradigm that opposes the superiority of Western women against the inferiority of Algerian women.

The representation of women in Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) confirms his commitment to the reluctant self-Orientalist stance reflecting his challenge to the stereotyped rendering of the Algerian woman. The novel shows portrayals that echo the image of the sexually objectified Algerian woman, which is incarnated in the characters of Dehbia and Ouiza in the novel. Yet, his resistance to the colonial order results in releasing other female characters from existing stereotypes, which can be noticed in the representations of Melha and Kamouma.

Taher Ouettar's novel *Al Laz* (1974) shows a totally opposite stance to Feraoun although both of them wrote about the era of the Algerian revolution which marked a significant commitment of Algerian women in favour of the cause of national independence. Unexpectedly, Ouettar suppressed the agency of most female characters and reduced them to the status of mere sexual objects, which is reminiscent of colonial portrayals as illustrated by examples from Maupassant's writings. The marginalisation of Algerian women in Ouettar's prose is understood as a reflection or even implicit endorsement of the marginalisation of Algerian women from the political realm. It also places Ouettar's novel among the writings which display fully-fledged self-Orientalist representations.

The ambivalent self-Orientalist stance was discussed through Waciny Laredj's *The Lady of the Place* (1995) and Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) in this chapter. The two novels show slight differences when it comes to the total marginalisation of Algerian

female characters in Ouettar's novel. This is because both Laredj and El-Farouk provided agency for some of their female characters although it was, in most cases, limited to the main protagonists Meriam and Luiza, respectively. Yet, what demonstrated the internalisation of stereotypical representations and the contribution in creating the self-Orientalist discourse was their insistence on associating their female characters with passivity, misery and weakness, while their other feminist counterparts, who wrote in the same period, such as Ahlam Mosteghanemi, attempted to empower their female characters to detach them from conventional images of passivity.

The second major feature that is reflected in Ouettar's and Laredj's texts is the contrast between the Arab and Western woman. My analysis has shown that Ouettar's objectification of Algerian female characters was not applied to the French female character included in the novel. Unlike objectified and second-rate roles assigned to Algerian characters, Ouettar's prose emphasised the agency of the Frenchwoman Suzanne and depicted her crucial role in educating the male protagonist Zidane. Revealingly, Laredj's novel included a Russian female character named Anatolia, who is given an active role and her presence depicted as being more effective than the presence of the protagonist's mother. These portrayals not only show the Western characters as active; they go as far as strengthening the stereotypes about Algerian women's inferiority as well.

Following the Western representation of the so-called Oriental woman shows that Orientalist and colonialist literary output gave specific attention to veiled Algerian women. The veil, as it typifies Muslim females, was perceived as another feature that differentiated Oriental women from their Western counterparts. Representations of veiled women were usually extended to the discussion of Islam as it is the religion that prioritised the veil. Thus, the

following chapter examines the Algerian rendering of the image of veiled Algerian women in particular and the Islamic religion, in the postcolonial literary output under study in this thesis.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Religion in Self-Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Algerian Postcolonial Novels**

The Orientalist and colonialist discourses paid particular attention to the religion of the Other, in addition to the study of the people and lands. As the major religion in the so-called Orient, Islam took the lion's share in this interest and led to the creation of biased perspectives about this religion. Therefore, in line with the overall analysis of this thesis, I argue that Algerian renderings of Islam were influenced by major social and political changes in Algeria, which revolved around the Islamic religion mainly during colonialism and in the Black Decade, causing the transmission of colonial perspectives to the postcolonial literature. I also argue that despite the existence of some Orientalist strands which more objectively tackled and represented the Islamic religion, some Algerian postcolonial authors provide accounts which mainly recreate aspects of the Orientalist discourse put forward by the most radical authors of the colonial era. In doing so, I highlight the trajectory of representations from a positive take on Islam to a critical and pejorative one, reflected in the three concepts of reluctant, fully-fledged and ambivalent self-Orientalist stances.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first part is an overview of phases through which biased clichés about Islam have been created in Orientalist and colonialist discourses, in order to provide a background context for the clichéd representation of Islam. In the second section, I analyse the representation of Islam in late colonial era literary production including theoretical works of Malek Bennabi on the one hand, and Mouloud Feraoun's novel *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) on the other. Through this section, I argue that the closeness to colonialism is not always the reason behind the influence of colonial stereotypes, as Bennabi and Feraoun rejected colonial clichés about Islam in spite of writing during colonialism. In so

doing, I demonstrate, rather counter-intuitively, that the phenomenon of ‘self-Orientalism’ reached an all-time low in the late colonial period and that Oriental clichés were in fact actively challenged, possibly alongside the anti-colonial political upheaval that prevailed at the time. In the third section, I discuss the contribution of the rise of radical Islamism during the Black Decade to the shift in the representation of Islam and the creation of self-Orientalist tendency which is vividly illustrated in Kamal Daoud’s *Meursault contre-enquête* (2013). The analysis of Daoud’s novel brings about a different perspective about Islam in Algeria as Daoud’s writings are at times deprecating Algeria’s national religion and contradicting portrayals discussed in the writings of Bennabi and Feraoun. The last section is devoted to a discussion of one of the major features related to the discourse about Islam, namely the veil. Being an aspect that is traditionally associated with Islam, the veil was also assigned to colonial stereotypical representations which I argue have been transmitted into the Algerian postcolonial literature creating self-Orientalist perspectives mainly in Algerian women’s writings. For that reason, the discussion of this aspect relies on the analysis of two Algerian female authors: Assia Djebar’s *Ombre sultane* (1987) and Fadhila El-Farouk’s *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999).

### **1. Historical dimensions of the Western conception of Islam, and the veil as one of its essential components**

Representations of Islam have been featured in the early discourse of Orientalism as it is regarded among major cultural elements that distinguished the Orient, as a cultural construction, from the West. Unlike Said’s study that starts from the works issued by the scientists, artists and engineers who accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte during his conquest of Egypt (1798), other scholars assume that the interest in the Orient in general, and the Islamic religion in particular, started before that episode. Norman Daniel argues that old accounts on Islam by Christian authors date back to an earlier stage and clearly display a tendency towards

rejecting Islam. He explains that “[a] formula for its abjuration by converts to Christianity has reasonably been thought to date from the first generations after the rise of Islam and is related to the work of St John of Damascus, himself born about fifty years after the Hijra” (3).

The early contact between the Christian and Muslim people led to the former gathering considerable evidence on the new religion. In fact, some scholars argue that the Byzantine Kingdom, then the Crusades were the ways which allowed Christians to gain more knowledge about Islam, which was the reason behind “the negative stories and blasphemies regarding Islam and the prophet Muhammad” (Hasbullah 3). However, other scholars such as David R. Blanks argue that there were other ways of contact with the East by people of different classes from the West, who came back home and spread their different impressions about the Islamic religion “and eventually a set of notions was formed from which all Europeans drew their collective perceptions of the ‘other’ and from which every European would have to choose those that informed his or her personal opinion” (2), which generated various perspectives on Islam.

Indeed, although there were numerous accounts revealing different perspectives, most of them seemed to share the same demeaning attitudes towards Islam. The dominant perceptions of Islam that spread in the West, were integrated in forming the picture of the ‘other’, which mostly tended to be debased<sup>132</sup>. This leads us to examine the reason behind the homogeneity of the deprecating tendency that characterised most Western perceptions of Islam since the early stages of its appearance. Daniel Vitkus argues in this context that the persistent misrepresentations of Islam were a result of “the perceived threat of Islam to Christianity that produced the denial or the radical distortion of what Islam really was” (208). Seemingly, Said

---

<sup>132</sup> Although one can argue that there were also some cases of what is called now Islamophilia as will be illustrated later.

maintains that Islam remained always a “lasting trauma” (44) for Europe or the Christian world in general.

Moreover, the spread and the development of the Islamic civilisation that reached the territories of Christian Europe during the Middle Ages augmented the rivalry between the two religions. In addition to the rivalry and political conflicts between these two civilisational poles, the development of the Islamic civilisation during the Middle Ages resulted in “a Western sense of cultural inferiority” (Blanks 3), which accordingly increased hostility towards Islam and also contributed to the creation of the deprecating image about it. David Blanks explains that:

During the Middle Ages, Islamic civilization was far ahead of its Christian rival, offering enticing advances in architecture, law, literature, philosophy, and, indeed in most areas of cultural activity. It was therefore from a position of military and, perhaps more importantly, cultural weakness that Christian Europe developed negative images, some of which survive to the present day (Blanks 3).

The images spread in Christian Europe were based on biased stereotypes that were associated with Islam and its representatives, which emphasised the picture of a religion that spread violence in the world and promised its followers sensual pleasure in the other world (Vitkus 217)<sup>133</sup>.

In this vein, Hichem Djaït (Hishām Ju‘ayt) explains that there are two categories of people from the Christian world that provide two different perspectives about Islam. He explains that “the first was nourished by the Crusade, the second by the Islamic-Christian confrontation in Spain. One was developed at the imaginary level, the other at the rational level” (Djaït 17/18)<sup>134</sup>. Djaït’s explanation provides a reason behind the nuances or the opposition amongst the images spread about Islam for he argues that “in popular literature Muslims were pagans

---

<sup>133</sup> This is a lasting perception of Islam up until the present day, as I shall outline later through the writings of some authors I am analysing.

<sup>134</sup> “[I]a première était nourrie de la Croisade, la seconde de la confrontation islamo-chrétienne en Espagne. L’une se déployait au niveau de l’imaginaire, l’autre au niveau du rationnel” (Djaït 17/18).



and Muhammad a magician, a depraved man, leading a depraved people” (18)<sup>135</sup>, which is opposing the perspective in the scholarly view (18). In fact, Djaït’s analysis and argument about the heterogeneity of the Orientalist discourse about Islam lead us to revisit Said’s generalised view regarding his opinion about the Orientalists’ accounts on Islam and argue that there is group of authors who, more objectively, studied Islam and contributed accounts and literature about it in different veins. Among them were Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and Shimmel (Hasbullah 7). For example, W. C. Smith criticised the Western definition of religion “as an observable phenomenon, a defined, fixed and distinguishable system” (Ibrahim 85). He explains that the study of religion cannot be undertaken from an angle of the observer as the “one who study[sic] religion from the perspective of an outsider and assumes that he knows or understands the religion. In reality, should he fail to experience himself the religion, his analysis falls short” (Ibrahim 86)<sup>136</sup>.

Indeed, the central argument of this chapter is that objective studies of Islam were the exception rather than the rule. As much of the accounts, especially in literature, sustained and perpetuated denigrating perspectives about Islam. In French literature, for example, Voltaire’s play *Le Fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophète* (1741) (*Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet*) is regarded as a fundamental source of demeaning stereotypes of Islam in European literature. The play focuses on the character of “Mahomet”, shows him as a sensual and despotic figure and highlights his “willingness to fabricate a religion based upon his sexual and political

---

<sup>135</sup> [d]ans la littérature populaire les musulmans étaient des païens et Mahomet un magicien, homme dépravé, chef d’un peuple dépravé” (18).

<sup>136</sup> Likewise, in opposition to Said’s argument about the homogeneity of the Orientalist discourse, Daniel Vitkus cites some Western authors such as the French traveller Jean Thevenot, who went to the East and provided accounts about the Orient and the Islamic religion in which he was “able to praise rather than revile” (225). In the same vein, whilst Abdul Latif Tibawi (1910-1981) criticised most Western scholars arguing that they “hav[e] ‘insufficient scientific detachment’ in writing about Islam” (Varisco 153), he highlighted the fact that Orientalists like Gibb and Lane were counted among the scholars who study Islam by “avoid[ing] meddling and patronizing” (Varisco 153).

desires” (Hammerbeck 4). Although it is argued that the play is used to indirectly criticise the dominance of the Catholic Church at that time, the features given to Islam and the Prophet in this play consolidated a typically biased perspective<sup>137</sup>. These denigrating perspectives about Islam survived and influenced the output of subsequent authors. Thus, in this chapter, I examine the possibility of the transmission of these portrayals and thoughts from the coloniser’s literary output to Algerian postcolonial literature.

The French Orientalist Joseph Ernest Renan is another seminal scholar, whose account on Islam had been influential since its appearance. In fact, the lecture *L’Islamisme et la science* (*Islamism and Science*), which he delivered on 29 March 1883, provided a supportive foundation to biased stereotypes on Islam, as he varied arguments about the inferiority of Semitic races and presented the Islamic religion as an obstacle that hinders acquiring and coping with science: “All those who have been in the East or in Africa were struck by what has fatally limited the mind of a true believer, this kind of circle of iron which surrounds his head, making him absolutely closed to science, incapable to learn nothing or open up to any new ideas” (Renan 372)<sup>138</sup>. His lecture triggered responses from the so-called Oriental scholars, who denounced Renan’s culturalist discrimination of Muslims and defended Islam’s compatibility with the scientific evolution, among them Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī)

---

<sup>137</sup> In one of his letters to the King of Prussia, Voltaire admitted that he “ha[s] made Mahomet in this tragedy guilty of a crime which in reality he was not capable of committing” (Quoted in Perchard 5).

<sup>138</sup> “Tous ceux qui ont été en Orient ou en Afrique sont frappés de ce qu’a de fatalement borné l’esprit d’un vrai croyant, de cette espèce de cercle de fer qui entoure sa tête, la rend absolument fermée à la science, incapable de rien apprendre ni de s’ouvrir à aucune idée nouvelle” (Renan 372).

(1838/1839 -1897) and Namik Kemal <sup>139</sup>(Nāmiq Kamāl) (1840-1888) (Norman 694)<sup>140</sup>.

Although there have been answers to Renan's paper, his perspectives are still echoed when referring to Islam as an obstacle against scientific evolution and modernity<sup>141</sup>.

In addition to the emphasis placed on backwardness, inferiority, relentless sexuality, violence, and despotism in Islam, the veil was another cornerstone of the Orientalist and the colonialist discourses. Despite the fact that the veil was not a novelty brought by Islam as it was common centuries before<sup>142</sup>, it has become related to Islam in the modern era because it is mostly worn only by Muslim women who "are seen either as embodiments of Islam, or helpless victims forced to live by its tenets" (Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 14). Moreover, the image of the veiled woman persisted in colonial and Orientalist writing for a double-edged use, which consists in propagating the oppression and passivity of veiled women and emphasising the inferiority of Islam. Leila Ahmed argues that "[t]he custom of veiling and the position of

---

<sup>139</sup> For instance, Renan praised the openness to science of Judeo-Christian societies as opposed to their Islamic counterparts. As a response, Al-Afghani "qualified Renan's negative views about the scientific reform among Muslim societies, pointing out that Islam was a much newer faith that was just opening up to humanism in Afghani's day, some 1200 years after Muhammad's death" (Norman 696). For his part, Kemal highlighted Renan's lack of knowledge on Islamic history and argued that "Islam neither destroyed knowledge nor was it destroyed with knowledge" (Quoted in Norman 704). In addition, he "mentions the imperative of Islam to search and investigate, from verses like 'My Lord! Increase me in knowledge' and 'Are those who know equal with those who know not?' or sayings of the prophet like 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave'" (Michelangelo 67).

<sup>140</sup> This topic has re-emerged and is still debated even in the present time by scholars like Abdelwahab Meddeb among others.

<sup>141</sup> For instance, Renan praised the openness to science of Judeo-Christian societies as opposed to their Islamic counterparts. As a response, Al-Afghani "qualified Renan's negative views about the scientific reform among Muslim societies, pointing out that Islam was a much newer faith that was just opening up to humanism in Afghani's day, some 1200 years after Muhammad's death" (Norman 696). For his part, Kemal highlighted Renan's lack of knowledge on Islamic history and argued that "Islam neither destroyed knowledge nor was it destroyed with knowledge" (Quoted in Norman 704). In addition, he "mentions the imperative of Islam to search and investigate, from verses like 'My Lord! Increase me in knowledge' and 'Are those who know equal with those who know not?' or sayings of the prophet like 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave'" (Michelangelo 67).

<sup>142</sup> For example, during the rule of Hammurabi in Babylon (1796- 1750 BC), he "imposed the veil for aristocratic women and forbade prostitutes from using it in his famous code" (Mernissi 11).

women in Muslim societies became, in [Western] rhetoric, the proof of the inferiority of Islam and the justification of their efforts to undermine Muslim religion and society” (237).

However, the perspectives toward the veil by Orientalist authors were sometimes heterogeneous, as the representations were influenced by the gender of the author, as Billie Melman highlights in *Women's Orient* (1992). She discussed the way female Orientalist authors and artists have denounced biased portrayals of the so-called Orient, as was the case of the paintings of Sophie de Bouteiller known as Henriette Brown (1829-1906), and the writings of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. The latter tackled the topic of the veil and provided representations which contradicted the conventional perspectives provided by male authors. The wife of the British ambassador to Turkey, Lady Wortley Montagu, discussed life in Turkey during the Ottoman Empire in her *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1717-1718) and observed that:

‘Tis very easy to see they have more Liberty than we have, no Woman of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without 2 muslins, one that covers the face all but her Eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head... You may guess how effectually this disguise them, that there is no distinguishing the great Lady from her Slave, and ‘tis impossible for the most jealous Husband to know his Wife when he meets her, and no Man dare either touch or follow a Woman in the street (Quoted in Melman 86).

Melman highlights the freedom Turkish women gained by wearing the veil explaining that the use of the word ‘Liberty’ in this context hints at equalising the freedom of the veiled Turkish women to the freedom of the Western males in her society, as at that time, “[t]he notion of Liberty [...] applied to Western Man alone with an emphasis on the ‘M’” (95). She also explains the fact that the veil enables Muslim women to become anonymous which helps them to gain more freedom, which is the feature that will be discussed in Djebbar’s writings in the fourth section of this chapter.

Unlike Montagu, most male Orientalist authors used the veil to create biased stereotypes about Oriental women. In French Orientalist literature, in particular, we find that authors from

1850s onward, like Lamartine, Du Camp, Nerval and Flaubert, among others, filled their travelogues “with titillating descriptions of Oriental women, in which Western male fantasises about the veil and the harem play a central part” (Beller et al 212). Such perspectives that teemed with misconceptions of the veil dominated the writings of French Orientalists in colonised Algeria and reappeared later even in Algerian postcolonial literature.

Having shown the context of Islam in Orientalist and colonialist discourses together with the contentions displayed against the veil, my hypothesis is that the endurance and the dominance of the biased portrayal about Islam may have resulted in affecting the perspective of the native populations on their own religion or lead to an acceptance of the dominance of the coloniser’s thought. This is what Memmi explains about the colonised, who comes to the stage of “accepting himself as something negative” (182), which can be echoed in the postcolonial Algerian authors’ writings as self-Orientalist representations.

## **2. Spirituality and religion in early Algerian literature**

During the French colonial period in Algeria, Islam was very often rejected just like other components of the indigenous culture and ideologies, especially as there is a history of antagonism between Islam and Christianity, which was marked by a hostile relationship between Islamic North Africa and Christian Europe dating back to the time of Roman attempts to conquer North Africa<sup>143</sup>. Thus, ever since the early stage of occupation, French colonialism started “a concerted assault on the identity and structure of the Muslim population of Algeria, depriving them, through political, economical and educational domination, of their leadership and consciousness as a community” (Willis, *The Islamist* 16). For instance, the French

---

<sup>143</sup> It is important to explain that there were cases of Islamophilia. Although the Islamic religion was rejected by the colonial administration in general, which at best sought to use it to its own benefits, there were French figures who were quite supportive of Islam, such as Ismayl Urbain, “author of *L’Algérie pour les Algériens* (1860), an important *arabophile* defence of Algerian rights” (Abi-Mershed 158), and others like Pierre Loti.

administration attempted to weaken the Islamic education in colonised Algeria and put restrictions on the Islamic or the Qur’anic schools and other traditional institutions for “[b]y the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the Muslims in Algeria had been effectively deprived of most of the means to finance their religious institutions and practices” (Maussen 59). Moreover, the social life of the Muslim population in colonised Algeria was severely controlled by laws issued through the colonial administration, in an attempt to restrain Islam and its followers.

For example, these laws held an unequal treatment of Muslims, Jews and Christians as “The so-called Crémieux laws of 1870 naturalised the Jews in Algeria, and the naturalisation law of 1889 granted automatic French citizenship to all Europeans born in Algeria. By contrast, the Muslims were denied French citizenship unless they renounced statutory rights to Islamic law [...]” (Maussen 60). Furthermore, in 1881, the French Chamber of Deputies passed the “Code de l’indigénat” which was “a set of harsher penalties for Muslims convicted of certain offenses, and the Algerian Muslim was literally denied his rights to justice by forcing him to reject Islamic courts in favour of French secular courts, if at all, he was willing to demand his rights” (Cooke 58). Willis highlights the further measures that took place against the Association of Algerian Ulama during the 1930s among them Michels Decree “which sought to prevent all but officially sanctioned imams from preaching in the mosques of Algiers – thus attempting to deny Ben Badis<sup>144</sup> and his followers an important outlet for their views” (The Islamist 15). The view considering Islam as incompatible with the French Republic was used as a justification for the discrimination of Muslims compared to Jews and Christians, as Muslims were denied their rights unless they agreed not to be under the jurisdiction of Islamic law.

---

<sup>144</sup> Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889-1940) is the founder of the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama (AUMA) and the leader of the Islamic reformist movement in Algeria.

Meanwhile in colonial literature, the history of Islam in Algeria was either dismissed or denigrated when mentioned. According to Peter Dunwoodie, Louis Bertrand among other Algerianist authors aimed “to erase the presence of Islam, unearth and consolidate the traces of the European colonizer in North Africa’s past, and bolt Algeria onto the mainland as a province or region; in other words to silence the colonists’ feeling of exile [...]” (179)<sup>145</sup>. Moreover, the assault on the Islamic religion in the colonial era was also practised through “denigrating the faith and making Islam appear in the worst possible form” (Cooke 58). This showed the perpetuation of the early stereotypes about Islam and their endurance in colonial writings throughout the colonial era.

Despite constant attempts to marginalise Islam in colonial Algeria, it appeared as a prominent element in works of Algerian authors and theorists published even during colonialism. Malek Bennabi (1905-1973) is among the seminal Algerian philosophers who analysed, in many works, the situations of human society, especially that of Algerian Muslim society such as: *Les Conditions de la renaissance* (1948) (*The Conditions of Renaissance*) and *Vocation de l’Islam* (1954) (*The Calling of Islam*), which were both published during the colonial era. In fact, whilst there were thinkers who engaged only with the spiritual legacy of Islam, Bennabi called for its use as a pathway towards political emancipation and as a way of ending the *colonisabilité* of Muslim society<sup>146</sup>. Such perspectives are explained in one of his works entitled *Le Problème des idées dans le monde musulman* (1970) (*The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*). Bennabi argued that a civilisation is the product of a fundamental idea that drives its historical and socio-cultural trajectories forward. He used as an example the influence of the Islamic idea saying that “it is the Islamic idea that has subordinated the vital

---

<sup>145</sup> This was achieved mainly through referring to the Roman and Latin heritage, and skipping the Islamic history of the country, to link it and authorise the presence of French colonialism as explained in the first chapter.

<sup>146</sup> See chapter one for a more detailed account of the concept of *colonisabilité*.

energy of the Jahilian society to the requirements of a civilized society” (43)<sup>147</sup>. Therefore, he incites Muslim countries to go back and learn from the past as well – for instance – when he says that nowadays Muslim countries “do not like looking back. However, it is sometimes necessary to go back on these steps, when it is necessary to correct errors” (112)<sup>148</sup>. This resulted in the detachment of Muslims from “the Archetypes of their original cultural universe” (134)<sup>149</sup>, which contributed to the withdrawal of their civilisation.

Bennabi explains that building one’s own civilisation cannot always be achieved by following the path of other civilisations. Instead, it must be based on authentic ideas, which in the case of Muslim societies, can be inspired from their religion. Pondering on this idea, Bennabi argues: “We do not make history by following others’ footsteps on all paved paths, but by opening new paths. This is only possible with authentic ideas that respond to all the problems of a moral order and effective ideas to deal with the problems of the growth of a society that must be rebuilt” (136)<sup>150</sup>. Bennabi attempts to introduce the Islamic culture and religion as a potential solution to ensure that Algerian society or Muslim societies in general can emerge out of their *colonisabilité*. His theoretical work incites Muslim populations to get authentic ideas from their religion which may serve as an effective response to the problems that result from the development and change of their society. In fact, Bennabi depicts Islam as a tool of progress in building societies, which contradicts its conventional representations in

---

<sup>147</sup> “c’est l’idée islamique qui a subordonné l’énergie vitale de la société djahilienne aux exigences d’une société civilisée” (43).

<sup>148</sup> “ne semblent pas aimer jeter de regard en arrière. Pourtant, il est nécessaire parfois de revenir sur ces pas, quand il y a lieu de corriger des erreurs” (112).

<sup>149</sup> “les Archétypes de leur univers culturel original” (134).

<sup>150</sup> “On ne fait pas l’histoire en emboîtant le pas aux autres dans tous les sentiers battus, mais en ouvrant de nouveaux sentiers. Ceci n’est possible qu’avec des idées authentiques qui répondent à tous les problèmes d’ordre moral et des idées efficaces pour faire face aux problèmes de la croissance d’une société qui doit se reconstruire” (136).



the colonial discourse that maintains the association of Islam with passivity, inferiority and backwardness.

Bennabi's works show a positive stance in representations of Islam which would paradoxically disappear later in post-independence literature. Despite the spread of biased stereotypes through the colonial discourse, Bennabi demonstrates the possibility to use Islam as a tool against the colonisability of the Algerian people during colonialism, which embodies a direct rejection of colonial perspectives that relate this religion to social, cultural and economic retardation. In other words, Bennabi's account does not reflect any influence of the colonial perception of Islam despite writing and publishing in the colonial era. Bennabi's works are rather opposing the colonial deprecation of Islam and present it as a vehicle of the country's liberation and development. That is, in Bennabi's case at least, it can be said that the dominance of colonial stereotypes does not always lead to their appropriation in the colonised's discourse as suggested by Memmi's analysis. Instead, the imposition of these biased clichés can cause an opposing reaction to reject them in colonised's writings, as it is the case with Bennabi and even with his counterpart Mouloud Feraoun as will be shown.

Whilst Bennabi refers to Islam as a useful tool in building societies, Feraoun's novel introduces a pathway to the coexistence of Islam and Christianity in the same society and shows the way Islam was a sign of strength and superiority in Kabyle society, rather than passivity and inferiority as it was conventionally showed in the colonial and Orientalist discourses. *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) provides an account of Algerian society that brings together Muslim and Christian populations during the colonial era in Kabylia. At the outset, Feraoun explains how the two religions were common in Kabylia and illustrates the case of some people, who were both Christian and Muslim at the same time. He claims that some of those converted to Christianity "no longer go to the mosque but they swear by the saints of the country, practice

circumcision like good Muslims and celebrate Eids as well as Christmas” (23)<sup>151</sup>. In addition, he explains that some Kabyles were just following the path of their ancestors, the first Kabyle who converted and “traced them a line of conduct that many follow ingenuously” (23)<sup>152</sup> and others “are converted to take advantage” (21)<sup>153</sup>. Feraoun illustrates this duality of the religious belief with a story of a neophyte, who converted to Christianity but still practised the rituals of Islamic religion:

They say, once, a Priest was surprised to see a barely trimmed neophyte was praying among the Muslims at the mosque.

-Was it really you last night at the mosque?

-Yes father.

-You are not a Muslim.

-Why not, father? I am a Muslim from birth. It seems that the Father did not insist much (22/23)<sup>154</sup>.

That being said, Feraoun highlights the fact that the Christians were a weak minority compared to the majority of the Muslim population. This idea is also expressed through the voice of Dehbia who questions herself: “Why was she born a Christian in Ait-Ouadhou, when everybody there were only Muslim Kabyles? Everywhere, except in Ait-Ouadhou and few other villages where Christians were a small minority; insignificant, negligible, this is what the

---

<sup>151</sup> “ne vont plus à la mosquée mais ils jurent par les saints du pays, pratiquent la circoncision comme les bons musulmans et célèbrent les Aïds aussi bien que le Noël” (*Les Chemins* 23).

<sup>152</sup> “leur traça une ligne de conduite que beaucoup suivent ingénument” (23).

<sup>153</sup> “sont convertis par intérêt” (21).

<sup>154</sup> Jadis, racontent-ils, ce néophyte à peine dégrossi fut surpris par un Père faisant à la mosquée sa prière parmi les musulmans.

- C’était bien toi, hier soir, à la mosquée ?

- Oui mon père.

- Tu n’es pas musulman.

- Pourquoi pas, mon père ? Je le suis de naissance. Il paraît que le Père n’a pas beaucoup insisté (22/23).

Christians of Kabylia were [...]” (19)<sup>155</sup>. Dehbia’s questioning of herself reflects to the reader the feeling of being a misfit in a Muslim community and even reveals a sense of inferiority she was feeling as a Christian.

On another occasion, the novel confirms Dehbia’s feeling of inferiority, when showing that Kabyle Christians with their religious belief were seen as inferior compared to Muslims who consider their religion as a sign of superiority. This is vividly illustrated in the novel through the fact that Muslim men avoided marrying Christian women for this reason. Feraoun illustrates this idea with the situation of Dehbia whom nobody wants to marry in spite of her beauty, merely because she is a Christian. Similarly, Feraoun highlights the fear of Nana Melha who thinks that “no one would marry her daughter. Everyone wanted her but no young man would want to make her his wife” (19)<sup>156</sup> when they would leave Ait-Ouadhou and go to Ighil-Nezman, simply because of her religion. This reminds the reader of the way Mokrane sexually objectified Dehbia, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The passage reveals that Mokrane thinks that Dehbia as a poor Christian woman “deserved to be raped mercilessly” (61)<sup>157</sup>. After showing that Feraoun highlights the debased status of Christians in Ighil-Nezman, it may be assumed here that Dehbia’s Christianity can be added as another reason behind her objectification by Mokrane and other men in Ighil-Nezman (see chapter 3). Although Dehbia is like some other female characters, who have been objectified in the novel – as explained in the previous chapter – we may assume that Dehbia is doubly objectified. On the one hand, she

---

<sup>155</sup> “Pourquoi était-elle née chrétienne aux Ait-Ouadhou, alors que partout il n’y avait que des Kabyles musulmans? Partout, sauf aux Ait-Ouadhou et dans quelques autres villages où les chrétiens étaient une faible minorité ; insignifiants, négligeables, voilà ce qu’étaient les chrétiens de Kabylie [...]” (19).

<sup>156</sup> “personne n’épouserait sa fille. Tout le monde la désirait mais aucun jeune homme n’en voudrait faire sa femme” (19).

<sup>157</sup> “méritait d’être violée sans pitié” (61).

is objectified like other female characters because she is a woman, and, on the other, because she is a Christian according to the examples that have been analysed.

Along the same lines, a closer reading of Feraoun's writings reveals a slight intrusion of some colonial stylistic features in his writings, which may be a result of the colonial education's influence<sup>158</sup>. For instance, Feraoun refers to the name of the Prophet using the Western version 'Mahomet' instead of the Arabic correct version 'Mohammed'. Moreover, Feraoun is criticised by Mostefa Lechraf (Muṣṭafá li-Sharaf) and Youcef Nacib (Yūsuf Nasīb) "who both note how Feraoun incongruously inserts the irreverent phrase "Mahomet's paradise" in Muslim context" (Chouiten, *Hybridity* 362)<sup>159</sup>. In spite of these episodes of self-Orientalism, the overall picture of Feraoun's representation of Islam that emerges from his writings is that of this religious practice being interpreted as a sign of elevated status and strength among populations in Kabylia. This unambiguously opposed the perspectives introduced in colonial writings such as what was propagated concerning the 'Kabyle Myth' which was used to promote the dichotomy between a supposedly 'good' Kabyle and the 'bad' Arab, a simplistic perspective used to serve colonial political goals (Tilmatine 95). Among major elements that constitute the 'Kabyle Myth' is the fact that Berbers – or Kabyles in particular – were less Islamised people and not attached too strongly to Islam: "Berbers especially distinguished themselves, according to colonial literature, by accepting a low degree of Islamization" (Tilmatine 97)<sup>160</sup>. This image is opposed in Feraoun's novel as it showed that Kabyles regard Islam as a sign of superiority that distinguished them from Christians.

---

<sup>158</sup> Mouloud Feraoun was among the Algerian authors who had been educated in French colonial schools, he has given more account about this experience in his autobiographical novel *Le Fils du pauvre* (1950).

<sup>159</sup> It should be clarified here that the expression "Mahomet's paradise" is conventionally used in Orientalist discourse to depict an erotic picture of Islam, as used in John Donne's poem *To his Mistress Going to Bed* (1654).

<sup>160</sup> More will be said about the origins and impact of the 'Kabyle Myth' in the next chapter.

Through the previous analysis of Malek Bennabi and Mouloud Feraoun's works, we notice that their representations of Islam mostly reflected it in a positive manner. Bennabi in his works attempts to show the possibility to use Islam in a constructive context which facilitates the growth of society. Feraoun, for his part, in *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957) depicts a form of Islam which is a sign of high social status in Kabyle society even though, he seldom includes stylistically colonial images about Islam. From these portrayals, we notice that some Algerian writers of the colonial era such as Feraoun and Bennabi showed clear rejection of the presumed passivity and inferiority associated with Islam in colonial literature. It also shows another area where Feraoun's writings confirm the reluctant self-Orientalist stance. This type of representation surprisingly decreases in the literature produced in the post-independence era, especially during the Black Decade which is the idea that will be discussed through Kamal Daoud's writings.

### **3. The rise of radical Islamism and the rebirth of stereotypical portrayals of religion**

The denigration of the native populations' religion was also used as a justification for the colonisation of Muslim countries as colonial writings usually focus on "show[ing] the irrationality, barbarity, obscurantism and backwardness of Muslims and Islam (and therefore their need to be 'civilized' and 'enlightened')" (Zebiri 8/9). Yet, I hypothesise that there are other factors, which are the reason behind the continuation and the prominence of these stereotypical portrayals about Islam. In the case of Algeria, added to the influence of the colonial and the Orientalist discourses, I argue that the events that unfolded during the Black Decade and the misuse of Islam for political purposes have led to the resurgence of conventional clichés related to this religion in Algerian postcolonial literature. This is particularly the case because the literary production of this era, as I shall outline later, shows a

significant re-creation of the demeaning representations of Islam in the attempt to denounce what was done under its pretext.

To contextualise the analysis of the novel under study, it is preferable to expose some fundamental events that took place during the Black Decade. After the riots of October 1988 in Algeria, the ruling party at that time, headed by President Chadli Benjedid (Shādīlī ibn jadīd), allowed the political reform that gave rise to political pluralism, which had been eliminated at the time of independence, when a single party, the FLN, took over the destiny of the country. These political changes were a turning point in Algerian history as: “[...]it was considered one of the most dynamic and salient tests for political reform in the world, because it brought out such an unusual cast of competitors (including secular feminists, moderate liberals, moderate and radical Islamists, old-school and even exiled nationalists, ethnic groups, Francophone and Arabophones” (Le Sueur 3). The surprising results of elections brought about a violent and bloody decade. In fact, after the participation of newly created political parties in legislative elections, the FIS won the first round in 1991 because the latter has already “expanded its popular constituency and [had] been setting much of the agenda of public debate” (Roberts 65). Yet, according to Willis, the results of the first round alarmed the Algerian military that “a FIS government would spell disaster, politically and economically, for the Algeria they had pledged themselves to defend” (*The Islamist* 245). Therefore, the ANP intervened, removed the president, stopped the second round of election and disbanded the FIS directly after that “in the name of ‘safeguarding democracy’” (Martinez 2).

This interruption in the democratisation process led to a violent phase of the civil conflict which affected all categories of Algerian society. Although “the civil war has not been accompanied by a collapse of the state; [as] military, administrative and educational institutions continued to operate more or less” (Martinez 6), this juncture witnessed bloody struggles

between the government and the AIS and put Algerian people in the middle. In fact, at the very beginning, the struggle was political as radical Islamists were targeting the state. Yet, after that, the war broadened its parameters and became cultural as well, for the radical Islamists misused the cause of religion to target “writers, French speakers, unveiled women, female athletes [...]”. By 1993, a new kind of cultural war began in earnest, claiming the lives of hundreds of prominent intellectuals and forcing tens of thousands of Algeria’s intelligentsias into exile [...]” (Le Sueur 5/6)<sup>161</sup>.

The rise of political Islamism clashed with the secularist side in Algeria that supported “thoughts and theories focusing on the separation of religion and politics” (Al Areqi 390). This wave has been reflected in Algerian postcolonial novels as well, as it is the case with the novel under study in this section<sup>162</sup>. Kamel Daoud’s *Meursault contre-enquête* (2013) is considered as a revisiting of Albert Camus’s *L’Etranger* (1942), in which the narrator is the “Arab’s” brother Harun. The novel has received much critical interest concerning the various topics it tackled. Elizabeth Zerofsky argues that “Daoud’s work is not simply a riff on the French canon, but rather a vast and searching allegory of the conquest of a people” (Zerofsky). However, other critics such as Nadia Sariahmed (Nādiyah sāriyat Aḥmad) have denounced Daoud’s lack of thoroughness and complexity in his examination of the war and its legacies unlike other Algerian novelists such as Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Moreover, she highlights the little interest

---

<sup>161</sup> Such a terror is pictured in different films such as Merzak Allouache’s *Bab el-Oued City* (1994), or Yamina Bachir-Chouikh’s *Rachida* (2002). Likewise, postcolonial Algerian literature has also tackled this epoch, which is the side that will be examined in following sections.

<sup>162</sup> In fact, during the Black Decade, research in Algeria became dangerous and almost impossible, therefore “the novels and the films themselves have turned into both primary and secondary sources for analysis of contemporary Algeria” (Vince, *Literature* 3). This is why I find it most relevant to use Daoud’s *Meursault contre-enquête* (2013) in my chapter as it was written during and about the Black Decade and provides an account about the representation of Islam in Algerian literature, more importantly because “Daoud knowingly pre-empts the use of his book to ‘explain’ Algeria to the outside world” (Vince, *Literature* 3).

given to denouncing Camus' colonial discourse in the novel. She argues that although Daoud is "answering part of Said's critique in giving Musa a name and a story, in many ways, Daoud repeats the erasures and colonial idioms of Camus" (Sariahmed). It is in the light of this criticism that I am discussing Kamel Daoud's novel in this section as my analysis focuses on the 'erasures' of Algerian characters through the generalised and essentialised portrayals and the re-creation of the 'colonial idioms' in his account of Islam.

Daoud has tackled the topic of terrorism during the era of the Civil War in Algeria although he received death threats like many other Algerian journalists<sup>163</sup>. In the novel under study, Daoud openly criticises radical Islamism in different passages. To begin with, in the following passage Harun describes the day of Friday:

Today's Friday. It is the day closest to death in my calendar. People dress ridiculously, they stroll through the streets at noon still wearing pajamas, practically, shuffling around in slippers as though Friday exempts them from the demands of civility. In our country, religious faith encourages laziness in private matters and authorizes spectacular negligence every Friday. You'd think men observed God's day by being completely scruffy and slovenly" (Daoud 68)<sup>164</sup>.

From the beginning of this passage, we notice Harun's hostility to 'Friday', which is a holy day in Islamic culture as he associates it with death, describing it as 'the day closest to death'. Such a description evokes a scary and uninviting feeling related to this religion, at odd with the fact that it is a religious day when people are invited to mosques. Other deprecating images prevail in the description of ordinary people going for their normal prayers – with the emphasis

---

<sup>163</sup> This trend gathered even more momentum after he became the target of a fatwa issued by Algerian Islamist preacher Abdelfattah Hamadache, who accused Daoud of crimes against Islam and the Arabic language and urged the Algerian state to punish him.

<sup>164</sup> Nous sommes vendredi. C'est la journée la plus proche de la mort dans mon calendrier. Les gens se travestissent, cèdent au ridicule de l'accoutrement, déambulant dans les rues encore en pyjama ou presque alors qu'il est midi, traînent en pantoufles comme s'ils étaient dispensés, ce jour-là, des exigences de la civilité. La foi, chez nous, flatte d'intimes paresse, autorise un spectaculaire laisser-aller chaque vendredi, comme si les hommes allaient vers Dieu tout chiffonnés, tout négligés (Daoud 96).



placed on their laziness and their dishevelled appearance. Indeed, the passage vividly illustrates a direct link between laziness and Islam in his description of the people going to pray wearing their pyjamas, which shows that the narrator does not differentiate between the religion itself and the different ways in which it is practised especially because the description infers a criticism of the religion itself.

This idea is even more acute in the following passage in which Harun consolidates his description of Fridays:

It's the Friday prayer hour I detest the most—and always have, ever since childhood, but even more for the past several year. The imam's voice, shouting through the loudspeakers, the rolled-up prayer rugs tucked under people's arms, the thundering minarets, the garish architecture of the mosque, and the hypocritical haste of the devout on their way to water and bad faith, ablutions and recitations. You'll see this spectacle everywhere on Friday, my friend—you're not in Paris anymore (68/69)<sup>165</sup>.

This passage maintains the narrator's debasing stance towards Islam, which he refers to as a form of bad faith and demeans all that represents it – even the architecture – in an essentialised description. Indeed, Harun's hostility and contempt toward Islam seems to be built on particular incidents that happened in a particular era, and therefore there is a clear attempt at essentialising negative perceptions of Islam. For instance, if the azan in Harun's city is done in a wrong way, it does not systematically imply that this is an authentic version of the origin of the azan in Islam, and it cannot be taken as a reason to debase the religion and its followers in the text. Furthermore, Harun's perspectives in these passages do not seem to be directed against Islamism or terrorism, but rather his portrayals seem to be hastily essentialised conclusions about Islam and its followers which reflect his personal dislike of peaceful religious practices that are fundamentally peaceful and harmless. In addition, these passages do not show Harun's

---

<sup>165</sup> C'est l'heure de prière que je déteste le plus -et ce depuis l'enfance, mais davantage encore depuis quelques années. La voix de l'imam qui vocifère à travers le haut-parleur, le tapis de prière roulé sous l'aisselle, les minarets tonitrueux, la mosquée à l'architecture criarde et cette hâte hypocrite des fidèles vers l'eau et la mauvaise foi, les ablutions et la récitation. Le vendredi tu trouveras ce spectacle partout, mon ami, toi qui viens de Paris (97).

secularist stance and his rejection of the use of religion in politics. He rather seems to suggest a total rejection of Islam, which may be understood as a discrimination of Islam rather than secularism. In line with this idea, Nadia Sariahmed denounces Daoud's absence of reference to the political activities of Islamist parties in his work and she argues that "Daoud tries to assert that this work is not offensive to Muslims, but only to Islamists. If this is true, by 'Islamists' Daoud must mean Muslims who practise Islam" (Sariahmed).

Seemingly, on another occasion, Harun shows his contempt towards his neighbour, who was reciting passages from the Qur'an in the adjacent house : "Sometimes, I feel like busting through the wall that separates me from my neighbour, grabbing him by the throat, and yelling at him to quit reciting his sniveling prayers, accept the world, open his eyes to his own strength, his own dignity, and stop running after a father who has absconded to heaven and is never coming back" (69)<sup>166</sup>. This passage showcases another feature that the text associates with Islam which is passivity, as the neighbour needs to be screamed in the face to be able to open his eyes. This implies that his religion makes him passive and hinders him from recognising his own power and dignity. On another occasion, Harun implicitly links Islam and violence when he speaks about the Qur'an and argues that he has "the feeling that it's not a book, it's a dispute between a heaven and a creature!" (65)<sup>167</sup>. He argues that when reciting the Qur'an his neighbour seems "as if he's alternating roles, from a torturer to a victim and back" (65)<sup>168</sup>. Indeed, the continuous hint for the relation of Islam with violence in Harun's narration recalls the clichéd perception of this religion, especially as he does not criticise cruel misdeeds done under the pretext of this religion; rather, the prose is merely disapproving usual religious

---

<sup>166</sup> "J'ai parfois envie de crever le mur qui me sépare de mon voisin, de le prendre par le cou et de lui hurler d'arrêter sa récitation de pleurnichard, d'assumer le monde, d'ouvrir les yeux sur sa propre force et sa dignité et d'arrêter de courir derrière un père qui ne reviendra jamais" (Daoud 98).

<sup>167</sup> "le sentiment qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un livre mais d'une dispute entre le ciel et une créature!" (93).

<sup>168</sup> "qu'il joue tour à tour le rôle de tortionnaire et celui de victime" (93).

activities such as prayers or reciting the Qur'an, which are rituals that may be found in any other religion.

This debasing stance is also applied to the description of anything that represents Islam, such as places and people. In this passage, Harun describes the view of a mosque from his balcony:

Facing my balcony, just behind the last building on the outskirts of the city, there is an imposing mosque standing unfinished, like thousands of others in this country. I often look out at it from my window, and I loathe its architecture, the big finger pointed at the sky, the concrete still gapping. I also loathe the imam, who looks at his flock as if he's the steward of some kingdom. The hideous minaret makes me itch to speak some absolute blasphemy (139)<sup>169</sup>.

The passage reflects the pejorative significance given to the mosque using a very gross insult to describe the architecture when referring to its minaret as a 'big finger pointed at the sky'. In addition, he shows the Imam as an embodiment of arrogance and conceit, describing him as 'the steward of some kingdom' when he talks to the people. Indeed, the use of expressions such as 'an imposing', 'the steward of some kingdom', 'hideous' suggests a direct link of Islam with radical repulsion. Taking all these examples together shows a deprecation of many of Islam's components including: Friday, Muslim people, the mosque, the Imam even the Qur'an which represents a uniting factor for all Muslims. This causes another biased representation that can affect the reader's perception of Islam and accordingly lead to the continuation of the demeaning clichéd vision of this religion. Indeed, Daoud's prose reflects a shift in the Algerian discourse about Islam, as it shows the fully-fledged appropriation of biased perceptions of Islam, and differs significantly from the discourse provided by Bennabi and Feraoun whose accounts were more positive and resisted to colonial clichés.

---

<sup>169</sup> Il y a, en face de mon balcon, juste derrière le dernier immeuble de la cité, une imposante mosquée inachevée, comme il en existe des milliers d'autres dans ce pays. Je la regarde souvent depuis ma fenêtre et j'en déteste l'architecture, son gros doigt pointé vers le ciel, son béton encore béant. J'en déteste aussi l'imam qui regarde ses ouailles comme s'il était l'intendant d'un royaume. Un minaret hideux qui provoque l'envie de blasphème absolu en moi (187).

In an interview, Kamal Daoud was asked about the audacious views he had presented in his novel about religion, and he answered saying “[...] this is just a story, a work of fiction. It was a fictional character in the novel who said these things, not me. If we judge people on the basis of characters in their books, we will be facing dark times in Algeria. Let me give you an example. Should everybody who quotes the verse ‘I am your God’ be killed? It is Pharaoh who says this, not Allah” (Daoud). Yet, although Daoud distances himself from Harun’s perspectives, his opinions about Islam were deliberately expressed in one of his articles: they were in line with Harun’s descriptions and illustrated that his literary representations are more than mere fictional images. Therefore, I intend to compare the representations of Muslims in his novel to the perspectives Daoud presents in one of his articles entitled “Cologne, lieu de fantasmes” (Cologne, Place of Fantasies).

This article was written after sexual assaults were perpetrated in Cologne when refugees were the first to be suspected after accusations of some victims. In his comment on this incident, Daoud somehow blames the “naivety” of the hosting European countries that welcome people who, according to him, cannot put aside their culture, which cannot be relevant to Europe. He says that: “Yes. The reception of the refugee, of the asylum seeker fleeing the Islamic State organisation or the recent wars, often fails in the West as a result of an overdose of naivety: we see, in the refugee, his status, not his culture [...]. We see the survivor and we forget that the refugee comes from a cultural trap that is encapsulated primarily in his relationship to God and to women”<sup>170</sup>. Daoud’s generalised warning about the effect of the refugee’s culture especially ‘his relationship to God and to women’ echoes a clear reference to essentialised images that associate Islam or Muslims with violence, the repression of women and uncontrolled sexuality.

---

<sup>170</sup> “Oui. L’accueil du réfugié, du demandeur d’asile qui fuit l’organisation Etat islamique ou les guerres récentes pèche en Occident par une surdose de naïveté : on voit, dans le réfugié, son statut, pas sa culture [...]. On voit le survivant et on oublie que le réfugié vient d’un piège culturel que résume surtout son rapport à Dieu et à la femme” (Daoud, *Cologne*).

More generally, it has been observed that Daoud “imputes responsibility for sexual violence to individuals deemed deviant, while denying these individuals any autonomy, since their actions are entirely determined by religion” (Amara et al)<sup>171</sup>.

Indeed, Daoud’s portrayals depict a recurrent reliance on essentialised perspectives which is even more evident when he bundles in one homogeneous group all Muslims, calling them ‘the world of Allah’ and stating that “Sex is the greatest misery in the ‘world of Allah’” (Daoud, *Cologne*)<sup>172</sup>. In addition, Daoud places emphasis on the incapability of the refugee to cope with the modernity of the West which, according to him, “will sometimes remain incomprehensible to [the refugee] for a long time”<sup>173</sup>. Thus, Daoud suggests to conceptualise asylum as “not only having ‘citizenship’ but accepting the social contract of a modernity”<sup>174</sup>. Daoud’s suggestion works somehow as a supportive argument which asserts the inferiority of the Oriental Muslim compared to the superiority of Western values. In this vein, Nouredine Amara and Joel Beinin among others argue that Daoud’s project: “[...] is scandalous, not only because of the unbearable routine of the civilising mission and the superiority of Western values that it evokes. Beyond this colonial paternalism, it also affirms, against ‘the angelism that will kill’, that the deviant culture of this mass of Muslims is a danger for Europe”<sup>175</sup>.

Furthermore, what is more important in discussing Daoud’s article is the fact that he chose to focus on the sexual assaults and ignore other important incidents like the many thefts that

---

<sup>171</sup> “impute la responsabilité des violences sexuelles à des individus jugés déviants, tout en refusant à ces individus la moindre autonomie, puisque leurs actes sont entièrement déterminés par la religion” (Amara et al).

<sup>172</sup> “Le sexe est la plus grande misère dans le « monde d’Allah »” (Daoud, *Cologne*).

<sup>173</sup> “lui restera parfois incompréhensible pendant longtemps”.

<sup>174</sup> “pas seulement avoir des « papiers » mais accepter le contrat social d’une modernité”.

<sup>175</sup> “est scandaleux, non-pas seulement du fait de l’insupportable routine de la mission civilisatrice et de la supériorité des valeurs occidentales qu’il évoque. Au-delà de ce paternaliste colonial, il revient aussi à affirmer, contre « l’angélisme qui va tuer », que la culture déviante de cette masse de musulmans est un danger pour l’Europe”.

happened on the same day in Cologne. One may assume that the aspect Daoud chose to essentialise, clarifies his approach, as speaking about Arabs like thieves will seem such an obvious and racist stereotype, which is inappropriate for him. Therefore, instead of that Daoud seems to choose another aspect of their behaviour that is a less recognised stereotype such as their presumed uncontrolled sexuality and violence. More importantly, through his choice of this specific behaviour and his over essentialised descriptions of the refugees who belong to “the world of Allah”, Daoud also fails to display a sufficient level of precision and care when talking about ‘all Muslims’ which is reminiscent of the essentialised Colonial and Orientalist discourses. All things considered shows that Daoud’s opinions in his articles are reminiscent of the perspectives depicted in his novel, which both teem with images that portray Islam as a religion of violence, uncontrolled sexuality and other biased images that form a direct link with colonial and Orientalist stereotypes. Thus, Daoud’s account about religion is characteristic of fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives.

Daoud was not the only author who discussed religion in his writings during the post-independence era, but there was a significant contribution of female authors who attempted to provide the Algerian rendering of Muslim women in literature, specifically veiled women.

#### **4. The veil and its implications in self-Orientalist discourse**

The veil features among the major cultural differences that attracted Orientalist and colonialist authors when writing about the so-called Orient. This is the case, especially because, as previously explained, there were contrasting perspectives in its reception. Whilst some considered it as a mere sign of oppression and passivity, others think of it as a way to provide more freedom or even as a tool of resistance. In the case of Algeria, the veil had controversial implications in the history of the country from the colonial era till nowadays. During colonialism, the veil was not a random topic in colonial literature, but it had a political

significance in the struggle of the colonised country, as it was a sign of Algerian women's political agency. Unlike the picture that was propagated in colonial literature depicting the veil as a means of oppression and passivity, in real life, "the veil became women's refuge from the French denuding gaze. [...], and it acquired new significance as a symbol of not only cultural difference but also protection from and resistance to colonial-qua-Christian domination" (Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 53).

For the French colonial administration, the veil prevented from controlling or possessing the colonised women as they were hidden behind it. Frantz Fanon explains that "the European experiences his relationship with the Algerian woman at a very complex level. He has the willingness to put this woman within reach, to make her a possible object of possession. This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the coloniser. There is no reciprocity. She does not give herself, does not offer herself" (*Sociologie* 25/26)<sup>176</sup>. Indeed, the colonial administration rejected the veil and viewed it as one of the "faculties of resistance" (Fanon, *Sociologie* 14)<sup>177</sup> of Algerian society, and unveiling Algerian women, indirectly signified breaking the resistance of the whole country. Thus, the colonial administration aimed to "conquer [Algerian] women [...] seek them behind the veil in which they hide" (Fanon 19)<sup>178</sup>. This is because for the colonial administration the cultural struggle against the veil was crucial in defeating the resistance<sup>179</sup>.

---

<sup>176</sup> "[...]l'Européen vit à un niveau fort complexe sa relation avec la femme algérienne. Volonté de mettre cette femme à portée de soi, d'en faire un éventuel objet de possession. Cette femme qui voit sans être vue frustre le colonisateur. Il n'y a pas réciprocité. Elle ne se donne pas, ne s'offre pas" (*Sociologie* 25/26).

<sup>177</sup> "facultés de résistance" (Fanon, *Sociologie* 14).

<sup>178</sup> "conquérir les femmes [algériennes] [...] les chercher derrière le voile où elles se dissimulent" (Fanon 19).

<sup>179</sup> It is important to mention that Fanon has also discussed unveiling as a sign of resistance as well. He explains that in the second phase of resistance "[t]he veil was abandoned in the course of revolutionary action. What had been used to block the psychological or political offensives of the occupier became a means, an instrument" (*Algeria Unveiled* 55).

Colonial writings were usually replete with accounts about the oppression of Muslim women and biased perspectives about the veil, such as Elissa Rhais's *La Fille des Pachas* (1922) (*The Daughter of Pachas*) among others. This is what Leila Ahmed (Laylā Aḥmad) defines as a "colonial feminism" that consists of "fusion between the issues of women, their oppression and the cultures of Other men" (151), which according to her was used "against other cultures in the service of colonialism, [and] was shaped into a variety of the similar constructs, each tailored to fit the particular culture that was the immediate target of domination—India, the Islamic world, sub-Saharan Africa" (151). As a result, the stereotypical representations of veiled women in colonial literary works have "formed a major obstacle to understanding the social significance of the veil from the point of view of the women who live it" (Hoodfar 440).

The status of the veil in Algerian society has witnessed crucial attention after independence, mainly during the Black Decade and became one of the major issues between the *secularists* and the radical *Islamists*, which is the focus of the following sections. The events during the Black Decade brought new and different implications to the veil in Algerian society. The main issue at this stage was the misuse, and more importantly, the misunderstanding of the Islamic religion by radical Islamists, which worsened the situation of Algerian women by the violence practised against them under the pretext of applying Islam. Jane Hiddleston explains this idea saying: "Islam has 'two voices' and the ethical voice, though crucial to the religion's structure, seems increasingly not to be heard in Algeria. Political changes and the resurgence of Islamism, for example, have led to a clamping down on women's activity that distorts the implications of some of Islam's tenets regarding women" (83). The ignorance the of 'ethical voice' in religion, as Hiddleston explained, has led, as I shall outline, to exploit religion to violate the rights of women in social life.



With the development of the conflict, there emerged new armed factions, which worsened the situation when they started to target and threaten women in the first place. In 1993, the GIA emerged as the armed Islamist group in Algeria that rejected the constitutional and legal ways to run the Algerian state “believing instead that force of arms was both morally and practically the right way to achieve this aim” (Willis, *The Islamist* 279). Indeed, in 1994, the GIA issued a “fatwa [that] legalized the killing of girls and women not wearing the hijab (which in Algeria consists of a scarf that hides the hair and neck and a full-length robe; veil is not an accurate translation) [...]” (Turshen 897). The fatwa was applied immediately: “[...] on March 30, two women students, Raziqa Meloudjemi, 18, and Naima Kar Ali, 19, were killed by gun-men on motorcycles while standing at an Algiers bus station. In May, travel by train was forbidden because men and women shared compartments; shortly afterwards, the night train between Béjaïa and Algiers was attacked and torched” (Slyomovics 11). With the continuous threats that targeted women, many unveiled women responded by wearing the veil although the assassinations affected both veiled and unveiled women (Slyomovics 12), which shows that not all the veiled women were supporters of the Islamists, or wore the veil in response to GIA’s orders.

Yet, many others refused to obey GIA’s orders and regarded not wearing the veil as a way of expressing defiance against the oppression of the Islamists’ rigorist interpretation of Islam. More precisely, in this period going out unveiled became for some, the sign of resistance and the political agency against radical Islamists. While some regarded being unveiled as a way of resistance, other groups of women, who belong neither to the radical Islamists nor to the secularists, attempted to use the veil as a tool that enable them to conquer the sphere that was limited to men, especially towards the end of the 1990s<sup>180</sup>. Despite the unceasing efforts of

---

<sup>180</sup> Some leaders of the Islamic political parties have shown welcoming perspectives to the participation of Algerian women. Such as the leader of *Ennahda*, Abdellah Djabellah who said: “there is no objection to a woman

Algerian women to cope with the circumstances of the Black Decade, “in public places, veiled or unveiled, [women] die for the interpretations secular or religious fanatics attach to their presence and appearance” (Slyomovics12). Thus, both veiling and unveiling in Algerian society, during colonialism or the Black Decade, has been a sign of women’s political agency, adding another layer of meaning to the cultural and religious significances. In the following sections, I discuss the extent to which this variety of implication of the veil is reflected in writings of Algerian postcolonial authors, through the analysis of the following novels: Assia Djebar’s *Ombre Sultane* (1987) and Fadhila El-Farouk’s *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999).

#### **4.1. The veil as a tool to seclude women in Assia Djebar’s *Ombre sultane* (1987)**

The novel *Ombre sultane* (1987) by Fatima-Zohra Imalayen (Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’ aymlyānn)– known by her pen name Assia Djebar – counts among the Algerian novels which examine the topic of the veil. The novel is about two women, Isma (Asmā’) and Hajila (Ḥujaylah), who marry the same man (at different times). The events of the novel are narrated by Isma, the first wife who recounts how she left her husband and daughter then chose Hajila as a wife for her husband, to replace her and take care of her daughter. Yet, the husband, who is still obsessed with Isma, becomes accordingly offensive toward Hajila despite her pregnancy. Eventually, Isma succeeds in taking custody of her daughter and helps Hajila to flee from the house in which she was imprisoned. Djebar in this novel intertexts the tale of *Thousand and One Nights* from *Arabian Nights*: she uses the tale of Scheherazade (Shahrazād) and Dunyazad (Dnyāzād) “as an inspirational feminist metaphor of resistance against patriarchy in the Algerian nation-state” (Olusegun-Joseph 229). In other words, the teamwork of Scheherazade and her sister to escape the tyranny of the king was echoed by the solidarity

---

occupying positions of responsibility if she is qualified. Scholars [in religion] allow her to exercise any function except that of the president of the state” (quoted in Lazreg, *The Eloquence* 217).

of Isma and Hajila to escape the abuse and the oppression of their husband in the novel. In addition to the collaboration of Hajila and Isma against the patriarchal society, the veil was another feature that was emphasised in the novel.

The veil in this novel represents a crucial element in the development of the plot, as one of the main characters Hajila (who represents the traditional woman), attempts through the course of events to have a life beyond the veil. On one occasion, Isma tells the story of the time Hajila was brought back to her husband's house after the few days she had spent with her family, while her husband was driving, a woman sitting in one of the parks caught her attention:

A woman with a push-chair has just sat down on one of the benches. She leans forward and picks up a baby; she is right in front of you. She stretches out her bare arms as if to throw the infant up in the air; this unknown woman gives a peal of uninhibited laughter, her evident delight clearly legible on her face which is framed by a halo of red hair. The baby wriggles, the woman laughs [...] (Djebar, *A Sister* 27)<sup>181</sup>.

The narrator highlights how Hajila memorised the scene in her mind and shows that what was attractive for her was the fact that the woman was unveiled. Isma expresses Hajila's thoughts: "You repeat to yourself, 'Henna-ed hair ... Not a French woman.' And you muse. 'Without a veil, out of doors, playing lovingly with her child!' You repeat, 'Outdoors, without a veil, loving...' 'No veil, out of doors...'" (27)<sup>182</sup>. The passage demonstrates that Hajila was deeply affected by the image of the unveiled woman which is highlighted through the continuous repetition of the same thoughts linking unveiling with the outside space in the same expression: 'No veil, out of doors'. This scene was what motivated her to go outside her house and discover her city many times after that.

---

<sup>181</sup> Sur l'un des bancs, une femme vient de s'asseoir, une poussette devant elle. Elle se penche, ses bras soulèvent un bébé : elle te fait face. Ses bras, entièrement nus et tendus, portent le fardeau, comme pour le lancer pour le ciel ; le visage de l'inconnue est barré d'un grand rire. Une joie élargit sa face auréolée de cheveux rouges. Le bébé gigote, la femme rit [...] (Djebar, *Ombre* 42).

<sup>182</sup> "[...] Tu dis, une, deux fois : « Des cheveux rouges de henné...Ce n'était pas une Française ! » Et tu rêves : « Sans voile, dehors, en train d'aimer son enfant ! » Tu reprends: « Sans voile, dehors, entrain ... » « Sans voile, dehors... »" (Djebar, *Ombre* 42).

Indeed, Hajila attempted to go outside while her husband was not at home and discovered the outdoors using her *haïk*<sup>183</sup> as a tool to walk out anonymously. Whenever she goes outside the house, she wears the *haïk* that enables her to remain unnoticed: Isma shows that “[i]t was as if this length of cloth helped you concoct your lie. As if the veil held your future days in its folds... Your escape” (18)<sup>184</sup>. Although the veil denotes the constrained life of Hajila in the novel, in this example it functions as a tool of liberation<sup>185</sup>, as “[t]he folds of the material become not much a barrier as a form of mediation between the woman and the outside world, a point of connection rather than a symbol of separation and seclusion” (Hiddleston 91). Yet, the significance of the veil as a tool of liberty seems to be converted in the following sections of the novel, as the events deviate to show another perspective about the veil.

In one of the passages, Isma narrates when Hajila went outside the house, and for the first time after a series of escapes, she finally dared to remove her veil in the street. Isma articulates Hajila’s feelings :

Finally your hands come to life and fold up the veil as if of their own accord: in two, in four, in eight. The pool of sunlight has spread, flooding the narrow street. [...] You tuck the *haïk* under your arm; you walk on. You are surprised to find yourself walking so easily, at one fell swoop, out into the real world! The alley-way twists and turns. With you free hand you pat the back of your neck, making sure that the slide is holding the long plait firmly in place...(31)<sup>186</sup>.

---

<sup>183</sup> *Haïk* is the traditional dress of the veiled women in some cities in Algeria, mainly Algiers. It consists of a large white tissue that is tied in a way that covers the whole body of women but the face.

<sup>184</sup> “[c]’était comme si, avec ce tissu, tu te préparais à concocter le mensonge. Comme si le voile emmagasinait dans ses plis ta future journée. Ton échappée” (31).

<sup>185</sup> This idea reminds the reader of the aspect of anonymity that has been shown in Montague’s reference to the veil in the Ottoman society (see the first section of this chapter) which provides more liberty to veiled women to move unnoticed and anonymous.

<sup>186</sup> Enfin tes bras en action plient le voile : en deux, en huit ! La flaque de soleil s’est étalée : elle envahit la ruelle. [...] Tu mets le *haïk* sous le bras : tu avances. Tu t’étonnes de te voir marcher d’emblée d’un pas délié sur la scène du monde ! La ruelle dessine d’autres méandres. De ta main libre, tu touches ta natte sur la nuque, tu vérifies la barrette qui retient tes cheveux...(Djebar, *Ombre* 48).

The passage describes the way Hajila moves and ‘walks on’ freely after she has discarded her haïk, emphasising her free hand touching her braids. In another contrasting passage, Isma describes Hajila’s way back at home where she was supposed to wear on her haïk. Isma relates: “[...] You furtively enter the dark hall of building ; with trembling hands, your face contorted in despair, your eyes closed, creating the darkness that reflects your own dark misery, you wrap yourself once more in the *haïk!* You emerge into the street, a ghostly figure once more, and under the white veil grey anger folds up its wings” (34)<sup>187</sup>. The comparison between the two passages shows implicit opposition between the imageries used to describe Hajila when she was removing then wearing back her haïk. Whilst, Isma uses more positive and encouraging expressions when describing the time Hadjila removes the veil such as the sunshine and the free hands that imply light and freedom respectively, she chooses negative imagery to describe Hajila’s situation in the time she was supposed to wear back her haïk, when she describes a dark corridor that reflects the gloominess and the shaking hands that display fear.

This opposition between the veiled and the unveiled is perpetuated on another occasion where Isma highlights the freedom Hajila gains when unveiled: “Spaces open up through which your body can pass without disturbing anything. You tell yourself that no one takes any notice of you, once you have dropped your veil: you are a stranger whom no one knows, moving freely about, with open eyes. Sometimes men stand aside to let you pass. And you sweep majestically by” (41)<sup>188</sup>. The passage stresses the way Hajila becomes mobile with open eyes and walking in a royal silhouette, which are all expressions that imply a positive meaning for the unveiling state. While on another occasion, Djébar presents an adverse description when

---

<sup>187</sup> “tu entres, furtive, dans le couloir sombre d’un édifice ; mains tremblantes, visage crispé, fermant les yeux de désespoir, créant dans ce noir, tu te réenveloppes du haïk ! Dehors, te revoici fantôme et la colère grisâtre replie ses ailes sous la blancheur du drap” (51).

<sup>188</sup> “Un vide se creuse où ton corps peut passer, sans rien déranger. Tu t’assures que personne ne te remarque, une fois que ton voile tombe, te voici étrangère et mobile, avec des yeux ouverts. Parfois certains te laissent la préséance. Tu fends l’air, silhouette royale” (60/61).

speaking about Hajila's sister Kenza (Kenzah), comparing her to an old peasant when veiled, saying : "So Kenza, hidden by this veil with its worn fringes, would accompany her to the German's; and anyone wearing this veil could be taken for an old woman or a peasant"(18)<sup>189</sup>. This passage and the descriptions of Hajila's process of unveiling herself emphasise the pejorative image of the veil as a barrier that constrains the woman and suppresses her presence after it has been shown as a tool that helped her to discover the world outside her house. This derogatory image associated to the veil, in this text, has been displayed through the repetitive use of demeaning and negative references.

Indeed, the novel traces the process Hajila went through to restore her agency and gain the power to overcome the abuse of her husband. This process was embodied in Hajila's venturing outside her house or her prison, to discover her city. It was also reflected in the way she removed the veil (haïk), representing the latter as another sign of oppression that Hajila wants to get rid of to restore her agency – even if it is sometimes depicted as a means that allowed Hajila to discover the outside world. In this context, Djébar argues that "[t]he most visible evolution of Arabic [sic] women, at least in the cities, has therefore been the casting off of the veil. Many women, often after an adolescence or her entire youth spent cloistered, has concretely lived the experience of the unveiling" (quoted in Faulkner 850). In other words, although the veil in the case of Hajila was the means that allowed her to flee her enclosure, it was depicted in most examples as an oppressive tool and another obstacle that hinders women's freedom. Such a representation reinforces and contributes to the continuation of the traditional stereotypical perception of the veil and the creation of the self-Orientalist representation in literary writings.

---

<sup>189</sup> "Ce voile aux franges élimées avait donc dissimulé Kenza, quand elle se rendait, elle aussi, chez l'Allemande, ce voile qui donne une silhouette de vieille ou de paysanne" (31).

All this said, illustrates a constant emphasis on reducing the veil to a symbol of passivity and constraint, even though there is a noticeable attempt to highlight its other implications. Indeed, the prose depicts the veil as a custom that hinders the emancipation of the Algerian woman which can be understood from the representation of the veil and the plot of the novel as well, for Hajila felt liberated only when she unveiled herself despite the continuity of abuse of her husband. This representation seems to bear a stereotypical influence especially as it disregards the other perspective that considers the veil as “a powerful political term to denote resistance on behalf of the women who choose to wear it” (Golley 522). More importantly, it is not rejecting the veil that pushes me to argue that the novel is recreating biased stereotypes about it. Yet because the novel seems to echo clichéd representations when repeatedly reassociating the veil with weakness, oppression and passivity, while showing the characters more powerful after unveiling themselves<sup>190</sup>. This may also lead the reader to assume that the uncovered body is the source of women’s power and liberty, which transforms into a weak and constrained self when veiled. Taking these aspects together, they illustrate that *Ombre sultane* echoes stereotypes traditionally assigned to the veil, showing it as a tool of oppression, passivity and weakness, even if sometimes the text inferred the image of the veil as a means of freedom, which identifies the ambivalent self-Orientalist stance in the novel.

#### **4.2. The veil as one of the facets of patriarchal and political oppression and a sign of women’s passivity and submissiveness**

Whilst *Ombre Sultane* was published during the late 1980s, before the start of the civil war in Algeria, Fadhila El-Farouk’s *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), was published during the Black Decade, when the veil re-emerged as a crucial element of debate and conflict between the secularists and the Islamists as previously illustrated. The novel understudy is an

---

<sup>190</sup> This is vividly illustrated when both Hajila and her sister Kenza are shown as passive and weak women when they are veiled but the unveiled Isma and Hajila (after unveiling herself) became stronger and liberated.

autobiographical work, which relates the story of an Algerian girl called Luisa, and correlates the religious, social and political conditions during these turbulent times.

The reference to the veil appears from the outset of the novel, as it was imposed on Luisa like a condition to continue her studies at the university. Once Luisa succeeded in her exam to enter university, she received an order via a phone call from her father, who lives abroad saying “she wears a veil and goes to university” (El-Farouk 12)<sup>191</sup>. El-Farouk articulates the distress of Luisa, who did all that she can to avoid wearing the veil, saying: “How sad to be a woman here! All her ambitions come to an end at the threshold of the feminine personal pronoun...It is alright, for me, the disaster has already happened...I felt that commuting to the university with that fancy disguise meant death, therefore, I refused, cried, and screamed, in the end, I went on a hunger strike, but I failed” (12/13)<sup>192</sup>. The passage illustrates an instance of the patriarchal dominance in Algerian society, as the father seems completely absent in the novel for Luisa explains that he lives abroad, yet, he appears only to issue orders on what concerns his daughters or his wife, on this occasion he orders her to wear the veil. It also depicts Luisa’s resistance as she rejected the veil and refused to wear it even through going on a hunger strike but she could not change the decision of her father. Furthermore, and in convergence with the theme of this thesis, the passage displays many examples that show the negative reference to the veil or the process of veiling. This is especially evident as the passage starts with a direct exclamation that will instantly grip the attention of female readers then succeeded with words that imply distress and sadness associated with the process of veiling such as: ‘end’, ‘disaster’, ‘death’.

---

191

ترتدي الحجاب وتذهب الى الجامعة (12)

192 ما أتعبس أن يكون الفرد امرأة عندنا! فكلّ طموحاته تتوقف عند عتبة تاء التأنيث... لا علينا... بالنسبة اليّ كانت الكارثة قد حلت، وانتهى الأمر... إذ كنت أشعر أن السفر الى الجامعة بذلك الزي التنكري يعني الموت، ولهذا رفضت وبكيت وصرخت، وفي الأخير أضربت عن الطعام، لكنني فشلت (12/13)



On another occasion, Luisa expresses her thoughts about the veil when she says that the veil becomes for her like: “[...] a proof of more differences between [her] and others, which puts [her] a bit inside a circle of the fuzzy vision ‘exist but do not appear!’, like those old boxes, which [her] grandmother used to hide with covers, which made [them] believe for a long time that they were mere tables, while they were full of her precious stuff” (16)<sup>193</sup>. The passage sheds light on the negative influence wearing the veil had on Luisa, depicting it as something that hinders her sight, suppresses her presence and hides good qualities in her. The reference to the grandmother in this example implies the old or outdated way of life which was paralleled with the emphasis on the objectification of the veiled woman when comparing her to old boxes. These descriptions recall the passive image in which the veiled woman was represented in colonial and Orientalist discourses showing the veil as an old-fashioned tradition that objectify women.

Luisa does not only talk about the physical appearance of veiled women; she also illustrates through the case of Luisa that the veil transforms women into passive and submissive objects. This idea is expressed when relating about the first time Luisa wears the veil to go to university:

She [her mother] told me: It is time. As if she told me that it is the end of life, or the end of the world, or whatever means the end of the human being...I stood up with my heart and my body shaking. I went to the bathroom all fearful to face my face in the mirror [...]. I did not raise my eyes to the mirror, I washed my face, and got dressed as if I was dealing with another person. At four fifteen...It was me, the veiled, the one who is supposed to be passive and obedient, who knows nothing but submissiveness, who has nothing but weakness as a means to survive” (19)<sup>194</sup>.

<sup>193</sup> إثبات مزيد من الفروق بيني وبين الآخر، إدخالي قليلاً داخل الرؤية الضبابية، كوني لكن لا تظهرني. كتلك الصناديق القديمة التي كانت تحرص جدتي على تغطيتها بأغطية أو هممتنا طويلاً أنها مجرد طاولات فيما هي تحوي أشياءها الثمينة (16)

<sup>194</sup> قالت لي: حان الوقت. وكأنها قالت لي حانت نهاية العمر، أو نهاية العالم، أو أي شيء يشبه إنتهاء الإنسان ... قمت والرجفة تسلسل قلبي وكياني. تحركت نحو الحمام وخفت أن يراجهني وجهي في المرأة [...]. لم أرفع عيني نحو المرأة، غسلت وجهي، وحضرت نفسي وكأنني أتعامل مع شخص آخر. في الرابعة والرّبع...كنت أنا المحجّبة، التي يفترض أن تكون شخصاً هيناً طبعاً لا يحسن غير الرّضوخ لأنه لايمكك غير ضعفه كوسيلة للعيش (19)

This passage highlights Luisa's inner suffering when being forced to veil herself in order to be able to continue her studies. The acute distress Luisa was suffering is expressed in the passage using different literary devices. The author uses short and powerful sentences such as 'it is time', 'at four fourteen' as a way to highlight an epic moment when she was going to veil herself for the first time. The feeling of distress is clearly reflected through repetitive use of negative words such as 'end' 'shaking' 'fearful' which shows the suffering psychology of Luisa. The description in the passage shows also that the veil was the reason behind the state of the psychological weakness as just after wearing the veil she feels herself passive, obedient, and submissive. The passage displays an intense emphasis on the negative impact of the veiling which serves as a clear example of self-Orientalism in the representation of the veil.

El-Farouk expands this idea explaining that the feeling of passivity and submissiveness is the aim of veiling women in Algerian society, especially the category of women who achieved success. She explains this through the case of Luisa's eldest sisters, who were not obliged to wear the veil before her because they failed in their studies and did not reach university. One of her sisters, Zitouna (*Zaytūna*) explains this idea to Luisa saying that "[t]he veil is not related to maturity in our society Luisa, it is related to two things: to the decision of the girl herself, which does not harm, or... to her level of intelligence. If the family felt that she is going beyond their circle, they impose it on her just to annoy her ..." (17)<sup>195</sup>.

Through the representation of the veil in the preceding passages, the author seems to highlight the impact of imposing the veil on women, by showing the inner psychological harm Luisa was suffering. Yet, the reader may notice the recurrent association between wearing the veil, the feeling of passivity and submissiveness. This is vividly illustrated in Zitouna's

---

<sup>195</sup> الحجاب عندنا غير مرتبط بسنّ البلوغ يا لويزا، إنّه مرتبط بشيئين: بقناعة الفتاة نفسها وهذا شيء لا يضرّ، أو... بمستوى ذكائها. إذا ما شعر الأهل أنّها ستخرج من دائرتهم فرضوه عليها لإرباكها لا غير... (17)

explanation, when she states that the veil is used as a tool to stop the woman's success and make her passive. These examples exemplify the image of the veil as it was conceptualised in the colonial and the Orientalist discourse, especially when emphasising showing it as a tool of oppression and control of women. Indeed, El-Farouk tries to show powerful female characters like Luisa who resisted the patriarchal constraint and discarded the veil, as will be shown later, yet, she maintains the biased picture of the veil as a symbol of passivity and submissiveness. Along these lines, Christine Détrez argues that some Arab women writers, who attempt to deconstruct Orientalist stereotypes of women "by providing powerful images, risk perpetuating the fantasy that they seek to undermine" (in Hosford et al 212), which is the case of El-Farouk who attempts to empower her female character whilst at the same time echoing in her representations traditional Western conceptions of the Islamic veil.

Furthermore, other occurrences in the novel suggest another image of the veil. Luisa recounts the time she went to vote and was physically abused by a fanatic follower of the FIS, after he realised that she did not vote for the Islamist party although she is veiled. She unveiled herself as a way of expressing her anger saying "[i]f this [the veil] is what allowed you to violate my privacy, it is yours" (55)<sup>196</sup>. She adds when she told her sister about what happened "[i]f the veil is what allowed such a bastard to slap me publicly and interfere in my life, I gave it to him, I will never wear it again" (55)<sup>197</sup>. This scene is the second occasion where the veil was depicted as a tool of patriarchal domination and violence. Her father imposed his power on her by imposing the veil and now the man abused her because she was wearing the veil and did not vote for the FIS. These portrayals fit well within the writings that echo the demeaning

---

196

إذا كان هذا ما سمح لك لتتعدى على خصوصياتي فهو (55) لك

197

إن كان الحجاب يسمح لو غد مثل هذا أن يصفعني أمام الملاء ويتدخل في حياتي فقد أعطيته له، لن أرتديه منذ اليوم (55)

image of the veil showing it as “[...] a symbol of male aggression against Muslim women rather than a form of worship or a Muslim woman’s choice or judgement of advantages that are provided by the veil” (Alrasheed 24).

Despite the fact that El-Farouk’s prose emphasises the negative impact of the veil as clearly illustrated in the previously discussed passages, the text shows an attempt, toward the end of the novel, to develop another parameter in the representation of the veil. On this occasion, Luisa recounts how she overcame the weakness she felt by unveiling herself and dressing in a masculine style, then she opposes her situation to that of veiled women in the FIS party:

My embodiment of the masculine personality was enough for me to gain the characteristic of power, whether in front of myself or in front of people because I remember well when I was veiled, I felt weakness overwhelmed me, despite the fact that veiled women in the FIS party are all strong, even stronger than men in the same party especially during the strike [...] (133)<sup>198</sup>.

This passage shows that Luisa had felt weak while she was veiled, and she overcame this feeling by unveiling herself. This is a similar feature shared with Djebbar’s representation of the veil as both texts emphasise the way the veil weakens their characters and how unveiling empowers them, which may show, as we previously assumed, that Djebbar’s and El-Farouk’s texts reduce the power of women to their bodies as they become completely weak and passive when veiled or covered. Yet, it also shows that El-Farouk’s representations tried to break the generalised pattern in the representation of the veil as the text places emphasis on the strength of women in the FIS party even though they are veiled, which contradicts previous representations. It also shows that there is an attempt to depict the different implications of the veil that existed during the Black Decade. Luisa attempted to restore her agency by unveiling

---

كان تقمصى للشخصية الذكورية يكفيني لأخذ سمة القوة، سواء أمام نفسي أو أمام غيري، فأنا أذكر جيداً حين كنت متحجبة أنني أشعر بالضعف يرتدني على الرّغم من أنّ المتحجبات المنتميات للفييس نساء قويّات، بل أقوى من رجاله خصوصاً خلال الإضراب [...] (133)<sup>198</sup>

herself after she was forced to wear the veil. While another category, in this example the women of the FIS party, were depicted as powerful women though veiled.

The examples analysed from Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) highlights the negative effect of the veil on Luisa and depicts a clear recurrence of the association of the weakness, passivity, male despotism with the veil, which evokes reminiscence with the stereotypical accounts. Yet, El-Farouk, somehow attempted, toward the end of the novel, to break the essentialised representations of the veil by highlighting on one occasion the agency of veiled women in the political sphere. This double faceted representation of the veil in the novel generates ambivalent self-Orientalist perspectives in El-Farouk's writings.

## **5. Conclusion**

The chapter offers a reflection on the survival of the clichéd perception of Islam in Algerian postcolonial literature resulting from the influence of colonial and post-independence circumstances. The analysis has paradoxically illustrated that the literary output produced during colonialism showed more reluctance towards the colonial and Orientalist stereotypes as a sort of resistance against the colonial culture, whereas the literature of the post-independence era was marked by a significant revival of the conventional clichéd representations of Islam resulting from the influence of the outrage against the violence caused by radical Islamism during the Black Decade. In other words, colonial writings had resulted in the spread of biased perceptions of Islam, during colonialism, and the rise of radical Islamism during the Black Decade triggered a new lease of life for these clichés about Islam in Algerian post-independence literature.

The analysis of Bennabi's and Feraoun's works showed that Albert Memmi's hypothesis about the adoption of colonial stereotypes by the colonised writer is not always applicable as

both authors presented an image of Islam that is at odds with stereotypes propagated during colonialism. Bennabi presents a counterargument against the association of Islam with passivity and backwardness, showing it as an effective instrument against the people's *colonisabilité*. For his part, Feraoun denies in his novel the presumed under-Islamisation of the Kabyles spread through the 'Kabyle Myth': he portrays Islam as a sign of high social status in Kabylia and rejects the biased perception of Islam as a sign of passivity and inferiority in colonised Algeria.

The literature of the post-independence era in my corpus shows a clear turning point in the portrayal of Islam that changed to become less welcoming to this religion and characterised with a fully-fledged re-creation of representations showing close reminiscence of the colonial and Orientalist discourses' perspectives about Islam. This is especially accurate with Kamal Daoud's novel which displays a discriminative reference to Islam. Daoud's prose shows stereotypical and essentialised assumptions on Islam based on particular practices and incidents during the Black Decade which was marked by the rise of radical Islamism and the misuse of religion in politics.

The last section of the chapter has shown that the veil worn by women – as one of the main symbols of Islam— has received similar attention in the Algerian post-independence literature as it was among the main topics tackled in Assia Djébar's *Ombre sultane* (1987) and Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999). My analysis has shown that both novels were marked with the resurfacing of the biased rendering of the veil; showing it as a tool of women's enclosure and oppression in Djébar's novel, and as a garment of passivity and backwardness in El-Farouk's representations. Yet, their writings, unlike Daoud's, were occasionally interrupted by nuances that created ambivalence in the self-Orientalist discourse they presented, which is particularly evident when Djébar referred to the veil as a tool of freedom

for women and when El-Farouk highlighted the power and the agency of the veiled women in the Islamist party.

## **Part Three: Conceptualising the Community**



## Chapter Five

### **When Politics Meets Fiction: Particularism and the Re-creation of Racial Stereotypes in Self-Orientalist Discourse**

Said argues that Orientalist writings deepened and hardened the distinction between the West and the East (*Orientalism* 34). They also played a crucial role in spreading systematic and multiple divisions and classifications of Oriental populations based on “race, color, origin, temperament, [and]character” (76). These divisions and classifications were reinforced by colonial policies such as the ‘divide and rule’ policy that was used in Algeria, among other countries, during the colonial period. This policy implanted categorical stereotypes and racial myths for different ethnicities in Algerian society in an attempt to enhance the effectiveness of the colonial administration. The hypothesis upon which this chapter relies is that these divisions and classifications may have influenced the self-representation of Algerians, going as far as leading to the re-creation of these racial myths and shaping the regionalist stance in Algerian postcolonial literature, which is what I refer to in this chapter as ‘particularism’. I use the concept of ‘particularism’ instead of ‘regionalism’ because the phenomena I am discussing –both the dominance of Arabo-Islamism or Berberism– are related to a culture and identity rather than a geographical region, despite the fact that the former concept was used by nationalists in the 1940s and 1950 to describe the same phenomenon. I use the concept of particularism which is defined as “a political theory that each political group has a right to promote its own interests and especially independence without regard to the interests of larger groups” (Meriam-Webster Dictionary), and as “exclusive attachment to the interests of one group, class, sect, etc, especially at the expense of the community, as a whole” (Collins Dictionary). This phenomenon is studied in this chapter with a particular emphasis on Mouloud Mammeri’s *La*

*Colline oubliée* (1952), Nabil Farès *Le Champ des oliviers* (1972) and Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999).

### **1. The forming of the Kabyle Myth in colonial Algeria: its influence on politics and on widening the divide between ethnic categories**

'Divide and rule' is a policy used by imperial powers "to create and/or turn to its own advantage the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, tribal, or religious differences within the population of a subjugated colony" (Morrock 129). In colonised Algeria, this policy was used by French colonialism to exploit, for its benefit, the existing differences mainly between Arabs and Kabyles<sup>199</sup> as they were the two largest ethnic groups in Algeria, through the creation of what has become known as the so-called 'Kabyle Myth'. Patricia Lorcin explains that this myth was based on showing that:

[...] [t]he Kabyles were superior to the Arabs; it was not that they were different, which they are. The French used sociological differences and religious disparities between the two groups to create an image of the Kabyle which was good and one of the Arab which was bad and, from this, to extrapolate that the former was more suited to assimilation than the latter" (2)<sup>200</sup>.

The formation of this myth started with the data collected about the indigenous people of Algeria by French historians and militants. Lazreg explains that the development and the spread of the Kabyle myth were led by military men such as Colonel Daumas and Captain Fabar, who sought to become historians and wrote about the origins of the Kabyles (*The Reproduction* 385). After that, the term of the Kabyle myth was developed to reflect the growing interest in this topic. Alexis de Tocqueville for his part, added an explanation of the way that enabled the French to attract the Kabyles to their culture, by showing them as potentially susceptible to

---

<sup>199</sup> The Kabyles are the largest category of the Berber or Amazigh ethnicities in Algeria which includes other groups such as Chaoui people and the Touareg and M'zab or the Mozabite people. I mostly refer to the Kabyles as they were the category that was referred to in the racial stereotypes articulated in the Kabyle myth and the category mostly involved in the Berber crisis of 1948 and the Berber spring of the 1980s.

<sup>200</sup> I focus on the Kabyle Myth instead of other attempts of divisions made by French colonialism because this myth in particular had an impact that lasted even into the post-independence and the contemporary era.

adopt French civilisation (Lorcin 24). Charles-Robert Ageron was the first historian to formulate the terms of “Berber Vulgate” or Kabyle Myth which denotes “the body of thought extolling the Kabyles and denigrating the Arabs” (Lorcin 11). He explains that the Tlemcen-born politician Camille Sabatier was the first one who declared in 1891 in front of a *Commission d’Enquête sénatoriale* (Commission of Senatorial Inquiry) “Divide ut imperes! and why not? Why not prevent a union (between Kabyles and Arabs) which could only work against France?” (Ageron 350)<sup>201</sup>.

The construction of the Kabyle myth was founded on two main elements: religion and civilisation. This chapter will indeed look at their reappearance in the postcolonial prose. According to the Kabyle myth’s founders such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Viscount Caix de St. Aymour and M. Maffre, the Kabyles were differentiated with a supposed “low degree of Islamization” (Tilmatine 97). This characteristic made them more “receptive to French civilization” (Lorcin 23) compared to Arabs. Although this myth did not lead to any policy privileging the Kabyles compared to the rest of ethnicities in the Algerian society, it was elaborated since the 1840s (Lazreg, *The Reproduction* 384), and maintained by the colonial literature in an attempt to prop the Kabyles against the Arabs.

Most of the colonial literature presented ‘the Kabyle character’ as being more compatible with French education than the Arab. This can be mostly noticed in the writings of authors like Ferdinand Duchêne and Lucienne Favre, among others, who conventionally used the character of the Kabyle school teacher in order to highlight the fact that he is “more receptive than the Arab to French education” (Lorcin 219). More importantly, French colonialism launched a schooling system that focused on Kabyle regions. Although it was not highly welcomed by the

---

<sup>201</sup> “Divide ut imperes! et pourquoi pas? Pourquoi ne pas prévenir une union (entre Kabyles et Arabes) qui ne pourrait se faire que contre la France” (Ageron 350).

indigenous populations, many joined and were educated in these schools. The influence of this schooling system<sup>202</sup> was emphasised by Charles-Robert Ageron who stated that “the former students became ‘reasoners’ [...] the Kabyle teachers had a ‘dangerous’ influence” (348)<sup>203</sup>.

Despite the fact that the Kabyle Myth gradually appeared to be inefficient to assimilate the Kabyles, some events in the history of Algerian nationalism brought to the fore the question of the legacy of this myth. An example of this is the Berberist Crisis in 1948-1949. The crisis started at the core of the main Algerian nationalist party of the time, the MTLD, which was the legal front of the banned party PPA. The tension between Kabyle and Arab communities emerged when the Berber activists in the party suggested the notion of ‘Algerian Algeria’<sup>204</sup>, which was more inclusive of all Algerian diversities, instead of the homogeneous ‘Arabo-Muslim Algeria’<sup>205</sup>.

However, Messali Hadj (Maṣālī al-Ḥājj), the leader of the party, rejected the idea brought by Berber activists. He “wrote of ‘Berberists’ as ‘virus’ and later claimed that they constituted ‘a colonialist creation’ intended ‘to destroy Arabism’” (McDougall 191). In this vein, Patricia Lorcin states that “Messali made no allowance for regionalism, believing that cultural and linguistic differences had been encouraged by the colonizing power for their own ends” (234), adding that for the Kabyles “regionalism was the way of maintaining their cultural identity and safeguarding their linguistic rights” (234). Lorcin refers to Berbers’ claims as a type of regionalism but she did not comment on the claim of Arab members who were defending for

---

<sup>202</sup> It is worth noting here that among Algerian authors who had a French education is Mouloud Mammeri who we are including in this chapter.

<sup>203</sup> “les anciens élèves devenaient des ‘raisonneurs’ [...] les instituteurs kabyles avaient une influence ‘dangereuse’” (348).

<sup>204</sup> ‘Algérie algérienne’.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Algérie arabo-musulmane’.

their part Arabo-Islamism. Albeit undetected, this opinion also constitutes, in my view, another form of regionalism or what I refer to in this chapter as ‘particularism’.

While Lorcin describes what happened as “regionalism”, other critics such as Marisa Fois refers to it as the Berber claim “for a redefinition of the society of which it was a part, starting from the language and culture” (208). Fois explains that “Berber activists did not deny Arabic-Islamism but they identified themselves as a part of a wider idea of Algeria, one that could contain the various communities in their society” (207). This shows that the reference to the phenomenon I am studying differs from one critic to another: some argue that the Berbers’ claim can be taken as a kind of particularism but others consider it as a defence of their legitimate right.

Therefore, on the one hand, I intend to clarify that what I call particularism in this chapter is different from the Algerian ethnicities’ defence of their rights to be recognised as a part of the national identity. I call particularism the re-creation of the myths that promote a racial hierarchisation of any particular category of Algerian society. On the other hand, I want to highlight the idea that the very fact that Kabyles are being accused of particularism whenever they defend their identity just because the Kabyle myth was created specifically about them, is in itself a major influence of the ‘divide and rule’ policy on the claim of the Berbers. In other words, although the Kabyles were defending Berberity just like the Arabs were promoting Arabo-Islamism, the Kabyles, unlike the Arabs, were sometimes referred to as “‘dividers’ and accused of having started a ‘campaign of division’ and spreading ‘propaganda of racial opposition’” (Fois 211). This has sometimes happened to some Berber authors as was the case with Mouloud Mammeri (will be discussed later)<sup>206</sup>. Therefore, I intend to consider the influence of the Kabyle Myth on the Berber claim, as Berbers are taken to be promoting racial

---

<sup>206</sup> Especially because Mouloud Mammeri published his novel *La Colline oubliée* (1952) in this period.

opposition—which was propagated by the Kabyle Myth—once they defend their Berberity, whereas the Arabs are following the same thing when promoting Arabo-Islamism and rejecting other affiliations but they do not receive the same type of accusations. Indeed, this example demonstrates one of the major legacies of the colonial ‘divide and rule’ policy in the contemporary Algerian landscape which deepened the divide between Arabs and Kabyles. In fact, both sides in the PPA-MTLD party were defending their political and cultural affiliations separately, which worsened the situation of the party and created the crisis. After that, the party agreed on prioritising the national cause first and postpone the subject of diversity to another time (Fois 216).

Surprisingly, after independence, the Berber cause did not witness any improvement. As the single ruling party imposed Arabisation to erase the language of the coloniser, it “also implied that no distinctively Berber or Berberophone culture could be considered legitimately part of an Algerian national patrimony” (McDougall 276). This decision resulted in the inferiorization of the language of different ethnicities in Algeria. Fazia Aïtel argues that “[t]he objective of Arabisation was not simply to eradicate the language of the former coloniser [...] but also to eradicate the Berber language and references to Algeria’s pre-Islamic past” (65). In fact, there were no political decisions taken in this matter as there had been no changes in the Algerian constitution since 1963 but instead there were more restrictions on the Berber language and culture. For example, in the early 1970s, the government banned the songs of the Kabyle singer Slimane Azem and cancelled the only course of Berber taught by Mouloud Mammeri at the University of Algiers (Aïtel 66).

These restrictions resulted in the Berber Spring that witnessed riots and sustained manifestations mainly in Kabylia. In this period, the Berber-speaking groups for the first time launched their “demand for an institutional recognition of [Berber] language and culture”

(Chaker 137). Moreover, the period was also marked by the resurfacing of particularist tensions. Kabyle activists were accused by their adversaries and the regime “as others had accused the PPA progressives in 1949 [...] Krim [Belkacem] and Ait Ahmed during the war, of fissiparous ‘Berberism’ or overweening ‘Kabyle imperialism’ both ‘regionalist’ threats to national unity and integrity” (McDougall 277). This led then to an escalation of conflicts with the supporters of Arabo-Islamism. An example of this happened at the University of Bab Ezzouar (Bāb al-zuwwār) in May 1980 as some students who were defending Arabic and Islam attacked their peers who organised a strike in sympathy with the Berber movement in Tizi Ouzou (Tīzī Wuzū), which caused dozens of casualties (McDougall 277). After all these incidents, it was not until 2003 that the Algerian constitution added Algerian Berber as a national language alongside Arabic (Fois 208).

I argue in this chapter that the colonial ‘divide and rule’ policy widened the divide between Arabs and Kabyles and have resulted in a sort of particularism from both sides (Arabs and Kabyles) that appeared and exploited first in the political sphere in colonial and post-independence eras. As the sociologist Lahouari Addi (Alhwwāry ‘ddī) explains that the sense of particularism “had to be used subtly by some and by others as a political resource in the competition, to encourage patronage and loyalties within the hegemonic political framework”<sup>207</sup> (quoted in Stora 170). Therefore, I examine in this chapter the possibility of the re-creation of this subject in Algerian literary output that was published during colonialism as particularist writings, and also the reappearance of the particularist stance as a reaction to the alienation of the Berbers by the political system through the Arabisation process in post-independence Algeria. I intend to discuss particularism and especially, in which aspects it is adopted and in which aspects it was left out, with a view to showing the way the colonial myth’s

---

<sup>207</sup> “a dû être utilisé subtilement par les uns et par les autres comme ressource politique dans la compétition, pour susciter des adhésions clientélistes et des fidélités dans le cadre politique hégémonique” (quoted in Stora 170).

influence percolated into the self-conception of the colonised population, at the same time, I intend to demonstrate the limits of the self-Orientalist discourse on this subject.

## **2. The influence of the racial colonial myths on the self-conception of the Algerian colonised population**

This section is devoted to a discussion of the extent to which Mouloud Mammeri's *La Colline oubliée* (1952) reflects a regionalist stance and recreates the racial divisions created by the Kabyle Myth. In this novel, Mammeri recorded the experiences of his Kabyle compatriots through the story of village youth who is stifled under the burden of traditional native customs, and the worsening conditions caused by colonialism and WWII. The novel highlights the life of two youth groups, those of Taasat and *the band*<sup>208</sup>, in a Kabyle village called Tasga. The events are narrated from the perspective of the major character in the novel, Mokrane, who narrates the events since he and his friends had returned from their studies in France because of the outbreak of war in 1939. In this period, most men of area, including those of Tasga were taken to fight for France. This devastated most families and increased poverty in the village. Mokrane was one of those who went to War and left his wife Aazi and his parents. As a childless woman, Aazi ('Azzī) was obliged to go back to her parents' house and divorce Mokrane in his absence. After the end of the war, Mokrane received a letter from his wife informing him that she is pregnant, which motivated him to hasten his return. Yet, he died on his way home in a snowstorm.

Mouloud Mammeri features among the major Algerian authors who established Algerian francophone literature. His novel *La Colline oubliée* (1952) has attracted the attention of many critics, especially as it was published during the colonial era by a Kabyle author, a few years after the Berber crisis (1948-1949). In fact, the novel has been the subject of an extensive body

---

<sup>208</sup> *la bande*.



of Algerian criticism, more precisely, by some nationalists of the political party, the MTLD. Most of the critics criticised Mammeri for focusing on Kabylia and ignoring the national cause, which according to them resulted in particularism, as will be shown. For example, the Algerian historian Mahfoud Kheddache (Maḥfūz khddāsh) blames Mammeri for overlooking the national cause in his writing and argues that the novel received much interest and support from the French newspapers because it implicitly supported colonial views and interests. Kheddache explains that “the fact that the French react to this kind of literature shows that it goes against our interests... By keeping silent we distort the truth, we betray our mission, we become accomplices... The young colonised person wants his cause to be defended by the artist and the writer” (quoted in Hassani)<sup>209</sup>. More importantly, Mammeri’s focus in his novel on a Kabyle region led other critics to raise suspicions about him, accusing him of being an author who favours the cause of Berbers to the detriment of the national one in a crucial period of Algerian national history.

In the same context, Amar Ouzegane (‘Mmār awzghān) points out that focusing the novel on one region makes the novel seem more supportive of a regionalist or particularist spirit rather than a nationalist one, which is the element that attracted the attention of the colonial press. Ouzegane says: “When you know that the French colonial doctrine is based on assimilation, Berberism, the cult of the Latin idea, the hatred of Islam and the Arabic language, you can easily perceive the ulterior motives of the laudators of Mr. Mouloud Mammeri” (quoted in Hamitouche)<sup>210</sup>. Yet, assigning a novel to one region does not necessarily result in particularism or even regionalism, as Mammeri showed in the novel the hard conditions the

---

<sup>209</sup> “[d]u moment que les Français réagissent à ce genre de littérature c’est donc qu’il va contre nos intérêts... En se taisant on déforme la vérité, on trahit sa mission, on devient complice... Le jeune colonisé veut que sa cause soit défendue par l’artiste et l’écrivain” (quoted in Hassani).

<sup>210</sup> “Quand on connaît la doctrine coloniale française basée sur l’assimilation, le berbérisme, le culte de l’idée latine, la haine de l’islam et de la langue arabe on perçoit aisément l’arrière-pensée des laudateurs de M. Mouloud Mammeri” (quoted in Hamitouche).

Kabyles were living and it was the same situation of the rest of Algerians in other regions. In this context, Abderezak Dourari (‘Abd alrrzāq dwrāry) explains that representations in the novel of “[...] the cultural, sexual, sentimental, food, and health misery... were the thing best shared among native Algerians”<sup>211</sup>. Moreover, focusing the novel on one region is not peculiar to Mammeri: many other Algerian authors did so, such as Mohammed Dib (Muḥammad Dīb) who devoted his novel to Tlemcen, or Ahlem Mosteghanemi in the post-independence era whose trilogy speaks about Constantine.

Therefore, Hend Sadi (Hind sādy) questions why we deny to Mammeri the right to foreground Kabylia, whilst we accept Dib’s representation of Tlemcen (Tilimsān) in which we see the image of the entire country of Algeria (15). Quite clearly, Dib was not accused of regionalism or particularism when speaking about Tlemcen whereas it happened from Mammeri just because he was Kabyle<sup>212</sup>. In other words, supporters of Arabo-Islamism may easily describe any focus on Berberism or Kabylia as a form of intolerable particularism and regionalism or a nefarious influence of the Kabyle Myth on Berber authors. At this level, I want to highlight that this is not the type of particularism I intend to discuss specifically in this thesis. I argue that the focus on one region and celebrating Kabyle ethnicity in a novel does not necessarily denote particularism, yet, it is the re-creation of racial stereotypes that deepened and maintained divisions and separations between Algerian regions that is of interest to me. It is in the light of this idea that I intend to discuss particularism in Mammeri’s novel, as I focus my analysis on representations included in the novel that recreate racial hierarchies and sustain

---

<sup>211</sup> “la misère culturelle, sexuelle, sentimentale, alimentaire, et sanitaire...étaient la chose la mieux partagée entre Algériens autochtones!”.

<sup>212</sup> This leads us to remember the point I previously discussed that the Kabyles are more likely to be accused of particularism compared to Arabs, which I highlighted as one of the major consequences of the Kabyle Myth.

divisions along regional or ethnic lines. I also examine the areas in which Mammeri departs or rejects these stereotypes in his writings.

### **2.1. The re-creation of the Kabyle myth's aspects: the persistence of racial divisions between Algerian ethnic groups in *La Colline oubliée* (1952)**

Most critics argued that Mammeri's novel is marked by a regionalist stance just because it focuses mostly on Kabylia, which cannot be taken as particularism as it is the literary choice of other Arabic-speaking authors as well. However, *La Colline oubliée* includes some representations which show the rebirth of divisions propagated by the Kabyle Myth, which is what I intend to discuss as particularism in this novel. This is especially true in the way Mammeri refers to other regions in Algeria, which is the aspect overlooked by most critics. This point was brought to the fore by Mostefa Lacheraf, who was one of the editors of the MTLD's newspaper at that time, *L'Etoile algérienne*. In his engagement with *La Colline oubliée* (1952), Lacheraf was more precise in his argument, as he did not only address the centralisation of the novel on Kabylia, but he explained that the regionalist stance and the sense of particularism in the novel is more explicit in the way Mammeri referred to other Algerian regions : "If this novel produces... such an impression, it is because of the regionalist genre that it represents and, above all, for the sentimental and even the passionate bias... it is not just the love of the region that animates this book, there is also the almost aggressive, unjust way in which the regional community is cut off from the rest of the country" (quoted in Dourari)<sup>213</sup>.

In fact, whilst Mammeri focused his novel on Kabylia, he referred to other regions in Algeria on many occasions. Mammeri mentions the names of Algerian cities in some cases but he

---

<sup>213</sup> "Si ce roman produit...une telle impression c'est un peu à cause du genre régionaliste qu'il représente et, surtout, pour un parti-pris sentimental et même passionné...il n'y a pas que l'amour de la petite patrie qui anime ce livre, il y a aussi la façon presque agressive, injuste, avec laquelle on retranche la communauté régionale du reste du pays" (quoted in Dourari).

mostly refers to non-Kabyle regions as “the Arab country”<sup>214</sup>. For example, when speaking about the economical circumstances of his village, the narrator says that the youth especially those of Ouali’s ‘band’, “had left school very early and since then one or the other had disappeared for a few months to go and earn a little money among Arabs or in France, because there is little work here [...]” (Mammeri 21)<sup>215</sup>. This quote gives the impression that Mammeri’s prose is putting France and other regions in Algeria on the same level as if the region of “Arabs” belongs to a different country. On another occasion, the narrator questions the reason behind the spread of poverty while the country is rich: “The Arab country is rich: where had so much wheat gone? The factories of the French are numerous and powerful: what had been done with so many fabrics? The few peddlers who still went to the Arabs’ region said that there were often several women who had only one dress” (65)<sup>216</sup>. In this example, the narrator seems to blame colonialism for the poverty of his people. It also depicts the way he keeps distancing his region from other Algerian ones, by avoiding mentioning precise names of the Arab regions and creating ethnical divides between Kabylia and the rest of the country when using expressions such as “the Arab country”<sup>217</sup>, “the Arabs’ region”<sup>218</sup>, “in our region”<sup>219</sup>, which appear recurrently in the novel. Mammeri’s descriptions illustrate what Lacheraf refers to when

---

<sup>214</sup> le pays Arabe.

<sup>215</sup> “avaient quitté l’école très tôt et depuis l’un ou l’autre disparaissait quelques mois pour aller gagner un peu d’argent chez les Arabes ou en France, car chez nous il y a peu de travail [...]” (Mammeri 21).

<sup>216</sup> “Le pays arabe est riche: ou était passé tant de blé? Les usines des Français sont nombreuses et puissantes : qu’avait-on fait de tant d’étoffes ? Les rares colporteurs qui allaient encore chez les Arabes disaient que là-bas souvent plusieurs femmes n’avaient qu’une robe” (65).

<sup>217</sup> “le pays Arabe”.

<sup>218</sup> “chez les Arabes”.

<sup>219</sup> “chez nous”.

he says that “there is also the almost aggressive, unjust way in which the regional community is cut off from the rest of the country”<sup>220</sup>.

This way of division appears in another context in the novel about a different region, which is the Sahara. The narrator explains that the spread of poverty and the lack of work forced most of the youth of the village to search for work somewhere else. Ibrahim is one of the characters who, after being exhausted of debts, intended to opt for work in the Sahara. Yet, his decision was faced with a direct rejection by his wife Sekoura (Skkūrah) who says: “Going to Algiers, to the Arab country, even to Tunis, to Morocco, is still okay, but to the Sahara? Ah! Better this ugly misery all life than a month of exile in an unknown country” (Mammeri 189)<sup>221</sup>. A similar description of the Sahara was presented in the novel through thoughts of another character, Ouali (Wa‘lī), who was sent in pursuit of Oulhadj (Ūlhājj) to kill him as part of a revenge story in Tasga. The narrator says that “He began to follow Oulhadj, but the country was almost a desert. Ouali, who had never left Kabylia” (170)<sup>222</sup>. Both passages display descriptions that give an impression of dissociating the Sahara Desert from the national territory such as referring to it as an “exile in an unknown country”<sup>223</sup>, “such a bare land”<sup>224</sup>, and emphasising the distinctiveness between Kabylia and the Sahara. This reminds of what Nedjma Abdelfettah

---

<sup>220</sup> “il y a aussi la façon presque agressive, injuste, avec laquelle on retranche la communauté régionale du reste du pays”.

<sup>221</sup> “Aller à Alger, en pays arabe, voire à Tunis, au Maroc, passe encore, mais au Sahara? Ah! Mieux vaut cette laide misère toute la vie qu’un mois d’exil en pays inconnu” (Mammeri 189).

<sup>222</sup> “Il se mit à suivre Oulhadj, mais le pays était presque désertique. Ouali, qui n’avait jamais quitté la Kabylie, s’étonnait que des hommes pussent vivre sur une terre aussi nue” (170).

<sup>223</sup> “exil en pays inconnu”.

<sup>224</sup> “une terre aussi nue”.

(Najmah ‘Abd alftāh) calls the attempt of the Berber elites to express their vision “which reinforces insularisation’, of radical distinction” (508/509)<sup>225</sup>.

This distinctiveness is expressed in the cultural context as well, which recreates or deepens ethnical boundaries between Kabylia and other regions. On this occasion, Ouali highlights the idea of the cultural peculiarity of the Kabyle society. Ouali explains to his friend Menach (Mnnāk) why he did not hesitate to kill Oulhadj when he found him:

Honour is honour, he concludes. Who has killed must die. Women are perverse, Menach; don’t believe any of them, not even your mother, who perhaps owes her wisdom only to her old age. But luckily, custom keeps watch, because where would we be if there weren’t still men in our mountains to ensure the respect of justice and pay for injustice? We would be like Iroumiens<sup>226</sup> and Arabs: everything would be allowed to us (Mammeri 173)<sup>227</sup>.

Speaking about ‘honour’ in Kabyle society, Ouali insists that it should be preserved to protect respect in Kabyle society, otherwise they will become like the Arabs or the French. The quote shows that Ouali particularises the cultural aspect of ‘honour’ to the Kabyles, even though it is also known to be a major controlling value in the Arab society. The way Ouali particularises this aspect of the Kabyle society and puts the Arabs with the French in the same category enhances the idea of cultural separation and distinction between the Kabyles and the Arabs and maintains the particularist stance in the novel.

While the previous example highlights the difference between Kabyles and Arabs, the following one shows an attempt to depict the close relation between Algerian and Moroccan Berbers. Mammeri explains this idea explicitly through his account on the encounter of one of

---

<sup>225</sup> “qui conforte un aussi grand désir ‘d’insularisation’, de distinction radicale” (508/509).

<sup>226</sup> It is a word used in a Kabyle dialect to refer to French people or Europeans in general.

<sup>227</sup> L’honneur c’est l’honneur, conclut-il. Qui a tué doit mourir. Les femmes sont perverses, Menach; n’en crois aucune, pas même ta mère, qui ne doit peut-être sa sagesse qu’à ses vieux ans. Mais la coutume heureusement veille, car où serions-nous s’il n’y avait encore dans notre montagne des hommes pour faire respecter la justice et payer l’injustice ? Nous serions comme les Iroumien et les Arabes : tout nous serait permis (Mammeri 173).

the youth of Tasga, Idir, with Rifain Berbers in Morocco saying that: “Riffian Berber not being very different from ours, Idir was soon able to speak it quite easily [...]. Soon he found the country and the people so endearing that he decided to linger over [there]” (32)<sup>228</sup>. This example depicts the kinship between Algerian and Moroccan Berbers which allowed Idir to communicate with them easily and even feel “so endearing” to them and their country. It also highlights the celebration of the ethnical semblance among North African Berbers. Yet, its comparison with other previous examples illustrates that the text concentrates on the distinctiveness from the Algerian Arabs while it celebrates the kinship with the Moroccan Berbers. That is, Mammeri’s prose seems to favour celebrating the ethnical relations between North African Berbers while disregarding any affinity between Algerian Berbers and Arabs as he also emphasises the difference and the dissemblance between them. The insistence on the dissemblance with Arabs and stressing the kinship with the Moroccan Berbers at the same time echoes the dividing stance which gives higher credence to regionalist and ethnical preferences over national identity. This is especially true as the timing of the novel paralleled the rise of Algerian nationalism, which is the topic almost missing in the novel.

In addition to echoing the divisions propagated by the Kabyle Myth, the novel includes another feature that was prominent in colonial writings about the Kabyles. As explained in the introductory section, the Kabyle character was essential in the colonial literature and represented as the most welcoming recipient figure for the graft of French civilisation and culture. Among the French authors who contributed to the spread of these representations are Ferdinand Duchêne and Lucienne Favre. Published in 1926, Duchêne’s *Kamir* “demonstrate[s] many of the most common stereotypes about the two principal ethnic groups of Algerian Muslims, the Arabs and the Imazighen” (Graether 17). Among these stereotypical

---

<sup>228</sup> “Le berbère rifain n’étant pas très différent du nôtre, Idir bientôt put le parler assez aisément. Bientôt il trouva si attachants le pays et les hommes qu’il se prit à s’[y] attarder” (32).

representations is the inclusion of the Kabyle character who, in Duchêne's novel, is called Si-Mahfoud, and performs the role of the school teacher who is "deemed to be more receptive than the Arab to French education" (Lorcin 219). Favre for her part contributed to sustaining the Kabyle Myth in her writings, as "she made use of the Kabyle as an *évolué* in many of her novels to elevate him in the colonial hierarchy, albeit never as high as the European" (Lorcin 219). This colonial tradition seems to be present in Mammeri's novel which is embodied in the character of Meddour, the school teacher.

Meddour (Mddūr) in the novel is one of the youth of Tasga. Unlike other characters, Meddour is depicted as the most enthusiastic adept of French education. He is represented through the perspective of the narrator Mokrane: "our weak point was Meddour. Meddour in a year would graduate from the Normal School of Teachers of Bouzareah. He had made himself in Tasga the promoter of all that he called vague words of 'civilization', 'progress, modern ideas'" (23)<sup>229</sup>. Although the character of Meddour or the Kabyle teacher is not given a strikingly elevated status as in the colonial novel for he is referred to as a 'weak point', he is depicted with the same qualities as in the colonial novel: his portrayal matches with the traditional colonial character of the Kabyle school teacher, as he is depicted like the heir of the presumed French civilisation brought by colonialism and spread through education.

Moreover, the adoption of these aspects did not only appear in the way Meddour talks, but also in his life style as the narrator describes the changes Meddour made in his house, which are in line with his way of thinking. The narrator describes the Menach's exclamation when he saw Meddour's room : "I congratulate you, but why so many innovations at once? A towel rack? All that's missing is the sink. A coat rack ! A bedside rug! This little table is nice"

---

<sup>229</sup> "[n]otre point faible, c'était Meddour. Meddour dans un an sortirait de l'Ecole normale d'instituteurs de Bouzareah. Il s'était fait à Tasga le promoteur de tout ce qu'il appelait des mots vagues de 'civilisation', 'progrès, idées modernes'" (23).



(Mammeri 160/161)<sup>230</sup>. Meddour justifies the changes he made as a way to be the first to apply the thoughts of progress he is promoting: “I have made, he says, in my room, some unpretentious arrangements, so that those who advocate new ideas would be also the first to set an example of progress” (Mammeri 160)<sup>231</sup>. The example depicts the way Meddour is absorbed in the role of the teacher who is promoting civilisation and ideas of progress, which show him as a typical embodiment of the Kabyle character conventionally included in the colonial novel.

Taking together the previously analysed examples shows the internalisation of some aspects of the Kabyle myth and the prevalence of representations that convey particularist perspectives. The way the novel refers to other regions in Algeria gives the impression of the separation and the radical distinctiveness of Kabylia from the rest of the country as the text includes expressions which imply geographical disunion. The novel also depicts some discriminative portrayals of the Sahara which is represented on many occasions as exile or unknown country. The prose also accentuates the sense of separation by adding the cultural distinctiveness between the Kabyles and the Arabs while celebrating the kinship between Moroccan and Algerian Berbers. These types of portrayals recreated dividing lines around ethnic belongings between Kabylia and other Algerian regions and echoed the division promoted by colonial racial myths. Last but not least, Mammeri’s writing integrated another fundamental aspect of stereotypical representations of the Kabyles, which is the incorporation of the character of the Kabyle teacher. This character shares many features of the conventional embodiment of the Kabyle character as the most receptive person to the French civilisation and education.

---

<sup>230</sup> “[j]e te félicite, mais pourquoi tant d’innovations à la fois ? Un porte-serviettes ? Il ne manque plus que le lavabo. Un portemanteau ! Une descente de lit ! Cette petite table est délicieuse” (Mammeri 160/161).

<sup>231</sup> “[j]’ai fait, dit-il, dans ma chambre, quelques aménagements sans prétention afin que ceux qui prônent les idées nouvelles soient aussi les premiers à donner l’exemple du progrès” (Mammeri 160).

Considering all these aspects together shows that Mammeri's representations reflect a particularist stance, not because the author chose Kabylia as a province for his novel but because he displays some portrayals which emphasise the distinctiveness between Kabyle and Arab Algerians and echo stereotypical racial perspectives that maintain the separation and the disunity of Algerian ethnic groups.

However, Mammeri's writings depict some areas in which the Kabyle myth's aspects are left out or even rejected. This aspect can be noticed in Mammeri's account of Islam in Kabyle society, as will be shown.

## **2.2. Rejection of Kabyle Myth's legacies: reluctance against the misrepresentation of Islam in Kabyle society**

Special attention has been paid to the status of religion in Kabyle society, especially because one of the cornerstones of the Kabyle Myth is the emphasis placed on the presumed religious heterodoxy status of Kabyles, which show them as ideal candidates for assimilation and even Christianisation. In fact, after the start of the colonisation of Algeria, "several leading prophets of French imperialism condemned Islam as the cause of Arab 'decadence' and praised the Kabyles' religious heterodoxy as a way of scoring off their arch-enemy Islam" (Benrabah, *Language* 27/28). Furthermore, some colonial politicians propagated the argument that the Berbers had been Christians before they converted to Islam. Therefore, they would welcome attempts to Christianise them. For instance, the medical doctor Auguste Hubert Warnier, a Saint-Simonian who was one of the French politicians who promoted the Kabyle Myth, claimed that:

The Berbers are ancient Christians, they are Muslims as little as possible... almost all of them have a cross tattooed on their forehead or on one of their cheeks. They are governed by Kanouns whose name reveals a Roman and Christian origin... the Berbers of Djerdjera

show the happiest dispositions for a complete return to Christianity (quoted in Ageron 317)<sup>232</sup>.

This idea was also developed by military men who assumed that the Kabyles “having experienced Christianity, have not been completely transformed by their new religion. They have accepted the Koran, but have not embraced it” (Lazreg, *The Reproduction* 385). These assumptions spread about the Berbers and their presumed low degree of Islamisation transformed into a feature that characterised Kabyle society<sup>233</sup>.

Unlike other stereotypes that were perpetuated in Mammeri’s *La Colline oubliée*, the stereotype about the lesser forms of Islamisation prevailing among the Kabyles seems to be denied in the novel. A reading of the novel shows a recurrent reference to Islam, in a way that depicts it as an essential element of Kabyle society. As a preamble, on one occasion, the author highlights the suffering of Aazi and Mokrane because they were childless. This was made particularly palpable as Mokrane’s mother repeatedly puts pressure on Aazi and threatens to divorce her from her son if she could not bring a grandson to the family. Disappointed by his mother’s behaviour, Mokrane tries to enlist the help of the Cheikh (Shaykh) to advise his mother. However, the Cheikh explains that the reason behind their suffering is the fact that they abandoned their religion and its rituals: “Damn. This whole century is cursed and you are only two sheep of the flock. Cursed because you strayed from the path. It has been two years since we did not celebrate Timcheret <sup>234</sup> in Tasga and you wonder why the war [is coming]”

---

<sup>232</sup> Les Bèrbères sont d’anciens chrétiens, musulmans aussi peu que possible... presque tous portent une croix en tatouage sur le front ou sur une des joues. Ils sont régis par des Kanouns dont le nom révèle une origine romaine et chrétienne... les Berbères du Djerdjéra montrent les plus heureuses dispositions pour un retour complet au christianisme (quoted in Ageron 317).

<sup>233</sup> It also motivated the religious campaign in Kabylia led by Archbishop Charles Lavigerie and the White Fathers (Lazreg, *The Reproduction* 386).

<sup>234</sup> Timcheret or Lewziaa are traditional festivals, which are usually practised in Kabylia by sacrificing oxen or sheep and sharing their meat with all the people of the village especially the poor ones. It is based on Islamic principles of Sadaka and is usually practised in Islamic Eids.

(Mammeri 63)<sup>235</sup>. The Cheikh accentuates the importance of religious practices, which according to him can reduce the hardship and the suffering of the people in his village.

This idea is also reflected on another occasion when the narrator relates the critical situation of Ibrahim (Ibrāhīm) who loses his job at the time of his fifth child's birth. He becomes hopeless with the heavy debts he got from his boss. The narrator depicts that "following the advice of his mother, Ibrahim learned to pray and regularly five times a day his face turned towards Mecca, he addressed God with the Arabic words of prayer which he did not understand" (Mammeri 111)<sup>236</sup>. The passage highlights the importance of spiritualism in Kabyles' life, as he shows that Ibrahim becomes devoted and more attached to his religion in times of distress. In addition, the text argues here that the language was not an obstacle, as Ibrahim practises his prayers even with Arab words that he does not understand. These two examples of Mokrane and Ibrahim seem to be contradicting the assumptions held by the Kabyle Myth about the Kabyles who were seen as less-attached people to Islam and a category who is ready for a complete return to Christianity. On the contrary, these examples show the extent to which the Kabyles are attached to their religion and assert the eminent status of Islam in Kabylia.

More importantly, this idea is asserted with the portrayal of the religious man in Tasga, who is depicted, unlike stereotypical images in which he is traditionally associated with despotism, corruption and fanaticism (Said, *Orientalism* 107). The influence of the Cheikh in the novel is highly emphasised; it can be noticed from one of the passages where Mokrane describes the impact of the Cheikh's speech on him:

---

<sup>235</sup> "Maudit. Tout ce siècle est maudit et vous n'êtes que deux brebis du troupeau. Maudit parce que vous vous êtes écartés de la voie. Voilà deux ans qu'on n'a plus célébré de timchret à Tasga et vous vous demandez pourquoi la guerre" (Mammeri 63).

<sup>236</sup> "[s]ur les conseils de sa mère, Ibrahim apprit à prier et régulièrement cinq fois par jour, le visage tourné vers la Mecque, il adressait au Dieu de bonté les paroles arabes de prière auxquelles il ne comprenait pas" (Mammeri 111).

I could not distract myself from the charm of his scholarly, measured, insinuating and gentle, yet specious dialectic. He made there, perhaps, the most beautiful speech of his life, the most sparkling that I have heard him deliver and, when he had finished, I remained for a long time looking at him, subjugated, under the spell (Mammeri 133)<sup>237</sup>.

The passage accentuates the influence of the Cheikh on Mokran and shows the Kabyle character as a religious orthodox rather than associating him with the presumed religious heterodoxy that is traditionally linked with Kabyle characters.

The author provides another representation in which he does not only elevate the status of the Cheikh in Kabyle society, he also criticises the incompetence and the inability of the youth to replace the Cheikh or elderly people's wisdom in the village in spite of them being educated.

Mokrane explains this that:

There was no longer an orator in Tasga who could speak respectfully for a long time; because the old men had nothing to say after the sheikh and my father, and because the young men were unable to pronounce in Kabyle a sustained speech. When by chance one of them spoke, we can see the bearded and ravaged heads of the old people seated in a row on the flagstones at the back are put down one by one; an uneasiness ran through them all, because the speeches of the young people resembled the conversations of the grocers. They were dry, cold, without order, without quotations, they aimed at nothing but the solution of a small precise detail, their big word was "Lmoufid", the minimum: so what could the assembly expect from harangues which openly aimed at the minimum? (Mammeri 30)<sup>238</sup>.

This passage can also be understood as a criticism of the influence of the French culture and language, which made most of the new generation lose their eloquence even in their native language and consequently unable to formulate a persuasive or even a meaningful speech like the ones that could be produced by the Cheikh or the other elders in the village.

---

<sup>237</sup>Je ne pouvais plus me distraire du charme de sa dialectique savante, mesurée, insinuante et douce, et pourtant spacieuse. Il fit là, peut-être, le plus beau discours de sa vie, le plus étincelant en tout cas que je lui aie entendu prononcer et, quand il eut fini, je restai longtemps à le regarder, subjugué, sous le charme (Mammeri 133).

<sup>238</sup> Il n' y avait plus à Tasga d'orateur qui put parler longuement et dignement; les vieux, parce qu'après le cheikh et mon père, ils n'avaient rien à dire, les jeunes parce qu'ils étaient incapable de prononcer en Kabyle un discours soutenu; quand par hasard l'un d'eux prenait la parole, on voyait s'abaisser une à une les têtes barbues et ravagées de tous les vieux assis en ligne sur les dalles du fond; un malaise les parcourait tous, car les discours des jeunes ressemblaient aux conversations des épiciers: ils étaient secs, froids, sans ordre, sans citations, ils ne visaient à rien qu'à la solution d'un petit détail précis, leur grand mot était "Lmoufid", le minimum: alors qu'est-ce que l'assemblée pouvait attendre de harangues qui visaient ouvertement au minimum ? (Mammeri 30).

A reading of such representations gives an impression that the author is rejecting the clichéd picture of the Kabyle as a “bad-Muslim” (Benrabah, *Language* 28), which differentiates him from the Muslim Arab. This is because the prose pays particular attention to the attachment of the people in Tasga to their religious faith and rituals, to the extent of believing that abandoning their religion is the reason behind their misery. In addition, through the representation of Ibrahim, the novel also denies the idea that the Arab language had been an obstacle for Kabyles to practise their religion, as the analysed examples emphasise the devotion of Kabyles to Islam even when they do not understand the language. Last but not least, the text sheds light on the important role of the Cheikh in Tasga, which also embodies a rejection of the stereotypical portrayal of the religious man. The novel simultaneously criticises the influence of the colonial language and culture on the new generation, which made them almost ignorant of their native language. In a nutshell, the representation of Islam in this novel serves as an attempt of the author to reject one of the major aspects of the Kabyle myth that is related to religion. Unlike the conventional assumptions held by the Kabyle myth, Mammeri emphasises the importance of Islam in Kabyle society.

This is especially accurate because similar perspectives on Islam are expressed elsewhere by Mammeri himself. When civil disobedience started after Mammeri’s course about Kabyle poetry was cancelled in 1980<sup>239</sup>, Kamel Belkacem (Kamāl Balqāsim), the chief editor of *El Moujahid’s* newspaper criticised Mouloud Mammeri and accused him of being against Arabo-Islamist principles in an article entitled “Les Donneurs de leçons” (The Lessons Givers). Mouloud Mammeri for his part replied by rejecting most of Belkacem’s claims, among them, his account of Mammeri’s position toward Islam. He says in this vein:

Basically, I personally consider that the Berber culture is common to us all and Islam and Islamic values have come to bring an essential element to the definition of our identity. I

---

<sup>239</sup> More information about this will be available in the following section.

consider that Islam of the first centuries was an instrument of liberation and emancipation of the Maghrebian man. [...]. Of course, between the different faces it [Islam] can take in reality, I myself opt for the most human, the one that is the most progressive, the most liberating and not for the different face that it may have presented in dark times. of our history (quoted in Cheniki)<sup>240</sup>.

Although Mammeri highlights his rejection of the religious fanaticism that appeared in Algerian history, mainly in the years leading up to the Black Decade in his case, he clearly argues that Islam was a tool of emancipation of the Maghreb people. Taking together these perspectives and his representations of Islam in his novel, they show that there is a direct rejection of the Kabyle myth's argument about the presumed heterodoxy of Kabyles compared to Arabs. Indeed, the analysis of representations in *La Colline oubliée* shows that the self-Orientalist discourse created in the novel integrates some aspects of the Kabyle Myth which evokes a particularist stance in the novel. However, the prose seems to leave out some other aspects of this myth such as the emphasis on the relatively shallower Islamisation of the Kabyles. The fluctuation of Mammeri's representations reflects the limitations of the self-Orientalist discourse and shows that it exists in a more nuanced manner as it is more prevalent in some areas than others, which also puts Mammeri's writing among the ambivalent self-Orientalist prose.

In this section, I have shown the ambivalent presence of particularism in Mammeri's novel that was published during the late colonial era, and coincided with the political conflict that happened in the MTLD party. The coincidence of this novel's publication with the Berber Crisis (1949) pushed many members of the same party especially the proponents of Arabo-Islamism, to harshly criticise the novel not because it recreates a particularist representation,

---

<sup>240</sup> Je considère personnellement qu'au fond la culture berbère, qui nous est commun à tous, l'Islam et les valeurs islamiques sont venus apporter un élément essentiel à la définition de notre identité. Je considère que l'Islam des premiers siècles a été un instrument de libération et d'émancipation de l'homme maghrébin. [...]. Naturellement entre les différents visages qu'il peut prendre dans la réalité j'opte quant à moi pour le plus humain, celui qui est le plus progressiste, le plus libérateur et non-pour le visage différent qu'il a pu présenter aux heures sombres de notre histoire (quoted in Cheniki).

which it does sometimes, but because of the centralisation of the novel on the Kabyle region that was common even in Arab authors' writings. I have argued that the divide created between the Berbers and Arabs and the criticism of Mammeri only for speaking about Kabylia can be in itself considered as a consequence of the Kabyle myth and shows the influence of politics on literature. This parallelism between politics and literature has reappeared in the post-independence era and about the same issue. The decision to Arabise Algeria in the post-independence era has dismissed and alienated all the other existing ethnicities. This resulted in the increase of the defence on the Berber identity and culture in literature but also led to the rebirth of the particularist and racial stereotypes which sometimes deepen the divide between Berbers and Arabs as I shall outline.

### **3. The influence of Arabisation and the alienation of the Berber culture : the revival of racial divisions in post-independence literature**

In this section, I intend to examine the rebirth of particularism in some literary representations, which attempted to celebrate the Berber culture. I also engage with the impact of the alienation of Berber Culture resulting from the politics adopted in post-independence Algeria such as Arabisation. I contextualise my analysis by briefly referring to the main stages that led to the marginalisation of the Berber culture.

The intention of monolingualism in Algeria was declared at a very early stage after independence. The declaration came directly from the first president of Algeria Ahmed Ben Bella (Aḥmad ibn bllah) in 1962 after independence when he said: "We are Arabs, Arabs, Arabs" (Benrabah, *Language* 52). This triple declaration served as a decision on the post-independence path of Algeria and asserted the elimination of the diversity and a challenge of other ethnicities in the country through the process of Arabisation. Ben Bella's declaration was not only a sign against cultural pluralism but more precisely against the Berber culture. His



perspective was asserted “in his abolition in October 1962 of the only existing Chair of Berber Studies at Algiers University” (Benrabah, *Language* 56). This decision was among the major causes of the rise of the Kabyles’ opposition led by Hocine Aït Ahmed, one of the main leaders of the FLN who created the FFS party as an opposing movement to the ruling party. This opposition developed into an armed uprising in 1963-1964 against the ruling party, as a result of the dismissal of the Berber language and the challenge to political pluralism represented by the banning of the FFS party. Eventually, no demand was accepted by the government concerning the Berber cause and Hocine Aït Ahmed was arrested. However, awareness about the cultural alienation raised among the defenders of Berber culture and they continued their movement of Berberism that they simply defined as “the concern to affirm and promote the Berber identity, as Arabism and Islamism have been concerned to promote the Arab and Islamic identities respectively” (Roberts 6).

The insistence on Arabo-Islamism and the exclusion of other ethnicities was also the doctrine of the new president Houari Boumediene (Hwwāry Būmadyan) after he seized power in 1965. The focus on Arabisation, mainly in the schooling system, was intensive in Boumediene’s rule especially between 1970 and 1977 as the year 1971 was called the “year of Arabization” (Benrabah, *Language* 62). Simultaneously, the government ignored the demands of the Berber defenders. For example, before Algerians voted for the National Charter between 1976 and 1977, the government organised a debate about the formulation and the content of the charter. The conservatives suggested the weekend to become Thursday and Friday in place of Saturday and Sunday, whereas the Berber militants raised the demand to teach the Berber language. Mohammed Benrabah (Muḥammad ibn Rābiḥ) explains that “[i]n August 1976, the government decreed Thursday– Friday as the weekend in Algeria [...]. As to the Berbers, Boumediene’s Charter condemned the Berber militants’ demand as ‘regionalism’ and a ‘social scourge to be eradicated’” (*Language* 59).

The extensive years of Arabisation were also accompanied by restraints put on the defenders of Berberism as “[i]n 1973, the Berber course taught by Mouloud Mammeri at the University of Algiers, which was permitted by the authorities only with great reluctance, was cancelled” (Aïtel 66). Then, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1980, the Algerian government decided to cancel Mouloud Mammeri’s course about ancient Kabyle poetry at the University of Tizi Ouzou, which was the event that triggered the civil disobedience in Kabylia and led to what is called the Berber Spring. Mohammed Benrabah argues that “the ‘Berber Spring’ was the final stage of a long process of resistance by the Kabyle community which had started with the armed struggle in 1963– 1964 led by Hocine Aït Ahmed” (*Language* 67).

The outrage of the Kabyles was faced with violent opposition and arrests by the Algerian army which worsened the situation. In fact, Kabylia’s unrests were used recurrently as a tool for political manipulation in the post-independence era. Indeed, in an interview with *African Geopolitics*, the interviewee states that even during the Black Spring in 2001, the Kabyle-Arab dichotomy was used for political reasons:

It follows that we have reason to take seriously the hypothesis that the sustained provocations which have set Kabylia on fire and kept it burning have been deliberately engaged in with the knowledge and approval of the commanders of the Algerian army. Why the army commanders might have done this can only be a matter for speculation at this stage. A theory which has been circulating is that, with the Islamic insurgency winding down, a different fault line in the Algerian body-politic, the Kabyle-Arab dichotomy, needs to be exploited if the army’s strategy of divide and rule is to be sustained (quoted in Roberts 302).

This quote shows that the Kabyle-Arab dichotomy survived in the politics of post-independence Algeria and have been used as a tool for manipulation of people, just as this dichotomy had first been used by French colonialism to divide and rule the indigenous population in colonised Algeria.

These political events were also paralleled with the extensive literary output that defended the Berber culture in spite of the restraints put by the government. In fact, these restrictions

served as a stimulus for defenders of Berber culture, as many Kabyle authors and artists devoted their works to defend and celebrate their Berber ethnicity. Among these people featured Mouloud Mammeri, who published several works in the post-independence era, closely related to Berber culture even after cancelling his course in Algiers<sup>241</sup>. Nabil Farès for his part was also one of the prominent authors who devoted his books to revive Berber culture, like *Le Champ des oliviers* (1972). Unlike Mouloud Mammeri, Nabil Farès' writings not only celebrate the Berber culture but reproduced the Kabyle-Arab dichotomy.

Nabil Farès (1940-2016) was an Algerian writer and poet, who joined the FLN and served the ALN during the War of Independence (Naylor 245). After independence, his political opinions opposed the political rule of the single party in Algeria and defended the diversity of cultural identity. His position put him at loggerheads with government. After his salary was frozen by Algerian authorities, he left teaching at the University of Algiers and migrated to Paris where he pursued his literary and political activities.

In 1972, he published *Le Champ des oliviers: la découverte du nouveau monde*. This novel is characterised by a fragmented structure. The book starts with the narration of the Western character Brandy Fax on his way to Barcelona from Paris, after he submitted his thesis about the "Ogress". In the beginning, the novel relates the inner discussion of Brandy Fax about the unknown meaning of the ogress in Europe. Then, the character of Brandy Fax will be replaced by other narrators such the Greek café-owner, Arlequin, other famous authors like William Faulkner and François Villon. The novel then continues in a fragmented way with multiple narratives and different stories, expressed in a mixture of prose, poetry, unfinished sentences, white blanks, variety of languages (Berber, Arabic, English, French and Spanish), and

---

<sup>241</sup> Such as: *Les Isefra, poèmes de Si Mohand-ou-Mhand* (1969), and *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (1980) among other works.

unpunctuated paragraphs. One of the major characters in this book is the ogress who embodies the origin of the Berber identity in the novel. She narrates the story about the arrival of Arabs to North Africa, which the author puts as the start of “the new world”<sup>242</sup>.

Nabil Farès’ emphasis on the defence of Berber identity attracted the attention of many critics. For instance, Anne Roche identifies in her analysis of Farès’ writings the two major components of what she calls the Faresian identity: “the Ogress, or the pre-Islamic origin: Kahena, the queen of the Aurès: these are the two mythical poles of the search for Farésian identity” (957)<sup>243</sup>. Valerie K. Orlando for her part highlights the major argument of Farès’ fictional works which, she argues, aimed to “express the desire to keep his native Kabyle culture present and alive, to use the Berber language, which he spoke before he knew French, and to break apart the codified structures of all languages”. This idea is openly addressed in the novel under study, as Farès emphasises in reviving the Berber language and origins. However, this aspect is highly criticised by Marnia Lazreg (Mrnyyah Lazraq) who, in her study of the reproduction of the colonial ideologies, includes only Kabyle authors and considers Nabil Farès’ *Le Champ des oliviers* among the Kabyle Literature that “tends to explore anti-Arab and anti-Muslim themes” (*The Reproduction* 391). Lazreg’s analysis shows a clear disregard for the possibility of the reproduction of the colonial ideologies by supporters of Arabo-Islamism as she includes instances only from Kabyle authors’ writings. She also overlooks in her article the constraints put against the cultural diversity by Arabo-Islamist politics, which is the reason behind the alienation of different ethnicities in Algeria, and maybe the reason behind the reproduction of these ideologies.

---

<sup>242</sup> “le nouveau monde”.

<sup>243</sup> “[I]’Ogresse, ou l’origine anté-islamique: Kahena, la reine des Aurès: tels sont les deux pôles mythiques de la recherche d’identité farésienne” (957).

While some critics praise Farès for his contribution to the defence of the Berber cause through the inclusion of symbols of Berber culture in his writing, others denounce his bias against Arabo-Islamism and accuse him of reviving the Kabyle myth's stereotypes. I am analysing this novel in the light of this disagreement, to show the perpetuation of the Kabyle myth's stereotypes resulting from the attempt made by Kabyle authors to defend the Berber culture and language to reject the political restraints. I also show the way Algerian politics and supporters of Arabo-Islamism continued to ban the cultural diversity and the existence of other ethnicities in that era using tools such as Arabisation.

Farès devotes one of the chapters of his novel to refer to the arrival of Arabs to North Africa. He embodies this event in a story told by the “ogress” who is one of the major symbols of Berber orality: the author refers to the Berber North African identity by the ogress while he embodies the Arab conquest by the arrival of the “horsemen” (Farès 86)<sup>244</sup> who came from the “desert” (86)<sup>245</sup>. The novel highlights the precedence of the Berber identity for the region through the voice of the ogress who says:

I had to. Somehow. Disenchant. Because. Deceived by the recent arrival (I say recent for me. Because these horsemen came around the seventh century. Then around the ninth century. Then (finally) around the eleventh century. They cannot be of an origin prior to mine) of a few riders from these few dunes from desert where there is a black stone, the masters of this original teaching (of my origin) stopped the investigation a few millennia of the true origin of the world and of myself (86)<sup>246</sup>.

---

<sup>244</sup> “cavaliers”.

<sup>245</sup> “pays désertique” (86).

<sup>246</sup> Je dus. En quelque sorte. Déchanter. Car. Trompés par l'arrivée récente (je dis récente pour moi. Car ces cavaliers venus vers le vii e. Puis vers le ix e. Puis (enfin) vers le xie siècle. Ne peuvent être d'une origine antérieure à la mienne) de quelques cavaliers venus de ces quelques dunes d'un quelconque pays désertique où existe une pierre noire quelconque, les maîtres de cet enseignement originel (de mon origine) ont arrêté l'investigation à quelques millénaires de la véritable origine du monde et de moi-même (86).

We read through the voice of the ogress Farès' insistence on the precedence of the Berber origins and on reviving the pre-Islamic era in North Africa. This expresses the argument prevailing in most of his writings "that Algeria's true consciousness will be found when the country recognizes its origins before the arrival of Islam, European colonialism, and postcolonial Arabization" (Orlando), which is the aspect that opposed the doctrine of the Algerian ruling political party at that time.

Moreover, the novel engages with the conquest of the Arabs and relates this event through a story told by the ogress, who narrates how naïve she was when she was deceived by the man who came from a desertic country and used his language to fool her and to destroy her empire. She says :

Me. The native ogress. Who was waiting for this man to come. And who was deceived by the scriptural virtue of this man. Who. Yes. Does not stop. Describing. In front of me. Under me. And who. Thereby. Deceived me. Fooled the native (naïve) ogress that I was. Because I was amazed. Yes. Literally amazed to see. Spout several signs with strange curves. In front of me. Under me. (Farès 86/87)<sup>247</sup>.

The story told by the ogress demonstrates that the man from a desertic country used his language with "Spout several signs with strange curves" to fool her, which serves as an explicit hint at the influence of the Arabic language and its spread in North Africa.

The text maintains this idea in another passage where it shows that this man did not only trick the ogress with his language but also brought a book that destroyed her kingdom, which may be taken as a reference to the Qur'an or Islamic religion in general. She explains this saying: "Blind. Yes. Became blind. Blinded by this descent of fifteen centuries below the day and the book. I lived. Without looking. The earth surrounding my eyes. Degraded. Maddened

---

<sup>247</sup> Moi. L'ogresse native. Qui attendait la venue de cet homme. Et qui fut trompée par la vertu scripturale de cet homme. Qui. Oui. Ne cessa. Devant moi. Sous moi. D'écrire. Et qui. Ainsi. Me trompa. Trompa l'ogresse native (naïve) que j'étais. Car je fus émerveillée. Oui. Littéralement émerveillée de voir. Devant moi. Sous moi. Jaillir plusieurs signes aux courbes étranges (Farès 86/87).

by this man of forty days and forty nights. Came from this town to write a book. This book that destroyed my beautiful kingdom of naive ogress” (87/88)<sup>248</sup>. The way the author pictures, in these passages, the conquest of North Africa by the Arabs seems to display a negative impression as Farès illustrates that the arrival of Arabs brought destruction to the ogress’ kingdom and pushed her to flee and “descend to the depths of the earth and the day” (87)<sup>249</sup>. In other words, what can be understood from the author’s representations is the fact that the Arabs’ arrival and their spread of the Arabic language and Islam destroyed the ogress’ kingdom which embodies the Berber origins of the region.

More importantly, the description of the Arab conquest of North Africa in the novel differs from perspectives spread about it in Algeria – especially at the time of the publication of the novel when the process of Arabisation reached its peak. In fact, Mohammed Benrabah explains that the manuals used during the years of Arabisation in Algeria highlighted the positive side of the conquest and disregarded any explanation of other complications:

[...] Arab conquerors were constantly called ‘Muslims’ and presented as the ‘liberators’ of the native inhabitants, the Berbers. The latter, described as ‘Maghrebans’ and being colonized, then, by the Byzantines, were ‘liberated’ by the Arabs. Children were also taught that the Berbers had completely lost their identity and fused into Islam. Nowhere could be found any reference to slavery or war treasures collected by force from the native Berbers by the conquering Arabs (*Language* 65).

Unlike these descriptions, Nabil Farès depicts that the Arab conquest brought destruction to the indigenous culture and identity. The comparison of these instances shows that both sides depicted particularist stances : the supporters of Arabo-Islamism in the Algerian government and the Berber authors like Farès. On the one hand, the Algerian government designed textbooks which showed extreme bias, dismissing the history of the Berbers before the arrival

---

<sup>248</sup> “Aveugle. Oui. Devenue aveugle. Aveugle par cette descente de quinze siècles au-dessous du jour et du livre. Je vivais. Sans regard. La terre entourant mes yeux. Avilie. Affolée par cet homme de quarante jours et de quarante nuits. Venu de cette ville pour écrire un livre. Ce livre qui détruisit mon beau royaume d’ogresse naïve” (87/88).

<sup>249</sup> “[d]escendre au plus profond des fonds de la terre et du jour” (87).

of the Arabs and devoting most books to the history of the Middle East. In addition, the policy of Arabisation ignored the linguistic diversity of Algeria as “[w]hile the essential task is to forge a consensus around the acceptance of pluralism, official linguistic policy proceeds by constraint and exclusion” (Mostari 39). On the other hand, Nabil Farès as a Kabyle author tried to revive the dismissed Berber culture in his writings. For his part, he described the arrival of the Arabs as a disaster for the indigenous people, and he disregarded the cultural diversity brought to the region by the inclusion of Islam and Arabic as components of the Algerian identity in addition to Berberity.

Farès relates that the arrival of the Arabs made the ogress fall into deep sleep which Marnia Lazreg explains that it denotes “a long Arabo-Islamic slumber” (*The Reproduction* 392). The novel shows that this deep dormancy was ended by the coming of a Western character in the novel called Brandy Fax, who wakes up the ogress and takes her with him in his travels. She says: “I must even say (the secrets of an ogress worth what the confidences of an ogress worth: ellipsis and expletion all at the same time) that Brandy Fax’s knowledge of railway delights me. Without him (Brandy Fax) I would continue (undoubtedly my secular sleep in some cave of Ikharsushen)” (Farès 85)<sup>250</sup>. This portrayal echoes another clichéd representation in the novel, as the author refers to the Arabs’ arrival like a disaster for the indigenous culture while he portrays the Western character as a saviour of the ogress. This recalls Orientalist portrayals and stories of the Christian hero who saves the Saracen princess (Kabbani 37). The same idea is also formulated by Gayatri Spivak in the form of “white men [who] are saving brown women” (Williams et al 92). In other words, depicting the ogress as a naïve character who is fooled by the Arab man and awoken from her sleeplessness by Brandy Fax seems a mere

---

<sup>250</sup> “Il faut même que je dise (les confidences d’ogresse valent ce que valent les confidences d’ogresse: ellipse et explétion tout en même temps) que la connaissance ferroviaire de Brandy Fax me ravit. Sans lui (Brandy Fax) je continuerais (sans aucun doute mon sommeil séculaire dans quelque grotte d’Ikharsushen)” (Farès 85).



perpetuation of the stereotypical portrayal which debases the Arab man and elevates the Western character as a saviour while insisting on the victimisation of the female character – the ogress in this example.

The representation of the arrival of Arabs in North Africa shows some biased perspectives in the way Farès chose to refer to or to embody the Arab conquest of North Africa, and in his appraisal when it comes to its influence on the region. First of all, he chooses to show that the arrival of the Arabs was based on fooling the indigenous people with the new language and religion. More importantly, the prose clearly denounces the intrusion of the new language and religion by showing that the new culture destroyed the kingdom of the ogress which hints at the ruin of the indigenous culture and identity, with all the negative connotations attached to destruction. Furthermore, the novel emphasised the damage and the weariness brought by the new culture when it tells of the ogress who went into deep sleep after she was fooled by the man coming from the desertic region until she was awakened by Brandy Fax.

Farès' representations, whilst defending the Berber identity and denouncing the alienation of the Berbers at that time, showed a particularist stance against the Arab culture and the Islamic religion. That is, Farès' account argues for a re-appraisal of stereotypes of separation and distinctiveness between Arabs and Kabyles as his portrayals emphasise the fact that the arrival of Arabs negatively influenced and even suppressed the indigenous culture and identity. In doing so, Farès perpetuates the racial divisions between Arabs and Kabyles as they were conceptualised in the colonial Kabyle myth, which places Farès's writings among the fully-fledged self-Orientalist writings. However, this stance of particularism did not only appear in the literature created by Kabyle authors in their attempt to defend their berberity as Lazreg suggested, but also in the politics of the Algerian government which, for its part, supported the dominance of Arabo-Islamism at the expense of other ethnicities, through Arabisation. The

support of Arabo-Islamism through Arabisation shows that “the linguistic policy pursued by Algerian politicians has always been dictated primarily by political objectives” (Mostari 38). In other words, the ruling party forbade the establishment of Berber as a national language and set policies and programs which restrained cultural diversity whilst at the same time imposing Arabo-Islamism, alienating other ethnicities in the process and resulting in the reappearance of particularism, even in literature, which is the idea that Yassine Temlali (Yāsīn tymlāly) has pointed to when he says: “I have learned over time these expressions of Arabophobia – very rare, it must be emphasised – for they were: the bitter fruits of cultural and linguistic oppression”(23)<sup>251</sup>.

The restraint put on cultural and linguistic diversity in Algeria through the process of Arabisation has also been discussed by Arab-speaking authors, who despite writing in Arabic, were often prepared to denounce the dominance of Arabo-Islamism and to criticise the disregard of other ethnicities and languages which have contributed to the development of Algerian identity. Among these authors is Fadhila El-Farouk who, in *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), like Farès, denounced the dominance of Arabo-Islamism by insisting on the negative results of Arabisation on Algerian society. That raises immediately the following question, which has been a running thread through this chapter: does this lead her to create a particularist discourse in her novel?

#### **4. The influence of Arabisation on maintaining particularism in Arabic-speaking literature**

As explained in the previous section, the Algerian government imposed monolingualism at the expense of other ethnicities through the process of Arabisation in order to erase the

---

<sup>251</sup> “J’ai appris avec le temps à prendre ces expressions d’arabophobie – très rares, il faut le souligner –, pour ce qu’elles étaient : les fruits amers de l’oppression culturelle et linguistique” (23).

influence of the French language. However, the political support of Arabo-Islamism caused the alienation of other ethnicities and languages as “Arabisation, to put it bluntly, tend[ed] to exclude every language except one – the one spoken by authorities and no-one else” (Mostari 39). Fadhila El-Farouk tackled this topic in her *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), where she illustrates the influence of Arabisation on Algerian society particularly on the Berber category. The novel revolves around the main character Luisa, a Chaoui (Shāwī) girl who is about to start her university studies in Batna (Bātnah) during the Black Decade.

El-Farouk shows in her novel the influence of Arabisation on the suppression of Berber history and the way this deepened the divide between the Arabs and the Berbers. The day she went to Batna for registration, Luisa relates the discussion she had with her cousin Habib who accompanied her. While walking, she wondered why they called a cosmetic shop “Ashar”<sup>252</sup>, as she found the name connotes a romantic place in Arabic. Habib (Ḥabīb) told her that he met an old man in the same place who read the name and thought that there was a magician there as he thought of the Berber meaning of the word. He said: “His Berber background made him read the word this way, but you represent the generation that was subjected to Arabisation. He is still Chaoui despite his ability to read the Arabic language, but you represent the opinion of Ibn Khaldoun (Ibn Khaldūn) ‘if it is Arabised it is ruined’: you set up the tent of Arabic romance on the ruins of what remains of your Berberity” (El-Farouk 23)<sup>253</sup>. In this passage, Habib shows that Luisa’s way of thinking is influenced by Arabisation as she first thought of Arabic connotation for the word, while the Chaoui old man referred to the Berber connotation even if he read the word in Arabic. This passage illustrates how the process of Arabisation influenced

---

<sup>252</sup> أشخار ‘Ashar’ is an Arabic word that means the last third of the night and used sometimes as a female name, but it is used in the Berber language as أُسْحَار ‘Asehar’ to refer to a magician.

<sup>253</sup> خلفيته البربرية جعلته يقرأ الكلمة هكذا، أما أنت، فتمتثلين الجيل الذي خضع للتعريب. هو مازال 'دشاوي' رغم استطاعته قراءة اللغة العربية، أنت على رأي ابن خلدون 'إذا عُرِبَت خربت' نصبت خيمة الرومانسية العربية في رأسك على أنقاض ما تبقى من بربريتك (23)

the way the Berbers think, especially those who went through the Arabised educative system, as it prioritised their Arabised knowledge compared to their Berber background.

In the same conversation, Luisa answers angrily that she does not care about the past, and her Berberity is just an ethnicity for her, which is not related to national and religious identity. Here Habib interrupts her explaining: “[...] you should notice that even this ethnicity according to your explanation, they do not want it, my lady. And when you get a little older you will understand that even this affiliation, they will try to uproot it. I told him: who will try to uproot it? He said: the Arabs” (El-Farouk 23/24)<sup>254</sup>. Here the passage depicts the divide existing between Berbers and Arabs, and the way Habib believes that the Arabisation policy aims to uproot Berber ethnicity. We understand through this example that Habib who is a Berber character does not consider Arabst as a different ethnic group but as an enemy who threatens the existence of his own ethnicity. In other words, the character of Habib illustrates that Arabisation did not only strengthen the feeling of particularism but even generated a feeling of enmity and hatred between Arabs and Berbers and as Hind Mostari puts it: “each individual element not only feels threatened, but is seen by others as a threat to unity” (40).

The idea of erasing the Berber history through Arabisation is developed in Habib’s explanation to Luisa, when he says that even names of the Berber leaders that Algerians know are not the original names such as “Kahena” and “Kousaila”, but they are taught the names Arabs used to refer to these leaders (El-Farouk 24). Habib’s explanations remind the reader of the attempt, through the Arabised educative system, to erase and alienate the Berber historical background in the data provided in the school textbooks. Habib pursues his argument saying that “the history of Arabs is all lies ‘my lady’ ... they wrote history with their arrogance while

<sup>254</sup>

لاحظي أنه حتى الإنتماء لا يريدونه أنستي حسب تعبيرك هذا، وحين تكبرين قليلاً ستفهمين أنه حتى هذا الإنتماء سيجاولون اقتلاعه. قلت له : ومن يحاول اقتلاعه. قال: العرب (24/23)

we are busy with Arabisation, wake up my cousin, Arabisation does not mean Arabising the tongue in this decision, but rather the expansion of the Arab map” (El-Farouk 25)<sup>255</sup>. These passages depict Habib in the novel as the Berber character that defends the Berberity and denounces its alienation by Arabisation.

However, Habib seems to be portrayed in a way replete with stereotypical images about the Berbers or the defenders of Berberity. This is because he is pictured as an extremist who calls for the hatred of Arabs and the maintenance of particularism, which are descriptions assigned to many other Berbers or defenders of Berberity before him, starting with the Berber members of the MTLD party, to Mouloud Mammeri and many others (see previous sections). Although it can not be argued that this is not a colonial stereotype, it can be considered as an adoption of a stereotype resulting from the influence of the colonial Kabyle myth. Indeed, the novel shows the political goals and the impact of the Arabisation policy in alienating Berber history and language. Yet, the representation of Habib in the novel works as a confirmation of stereotypes assigned to Berbers, depicting them as particularists and dividers, which is the aspect that can place the representations of Berbers in the novel among fully-fledged self-Orientalist writings.

The analysis of representations included in this novel shows a different perspective from the one of Mammeri and Farès concerning particularism. Like Farès and Mammeri, El-Farouk is a Berber author, but unlike them, she writes in Arabic. Whilst El-Farouk’s representations do not show a clear re-creation of racial stereotypes, some examples maintain a particularist stance. The examples analysed do not show any preference of a specific region or ethnicity over another, but the feeling of ethnical particularism prevails among her characters mainly Habib, who expresses a perspective that goes beyond particularism and reaches the extent of

---

<sup>255</sup>

تاريخ العرب كله كذب في كذب 'يا لآلة'... لقد كتبوا التاريخ بغرورهم... ونحن منهمكون بالتعريب، أفيقي يا ابنة عمي، التعريب لا يعني اللسان في هذا القرار، إنما توسيع الخارطة العربية (25)

hatred and enmity between Berbers and Arabs. Also, his criticism of Arabisation does not seem to be directed at government or politicians but to all Arabs in general. This portrayal can be an example of fully-fledged self-Orientalism because it echoes the clichéd image of the Berbers. Thus, the novel does not recreate racial stereotypes compared to the writings of Mammeri and Farès, yet its representations maintain the prevalence of particularism in Algeria, in line with perceptions shaped by decades of colonial attempts dominated by ‘divide and rule’ policies revolving mostly around particularist perspectives.

## **5. Conclusion**

I have discussed in this chapter the creation of racial stereotypes and the particularist stance resulting from colonial ideologies such as the Kabyle myth and the influence of politics in the perpetuation of these stereotypes in Algerian postcolonial literature. Starting with the period of colonialism, I have shown that the Berber crisis in the political party MTLD demonstrated the influence of the Kabyle myth on the creation of particularism between the Berbers and Arabs. The anticolonial party witnessed division between Arab and Berber members and a sense of particularism appeared from both sides. This was reflected in literature as well as most of Arabo-Islamist members of MTLD criticising Mouloud Mammeri’s novel *La Colline oubliée* (1952) just because it focused on Kabylia, while no criticism has been addressed to the over-emphasis on Arabo-Islamism and the alienation of other ethnicities in the politics of MTLD.

I have shown that Mammeri was not completely innocent of particularism, which, within the context of this thesis, can be considered as an expression of self-Orientalism. I argue in this chapter that his novel displays a particularist stance not because it focuses on Kabylia but because it recreates some clichéd racial perspectives traditionally used in colonial literature. Indeed, the analysis of the novel has illustrated that Mammeri perpetuates some aspects of the Kabyle myth which emphasise the distinctiveness between Kabyles and Arabs. However,

Mammeri's prose rejects some other stereotypes of the Kabyle myth, especially those related to the presumed 'under-Islamisation' of the Kabyles. This shows that Mammeri's writing reflects ambivalence in the form of the self-Orientalist discourse he created as it is more prevalent in some areas than others.

In the second section of this chapter, I have shown that the politics of the Algerian government in the post-independence era concerning cultural diversity has led to the re-creation of the particularist stance in some of the literary output of the time. The analysis of Nabil Farès' *Le Champ des oliviers* (1972) has shown that the novel was published as a reaction to the alienation of Berber culture by political restrictions in place at that time. Farès' novel displays a fully-fledged self-Orientalist discourse: it depicts a direct rejection of the intrusion of the Arabo-Islamist culture and the perpetuation of racial stereotypes that maintain the separation and the distinctiveness between Berbers and Arabs. This is especially the case as the novel reflects the idea that the arrival of Arabs has ruined the area and suppressed the indigenous culture and identity. I have also shown in this section that this stance of particularism was not limited to Berber authors but it has also marked the activities of Algerian politics through supporting Arabo-Islamism and harshly dismissing other ethnicities and dialects.

The last section analyses a piece of literary work that was created as a result of the political alienation of Berbers through Arabisation. The analysis of Fadhila El-Farouk's *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999) has shown a different discourse on particularism compared to the previously discussed novels. Whilst El-Farouk did not recreate the stereotypes that emphasise the distinctiveness between Arabs and Berbers, she included representations of Berbers which resurfaced the conventional rendering of supporters of Berberity and reflects a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance in the novel, in spite of the fact that she wrote it in Arabic.

The sense of particularism, reflected in the form of self-Orientalism discussed in this chapter, has been adopted from the racial stereotypes spread by the colonial discourse, and has been perpetuated by Algerian authors in their literary output during and after colonialism as a result of the Algerian politics which continued to widen the divide between Berbers and Arabs – most notably, as a result of the extensive support of Arabo-Islamism at the expense of other ethnicities. The analysis also showed that this stance of particularism is more prevailing in some areas than others. As it was the case with Mammeri, whose particularist stance appeared in representations that emphasised the distinctiveness between Arabs and Berbers, but disappeared when speaking about religious matters. It was also more prevailing in the writing of some authors than others as it is the case with El-Farouk whose novel is less inclined to perpetuate racial stereotypes, compared to Farès.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Of Words and Identity: Self-Orientalism and the Linguistic Conflict in Algeria**

The linguistic aspect is another area that shows that colonial legacies are most evident in postcolonial Algeria, as the French language is still a common (even sometimes dominating) language, mainly in the North of Algeria, despite the ceaseless attempts to suppress the so-called “language of the colonizers” (Sharkey 317) through Arabisation. This chapter examines the ways in which the self-Orientalist discourse has benefited from postcolonial political and sociocultural developments in Algeria. Moving from the colonial to post-independence cultural politics and practices, I demonstrate the palimpsestic nature of the cultural and political history that contributed to the formation of the linguistic question in Algeria and, in my opinion, created a markedly self-Orientalist discourse about languages. I argue that the rise of Arabic as part of the Arabisation process and the violence during the Black Decade, have resulted in post-independence ‘linguicism’ that marginalised partisans of Francophonie, Berberophonie and even some Arabic-speaking authors. Then, I show the ways in which the influence of linguicism brought some Algerian writers back to the old colonial vision that elevates the French language to the detriment of Arabic: I argue in this thesis that such a situation stems from a self-Orientalist discourse containing echoes of colonial perspectives about languages. I do so by examining the place of the French language in Algeria, more specifically, how it is represented in postcolonial literature – especially compared to Algerian languages, such as dialectical Arabic, standard Arabic and Berber.

## **1. The Linguistic identity of Algeria : cultural and political palimpsest**

Nowadays, the respective position of all languages in Algeria results from a long history of colonial and post-independence sociocultural and political developments in the country. Therefore, it is important to shed light on the main events of this linguistic history to better understand the linguistic question and the present language status in postcolonial Algeria. This section is devoted to analysing the complex relationship between the various stages in the cultural and political history of Algeria, which eventually shaped the present conflicting situation between languages.

### **1.1. Favouring French: Linguicism during the colonial era**

The dominance of the French language started with the colonial cultural conquest that aimed to establish French as a language of culture and administration in Algeria. At the time of colonialism, Algerian people used mostly Berber, Arab dialects, and the institutional or standard Arabic that was taught in Qur'anic schools. In fact, after the military conquest was completed by the crushing of the anti-colonial resistance in Kabylia in 1871, a form of cultural conquest started. Joel Spring quotes Alfred Rambaud, the minister for public education at that time, who argued that the next conquest: "[...] will be by the school: this should ensure the predominance of our language over the various local idioms, inculcate in the Muslims our own idea of what France is and of its role in the world, and replace ignorance and fanatical prejudices by the simple but precise notions of European science" (18). This passage illustrates the start of the cultural conquest which began with the debasement of local Algerian languages, as Rambaud asserts the necessity of the dominance of the coloniser's "language" over Algerian languages which he refers to as "idioms". The opposition between French and Arabic was the basis of the colonial discourse and the cultural conquest, which aimed to elevate French in comparison to colonised people's languages.

In the early phase of colonialism, strict restrictions were put over Qur'anic schools, which caused the closure of most of them. When Algeria fell under the military control of the new Emperor Louis Bonaparte, also known as Napoleon III, in 1852, he launched “the mixed school which he believed could work as a preparatory institution leading to a peaceful co-existence of French and Arabic, though it was not clearly stated in terms of a bilingual education” (Rebai 80). This reflected the emperor's belief in a hypothetical ‘Arab Kingdom’ under French tutelage. However, this programme did not last long as it was stopped by new programmes brought later, under the Third Republic, by Jules Ferry, the minister of public instruction in the 1880s, who proposed the ‘Ferry laws’ that consolidated secular and free education. Yet, this system completely suppressed Arabic and resulted in the elimination of Franco-Arabic schools after the separation between schools for Europeans and indigenous people (Messaoudi 306).

The promotion of the French language at the expense of local Algerian languages developed a form of ‘linguicism’ in its favour, which is defined as a “discrimination based on language that unfairly treats certain linguistic communities, or unfairly advantages some languages over others” (Galloway *et al* 255). Indeed, French colonialism established linguicism in Algeria by placing French as language of education in colonised Algeria, and changing the status of Arabic as it was “relegated [...]to the status of a foreign language” (Saadi-Mokrane 45). The elimination of Arabic in education and administrative sectors was one of the main steps toward the path of assimilation of the Algerian people into French culture. Yet, Reem Bassiouney (Rīm Basyūnī) argues that “[t]he French seemed as if they mainly wanted to marginalise Algerians rather than assimilate them; their policy was based on exclusion rather than inclusion. This was based not on race but on language and religion” (*Arabic* 214). According to Bassiouney, and in spite of the claims made by many French politicians at the time, the aim of the Ferry laws was not to assimilate the Algerian people but to consolidate the dominance of the colonial language and even suppress the natives’ languages and dialects.

From this era onward, linguicism was reinforced in Algeria, as the learning of French remained the main educational priority and was regarded as the key to civilization and to French citizenship (Messaoudi 306), whereas Arabic was mercilessly marginalised and confined to the few remaining Qur'anic schools. All these policies caused radical changes in Algerian linguistic identity which persisted in Algerian society ever since, as Malika Rebai explains when she says: "One major effect of colonialism in Algeria had been the dislocation of language. The imposition of the French language meant not only segregation, illiteracy for the great bulk of Algerian people, religious intolerance, but above all the eradication of Algerian identity and her linguistic expressions, Arabic and Berber" (77). At the time of independence, French was the most dominant language in Algeria and it was considered to be the language that grants high socio-cultural capital. This is because it was the primary language in different socio-political sectors such as education, administration and the most valuable economic activities. This dominant status has persisted since then and perpetuated even in post-independence literary production.

## **1.2. Linguicism during the post-independence era in favour of Arabic**

The Algerian Arab and Berber dialects also persisted after independence, with only a few people who learnt standard Arabic. Among the minority of Algerians who were studying in French schools, "those students pursuing an Arabic and Islamic education were an even smaller band" (McDougall 255). Mohammed Benrabah explains that this early era after independence was "characterised by the colonial legacies amongst which was a network of schools and an educational system dominated by the French language" followed by a second phase from the late 1960s to the late 1990s where "the Arabic language was gradually imposed in the educational sector" (*Language in* 225/226). The choice of Arabic among other languages was influenced by the reputation of Arabic as a language that had preserved the Arabo-Islamic

identity in colonised Algeria, “therefore, Arabisation was considered to be one of the most important factors in restoring Algerian national identity and, of course, an essential ideological choice” (Tilmatine 7). In addition, this choice was influenced by the rise of the Pan-Arabist movement which gave “an important role to Arabic as a common language for all the so-called Arab countries in their battle against European Colonialism” (Tilmatine 7). Indeed, Arabisation in Algeria was adopted not only to restore the Arabo-Islamist identity but also as a “way to push for Pan Arabism led by other Arab countries like Egypt and Syria” (Daoudi, *Multilingualism* 467).

The imposition of Arabic through Arabisation after independence was not easy in Algeria, not only because of the dominance of French but also because of the difference between standard Arabic and the Algerian dialectal Arabic. In this vein, Anne-Emmanuelle Berger shows the controversy between the nationalist aim of Arabisation and imposing a form of Arabic that was foreign to Algerian people at that time: “In spite of the nationalist rhetoric describing Arabization as a recovery of Algeria’s ‘true personality,’ the process entailed the teaching and generalized use of an Arabic foreign to the speakers of dialectal Arabic (the majority of the Algerian population), who therefore were not considered ‘Arabophones’” (2). Indeed, whilst Arabisation was meant to implant the Arabic language and recover the Algerian linguistic identity, it led to the alienation of other components of this identity, such as dialectal Arabic and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Berber<sup>256</sup> language (Daoudi, *Multilingualism* 466). Standard Arabic was meant to replace Algerian dialects and French in political, administrative, and cultural spheres relations but it was not fully mastered or understood by all Algerians. Djamila Saadi-Mokrane (Jamīlah Sa‘dī Maqrān) has pointed to the problem of the strangeness of Arabic to Algerian people in the early era of independence

---

<sup>256</sup> The alienation of Berber culture and the rise of the Berber spring is discussed in depth in chapter five.

explaining that “it was not until President Mohammed Boudiaf was called upon to lead the country in February 1992 [...], that the leader and the people spoke in the same language. It was the first time that a leader had addressed the people in dialectical Arabic and had been understood” (46), as most of the previous leaders used institutional or standard Arabic.

The extensive Arabisation after independence generated what I call ‘post-independence linguicism’, which was based, this time, on the promotion of Arabic at the expense of French and other Algerian Arabic and Berber dialects and led to the denial of Algerian linguistic diversity that was an important characteristic of Algerian society. This was the main reason why many Algerian intellectuals objected to the policy of national monolingualism although there were other political reasons. As Anissa Daoudi argues: “The Arabisation project was the soft way of legitimising the coup<sup>257</sup> and framing it as being guided by Islamic ideals. While the discourse about the Arabisation project [...], had the ingredients of success, in reality it became a central element of disunity” (*Multilingualism* 445).

At the early stages of Arabisation, Mostefa Lacheraf among others, objected to the extensive Arabisation that had been launched since independence, and was one of the proponents of bilingualism. Once appointed minister of national education in 1977, he paused the Arabisation process and suggested dealing with it incrementally as “he believed that French could serve as a ‘reference point, a stimulant’ that would force the Arabic language ‘to be on the alert’” (Benrabah, *Language in* 231). Furthermore, he pointed out the ‘reverse influence’ of the ill-prepared Arabisation, which can be defined as having the opposite effect of what was expected. In other words, Lacheraf warned against the possibility of making the students hate or reject Arabic instead of embracing it as a mother tongue because of the extensive and inexpert process

---

<sup>257</sup> Houari Boumediene’s coup d’état in 1965.

of Arabisation<sup>258</sup>. He argued that the school textbooks in Arabic were badly produced as they were “so full of abstract words that might awaken a dislike for Arabic among Algerian students and encourage them to prefer French” (quoted in Benrabah, *Language* 236).

Lacheraf also criticised and warned against the inadequately prepared education system and against the wrong politicization of the national education system, especially regarding teachers’ training:

Here we have a glaring example of poor politicisation within National Education. Men with no extra complementary culture other than oratorical and circumstantial, that is to say spontaneous, without real basis, ‘acquired’ lazily only by reading newspapers. But above all [they were] affiliated with religious trainings and do not receive with a fair requirement the profession of teaching, an arduous occupation, if any, in countries worthy of consideration where the most difficult university and competitive exams that are supported by years of hard work and intense intellectual effort, are those of grammar, geography and mathematics (Lacheraf 28)<sup>259</sup>.

Lacheraf highlights the need to train teachers well, a requirement that was not fully taken into consideration during the implementation of a sustained and committed Arabisation. The need for more teachers “caused the authorities to employ whoever was available: graduates from Qur’anic schools in and out of the country, mainly from Egypt, who confused teaching Arabic with teaching the Qur’an and religion” (Benrabah, *Language* 71)<sup>260</sup>. Yet, Lacheraf resigned after the death of President Houari Boumediene in 1978, and his suggestions were side-lined.

---

<sup>258</sup> Which is the aspect that will be further demonstrated through the novel of Fadhila El-Farouk in this chapter.

<sup>259</sup> Nous avons, ici, un exemple flagrant de la mauvaise politisation au sein de l’Education nationale. Des hommes sans culture complémentaire d’appoint autre qu’oratoire et de circonstance, c’est-à-dire spontanéiste, sans bases réelles, “acquise” paresseusement à la seule lecture des journaux, mais surtout affiliés à des formations religieuses et qui ne reçoivent pas avec une juste exigence le métier d’enseignement, fonction ardue, s’il en est, dans les pays dignes de considération où les concours universitaires et agrégations les plus difficiles et soutenus par des années de dur labeur et l’effort intellectuel intense, sont ceux et celle de grammaire, de géographie et de mathématiques (Lacheraf 28).

<sup>260</sup> This was one of the reasons behind the emergence of Islamism in Algeria, as will be explained in another section of this chapter.

Like Lacheraf, the scholar Abdellah Mazouni (‘Abd Allāh Māzūnī) argues in his work that the hasty and excessive Arabisation was not only alienating other languages but they warned against the negative impact it had on Arabic itself. He criticised the unprepared system of Arabisation and pointed to the inadequate ways of teaching Arabic. More precisely, he highlighted the damage this programme could cause to Arabic itself. He explained that hastily prepared programmes can lead to the rebirth of the stereotypical picture of languages which shows Arabic as a language of poetry and prayers while French is the language of civilisation and modernity (Mazouni 38 & 185). However, no attention has been given by the government to the insights of Mazouni and Lacheraf, but instead, the latter has been criticised by Arabic-speaking scholars for his use of the French language<sup>261</sup>.

The ill-prepared programmes were not the only problem of Arabisation and the conflict of languages in Algeria. In fact, with the start of Arabisation, languages turned to be accordingly linked with different ideologies which raised the stakes between the proponents of each language. Hafid Gafaiti (Ḥafīz ghfāyṭy) unpacks this idea in a detailed essay, arguing that languages in this era became “ideologically stuffed” (27). Arabic for example, became the “hostage of nationalism” as Lacheraf put it (Gafaiti 27). He explained that the expression of nationalist sentiment was paralleled and linked to the abandonment of French that was referred to as the ‘language of the coloniser’. Therefore, scholars, intellectuals and artists in Algeria have been enticed to express the ‘Arabness’ of the country, as it was the case with the writer Malek Heddad (Mālik ḥddād) who stopped writing as he did not master Arabic (Gafaiti 26).

Gafaiti adds that Arabic became accordingly linked with political Islam with the Gulf War and the rise of FIS in Algeria during the 1990s (31/32). In this context, Daoudi argues that the

---

<sup>261</sup> Abdallah Chriet for example, a professor of Philosophy at the University of Algiers, regretted the fact that Lacheraf expressed himself in French while his arguments were directed to Arabists (Henry *et al* 314).



coincidence of the restoration of standard Arabic with the rise of radical Islamism made “[t]his language symbolizes the appearance of fanaticism and oppression for Algerian women” (*Algerian* 19). More importantly, Gafaiti explains that media and literature helped to solidify these ideologies: “Many scholars and media in Algeria and in the Western world, particularly France, have unreasonably and unilaterally presented the Francophones as representatives of democratic and progressive ideals, while their Arabophone opponents have been described as obscure barbarians linked to international Muslim fundamentalist terrorism” (20). On the opposite end of the spectrum, the proponents of Arabo-Islamism opposed the Francophones and pro-bilingual positions were continuously marginalised by the pro-Arabisation lobby. This disagreement reached its peak in 2002 when the supporters of bilingualism were referred to as “enemies of Islam and the Arabic language” and the “supporters of forced Westernisation of Algerians” (Benrabah, *Language in* 227). Saadi-Mokran highlights that this opposition between the two groups reached the extent of naming the supporters of bilingualism “hizb franza” (the party of France), which is traditionally used to refer to the traitors of the country (45).

This cultural and socio-political palimpsest and the persistence of linguicism – in favour of French then Arabic respectively – have influenced the status of languages in Algeria, and also affected the self-Orientalist discourse about languages in Algeria. Thus, the following sections of this chapter illustrate through the analysis of three literary works by Fadhila El-Farouk and Assia Djebar, the ways in which the self-Orientalist discourse in Arabophobe and Francophone writings was shaped by the historical palimpsest in colonial and post-independence Algeria.

## 2. Fadhila El-Farouk and the reverse influence of Arabisation on Arabic

This section is devoted to studying a novel that was written by Fadhila El-Farouk who was educated in the Arabised system, which will allow me to analyse an author who writes in Arabic on languages in Algeria, and examine in the novel, the extent to which languages are linked with a stereotypical status and a set of ideologies. I intend to show in this section that the colonial demeaning view of Arabic was not the only reason behind the perpetuation of stereotypes about this language in the post-independence era. I argue that the extensive Arabisation in the post-independence era also contributed to the persistence of linguicism – which imposed, this time, Arabic at the expense of Berber and French – that played a role in influencing the representation of Arabic in postcolonial Algerian literature, and led to the creation of self-Orientalist representation by authors like Fadhila El-Farouk.

In *The Mood of a Teenager* (1999), Fadhila El-Farouk highlights the issue of Arabisation in Algeria and considers the distance and separation between the old and the new generation in Algeria created with this process. El-Farouk tackles this idea through the relationship between Luisa – the protagonist in this novel – and her father. Luisa belongs to the Arabised generation and her father is from the earlier generation who was taught either in French schools during colonialism or in Algerian schools before the policy of Arabisation was put in place. When Luisa started a relationship with her cousin Habib, she wanted to inform or consult with her father who was abroad, so she wrote to him a letter in French. She says : “I was pleased because I was able to write a letter in French, the language that I do not master, and the only one my father masters, but it is also the language in which I can put down everything that makes me

ashamed and without actually being shy... By writing the letter I felt that I had cancelled a long distance between me and my father [...]” (El-Farouk 40)<sup>262</sup>.

The passage depicts two main ideas: the first idea is that even the Arabised generation finds it difficult to express their feelings in Arabic and they use French instead, even if they do not master it, which echoes Mohammed Benrabah’s account on the use of French language by Algerians. He states that Algerians prefer to use French in specific contexts such as courting because “taboos which cannot be communicated in the majority’s first language are transgressed by French which marks impersonality and socio-psychological distance” (Benrabah, *Language in* 240). El-Farouk’s perspective here is in stark contrast with Djébar’s view on the matter, which will be discussed in another section of this chapter, as Djébar saw dialectical Arabic as the language in which she could express her deepest and most intimate feelings. Indeed, for Djébar, “the mother/ Mother’s tongue is viewed as the language of the heart, with its strong umbilical associations with motherly warmth, private feelings and ‘musical intimacy’” (Ben Salem 24). This apparent contradiction between El-Farouk and Djébar indicates how diglossia changes perceptions of the values and qualities of languages depending on the personality of the locutor, their positionality and the political context. This contradiction may also reflect the influence of Arabisation on El-Farouk, as imposing Arabic on her led her not to consider it as a relevant language in which she can express her feelings. This opposes what happened with Djébar when colonialism imposed French, leading her to find Arabic more expressive of her feelings, as will be explained later in this chapter.

The second idea is that there is a sort of disconnection between the older generation and the new Arabised generation because of the language. In an interview with Daoudi (20 April 2020),

---

<sup>262</sup> سررت لأنني استطعت أن أكتب رسالة بالفرنسية، اللغة التي لا أتقنها، ولا يتقن والدي غيرها، ولكنها أيضاً اللغة التي يمكنني أن أودع فيها كل ما يخجلني دون أن أشعر فعلاً بالخجل... بكتابتي الرسالة شعرت أنني ألغيت الكثير من المسافة بيني وبين والدي (24)

El-Farouk highlighted this idea when speaking about what she perceives as the damage of Arabisation. El-Farouk explained that French colonialism recorded everything about Algeria in French, but with Arabisation: “[...]there happened a break with everything that was in French [...], the generation that came was completely ignorant of French, which caused a disconnection between two generations and thus between two historical eras. That is, we were historically disconnected with the [previous] era, we became strangers to ourselves as if we do not have roots with this land” (*Interview*). This quote supports Luisa’s opinion in the novel as it emphasises the disconnection between the Francophone and the Arabised generation.

El-Farouk argues that Arabisation not only created a disconnection between generations but also created a historical gap because of this linguistic caesura. Speaking about the coloniser’s language, Albert Memmi states that “[o]nly that language would allow the colonised to resume contact with his interrupted flow of time and to find again his lost continuity and that of his history” (154). In this context, El-Farouk presents French as more expressive for Algerians and serves as the language that enables the connection with the older generations which is not the case with Arabic. El-Farouk goes further by showing through the voice of Luisa’s uncle that the readership of Arabic literature is less numerous than the readership of Francophone literature. Luisa’s uncle says: “I am sure that the Algerian reader did not identify himself with the current text, especially the one written in Arabic, for this reason: he does not read” (El-Farouk 70)<sup>263</sup>. In this passage, the text illustrates another shortcoming of Arabic, when showing that the text written in this language is less attractive and less expressive to the demands of the Algerian reader compared to the texts written in French.

El-Farouk’s representations here seem to contradict the perspective of her Arabist colleagues such as Ahlam Mosteghanemi, one of the most famous Algerian authors and

---

<sup>263</sup> أنا متيقن أن أن القارئ الجزائري لم يجد نفسه في النص الحالي، خصوصاً المكتوب باللغة العربية، ولهذا لم يعد يقرأ (70)

defenders of Arabic. Unlike El-Farouk, who valorises French, presenting it as a tool that will allow the connection with the past, Mosteghanemi argues that Arabic will be most relevant to erase the colonial past and: “[d]ecolonization in a land whose boundaries and tongues were so thoroughly erased by French colonialism thus requires, she suggests, not a remembrance but a forgetting of that colonialism, and a realization in present and future space of the ‘re-Arabized’ of which those who struggled for Algerian liberation could only dream” (Tageldin 488). More importantly, Mosteghanemi contradicts El-Farouk as she shows in her novel *The Memory in the Flesh* (1993), through the voice of the main character Hayat, that Arabic is the language that is better equipped to convey intimate and personal feelings. Hayat tells the other character Khaled that she could have written in French, before adding “but Arabic is the language of my heart... I can only write in Arabic.. We write in the language in which we feel” (Mosteghanemi, *The Memory* 91)<sup>264</sup>. Mosteghanemi’s support for Arabic is also clear from the very beginning of the novel, where she dedicates the novel to her father and to the Francophone Algerian poet and novelist Malek Haddad (1927-1978), whom she refers to as “Martyr of Arabic”<sup>265</sup> (*The Memory* 5) because he refused to continue writing in French after independence and stopped writing completely after that because he did not master Arabic.

Amin Zaoui for his part gives a more open perspective toward Arabic and French. Unlike El-Farouk and Mosteghanemi who prefer French and Arabic respectively, Zaoui chooses to keep writing in both languages. He says in an interview with Rabia Bekkar about the relation between languages and the political protest in Algeria:

Even though I published three novels and three essays in French, I did not cut off the Arabic language. In 1999, I published in Beirut, at al-Kunuz al-Adabiyya, a novel entitled Al-Ra’cha [The Shiver or The Ecstasy]. It was banned from book fairs in some Arab

264

ولكن العربية هي لغة قلبي ... ولا يمكن أن أكتب إلا بها .. نحن نكتب باللغة التي نحسن بها الأشياء  
(91)

265

شهاد اللغة العربية  
(5)

countries, one of which was Kuwait. By writing in both languages, I am not a hostage of the French language or of the Arabic language. I do not have a linguistic complex. I feel as if I am standing on both feet, like a waltzing dancer. I feel ‘internally’ balanced by leading this bilingual experience; I feel harmonized vis-a-vis the memory of my mother, especially (139).

Zaoui’s standpoint gives a moderate perspective that calls for multilingualism in Algeria and presents an example that steers clear of any stereotypical representation of languages.

Whilst Amin Zaoui presents multilingualism as a pathway towards an perspective, El-Farouk places emphasis on the negative impact of the hasty integration of Arabic in the education system. Like El-Farouk, Luisa (the protagonist in the novel) was a student who belongs to the new generation who went through the Arabised educative system. Yet, this system was not completely Arabised as it concerned the primary, middle and secondary levels, while university programmes have remained in French until nowadays. This sudden switch of languages in the Algerian education system is highlighted by Reem Bassiouney as a serious problem in Algeria when she says that “the problem with Algeria specifically and North African countries in general in the linguistic discrepancy between schools and universities” (*Arabic* 221). She notes: “[t]he fact that schools teach science and maths in Arabic and universities suddenly teach technical subjects in French is indeed a peculiar problem pertaining to North Africa” (Bassiouney, *Arabic* 221). Indeed, this problem is the aspect that was a contributing factor to the creation of the ‘reverse influence’ of Arabisation on students. This is because Arabised students find themselves incompetent in French, which will prevent them from accessing in scientific discipline at university level, as is the case with Luisa.

El-Farouk referred to this issue and wrote about the difficulties the students face when moving to university through the example of Luisa who describes this situation as follows :

After six months of study, I realised that the Faculty of medicine was not the right place for me. Whenever I tried to harmonise with its atmosphere, I collided with the walls of the language. I only understood a little information from lectures, because most of us were Arabised, the thing that made us in one world and the teachers in another. We often

go on strike. We raised hands, banners, and shirts... and stood naked ...we shouted that we did not understand anything, 'damn Arabic', but no one responded. I was like others, the victim of an irrational decision by the state to flatter the East and to erase the antiquities of France from Algeria (El-Farouk 71/72)<sup>266</sup>.

The recurrent use of the pronoun 'we' in this passage emphasises the general agreement on the rejection of Arabisation. The passage highlights the idea that the anger of students against Arabisation turns against Arabic itself. Indeed, the example recalls the warnings of Lacheraf and Mazouni on the negative impact of the extensive and unprepared Arabisation which can lead to the alienation of the population from the Arabic language. This example can also be reflected on El-Farouk herself as she was among the students upon whom Arabic was imposed, which makes a way for the hypothesis that Arabisation led to the alienation of El-Farouk from Arabic itself, despite the fact that she is an Arabic speaker, and to her valorisation of French in this novel.

Accordingly, the main female protagonist in the novel, Luisa, changes the field of her study from the medical school to the institute of Arabic studies and literature, as a way of seeking revenge from Arabic that had been a source of problems for her:

I travelled to Constantine on a dismal summer morning day, and transferred my documents to the Institute of Arabic Language and Literature, without crying for my failure in Medicine. I did it as if I put a box full of my feelings in a refrigerator that was appropriate to the heat of that hot summer and I took solace in myself by lying in the bosom of this giant language, which was the reason behind my exclusion. In fact, I wanted to defeat it, ride it, dismantle and assemble it as I like. I wanted to subject it to my playing skills, and not to fall into its sarcastic game that made me start my youth with a deficiency, called the deficiency of language (El-Farouk 74)<sup>267</sup>.

---

<sup>266</sup> بعد ستة أشهر من الدراسة، عرفت أن كلية الطب ليست بالمكان الصحيح لي. فكلمًا حاولت الانسجام مع أجوائها، اصطدمت بجدران اللغة. لم أكن أفهم إلا الشيء القليل من محاضراتها، فأغلينا نحن الطلبة معزبون، الشيء الذي يجعلنا في وادٍ والأساتذة في وادٍ آخر، وكثيراً ما أضربنا عن الدراسة، رفعا الأيدي والزبايات والقمصان ... وقفنا عراة ... صرخنا أننا لا نفهم شيئاً 'ناعلبوها العربية' (يلعن أبو العربية) لكن لأحد استجاب. كنت - كغيري - ضحية فرار لاعقلاني أصدرته الدولة لمجاملة الشرق ومسح آثار فرنسا من الجزائر (71/70)

<sup>267</sup> سافرت الى قسنطينة ذات صباح صيفي كنيب، ونقلت وثائقي الى معهد اللغة العربية وآدابها، دون أن أبكي على فشلي في الطب، فعلت ذلك كأنما أضع صندوق مشاعري في براد بلائم حرارة ذلك الصيف السّرس، وتولّبت عزاء نفسي بالارتداء في حضن لغة ماردة، كانت سبباً في إقصائي، أردت هزمها في الحقيقة، امتطاءها، تفكيكها وتركيبها على هواي، أردت أن أخضعها لمهارة لعبي أنا، لا السقوط في لعبتها الساخرة تلك التي جعلتني أدخل الحياة في عزّ عنفواني بعاهة اسمها عاهة اللغة (74)

A reader of this passage may understand that the choice of Luisa to study Arabic was not out of love for the language. The passage depicts that Luisa chose Arabic to avenge herself as she blames Arabic for her failure in medical studies. Therefore, she chooses to exact revenge by subjecting Arabic itself to her control, which is the feeling emphasised through the use of different words that express anger and eagerness to control: ‘defeat it, ride it, dismantle and assemble it as I like’ or simply ‘subject it’. The reaction of Luisa towards Arabic echoes the concept of appropriation of the colonial language in postcolonial writings, a process “by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it to ‘convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own’” (Ashcroft *et al* 38). The passage depicts the way Luisa wants to interpret Arabic as a colonial language, by defeating and subjecting Arabic to her own playing skills, which confirms the fact that imposing Arabic on Luisa made her consider Arabic not only a strange language to her, but one in a position of a colonial language.

On another occasion, El-Farouk depicts the disadvantages of the choice to study Arabic. When Luisa informed her uncle about changing her field of study to Arabic, her uncle expressed his disappointment telling her that by choosing to study Arabic she “confined [herself] between the pieces of chalk and the blackboard” (El-Farouk 75)<sup>268</sup>. In other words, he explains to her that the only job she can get from studying Arabic is as a school teacher. This passage showcases another example of what El-Farouk describes as the shortcomings of studying Arabic in Algeria. However, the shortcoming of studying Arabic is not related to Arabic itself, but to the unequal distribution of power across languages studied in universities. Indeed, most science departments in Algerian universities, leading to more prestigious jobs, are in French while Arabic is reserved for a few literary fields such as Arabic literature, Law,

---

268

حصرت عمر ك بين قطع الطباشير والسبورة (75)



Political Sciences and Theology. In fact, Arabised students: “[..] can only access jobs where fluency in French is not required: teaching, administration (civil status), ministry of justice or religious affairs, other jobs (posts in industry and national companies, for example) being entrusted to students of franchophone streams” (Rochdy 61)<sup>269</sup>. More importantly, “the distinction between Arabised and Francised streams overlaps with that existing between literary streams and scientific and technological streams; the first, whatever the language of instruction, generally offering fewer openings than the second” (Rochdy 62)<sup>270</sup>.

Theoretically speaking and in line with Reem Bassiouny’s argument that “in diglossic communities, there is a highly valued H (high) variety that is learned in schools and is not used for ordinary conversations” whereas “the L (low) variety is the one used in conversations” (*Redefining* 101), both French and Arabic are languages that belong to the highly valued variety. Arabic can be considered even a higher valued language compared to French because it is taught earlier than French in the Algerian curriculum. However, the unfair distribution of languages in academia makes French the only highly valued language as it is the language that is endowed with more prestige status in academia as explained previously. Indeed, the French language, in this case, matches with what Pierre Bourdieu calls the symbolic capital that refers to “[a]ny difference that is recognized, accepted as legitimate [...] [and] provid[es] a profit of distinction” (297). In the case of the French language in Algeria, it can provide more than a ‘profit of distinction’ as it is the language that provides better opportunities for work compared to the Arabic language as explained previously by Rochdy.

---

<sup>269</sup> “ne peuvent accéder qu’aux emplois où la maîtrise du français n’est pas requise: enseignement, administration (état civil), ministère de la justice ou des affaires religieuses, les autres emplois (cadres de l’industrie et des sociétés nationales par exemple) étant confiés aux étudiants des filières francisées” (Rochdy 61).

<sup>270</sup> “la distinction entre filières arabisées et francisées recouvre celle existant entre filières littéraires et filières scientifiques et technologiques; les premières, quelles que soit la langue d’enseignement, offrant généralement moins de débouchés que les secondes” (Rochdy 62).

Therefore, the uncle argues that Luisa will have limited choices in her professional life when studying Arabic, which is why she is more likely to become a school teacher. Yet, the passage does not show that the unequal division of languages in academic circles is the source of the problem. Rather, the example presents Arabic as a limited language that cannot open broader opportunities for work. In this context, the Algerian linguist Khawla Taleb Ibrahim explains that “[...] a language can benefit from the work of specialists, it is also developed by the use that its users make of it in all sectors of life, and with its involvement in the movement of production of ideas and meanings”<sup>271</sup>. Through this example, El-Farouk hints at the reduced opportunities for Arabist students, yet she fails to identify the real socio-political cause of the problem and instead echoes a clichéd view of languages that links French with science and pigeonholes Arabic as a language that can serve ‘only’ in the less ‘useful’ disciplines of Humanities departments.

According to Luisa, the decision of Arabisation was irrational and Algerian students were the first victims of it. She expresses this when she says : “Why would I be the victim? Why would I be Arabised in this way? Why at a time when mind, knowledge and modesty were lost? Who among Arabs feels my crisis today? They applaud for such a decision with their strong belief that there is no unity between us, even if we are Arabised” (El-Farouk 72)<sup>272</sup>. The passage is marked by the interrogations or hypophora which shows an attempt to attract the reader and invite her/him to consider the questions she asks and deeply think about the negative effect of Arabisation on her generation. Moreover, Luisa argues in this passage that imposing Arabic will not help to unify Algerian people as the divide will still be existing in spite of the

---

<sup>271</sup> “une langue peut bénéficier des travaux des spécialistes, elle est également amenée à évoluer par l’utilisation qu’en font ses usagers dans tous les secteurs de la vie et son implication dans le mouvement de production des idées et du sens”

<sup>272</sup> لماذا يجب أن أكون ضحية، لماذا يجب أن نعرب بهذه الطريقة، لماذا في هذا الوقت الذي فقد فيه العقل والعلم والحياء، من من العرب يشعر بأزمته اليوم، إنهم يصفقون لقرار كهذا من وراء إيمانهم المتين بأن لا وحدة بيننا حتى وإن عرّبنا (72)

unifying power of language. Paradoxically, the same opinion has been expressed by El-Farouk in an interview (26 April 2014) when she was asked about the reason behind choosing to write in Arabic:

I am Amazigh and I like the Arabic language and I belong to the era of the Arabization of Algeria. It was Abdel-Nasser and Houari Boumediene who tried to unite the Arabs, but I do not think that a language could unite the peoples; we cannot suppress the language, culture, traditions, history and identity of the Amazigh, for example. Following this project [Arabisation], they restricted French language lessons to two hours a week, that is not enough to master this language, Arabisation has limited us and has prohibited me from spreading my ideas and writing in other languages (Arafat)<sup>273</sup>.

The author clarifies that in spite of her love for the Arabic language she denounces the decision of Arabisation which, according to her, diminished her ability to write in other languages such as French and Berber (Amazigh). In addition, she highlights the fact that the aim of unifying people through imposing monolingualism is not a solution, as Arabisation could not erase the existence of the indigenous history and cultures of Algeria, and especially the Berbers to whom she refers explicitly.

In fact, the idea of unification through language goes back to the motto of the Association of Algerian Ulama (al-‘Ulamā’) founded by Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Baddis (Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs) “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language and Algeria is my country”. This motto provided the “unifying ideology that all Algerians felt the need to share under colonialism and from which the language is framed as being a factor towards achieving both the Islamisation as well as the Algerianisation of the country [...]” (Daoudi, *Multilingualism* 465). In this context, Reem Bassiouney explains that “[l]anguage policies have to take into

---

<sup>273</sup> Je suis Amazigh et j’aime bien la langue arabe et j’appartiens à l’époque de l’arabisation de l’Algérie. C’est Abdel-Nasser et Houari Boumediene qui ont tenté d’unir les Arabes, mais je ne pense pas qu’une langue pourrait unir les peuples ; on ne peut pas supprimer la langue, la culture, les traditions, l’histoire et l’identité des Amazigh par exemple. Suite à ce projet, ils ont restreint les cours de langue française à deux heures par semaine, ça ne suffit pas pour maîtriser cette langue, l’arabisation nous a limités et elle m’a interdit de diffuser mes idées et écrire en d’autres langues (Arafat).

consideration both functions of language, the symbolic and instrumental, otherwise the policy will be lacking” (*Arabic* 203). However, this was not applied in Algeria, as the process of Arabisation emphasised only the symbolic function of Arabic and overlooked developing the language to cope with the scientific modules which is the neglected instrumental function here. Therefore, El-Farouk rejected in an interview (26 April 2014) and in the novel through the voice of Luisa the nationalist symbolism that was traditionally associated with Arabic as a language, which was also used as a justification for Arabisation. Furthermore, she emphasised the fact that imposing Arabic does not unify people and leads to creating hostility toward the language itself as happened with Luisa in this novel.

Taking all these representations together shows that El-Farouk’s main argument is to criticise the Arabisation in Algeria and to denounce the post-independence linguicism that marginalised French and Berber. Quite unexpectedly, the novel depicts Arabic as a language that does not respond to, nor copes with the cultural demands of new Algerian generations, where French serves as a more suitable alternative. For they find French more expressive than Arabic, and a language that enables the connection between old and new generations, which were separated due to of Arabisation. El-Farouk’s representations show a stark opposition to other authors’ perspectives such as Assia Djebar who argues that Arabic is the language that can express her feelings, and even with other Arabic-speaking authors such as Ahlem Mosteghanemi who suggests Arabic as a relevant tool, not to connect to the colonial past, but to erase and forget the legacy of colonialism, or Amin Zaoui who emphasises the importance of writing in both languages to preserve multilingualism.

Most importantly, the novel highlights the impact of the extensive use of French in the scientific subjects in academia as a major reason for belittling Arabic and reviving the stereotypical representation of Arabic as a language for the humanities and French as the

language of science. In addition, the prose shed light on the narrowed chances of the Arabised student in the professional sphere but showed this shortage as a drawback of Arabic itself without shedding light on the way Arabic is excluded from the scientific domains in academic levels. These portrayals are reinforced with the repetitive comparison between the two languages which maintain the clichéd perspective about Arabic and French and contributed to developing fully-fledged self-Orientalist perspectives.

In the end, Luisa emphasises the fact that Arabisation does not unify Algerian people, which is the same opinion expressed by El-Farouk on another occasion: the character and the novelist seem to be literally on the same page in that regard. This standpoint was achieved by both El-Farouk and Luisa through rejecting the nationalist symbolism of Arabic that was traditionally used during colonialism as a unifying ideology. Luisa's perspective about Arabic is clearly expressed when showing that imposing Arabic through the forced pathway of Arabisation has contributed to creating hostility toward this language as Luisa among other students find Arabic the reason behind their failure. The prose depicts that this hostility made Luisa attempt to appropriate Arabic to her own spirit not only as a language that was imposed on her but as a colonial language. Relying on these representations we can say that El-Farouk's account about Arabic confirms Mazouni's hypothesis about the reverse influence of the extensive Arabisation on the status of Arabic itself. This is because El-Farouk is an Arabised author but her novel shows a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance which valorises the French language more than Arabic, as the latter is depicted like a language that is not responsive to its people's cultural demands, with limited professional use, and more importantly, as no longer a unifying language.

### 3. Assia Djébar's linguistic trajectory: from nostalgia towards Arabic to Francophonie as a tool for liberation

Whilst El-Farouk rejected Arabisation and argued that Arabic failed as a unifying language, Assia Djébar showed different perspectives: unlike El-Farouk who has a homogeneous opinion, Djébar's perspective appears to have changed with time. Djébar wrote extensively about the linguistic issue in Algeria "in which speaking a language may be perceived as making a political statement" (Bassiouney, *Arabic* 219). Her literary output shows a changing standpoint about Arabic and French, especially after the rise of radical Islamism during the Black Decade and the revival of linguicism through Arabisation. Therefore, this part is divided into two sections to depict the influence of colonialism then the rise of Islamism in the shift of Djébar's perspectives about French and Arabic, which led to the creation of an ambivalent self-Orientalist discourse about languages.

#### 3.1. Before the Black Decade: Arabic as a language of intimate territory and French as a language of colonial linguicism

This section is devoted to discussing Assia Djébar's account on languages in *L'Amour la fantasia* (1985) more specifically in the section entitled *The Tunic of Nessus*<sup>274</sup> which she dedicates to explaining her relationship with the French language. This autobiographical novel is considered by Djébar as a "a quest for identity"<sup>275</sup> (Mortimer 201) where she discusses her inner linguistic conflicts between Arabic and French<sup>276</sup>. The novel opens with the introduction of the narrator, an Arab girl following her father to the French school under colonialism: "A little Arab girl going to school for the first time, one autumn morning, walking hand in hand

---

<sup>274</sup> *La Tunique de Nessus*

<sup>275</sup> "une quête de l'identité" (Mortimer 201).

<sup>276</sup> As the novel is an autobiographical work, I will refer to the narrator as representative of Assia Djébar in my analysis.

with her father” (*Fantasia* 3)<sup>277</sup>. Following the childhood of the narrator until womanhood, the novel demonstrates the deep transitions that Algerian society went through during French colonialism.

Jane Hiddleston argues that this opening scene is “rich in cultural implications” (69), as it shows the Arab narrator on her way to start learning the French language, which is the aspect that influences her inclinations about the mother and colonial languages. Throughout the novel, Djébar depicts her conflicted predispositions “between the delimiting impositions of the colonizer on the one hand, and the desire for recognition and affirmation of identity on the other” (Murdoch 88). Djébar relates the privileges of learning the French language, which led her to a different path from that of her cousins and other Arab girls who were her age. She says that: “I had passed the age of puberty without being buried in the harem like my girl cousins; I had spent my dreaming adolescence on its fringes, neither totally outside, nor in its heart; so I spoke and studied French, and my body, during this formative period, became Westernized in its way” (*Fantasia* 127)<sup>278</sup>. The passage also highlights the influence of French in Djébar’s maturation as the process of acquiring French was reflected through the ‘Westernisation’ of her body.

Djébar places emphasis on the fact that French has granted her many privileges despite being the language imposed by colonialism. In an interview with Lise Gauvin (February 1996), Djébar comments on her account of Arabic and French in the novel understudy saying: “French granted me the freedom of the body, at eleven years old. [...] That is to say, I was able to escape the veil thanks to the French language, that is to say thanks to the father in the French language”

---

<sup>277</sup> “Fillette arab allant pour la première fois à l’école, un matin d’automne, main dans la main du père” (*L’amour* 11).

<sup>278</sup> Ayant dépassé l’âge pubère sans m’être immergée, à l’instar de mes cousines, dans le harem, demeurant, lors d’une adolescence rêveuse, sur ses marges, ni en dehors tout à fait, ni en son cœur, je parlais, j’étudiais donc le français, et mon corps, durant cette formation, s’occidentalisait à sa manière” (*L’amour* 181).

(84)<sup>279</sup>. Elsewhere, Djébar highlights another function of French when she says that it is the language in which she thinks: “Myself, I often jump from one language to another. My images, my memories and concrete things require the use of Arabic, but I reason in French. Finally, I write poems in both languages” (quoted in Asholt *et al.* 132)<sup>280</sup>. These representations put the importance of French to the fore, as a beneficial language in Djébar’s life. However, she displays a double faceted representation of French in this novel as she argues through the voice of the narrator saying: “Ever since I was a child the foreign language was a casement opening on the spectacle of the world and all its riches. In certain circumstances it became a dagger threatening me” (Djébar, *Fantasia* 126)<sup>281</sup>. Djébar draws on this argument throughout the novel and explains at length the impact of French on her as a sting that propelled her towards an exterior world.

Indeed, Djébar devotes one of the sections of her novel to explore her relation with the French language which she compares to a “*The Tunic of Nessus*”<sup>282</sup>. She argues that speaking French: “enveloped [her] from childhood, the gift of [her]father lovingly bestowed on [her], that language has adhered to [her] ever since like the tunic of Nessus: that gift from [her]father who, every morning, took [her]by the hand to accompany [her] to school. A little Arab girl, in a village of the Algerian Sahel...” (217)<sup>283</sup>. The metaphor of ‘Nessus’ tunic’ is used by Djébar

---

<sup>279</sup> “le français m’ayant apporté la liberté du corps, à onze ans. [...] C’est-à-dire que du fait que j’ai pu échapper au voile grâce à la langue française, c’est-à-dire grâce au père dans la langue française” (84).

<sup>280</sup> “Moi-même, je saute souvent d’une langue à l’autre. Mes images, mes souvenirs et les choses concrètes réclament l’emploi de l’arabe, mais je raisonne en français. Enfin, j’écris des poèmes dans les deux langues” (quoted in Asholt *et al.* 132).

<sup>281</sup> “La langue étrangère me servait, dès l’enfance, d’embrasure pour le spectacle du monde et de ses richesses. Voici qu’en certaines circonstances, elle devenait dard pointé sur ma personne” (*L’amour* 180).

<sup>282</sup> *Tunique de Nessus*

<sup>283</sup> “[I]’a enveloppée, dès l’enfance, en tunique de Nessus, don d’amour de [s]on père qui, chaque matin, [la] tenait par la main sur le chemin de l’école. Fillette arabe, dans un village du Sahel algérien...” (*L’amour* 302).



here as a “popular symbol for a treacherous gift that destroys from within” (Mayor 54)<sup>284</sup>. The same way as Heracles was hurt by Nessus’ tunic which was the gift of his wife, Djébar was hurt with the French language, which was the Nessus tunic that her father gifted her. Baida Chikhi (Byḍā Shaykhī) argues that in this novel, Assia Djébar embodies her relationship to the French language “in a violent metaphor that only accentuates the ambiguity of a contradictory, ‘equivocal love’, both ‘Nessus’ tunic’ and ‘gift of love from the father’” (115)<sup>285</sup>. Comparing French to Nessus’ tunic reflects Djébar’s accentuation on the disadvantageous influence of the French language, which she also portrays, quite paradoxically, as a language that grants her extra entitlements.

On another occasion, Djébar explains the reason behind considering the French language a Nessus tunic despite its advantages. Pondering on colonial linguisticism caused by the French language in the colonial era, she explains that: “This language was formerly used to entomb [her] people; when [she] write[s] it today, [she] feel like the messenger of old, who bore a sealed missive which might sentence him to death or to dungeon” (*Fantasia* 215)<sup>286</sup>. She adds that the use of French in Algeria commonly conveyed associations with violence. Therefore, French became denotative of brutality and roughness: “French – formerly the language of the

---

<sup>284</sup> The metaphor comes from the myth Of Heracles who shot Nessus after he had mistreated his wife Deianeira. To exact revenge for himself, Nessus gave Deianeira his blood-soaked tunic, claiming it will bring back the love of her husband if she ever lost him away. Years later, Deianeira gifted Heracles the tunic when he married a younger wife. Yet, as soon as Heracles wore the dress, the poison devoured his body (Mayor 63).

<sup>285</sup> “[...] dans une métaphore violente qui ne fait qu’accentuer l’ambiguïté d’un ‘amour contradictoire, équivoque’, à la fois ‘tunique de Nessus’ et ‘don d’amour du père’” (115).

<sup>286</sup> “Cette langue était autrefois sarcophage des miens; je la porte aujourd’hui comme un messenger transporterait le pli fermé ordonnant sa condamnation au silence, ou au cachot. Me mettre à nu dans cette langue me fait entretenir un danger permanent de déflagration” (Djébar, *L’amour* 300).

law courts, used alike by judges and convicted. Words of accusation, legal procedure, violence – that is the oral source of the colonized people’s French” (215)<sup>287</sup>.

Since the French language for Djébar is associated with violence, she realises that this language cannot express her feelings, especially in the context of love or romance. Djébar argues: “the French language could offer me all its inexhaustible treasures, but not a single one of its terms of endearment would be destined for my use” (27)<sup>288</sup>. She also highlights the fact that her ignorance of the Arabic language in the context of romance made her feel the dryness of the French that she uses. She says: “Burdened by my inherited taboos, I discover I have no memory of Arabic love-songs. It is because I was cut off from this impassionate speech that I find the French I use so flat and unprofitable?” (Djébar 214)<sup>289</sup>. These passages show that Djébar finds herself in a linguistic gap, as she neither finds French suitable to express her feelings nor does she master Arabic. Unlike El-Farouk who finds in French the relevant language in which she can express her intimate emotions and Mosteghanemi who finds this aspect in the Arabic language, Djébar finds herself lost between the two languages.

Along those lines, Jane Hiddleston explains that Djébar’s use of French made her “unable to access the infinitely contingent kernel that she wants to describe” (77), adding that “Djébar’s narrator quickly interrupts her own love story and expresses doubts and dissatisfactions that prevent the reader from accessing the scene in an unmediated way” (77), which truly reflects the disturbance in the narrator’s and Djébar’s emotional state. Drawing on the same argument,

---

<sup>287</sup> “Le verbe français qui hier était clamé, ne l’était trop souvent qu’en prétoire, par des juges et des condamnés. Mots de revendication, de procédure, de violence, voici la source orale de ce français des colonisés” (Djébar, *L’amour* 300).

<sup>288</sup> “la langue française pouvait tout m’offrir de ses trésors inépuisables, mais pas un, pas le moindre de ses mots d’amour ne me serait réservé ...” (*L’amour* 43/44).

<sup>289</sup> “Sous le poids des tabous que je porte en moi comme héritage, je me retrouve désertée des chats de l’amour arabe. Est-ce d’avoir été expulsée de ce discours amoureux qui me fait trouver aride le français que j’emploie?” (Djébar 298).

Anne Aubry highlights the fact that the French language “will certainly allow her to be open to the world but it will not offer her the necessary space to express herself and, above all, to say words of love” (121)<sup>290</sup>. Indeed, the novel provides an example where Djébar illustrates the inability of French to reflect the real meaning of her intimate feelings. One such occasion is when the narrator tells about her meeting with her brother, whom she calls in the Arabic dialect ‘hannouni’, a word that is peculiar to her region. She explains that despite the long absence of her brother, when they met “in a sudden burst of confidence he let fall a single word, ‘*hannouni*’” (80)<sup>291</sup>, which broke the ice between them. The narrator wonders about the way one can translate the word ‘hannouni’ to convey the same meaning in French: “How can you translate this hannouni by a word like ‘tender-hearted’ or ‘tendrelou’? Or by ‘my darling’ or ‘my precious heart’” (80)<sup>292</sup>. The passage shows the way this word creates a “gap through which damned-up speech can flow again” (Von Rosk 75).

Djébar’s insistence on the impossibility to translate the exact meaning of a single word reflects her emphasis on the incapability of the French language to express her feelings. Furthermore, when she finds this word untranslatable, Djébar uses the original word in Arabic “in order to render the effects of dialectical Arabic in French, emphasizing the connotative more than the denotative elements of the words” (Donadey 102). The manipulation of the French language and the internalisation of the dialectical Arabic can be understood as a writing back to the violence expressed by the French language, which is the aspect that Zahia Salhi refers to when she argues that “Djébar is doing violence to the French language” (*Occidentalism* 212). This aspect is so reminiscent of what happened to El-Farouk but with

---

<sup>290</sup> “lui permettra certainement de s’ouvrir au monde mais elle ne lui offrira pas l’espace nécessaire pour se dire et, surtout, pour dire des mots d’amour” (121).

<sup>291</sup> “Un seul mot, dans une confiance inopinée, a fait jaillir la rencontre: ‘hannouni’” (Djébar, *L’amour* 116).

<sup>292</sup> Comment traduire ce ‘hannouni’, par un ‘tendre’, un ‘tendrelou’? Ni ‘mon chérie’, ni ‘mon coeur’” (Djébar, *L’amour* 117).

Arabic after Arabisation, when she attempted to subject Arabic to her own skills (see the second section of this chapter).

Djebar's account about Arabic and French languages, before the Black Decade, showed a contradicting representation to that of El-Farouk. In the first half of her literary trajectory, Assia Djebar depicted French like a Nessus tunic as it granted her many privileges but was not expressive of her feelings as Arabic does. Moreover, the French language was represented as the language of colonial linguicism that suppressed her own local languages. More importantly, Djebar highlights the fact that French remains closely associated with the violence that was practised on her people, as it was the language in which her people were tortured, jailed or condemned to death. However, the representation of the French language was not that far from the colonial clichéd image. Indeed, despite depicting Arabic as the proper language that fully reflects her intimate feelings which is the role that French cannot achieve, Djebar places emphasis on the entitlements that French brought her as it liberated her from the harem, the patriarchal system and opened the doors of knowledge for her.

This representation recalls the favourable status given to French in the colonial discourse compared to other languages of the colonised people. Therefore, it can be said that the laudatory portrayal of Arabic in the novel did not invalidate the perpetuation of the clichéd status of French as a language of civilisation and freedom. This resulted in the creation of the ambivalent self-orientalist representation which gives importance to the existence of Arabic, yet pays greater attention to the established superior image of the French language compared to Arabic. Djebar's account on languages became even more supportive to the French language during and after the Black Decade as a result of the rebirth of linguicism in favour of Arabic, which is the aspect that will be further demonstrated.

### **3.2. During and after the Black Decade: the rebirth of the stereotypes, French as a tool of liberation and Arabic as a language of postcolonial linguicism**

Djebar's account on the respective situation of languages during this era reflected her linguistic trajectory. The latter moves from a moment of optimism, sparked by the return of Arabic despite the dominance of the colonial language, to a much more critical moment during the Black Decade where French became a targeted language by radical Islamism while regarded as a means of getting out of obscurantism by Francophone authors. Assia Djebar's *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003) explores the interplay between French and Arabic with socio-political circumstances in post-independent Algeria. The novel revolves around the return of the protagonist Berkane (Barkān) to his hometown in Algiers after a long exile in France, which coincided with the rise of radical Islamism during the 1990s. The violent events of the Black Decade evoked in Berkane memories of the colonial period, which he narrates throughout the novel including periods of his French education, and his participation in the war of independence. The main theme of the novel is not about the French language as the title implies but the novel embodies the disappearance of French and Francophonie in Algeria by the sudden disappearance of Berkane at the end of the novel.

The novel lamented the systematic eradication of the French language as a result of rise of linguicism that advantages the Arabic language, which is the aspect that marked Djebar's writings during the Black Decade. The novel shows that the rise of radical Islamism brought changes to the customs and the traditions of the Algerian society. Berkane states: "I noticed that there are almost no longer any elegant white veils emphasising the hips, nor the glistening gaze of the too visible invisible ones. Other passers-by, now buried in long, grey Moroccan-style tunics, their hair disappearing under a black, Iranian-style scarf" (Djebar, *La Disparition*

86/87)<sup>293</sup>. Berkane shows the intrusion of foreign aspects even in the traditional veil of Algerian women which causes the alienation of the local tradition, customs and even language. This evokes in Berkane memories about the similar oppression that Algerians were facing during French colonialism. Therefore, in the same way as he was resisting to French colonialism in his adolescence, Berkane continues his resistance to the oppression of Islamists by writing his diary in French which he considers as “[...] his memory language” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 251)<sup>294</sup>. This is because during the Black Decade, Arabic turned up to be the language of oppression which made Berkane’s Francophone diary an embodiment of his resistance (Hiddleston 179).

Berkane’s perspective reflects Djebar’s, as she, like her protagonist, uses French as a way of resistance to denounce alienation of Francophones in postcolonial Algeria and “[...]to uncover the oppressed multiculturalism and multicultural creativity of Algerian art and literature” (Hiddleston 120). Pondering on this idea, Nancy Von Rosk highlights the change in Djebar’s perspective about French: “[t]hat language, which once resulted in an ‘aphasia of love’, now becomes a language in which she can finally inscribe the ‘innermost self’” (82). Whilst Djebar opts for French as a tool to defend multilingualism, Arabic became for her a language that is mostly used in the context of violence, which was the backdrop that used to typify French in the colonial period. This is the same opinion expressed by Nadjia (Najyyah), Berkane’s second lover, in the novel. She explains that she was unfamiliar with the Arabic language used by radical Islamists as it was violent:

But the others, on the other side, the fanatics, did you feel their verbal fury, the hatred in their vociferations? Their Arabic language! I who studied literary Arabic, that of poetry, that of Nahda and contemporary novels, I who speak several dialects of the countries of

---

<sup>293</sup> “[...] je note qu’il n’y a presque plus de voiles blancs, élégants, soulignant les hanches, non plus le regard luisant des invisibles trop visibles. D’autres passantes, ensevelies désormais sous tuniques longues, grises à la marocaine, leurs cheveux disparaissant sous un foulard noir, à l’iranienne” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 86/87).

<sup>294</sup> “[sa] langue de mémoire ...” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 251).

the Middle East where I stayed, I do not recognise this Arabic. It is a convulsive, disturbed language, which seems deviated to me! (Djebar, *La Disparition* 157)<sup>295</sup>.

Nadjia highlights that this language was strange to the Arabic language that her people use as it was dominated by violent and angry spirit. She adds that this language “has nothing to do with my grandmother’s language, with her tender words, nor with Hasni El Blaoui’s love songs, the star singer of yesteryear, in Oran. The language of our women is a language of love and liveliness when they sigh, and even when they pray” (157)<sup>296</sup>. Nadjia’s words deeply reject any relation of the Arabic language used during the Black Decade to the Algerian Arabic used by her ancestors, the one used in old songs or by her own people to express love.

The violence that Arabic became associated with, changed the status of languages in Djebar’s perspective as she became a defender of French, the alienated language by Arabo-Islamists. In this context, Shaden M. Tageldin argues that “Arabic for Djebar is now the colonial executioner and French the wounded tongue” (471). Djebar’s position was asserted in her 2006’s speech addressing the French Academy, Djebar announced her definitive break with Arabic and her full embrace of French when she said: “The French language, yours, ladies and gentlemen, that has become mine, at least in writing, so French is the place where my work digs, the space for my meditation or my reverie and perhaps the target of my utopia. I will even say; tempo of my breathing, day by day: what I would like to sketch, at this moment when I

---

<sup>295</sup> Mais les autres, de l’autre côté, les fanatiques, as-tu senti leur fureur verbal, la haine dans leurs vociférations? Leur langue arabe, moi qui ai étudié l’arabe littéraire, celui de la poésie, celui de la *Nahda* et des romans contemporains, moi qui parle plusieurs dialectes des pays du Moyen-Orient ou j’ai séjourné, je ne reconnais pas cet arabe d’ici. C’est une langue convulsive, dérangée, et qui me semble déviée! (Djebar, *La Disparition* 157).

<sup>296</sup> “[...] n’a rien à voir avec la langue de ma grand-mère, avec ses mots tendres, ni avec l’amour chanté de Hasni El Blaoui, le chanteur vedette d’autrefois, à Oran. La langue de nos femmes est une langue d’amour et de vivacité quand elles soupirent, et même quand elles prient [...]” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 157).

remain an erected silhouette on your threshold”<sup>297</sup>. She asserts in another passage that she no longer considers French as a language of the Other, she says:

For decades, this language has no longer been the language of the Other to me - almost a second skin, or a language infiltrated into yourself, its beat against your pulse, or very close to your aorta. Perhaps it also encircles your ankle in a slipknot, punctuating your walk (because I write and I walk almost every day in Soho or on the Brooklyn Bridge) ... I only feel myself gazing into the immensity of a birth in the world. My French becomes the energy left to drink the grey blue space, the whole sky (Djebar, *Discours*)<sup>298</sup>.

In the same speech she showed her complete sympathy to her Algerian Francophone colleagues when she says:

I remember, last year, in June 2005, the day you elected me to your Academy, I replied to the journalists who were asking for my reaction that ‘I was happy for the Francophonie of the Maghreb’. Sobriety was necessary, because I had been seized by the almost physical sensation that your doors were not opening just for me, nor for my books alone, but for the still living shadows of my colleagues - writers, journalists, intellectuals, women and men from Algeria who, in the 1990s, paid with their lives for writing, presenting their ideas or quite simply teaching... in French (Djebar, *Discours*)<sup>299</sup>.

Her sympathy with French and her Francophone counterparts is also reflected in the novel through the voice of Marise, Berkan’s French lover. She compares Algerian Francophones who flee from the violence of radical Islamism, because of their use of the French language, with the Andalusian Moriscos and the Jews of Granada who fled from Spain because of their

---

<sup>297</sup> La langue française, la vôtre, Mesdames et Messieurs, devenue la mienne, tout au moins en écriture, le français donc est lieu de creusement de mon travail, espace de ma méditation ou de ma rêverie, cible de mon utopie peut-être, je dirai même; tempo de ma respiration, au jour le jour: ce que je voudrais esquisser, en cet instant où je demeure silhouette dressée sur votre seuil”.

<sup>298</sup> Depuis des décennies, cette langue ne m’est plus langue de l’Autre- presque’une seconde peau, ou une langue infiltrée en vous-même, son battement contre votre pouls, ou tout près de votre artère aorte, peut-être aussi cernant votre cheville en nœud coulant, rythmant votre marche (car j’écris et je marche, presque chaque jour dans Soho ou sur le pont de Brooklyn) ... Je ne me sens alors que regard dans l’immensité d’une naissance au monde. Mon français devient l’énergie qui me reste pour boire l’espace bleu gris, tout le ciel (Djebar, *Discours*).

<sup>299</sup> Je me souviens, l’an dernier, en Juin 2005, le jour où vous m’avez élue à votre Académie, aux journalistes qui qu’étaient ma réaction, j’avais répondu que « *J’étais contente pour la francophonie du Maghreb* ». La sobriété s’imposait, car m’avait saisie la sensation presque physique que vos portes ne s’ouvraient pas pour moi seule, ni pour mes seuls livres, mais pour les ombres encore vives de mes confrères — écrivains, journalistes, intellectuels, femmes et hommes d’Algérie qui, dans la décennie quatre-vingt-dix ont payé de leur vie le fait d’écrire, d’exposer leurs idées ou tout simplement d’enseigner... en langue française (Djebar, *Discours*).



practice of Arabic language. She inquires: “So, as Arabic had then disappeared in Spain of the Most Catholic Kings – these helped vigorously by the Inquisition –, was it suddenly the French language that was going to disappear ‘over there’ [in Algeria]?” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 271)<sup>300</sup>. Drawing on the same argument, Djebar confirms Marise’s assumption with the destiny of her Francophone protagonist Berkane, who disappeared because of his French language as Marise concludes in the novel (*La Disparition* 272). The argument of Djebar in the novel illuminates the way she changed her tone in her writing from defending Arabic – her mother tongue – to French, which was once for her the language with which her people were abused and subjected. However, this sudden change in her position led her to revive the colonial perspective that elevates French compared to Arabic.

The marginalisation of French in this period is not the only reason behind Djebar choosing it as the language of her writings, but also because she finds this language more convenient as it is not linked to any ideology, like Arabic that is regarded as the language of Islam. Djebar highlights this idea when speaking about the female characters of *Loin de Médine* (1991) (*Far from Medina*) in her book *Ces voix qui m’assiègent* (1999) (*These voices that besiege me*):

[...] these women of History were able to inscribe body and voice in my text, precisely because - the language outside Islam for the moment, is neutral language - gave them dynamics, its freedom, [...] because the French language therefore, moulding its dough in me to bring out these Muslim heroines, inscribes its space outside the compunction of religious tradition, the latter still encloses in my Arabic (52)<sup>301</sup>.

---

<sup>300</sup> “Ainsi, comme l’arabe avait ensuite disparu dans l’Espagne des Rois très Catholiques – ceux-ci aidés vigoureusement par l’Inquisition –, est-ce que soudain c’était la langue française qui allait disparaître ‘là-bas’?” (Djebar, *La Disparition* 271).

<sup>301</sup> [...] ces femmes de l’Histoire ont pu s’inscrire corps et voix dans mon texte, justement parceque - la langue hors islam pour l’instant, langue neutre - leur a donné dynamique, sa liberté, [...] parce que la langue française donc, moulant sa pâte en moi pour faire surgir ces héroïnes musulmanes, inscrit son espace hors de la compunction de la tradition religieuse, celle-ci enserme encore dans mon arabe (52).

This example highlights the characteristics of the French language, which Djébar finds absent in Arabic. However, it shows that Djébar's choice or defence of French brought her back to the conventional colonial vision that French is the language that allows freedom and emancipation, especially when she regards French as a more liberating language because it is a neutral language, unlike Arabic that is conventionally associated with the spiritual experience of Islam.

This idea meets well with Amin Zaoui's perspective about the ideologisation of languages in Algeria. In an interview with Daoudi (21 May 2020), he declared that "Arabic in Algeria has a religious memory since the 1970s". He added: "[...] Today anyone who defends Arabic will add Islam and religion, as if this language is not the language of Christians in the East, as if it is not the language of Gibran Khalil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy, Georges Al Rassi, and as if it is not the language of many great Arab Christian authors" (Zaoui). Through this declaration, Zaoui calls to end the association of languages with ideologies that results in limiting a language to specific groups, in this case, limiting Arabic to Islam and Muslim people while, in reality, it is the language of many Muslim and non-Muslim people as he illustrated. However, whilst Djébar considers French as a neutral language, it is for some Arabic-speaking authors, such as Ahlem Mosteghanemi, a language of the coloniser that we should replace with Arabic as explained previously in this chapter. Mosteghanemi's position denies the image of French as a neutral language as it is still associated with colonial ideologies by some authors.

It was not the only occasion where Djébar expressed her perspective about French as a tool of freedom and emancipation. According to Salhi, Djébar is no longer considering French as a tool of colonialism. Instead, she uses it as booty of the colonial war and, "she went as far as to call the French language a liberating tool" (*Occidentalism* 211). In the same context, S. Tadjeldin argues that Djébar found in French a language that can "afford a space of expression for women that 'patriarchal' Arabic supposedly cannot" (470). She adds speaking about

Djebar's account in the novel understudy: "[...] she lamented 'la disparition de la langue française' in Algeria as the disappearance of the very possibility of the secular, equating French with secularity and positing both as the only forces that can 'free' Algerian women from the shackles of male-dominated Islam" (Tadjeldin 470).

Indeed, this perspective echoes the colonial status of French as a language of freedom and emancipation for Algerian women, and represents another point that illustrates a sharp contrast with Ahlem Mosteghanemi. Unlike Djebar, Mosteghanemi argues that Arabic is the most relevant language to write about Algerian women, as happened when Algerian Muslim male writers wrote in Arabic with the aim of liberating women<sup>302</sup>, at a time when "French-language literature is not interested in the problem of women but rather uses it for an exotic purpose French-language literature is not interested in the problem of women but rather uses it for an exotic purpose" (*Algérie* 288)<sup>303</sup>. Pondering on this idea, Daoudi has highlighted the importance of language in the writing of both writers explaining that "[...] despite their differences, both writers agree about the importance of language (any language) in constructing narratives of liberation" (*Algerian* 21).

Djebar's standpoint about French and Arabic was continuously influenced by the political circumstances that shaped the situation of languages in Algeria, but this did not change her position toward the French language as a liberating tool in both colonial and post-independence eras. This resulted in the creation of a form of self-Orientalist discourse in Djebar's writings that revives the colonial tradition of presenting the French language as a liberating language that can lead to the emancipation of Algeria, a position which was accentuated in her post-

---

<sup>302</sup> Such as Ahmad Redha Houhou whose literary works are considered among the early Algerian Arabic-speaking literature. He "raises the problem of the condition of women. He even dedicated his *Gada umm al qura (Beautiful Woman of Mecca)* [1947] to the Algerian woman (Bois, Bjornson 104).

<sup>303</sup> "la littérature de langue française ne s'intéresse pas au problème de la femme mais s'en sert plutôt dans un but exotique" (*Algérie* 288).

independence writings. Indeed, Djébar's perspective on the Arabic language is the aspect that witnessed a significant shift during the Black Decade. In the colonial period, she felt that Arabic was the only language that could truly express her intimate feelings, but it became for her – with the rise of political and linguistic forces that side-lined French in the post-independence era– the oppressing language.

On the contrary, her defence of French against post-independence linguicism –practised by Islamists and proponents of Arabisation– led her to emphasise her full embrace of French, not only as a language that liberated her in her childhood from the *harem* but as a language that can liberate the whole country from Islamist obscurantism. More importantly, Djébar's reaction of defending Francophonie against the post-independence linguicism is similar to the reaction of some other Algerian authors who were defending the Berber language for the same cause. For Example, Nabil Farès rejected the restraints of the post-independence linguicism, and like Djébar, he also recreates a self-Orientalist discourse that echoes the clichéd picture of the Arabic language but with fewer nuances as explained in the previous chapter.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This chapter has engaged with the ways in which the linguistic history of Algeria has had a bearing on self-Orientalist discourse about language and culture in the postcolonial era. I show in particular the ways in which the connection between French as the colonial language, Arabic as a prime language in the reconquest of identity in the post-independence era, and Berber as the region's oldest surviving indigenous language, have been involved in an interplay connecting not only the linguistic colonial legacy but also politics, spiritual competition and military activity as a part of the Black Decade. Through the novels of Fadhila El-Farouk and Assia Djébar, I chart some of the unexpected consequences of the colonial and post-independence linguicism that resulted from the colonial forced implementation of the French

language and the post-independence policies of Arabisation launched since the 1970s in Algeria. Also, the unique trajectories inspired by the changing influencing nature of the French language against the backdrop of the development of political and religious violence in Algeria in the 1990s.

Fadhila El-Farouk as an author who was educated in the Arabised system presents in her novel an account about Arabic that illustrates the unexpected consequences – I termed ‘reverse influence’ in this chapter – of the systematic Arabisation strategy implemented in post-independence Algeria. The novel depicts the rebirth of the demeaning stereotype about Arabic as a language with limited professional use that does not respond to the cultural demands of the new generations. In addition, she even denies the nationalist symbolism that is traditionally attributed to Arabic as she doubts the ability of this language to unify her people. At the same time, the novel carries a laudatory portrayal of the French language that is reminiscent of the colonial valorisation of French compared to Arabic, and confirms the existence of the fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance in El-Farouk’s representations of languages.

The analysis of Assia Djébar’s novels shows her trajectory through the two languages. An experience that reflects a fundamental shift in her perspective from the colonial to the post-independence era. This change confirms the impact of politics of both eras in the development of the linguistic situation in Algeria. On the opposite end of the spectrum, it showcases the influence of politics on literary representations. Her account in *L’Amour la fantasia* (1985), published before the Black Decade, reveals her intimate attachment to her mother tongue in a period where the Algerian people considered Arabic as a tool to reconquer the Algerian identity. Although Arabic was not the language that equipped her to become an inspirational independent woman, as French did, it still represented the connection to her roots. The second novel under study, *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003), that was published after the

Black Decade, demonstrates that Djébar shifted away from a feeling of nostalgia towards Arabic and came to the conclusion that her actual intellectual projects were well confronted to the thread of Islamism and became more associated with ‘the coloniser’s language’ than the Arabic language, which is what led her to echo the clichéd laudatory status of the French language as a tool of liberation and emancipation. This double-faceted representation of Arabic and French in Djébar’s prose confirmed her ambivalence in the self-Orientalist discourse she created.

Thus, this chapter shows that the linguistic history of Algeria triggered a new lease of life for the biased clichés on French and Arabic in a sort of self-Orientalist discourse, which was influenced by the colonial legacy and the politics held in Algeria mainly during the Black Decade and during the era of Arabisation.

## **Conclusion**

### **Moving Beyond the Aporia of Colonialism? Self-Orientalism as an Ambiguous Literary Response**

Through charting the articulation of 'Self-Orientalism' in late colonial and post-independence Algerian literature, this thesis has sought to enhance our understanding of the long-term cultural consequences of the encounter between coloniser and colonised in Algeria. The examination of Algerian authors' literary self-representations has allowed this thesis to argue that Algerian prose echoes to a large extent, under the influence of colonialism, a series of colonial and Orientalist stereotypes resulting in self-Orientalism. The analysis has also demonstrated that the survival of colonial tropes in Algerian writings was also prompted by the influence of local politics, the role of violence, psychological phenomena like a sense of colonisability and colonial mentality and gender-related dynamics of the post-independence era. The reinvestment of the colonial and Orientalist tropes with old and new meanings has led to Algeria being pictured in essentialised portrayals: showing Algerians as inferior people, emphasising the alleged image of the passive objectified woman, stigmatising Islam with terrorism, maintaining the particularist divisions, and depicting native languages as sterile and a hindrance to development.

#### **1. The Algerian paradox: critical perspectives on literary production**

The first part of the thesis has shown the multiplicity of colonial and Orientalist legacies and heritage that have fed into the Algerian postcolonial production mainly within the context of representations of Algerian people and cities. These chapters have shown that Algerian postcolonial literature illustrated the continuation of the demeaning stance that characterised colonial writings about Algeria, and became even more salient in the post-independence literature as opposed to the pre-independence literature. This is because the latter was

infiltrated, in its later stages, by a resisting stance to these tropes, which receded once colonialism had ended. The analysis in these chapters has also shown a form of ‘inversely proportional’ correlation between the extent of the adoption of colonial stereotypes and the closeness to the colonial period: the dominance of the fully-fledged self-Orientalism in the post-independence writings comes in stark contrast with the prevalence of the reluctant self-Orientalist stance in the Algerian prose of the colonial era. Indeed, the reluctance in self-Orientalism not only rejects the colonial stereotypes but even seeks to reverse some clichés and apply them in the representation of the West. At the same time, the reluctance that appeared in Algerian writings of the late colonial era undermines Albert Memmi’s hypothesis about the definite submissiveness of the colonised to the dominance of the coloniser’s culture.

Moreover, the two chapters have shown the influence of other local factors such as the colonised’s psyche which is sometimes impacted by the influence of ‘colonisability’ and ‘colonial mentality’ and results in the emulation of some prejudiced and demeaning clichés. More importantly, the analysis, mainly of the representation of Algerian places and cities, has highlighted the role of gender-related dynamics in the survival of the colonial tropes and the heterogeneity of the self-Orientalist discourse. This is especially evident in the different perpetuation of the feminising trope between female and male Algerian writings, as the feminisation included in women’s writings showed less reminiscence with the colonial tradition, compared to the feminisation in Algerian’s male writings. The difference articulated between male and female representations shows another evidence that confirms Billie Melman, Lisa Lowe, and Reina Lewis’ argument about the impact of gender on the heterogeneity of representations.

The second part of this thesis tackled the representation of beliefs and customs as another area where the process of othering was so evident. The analysis has shown the postcolonial



rebirth of some stereotypes ascribed to Algerian women and Islam which gained validity throughout the long period of colonialism. The first chapter has shown that Algerian historical events and gender-related circumstances have influenced the portrayal of women in the Algerian novel. The massive involvement of women in the Algerian Revolution was reflected through the reluctant self-Orientalist stance of authors like Mouloud Feraoun who released some of his Algerian female characters from the passive and objectified portrayals of colonial discourses by giving them voice and agency despite the social and the patriarchal challenges depicted in the novel.

However, the space that was given to the Algerian female character was reduced in representations that appeared after independence. A fact that reflected, or was influenced by, the sudden withdrawal of most Algerian women from the many fields wherein they had been active during the Algerian revolution – and the associated reduction of female mobility through the Algerian family code promulgated after independence. This aspect had clearly influenced Tahar Ouettar's prose that illustrated a fully-fledged stance perpetuating the image of passivity, oppression and silence which were recurrently assigned to Algerian women in his novel. Moreover, the study of representations of Algerian women has also depicted that works published in the 1990s (mainly of Fadhila El-Farouk and Waciny Laredj) are putting most Algerian female characters under the umbrella of generalised, essentialised images which place emphasis on their objectification and their submissiveness to the patriarchal authority. In doing so, the prose of El-Farouk and Laredj deviates from the path of other feminist authors who denounce oppression by empowering their female characters and rejecting the stereotypes traditionally attributed to them.

The second chapter of this part depicted the role of violence associated with the rise of political Islamism during the Black Decade in the rebirth of the biased image of Islam and the

change that affected its status in Algerian literature after independence. Through the analysis of Algerian literature of the late colonial era – mainly the works of Malek Bennabi and Mouloud Feraoun – the chapter has shown that despite the constraints and the debasing discourse created in the colonial era – that highlighted Islam as a religion of a recoiling effect on the society – Algerian literature of that period displayed a reluctant self-Orientalist stance and showed Islam as a highly valued, well-connected religion to Algerian society compared to other religions, and suggested Islam as a tool leading to the political emancipation. Such an optimistic and positive representation seems to have disappeared in the post-independence era, as the literature produced during or after the Black Decade such as Kamal Daoud's prose, which was meant to denounce radical Islamism, appeared to be mostly putting the blame on Islam and showing reminiscence of colonial and Orientalist biased statements about Islam and developing a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance. The shift in representation and the resurfacing of the colonial stereotypes about Islam shows the influence of the involvement of political Islam in the violent events of the Black Decade.

The chapter has shown that the rise of political Islamism has also affected the portrayal of other religious aspects in Algerian society like the veil. The veil had varied implications in colonial and post-independence Algeria. Indeed, it was regarded as a sign of resistance for Algerians during colonialism despite the colonial records that conventionally depicted it as a tool for the oppression of Algerian Muslim women. In the post-independence era, more implications have been associated to the veil. Whilst some viewed it as a sign of radical Islamists' violation of Algerian women's freedom, for others, the veil was used by women to conquer public space, which had been hitherto limited to men. However, this variety of interpretations of the veil in Algeria was generally ignored in the discourse created by Algerian authors of this period. Assia Djebar and Fadhila El-Farouk's novels did not only revive the stress on the veil which was a topic mainly raised and constructed in the colonial discourse, but

they also emphasised only one implication of the veil which draws on stereotypical perspectives that associate the veil with passivity, submissiveness and despotism of the Muslim patriarchy.

The last part of this thesis discussed the conceptualisation of the Algerian community, showing the direct impact of the local post-independence politics in the revival of the racial myths and the stereotypes about languages that initially started with racial divisions practised by the colonial administration. The main argument developed in the first chapter is that particularism has first appeared after the Berber crisis between Arab and Berber members in the anticolonial Algerian party *MTLD* in 1949. This resulted in harsh criticism of Mouloud Mammeri's novel by most of the Arabo-Islamist members of the party just because it focused on Kabylia. This incident showed the influence of 'divide and rule' policy and the 'Kabyle myth' on the alienation of the Berbers, or Kabyles more specifically, whenever they attempted to defend their ethnicity, unlike Arabs who defended Arabo-Islamism without being accused of particularism.

The analysis has shown that the particularist stance became even more evident in the post-independence Algerian prose as a consequence of post-independence politics which overvalorised Arabo-Islamism and rigidly alienated other Algerian ethnicities. The extensive Arabisation and other policies that constrained Berber culture and language raised the concern of many Berber authors such as Nabil Farès and led to the appearance of the fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance restoring the division between Berbers and Arabs and openly rejecting the intrusion of the Arabo-Islamist culture in North Africa. The same stance has been expressed by female Berber authors' writings such as Fadhila El-Farouk. Whilst she did not recreate the racially dividing stereotypes, she confirmed the deep divide between Arabs and Berbers which, in her opinion, developed into a feeling of hatred. Both authors' —Fares and El-Farouk—

writings highlight new aspect that trigger the revival of stereotypes. The dominance of Islamism and Arabic were considered in their writings as elements of the new colonialism that comes from the Mashriq. Therefore, in their attempt to reject the external influence of these phenomena on the local language and culture, they recreated clichés that demeaned Arabic and Islam.

A similar argument has been developed in the last chapter about another aspect in the Algerian community, which is language. The analysis in this chapter has shown that the linguisticism imposed by colonialism then by Algerian politics in the post-independence era were the reasons behind the continuation of stereotypes about French and Arabic. Fadhila El-Farouk's prose has illustrated the reverse influence of the extensive process of Arabisation, which appeared in the text as a fully-fledged self-Orientalist stance that reinvests the demeaning portrayals of the Arabic language. The second section of this chapter depicts the impact of the colonial and post-independence linguisticisms on portrayals of languages in the Francophone literary production mainly in Assia Djebar's novels. Whilst *L'Amour la fantasia* (1985) showcased the influence of the colonial imposition of French in pushing Assia Djebar to defend her native language Arabic, *La Disparition de la langue française* (2003) depicted the influence of post-independence linguisticism, that imposed Arabic, on the creation of the self-Orientalist representations that revives the colonial and Orientalist assumptions that assert the inferiority of Arabic compared to French.

## **2. Beyond self-Orientalism**

Our analysis of Algerian postcolonial novels shows that there is a need to bring attention not only to the Western conception of the Orient but also to the multiple ways in which the self-conceptions of Oriental populations may contribute to the continuation of colonial and Orientalist stereotypes, described in this thesis as 'self-Orientalism'. This research focused on

the framing of Algerian postcolonial literary output as an example of the self-conception of ex-colonised people, and unlike the Orientalist discourse which is defined by Edward Said as one homogeneous body of knowledge created about the Orient, the self-Orientalist discourse that appeared in the postcolonial Algerian literature has been shown as non-homogeneous. The heterogeneity of self-Orientalism is depicted through the three trends in which this discourse is displayed in the literary works discussed which are: reluctant, ambivalent and, fully-fledged stances of 'self-Orientalism'. More importantly, self-Orientalism is not only influenced by the Western power and discourse but also by the post-independence politics and historical events in Algeria. Psychological phenomena like the sense of colonisability and colonial mentality that are related to the colonial era and maybe beyond, as well as socio-political trends such as the withdrawal of women from all fields after independence, the reduction of female mobility through the Algerian family code, the rise of radical Islamism, and cultural choices like Arabisation. All these aspects have seemingly created the circumstances necessary to stimulate the rebirth of many colonial stereotypes about the inferiority of Algerians, passivity and uncontrolled sexuality of Algerian women, violence, and fanaticism of Islam and the racial division between Algerian regions and languages.

Although all these phenomena have contributed in some way to the emergence of self-Orientalism, the policy of Arabisation and the rise of Islamism as a political movement had a more drastic influence. This is not only because these two elements constituted a backlash against the extreme colonialist policies that sought to undermine the importance of Arabic and Islam in Algeria, but also because they are elements that are influenced by the persistent external influence of the Mashriq which worsened the turn of events in post-independence Algeria, paving the way for what some observers have described as a "second Algerian war" (Le Sueur xi). Indeed, the extensive Arabisation and the dominance of political Islam were triggered by the government-imposed "peripheralization relative to the Mashriq, in official

culture and political orientation, [...] [which] are sometimes identified as factors in the cultural and ideological makeup of contemporary Algeria” (McDougall 251/252). The eagerness of Ben Bella’s government to join the group of Arab countries stimulated the extensive Arabisation which contributed for its part to the rise of radical Islamism in the country<sup>304</sup>. Such blind peripheralisation was denounced by the FLN leading intellectual Mostefa Lacheraf who described it as an intellectual subordination to the Mashriq of the “Bathists” or qawmiyȳ in (McDougall 266). Whilst he was a vocal critic of the intellectual subordination of Algerians vis-à-vis Middle Eastern Arab resulting from the policy of Arabisation, Lacheraf simultaneously insisted on the fact that the Arabic language itself was in his view “innocent of the pretentious Baathist mediocrity, as Islam is innocent of the crimes and gross counterfeits of fundamentalism” (Lacheraf 45)<sup>305</sup>.

Eventually, the restrictions applied to Algeria’s multilingualism and cultural diversity triggered resistance and even hatred towards Arabic and Islam and pushed some factions to consider this kind of cultural subordination to the Mashriq as a new colonialism of the country. In this vein, Hafid Gafaïti explains that this situation resulted in the creation of what is negatively referred to as a “Berberist discourse” which considers Arabic as:

the language of the Arab colonialism imposed on North Africa in the seventh century; an archaic language, which because of its underdevelopment and sclerosis, is not capable of adapting to the needs of the modern world; the vehicle of Islam and Pan Arab ideology, which area alien and inauthentic traditions imposed on Algeria from the outside (23).

---

<sup>304</sup> In this vein, Benrabah explains that by the start of the Arabisation process the government recruited around 1000 Egyptian Arabic-language instructors but when Gamal Abdel Nasser informed the Algerian officials of the instructors’ shortage Ben Bella’s envoy “Ben Bella’s envoy insisted that he should send him teachers ‘even if they were greengrocers’” (*The Linguistic* 56). He also explains the relation between Arabisation and the rise of Islamism in Algerian saying that “the majority of these Egyptians belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, who sowed the seeds of religious fundamentalism among a population with a low literacy rate” (Benrabah, *The Linguistic* 56).

<sup>305</sup> “est innocente de la prétentieuse médiocrité baâthist, comme l’Islam est innocent des crimes et grossières contrefaçons de l’intégrisme” (Lacheraf 45).

These perspectives were displayed in some of the literary works included in this project such as the works of Fadhila El-Farouk and Nabil Farès' prose which is reflective of the rejection to the Mashriq's cultural impact on Algeria. Very often, literary engagements with these ideas went hand in hand with the reviving of Orientalist themes and stereotypes. I have come to the conclusion that the Mashriq's cultural influence on Algeria represents another aspect that should be taken into account when discussing self-Orientalism and its associated revival of stereotypes in the postcolonial period.

These conclusions invite the reader, of postcolonial literature in particular, to consider self-Orientalism as a discourse that can be potentially found in any literary production of any country that witnessed the colonialism and the impact of the Orientalist discourse. Drawing on this perspective, we will be led to study literary representations, of Algeria among other countries, in a more complex consideration than mere literary representation and to move beyond traditional binaries such as coloniser/colonised and consider other criteria that can shape the self-conception or the literary representation. This will also imply casting light on non-binary aspects in the literary analysis, such as the Maghreb in the study of the East-West encounter, or the Berber language and Algerian dialectical languages in the study of French-Arabic linguistic conflict. The study of the othering process calls for greater consideration of the othering within the so-called 'Orient' as well, such as the distinction or the influence between Maghreb and Mashriq, and the othering that survived among the same people, which bring to attention the study of the othering existing between Arabs and Berbers, North and South, and modern and traditional in Algeria. This is perhaps where the roots of the 'Algerian paradox' lie in postcolonial literature.

## Works Cited

### Primary resources

- Blair, Dororthy, trans. *A Sister to Scheherazade*. Assia, Djebbar. London: Quartet, 1987.
- Blair, Dorothy, trans. *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. Assia, Djebbar. London: Quartet, 1985.
- Cullen, John, trans. *The Meursault Investigation*. Kamel, Daoud. London: Oneworld, 2015.
- Daoud, Kamel. *Meursault, contre-enquête*. Algiers: Barzakh, 2013.
- Djebbar, Assia. *La Disparition de la langue française*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2003.
- Djebbar, Assia. *L'Amour, la fantasia* [1985]. Paris: Albin Michel, 1995.
- Djebbar, Assia. *Ombre sultane*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1987.
- El-Farouk, Fadhila. *The Mood of a Teenager* (مزاج مراهقة) [1999]. Beirut: Dar El-Farabi, 2007.
- Farès, Nabile. *Le Champ des oliviers*. Paris: Seuil, 1972.
- Feraoun, Mouloud. *Les Chemins qui montent* [1957]. Algiers: ENAG, 2011.
- Khatibi, Said. *Forty Years Waiting for Isabelle* (اربعون عاماً في انتظار ايزابيل). Algiers: El-Ikhtilaf, 2016.
- Mammeri, Mouloud. *La Colline oubliée* [1952]. Algiers: El Dar Othmania, 2007.
- Mosteghanemi, Ahlam. *The Memory in the Flesh* (ذاكرة الجسد) [1993]. Beirut: Dar Al Adab, 2000.
- Nina, Bouraoui. *La Voyeuse interdite*. Paris: Gallimard, 1991.
- Ouettar, Taher. *Alaz* (اللاز) [1974]. Algiers: Moufem, 2007.
- Waciny, Laredj. *The Lady of the Place* (سيدة المقام) [1995]. Algiers: El-Fadaa El-Hor, 2001.

### Secondary resources

- Abdelfettah Lalmi, Nedjma. "Du myth de l'isolat kabyle." *Open Edition Journals* (January 2004): 507-531.
- Abdelmalek, Anouar. "Orientalism in Crisis." *Orientalism a Reader*. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2000 : 47-55.



- Abi-Mershed, Osama W. "Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria." *The Arab Studies Journal* 20.1 (Spring 2012): 157-161.
- Ageron, Charles-Robert. "La politique berbère du protectorat marocain de 1913 à 1934." *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 1.18 (1971): 50-90.
- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Aïtel, Faiza. "Between Algeria and France: The Origin of the Berber Movement." *French Cultural Studies* 24. 1 (2013): 63-76.
- Al Areqi, Rashad Mohammed Moqbel. "Arabic Narrative and Secularism/Secularization." *International Journal of English and Literature*. 4.8 (October 2013): 388-397.
- Al Rasheed, Ghadah. "The Face-Veil through the Gaze." *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines* 7.1 (2013): 19-32.
- Al-'Azam, Sadiq Jalal. "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse." *Libcom.org*. 03 January 2014. Web. 17 November 2020.
- Al-Bitar, Nadim. *The Boundaries of the national Identity: General Criticism (Houdoud lhouwia al-Kawmia: Nakd Aam)*. Beirut: Dar el-Wihda, 2002.
- Alkyam, Sami. "Lost in reading: The predicament of postcolonial writing in Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 55:4 (21<sup>st</sup> May 2019): 459-471.
- Amara, Noureddine, et al. "Les Fantômes de Kamel Daoud." *Le Monde*. 11 February 2016. Web. 30 July 2019.
- Amrane-Minne, Danièle Djamila. "Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day." *Research in African Literatures* 30, 3 (Autumn, 1999): 62-77.
- Ashcroft, Bill. et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London : Routledge, 2002.
- Ashcroft, Bill. Hussein, Kadhim. eds. *Edward Said and the Post-Colonial*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001.
- Asholt, Wolfgang, ed et al. *Assia Djebar, littérature et transmission*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne, 2010.
- Aubry, Anne. "« Idiome de l'exil et langue de l'irréductibilité ». L'utilisation de la langue française dans deux romans d'Assia Djébar: 'L'Amour, la fantasia et Vaste est la prison: instrument d'oppression coloniale ou instrument de libération?'" *Dalhousie French Studies* 74.75 (Summer 2006): 121-131.

- Aubry, Marine. "Nina Bouraoui Us Tour" (2012): 1-2.
- Baaqeel, Nuha Ahmed. *The Kaleidoscope of Gendered Memory in Ahlam Mosteghanemi's Novels*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.
- Baaqeel, Nuha. "An Interview with Ahlam Mosteghanemi". *Women: A Cultural Review* 26.1-2 (2015): 143-153.
- Baldauf, Richard B, Robert B, Kaplan. *Language Planning and Policy in Africa: Volume II*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2007.
- Bart, Moore-Gilbert. *Postcolonial: Context, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso, 1997.
- Bassiouney, Reem. "Redefining Identity through Language in the Literature of the Diaspora." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30.1 (2010): 101-106.
- Bassiouney, Reem. *Arabic Sociolinguistics*. Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Beatson, Peter, trans. "Nabile Farès: Giving a Name to Exile Interview". *Fountains* 3 (1979): 1-11.
- Behdad, Ali. *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1994.
- Bekkar, Rabia. "Interview with Amin Zaoui." Trans. Rajae, Nami. *The Arab Studies Journal* 8/9.2/1 (Fall 2000/Spring 2001): 130-141.
- Beller, Manfred, Joep, Leerssen eds. *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Ben Salem, Lobna. "'Fugitive Without Knowing it': Language, Displacement and Identity in Assia Djebar's Autobiographic Narratives." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 6.4 (August 2015): 20-27.
- Bennabi, Malek. *Le Problème des idées dans le monde musulman*. Algiers: Elbay'yinate, 1990.
- Bennabi, Malek. *Vocation de l'Islam*. Alger: Editions ANEP, 2006.
- Benrabah, Mohamed. "Language in Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues." *Language Policy* 6.3 (June 2007): 225-252.
- Benrabah, Mohammed. *Language Conflict in Algeria: from Colonialism to Post-independence*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013.
- Berger, Anne Emmanuelle, ed. *Algeria in Others' Languages*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002.

- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture* [1994]. London; New York, 2004.
- Blair, Mary Neville. *Equal in War, Forgotten in Peace: The Changing Status of Algerian Women*. University Microfilms International: Ann Arbor, 1986.
- Boariu, Maria. "The Veil as Metaphor of French Colonized Algeria." *JSRI* 3 (Winter 2002).
- Bois, Marcel. Richard, Bjornson. "Arabic-Language Algerian Literature Author(s)." *Research in African Literatures* 23. 2 (Summer 1992): 103-111.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Symbolic Capital and Social Classes." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13.2 (2013): 292–302.
- Burney, Shehla. "Orientalism: The Making of the Other." *PEDAGOGY of the Other: Edward Said, Postcolonial Theory, and Strategies for Critique* (2012): 23-39.
- Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.
- Catteloup, M. *Essai d'une topographie médicale du bassin de Tlemcen*. Paris : Imprimé par Henri et Charles Noblet, 1854.
- Çelik, Zeynep. *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations : Algiers under French Rule*. Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press, 1997.
- Chaker, Salem. "Berber Challenge in Algeria: The State of the Question." *Race Gender and Class* 8,3 (2001): 135-156.
- Cheniki, Ahmed. "Article de Kamel Belkacem et réponse de Mouloud Mammeri (1980): Témoignage du journaliste Ahmed Cheniki." *Overblog*, 10 March 2018. Web. 08 August 2021. <http://psychologuons.over-blog.com/2018/03/article-de-kamel-belkacem-et-reponse-de-mouloud-mammeri-1980-temoignage-du-journaliste-ahmed-cheniki.html>
- Chikhi, Baida. *Assia Djebar: histoires et fantasies*. Paris: Presses universitaires Paris-Sorbonne, 2007.
- Choisy, August. *Le Sahara: souvenirs d'une mission a Goleah*. Paris: E. Plon et Cie, Imprimeurs-Editeurs, 1881.
- Chouiten, Lynda. "Hybridity and Cultural Negotiation in Mouloud Féraoun's *La Terre et le sang* (1953) and *Les Chemins qui montent* (1957)." *What Country's This? And Whither Are We Gone?* (30<sup>th</sup> July-2<sup>nd</sup> August 2008): 352-368.
- Chouiten, Lynda. *A Carnavalesque Mirage: The Orient in Isabelle Eberhardt's Writings*. Galway: NUI Galway, 2012.
- Clancy-Smith, Julia. "Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962." *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*. Julia Ann, Clancy-Smith. Frances, Gouda eds. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, (1998): 154-174.

- Connolly, Aoife. "Telling Tales of Conquest and Independence : Feminising (French) Algeria." *Gender. Nation. Text : Exploring constructs of Identity*. Eds. Loraine, Kelly et al. Berline : Cultural Studies, 2017.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* [1902]. London: Penguin, 1994.
- Cooke, James J. "Tricolour and Crescent: Franco-Muslim Relations in Colonial Algeria, 1880-1940." *Islamic Studies* 29.1 (Spring 1990): 57-75.
- Cox, Debbie. "Algeria the Colonial and Postcolonial Context". *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*. Wail, Hassan ed. 157-172.
- Cox, Debbie. "The Novels of Tahar Wattar: Command or Critique?" *Research in African Literatures* 28, 3 (Autumn, 1997): 94-109.
- Crawley, William. "Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms." *Taylor & Francis* 25 (18 June 2010): 193-241.
- Daoud, Kamel. "Cologne, Lieu de Fantômes." *Le Monde*. 29 Janvier 2016. Web. 28 July 2019. [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantomes\\_4856694\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/01/31/cologne-lieu-de-fantomes_4856694_3232.html)
- Daoud, Kamel. "Islamist Politician Demands Execution of Algerian Author Kamel Daoud for Blasphemy in His Book." *The Middle East Media Research Institute TV Monitor Project*. 19 December 2014. Web. 20 June 2021. <https://www.memri.org/tv/islamist-politician-demands-execution-algerian-author-kamel-daoud-blasphemy-his-book>
- Daoudi, Anissa. "Algerian Women and the Traumatic Decade: Literary Interventions." *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies* (2017): 1-22.
- Daoudi, Anissa. "Multilingualism in Algeria: between 'soft power', 'Arabisation', 'Islamisation', and 'globalisation'." *The Journal of North African Studies* 23.3 (2018): 460-481.
- David R., Blanks, et-al eds. *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
- De Champeaux, Guillaume. *A Travers les oasis sahariennes*. Paris: Chapelot and Cie, 1903.
- De Jager, Marjolin, David, Kelly, trans. *Algerian White a Narrative*. Assia, Djébar. New York/London/Sydney/Toronto: Seven Stories Press, 2000.
- Decker, Jeffrey Louis. "Terrorism (Un) Veiled: Frantz Fanon and the Women of Algiers." *Cultural Critique* 17 (Winter 1990-1991) : 177-195.
- Depont, Octave. *L'Algérie du centenaire : L'œuvre française de libération, de conquête morale et d'évolution sociale des indigènes. Les Berbères en France. La représentation parlementaire des indigènes*. Paris : Recueil Sirey, 1928.

- Djait, Hichem. *L'Europe et l'Islam*. Paris: Seuil, 1974.
- Djebar, Assia. "Discours de réception, et réponse de Pierre-Jean Rémy." *Académie française* (22 June 2006).
- Djebar, Assia. "Territoires des langues: entretien avec Lis Gauvin." *Littérature* 101 (1996): 73-87.
- Djebar, Assia. *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1999.
- Donadey, Anne ed. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Assa Djebar*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2017.
- Dourari, Abderrezak. "Discours épistémique, fiction et jugement nationaliste: M. Lacheraf a propos de *La Colline oubliée* de M. Mammeri." *Insaniyat* (2010): 91-123.
- Dunwoodie, Peter. *Writing French Algeria*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.
- Elmarsafy, Ziad. *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- El Nossery, Névine. Amy L., Hubbell eds. *The Unspeakable: Representations of Trauma in Francophone Literature and Art*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.
- El-Farouk, Fadhila. "Fadhila El-Farouk romancière: au Liban, j'ai redécouvert la littérature algérienne." Interview. Conducted by Nadine Arafat. *Djazairess*, 26 April 2014, <https://www.djazairess.com/fr/liberte/220258>.
- El-Farouk, Fadhila. Interview. Conducted by Anissa, Daoudi, 20 April 2020.
- Fakhreddine, Huda. Bilal, Orfal. "Criticising the city: Against Cities: On Hija' al-Mudun in Arabic Poetry". *The Poetics of the City in Modern Arabic Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Fanon, Frantz. "Algeria Unveiled". *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*. Duara, Prasenjit ed. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Sociologie d'une révolution: L'an V de la révolution algérienne*. Paris: François Maspero, 1968.
- Faulkner, Rita A. "From Assia Djebar, Frantz Fanon, Women, Veils, and Land." *World Literature* 70. 4 (Autumn, 1996): 847-855.
- Feighery, William G. "Tourism and Self-Orientalism in Oman: A Critical Discourse Analysis." *Critical Discourse Studies* 9.3 (2012): 269-284.
- Feraoun, Mouloud. *Journal 1955-1962*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1962.

- Fletcher, Yaël Simpson. "Irresistible Seductions: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria around 1930." *Domesticating the Empire : Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*. Eds. Julia, Clancy-Smith et al. Charlottesville ; London : University Press of Virginia, 1998, 193-210.
- Fois, Marisa. "Identity, Politics and Nation: Algerian Nationalism and the 'Berberist Crisis' of 1949." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43,2 (2016): 206-218.
- Ford, Caroline. "The Inheritance of Empire and the Ruins of Rome in French Colonial Algeria." *Past and Present* 10 (2015): 57-77.
- Fromentin, Eugène. *Sahara et Sahel*. Paris : Plon-Nourrit et Cie, Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1887.
- Fromentin, Eugène. *Un Été dans le Sahara*. Paris : Plon-Nourrit et Cie, Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1904.
- Gafaiti, Hafid. "The Monotheism of the Other: Language and De/Construction of National Identity in Postcolonial Algeria." *Algeria in Others' Languages*, ed. Anne Emmanuelle Berger. Ithaca: Cornell UP (2002) 20-34.
- Galloway, Nicola, Rose, Heath. *Introducing Global Englishes*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.
- Ghennam, Fatma. "Malek Bennabi's Perspective on the Civilizational Crisis: The Right Questions." *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 9 (June 2018): 148-158.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Godzich, Myrna. Wlad, Godzich, translators. *The Colonial Harem*. By Malek Alloula. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Golley, Nawar Al-Hassan. "Is Feminism Relevant to Arab Women?" *Third World Quarterly* 25.3 (2004): 521-536.
- Gouffi, Mohammed. Et al. "Neocolonial Burdens and Unhomely Selves in the Metropole in Mosteghanemi's *The Bridges of Constantine*." *Critique : Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 61.5 (2020) : 554-567.
- Grace, Yan, and Carla, Almeida Santos. "China, Forever: Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 36, 2 (2009): 295-315.
- Graebner, Seth. *History's Place : Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature*. Lanham, Maryland : Lexington Books, 2007.
- Halliday, Fred. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1995.
- Hamitouch, Fatah. "Mouloud Mammeri: de la révolution algérienne à l'amazighité." *Le Matin de l'algérie*. 28 December 2020. Web. 06 September 2021.

<https://www.lematindalgerie.com/mouloud-mammeri-de-la-revolution-algerienne-lamazighite>

- Hammerbeck, David. "Voltaire's Mahomet, the Persistence of Cultural Memory and Pre-Modern Orientalism." *Agora* 2.2 (Spring 2003): 1-20.
- Hanafi, Hassan. "From Orientalism to Occidentalism." *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 40.1 (2004): 227-237.
- Hannoum, Abdelmadjid. "Writing Algeria: On the History and Culture of Colonialism." *The Maghreb Center Journal* 1 (January 2010): 1-19.
- Hasbullah, Moeflich. "Assessment on Orientalist Contributions to the Islamic World." *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius* 13 (Januari-Maret 2005).
- Hassani, Louenas. "'La Colline oubliée': le roman des tréfonds." *Le Matin d'Algérie*. 27 February 2021. Web. 06 September 2021. <https://www.lematindalgerie.com/la-colline-oubliee-le-roman-des-trefonds>
- Hayden, Robert. "Self-Othering: Stories about Serbia from Externalized Belgrade Insiders." *American Ethnologist Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 41-1 (2014): 187-192.
- Henry, Jean-Robert. Et al. *Le Temps de la coopération: sciences sociales et décolonisation au Maghreb*. Paris: Karthala, 2012.
- Hiddleston, Jane. *Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria*. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006.
- Hiddleston, Jane. *Decolonising the Intellectual: Politics, Culture, and Humanism at the end of the French Empire*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004.
- Hoodfar, Homa. "The Veil in their Minds and on our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women." *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*. Castelli, E.A ed. Palgrave Macmillan (2001): 420-446.
- Hosford, Desmond, J. Wojtkowski, Chong, eds. *French Orientalism: Culture Politics and the Imagined Other*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.
- Hulme, Peter, and Tim, Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Ibrahim, Haslina. "Wilfred Cantwell Smith on the Meaning of Religion and Islam: A Pluralist Dilemma Reexamined." *Al-Shajarah* 18.1 (2013): 85-102. *International Journal of English and Literature* 4.8 (October,2013): 388-397.
- Irwin, Robert. *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*. London, Allen Lane, 2006.
- Jane Hiddleston. *Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria*. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2011.

- Jehlen, Myra. "Reviewed Works: Culture and Imperialism by Edward W. Said." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51. 4 (October 1994) : 783- 787.
- Jensen, Kim. "Ahlam Mostaghanemi's Memory in the Flesh." *Al Jadid*, 8. 39, (2002).
- Kabbani, Rana ed. *The Passionate Nomad: The Journals of Isabelle Eberhardt*. Trans. Nina, de Voogd. London: Virago, 1987.
- Kabbani, Rana. *Imperial Fiction: Europe's Myths of Orient*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1986.
- Kasmi, Amine. "The Plan as a Colonization Project : The Medina of Tlemcen under French Rule, 1842–1920." *Planning Perspectives*, 34.1 (2019) : 25-42.
- Kelly, Debra. *Autobiography and Independence: Selfhood and Creativity in North African Postcolonial Writing in French*. Liverpool university press: Liverpool, 2005.
- Kemp, Anna. "Freedom from Oneself: Artistry and the Postcolonial Woman Artist in Nina Bouraoui's *La Voyeuse interdite*." *French Forum*, 38. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2013) : 237-250.
- Khatibi, Abdelkebir. *Maghreb Pluriel*. Paris: Denoël, 1983.
- Khatibi, Said. Interview. Conducted by Anissa Daoudi, 2018.
- Knight-Santos, Lucie. *Violent Beginnings: Literary Representations of Postcolonial Algeria*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2014.
- Komel, Mirt. "Re-orientalizing the Assassins in Western Historical-fiction Literature: Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in Bartol's *Alamut*, Tarr's *Alamut*, Boschert's *Assassins of Alamut* and Oden's *Lion of Cairo*." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, 5 (2014): 525-548.
- Lacheraf, Mostefa. *Les Ruptures et l'oubli: essai d'intepretation des idéologies tardives de regression en Algérie*. Alger: Casbah Editions, 2004.
- Lanham, Md.; Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007.
- Laroui, Abdellah. *The Crisis of Arab Intellectuals: Traditionalism or Historicism?.* Trans. Diarmid, Cammell. London: University of California Press, 1976.
- Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* [1935]. London: Jonathan Cape, 2000.
- Lazreg, Marnia. "Gender and Politics in Algeria: Unraveling the Religious Paradigm." *Signs* 15.4 (Summer, 1990): 755-780.
- Lazreg, Marnia. "The Reproduction of the Colonial Ideology: The Case of the Kabyle Berbers." *The Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, 4 (Full 1983): 380-395.



- Lazreg, Marnia. *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*. New York; London: Routledge, 1994.
- Leperlier, Tristan. "Literary and political strategies in a literary field: The case of Tahar Ouettar". *The Sociological Review* 68.5 (2020): 1032–1048.
- Le Sueur, James. D. *Algeria since 1989: Between Terror and Democracy*. Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood, 2007.
- Le Sueur, James. D, ed. *Journal, 1955-1962: Reflections on the French-Algerian War* [1958]. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Leonhardt, Adrienne. "Between Two Jailers: Women's Experience During Colonialism, War, and Independence in Algeria." *Anthós* 5, 1 (2013): 43-54.
- Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Little, Donald P. "Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism." *Orientalism a Reader*. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Lorcine, Patricia. *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1995.
- Lorrain, Jean. *Heures d'Afrique*. Paris : Eugène Fasquelle, Éditeur, 1899.
- Lowe, Lisa. "The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's 'Salammbô' and 'Voyage en Orient'." *Comparative Literature Studies* 23.1 (Spring, 1986): 44-58.
- Lowe, Lisa. *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Lyons, Harriet D. "Presences and Absences in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28. 1 (1994): 101-105.
- Maamri Rebai, Malika. "The Syndrome of the French Language in Algeria." *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 3.3 (2009): 77-89.
- Macfie, Alexander Lyon. *Orientalism*. London: Longman, 2002.
- MacKenzie, John M. *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Marchi, Lisa. "A Dark, Inner Life and a Society in Crisis: Nina Bouraoui's Standard". *Department of Humanities* 8. 41 (2019): 1-9.
- Margueritte, Paul. Amédée, Fraigneau. Lys du Parc. *L'Algérie de nos jours : Alger - Boufarick - Blidah - Oran - Tlemcen - Kabylie - Constantine - Biskra*. Alger : J. Gervais-Courtellemont, 1893.

- Martinez, Luis. *The Algerian Civil War 1990-1998*. Trans. Jonathan, Derrick. London: Hurst in association with the Centre d' Etudes et de Recherches International, Paris, 2000.
- Maupassant, Guy de. Louis, Forestier, ed. *Contes et nouvelles*. Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
- Maussen, M. J. M. "French Colonialism, Islam and Mosques." *Constructing Mosques: The Governance of Islam in France and the Netherlands* (2009): 57-89.
- Mayor, Adrienne. "The Nessus Shirt in the New World: Smallpox Blankets in History and Legend." *The Journal of American Folklore* 108.427 (Winter 1995): 54-77.
- Mazouni, Abdallah. *Culture et enseignement en algérie et au maghreb*. Paris: François Maspero, 1969.
- McDougall, James. "Dream of Exile, Promise of Home: Language, Education, and Arabism in Algeria." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43,2 (May 2011): 251-270.
- Mcdougall, James. *A History of Algeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- McIvanney, Siobhan. Gillian, Ni Cheallaigh. "Viewing the Algeria Cityscape in Nina Bouraoui's *La Voyeuse interdite* and Leila Sebbar's 'La Jeune fille au Balcon'." *Women and the city in French Literature and Culture : Refiguring the Feminine in the Urban Environment*. Ed. Siobhan, McIvanney. Et al. Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2019, 180-206.
- Mcleod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- McNair, Lucy R. "Towards an Ethics of Traumatic Memory: Mouloud Feraoun's *La cité des roses* and Zahia Rahmani's France, *Récit d'une enfance*." *The Journal of North African Studies* 23.1-2 (21<sup>st</sup> November 2017): 154-172.
- Melman, Billie. *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized* [1967]. Trans. Howard, Greenfeld. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Mernissi, Fatema. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society*. London: Saqi, 2011.
- Messaoudi, Alain. "The Teaching of Arabic in French Algeria and Contemporary France." *French History* 20.3 (2006): 297-317.
- Midgley, Clare ed. *Gender and Imperialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.
- Minnaard, Liesbeth "The Spectacle of an Intercultural Love Affair: Exoticism in Van Deysel's *Blank en geel*." *Journal of Dutch Literature* 1. 1 (2010): 74-90.

- Moore, Lindsey. "The Veil of Nationalism: Frantz Fanon's 'Algeria Unveiled' and Gillo Pontecorvo's The Battle of Algiers." *Kunapipi* 25.2 (2003): 56-73.
- Morris, Rosalind C. ed. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Morrocco, Richard. "Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist 'Divide and Rule' Strategy upon the Colonized Peoples." *Science and Society* 37,2 (Summer 1973): 129-151.
- Mortimer, Mildred. "From The Desert in Algerian Fiction." *Maghrebine Literature of French Expression* 26.1 (Spring 1986) : 60-69.
- Mortimer, Mildred. "Review." *World Literature Today* 63.1 (Winter 1989):156.
- Mortimer, Milred. "Entretien avec Assia Djebar." *Research in African Literature* 19.2 (1988): 197-203.
- Mostari, Hind. "Arabisation and Language Use in Algeria." *Zomba* (2003): 26-41.
- Mosteghanemi, Ahlem. *Algérie: femme et écritures*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985.
- Murdoch, H. Adlai. "Rewriting writing: Identity, Exile and Renewal in Assia Djebar's *L'amour, la fantasia*." *Yale French Studies* 83.83 (1993): 71-92.
- Naylor, Phillip C. *Historical Dictionary of Algeria*. Lanham; Maryland; Toronto; Oxford: 2006.
- Niyogi, Chandreyee, ed. *Reorienting Orientalism*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006.
- Nnam, Michael Nhuzi. *Colonial Mentality in Africa*. Plymouth: Hamilton Books, 2007.
- Norman, Daniel. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. Oxford: One world, 1997.
- Norman, York A. "Disputing the 'Iron Circle': Renan, Afghani, and Kemal on Islam, Science and Modernity." *Journal of World History* 22.4 (December 2011): 693-714.
- Olusegun-Joseph, Yomi. "Differing from her sister's voice: (Re)configured womanhood in Assia Djebar's *A Sister to Scheherazade*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54.2 (2018): 226-238.
- Orlando, Valérie K. "Conversations with Camus as Foil, Foe and Fantasy in Contemporary Writing by Algerian Authors of French Expression." *The Journal of North African Studies* 20.5 (27 Jul 2015): 865-883.
- Orlando, Valerie K. *The Algerian New Novel: The Poetics of a Modern Nation, 1950-1979*. Virginia: The University of Virginia Press, 2017.  
Paris: La Découverte, 1998.

- Patria, Muhammad Yusuf. "Transforming the Post-Muwaḥḥiddūn Man: Malik Bennabi's Critique of The Contemporary Muslim Society." *Journal of Islamic World and Politics* 5.1 (June 2021): 55-78.
- Perchard, David. "The Fatwa and the Philosophe: Rushdie, Voltaire, and Islam." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2015): 1-18.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Prochaska, David. "Making Algeria French and French Algeria Unmaking." *Twenty Years of the Journal of Historical Sociology Volume 2 - Challenging the Field*. Ed. Wong, Yoke-Sum et al. Chichester : Wiley, 2009, 297-320.
- Randau, Robert. *Les Colons : roman de la patrie algérienne*. Paris: Sansot, 1907.
- Rebai Maamri, Malika. "The Syndrome of the French Language in Algeria." *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 3.3 (2009): 77-89.
- Renan, Ernest. "L'islamisme et la science." *Commentaire* 46. 2 (1989): 371-378.
- Rice, Laura. "'Nomad Thought': Isabelle Eberhardt and the Colonial Project." *Cultural Critique* 17 (Winter, 1990-1991): 151-176.
- Richard, Charles. *De la civilisation du peuple arabe*. Alger: Dubos Frères Éditeurs, 1950.
- Richard, Charles. *Du Gouvernement Arabe et de l'institut qui doit l'exercer*. Alger, Typographie Bastide, Libraire –Editeur, 1848.
- Roberts, Hugh. "Co-opting Identity: The Manipulation of Berberism, the Frustration of Democratisation and the Generation of Violence in Algeria." *Development Research Centre LSE* (December 2001): 1-44.
- Roberts, Hugh. *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002: Studies in a Broken Polity*. London; New York: Verso, 2003.
- Rochdy, Aleya. ed. *Language Contact and Language Conflict in Arabic: Variation on a Sociolinguistic Theme*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Roche, Anne. "Sur l'oeuvre de Nabil Farès - L'acceptabilité d'un discours politique." *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* 15 (1976): 953-962.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London, England: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1982.
- Saadi-Mokrane, Djamila. "The Algerian Linguicide." *In Algeria in Others' Languages*, ed. Anne Emmanuelle Berger. Ithaca: Cornell UP (2002) 44-59.

- Sadi, Hend. "Mouloud Mammeri ou la colline emblématique." *Socialgerie*. 20 September 2012. Web. 06 September 2020. <https://www.socialgerie.net/spip.php?article924>
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York : Vintage Books, 1994.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* [1978]. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Salhi Smail, Zahia. *Politics, Poetics and the Algerian Novel*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999.
- Salhi, Zahia Smail. *Occidentalism: Literary Representations of the Maghrebi Experience of the East-West Encounter*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.
- Sariahmed, Nadia. "Daoud's Camus Fanfiction is More of the Same." *Jadaliyya*. 27 July 2015. Web. 11 May 2019, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32317>
- Schick, Irvin Cemil. "Representing Middle Eastern Women: Feminism and Colonial Discourse." *Feminist Studies* 16, 2 (Summer, 1990): 345-380.
- Sèbe, Berny. "Oases of Imperial Nostalgia: British and French Desert Memories after Empire." *Decolonising Europe? : Popular Responses to the End of Empire*. Eds. Berny, Sèbe. Mathew Stanard. New York : Routledge, 2020, 159-180.
- Sèbe, Berny. "Voyageuses et aventurières en afrique occidentale: seconde moitié du XIX siècle-entre-deux-guerres)." *Lucie Cousturier, les tirailleurs sénégalais et la question coloniale: actes du colloque international tenu à Fréjus les 13 et 14 juin 2008, augmentés de lettres adressées à Paul Signac et Léon Werth*. Roger, Little, ed. Paris: L'Harmattan, (2008): 163-186.
- Sharkey, Heather. J. "Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence." *Journal of French Language Studies* 24.2 (2014): 317-318.
- Slyomovics, Susan. "Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria: Women and Public Space in Algeria." *Middle East Report* 192 (Jan-Feb 1995): 8-13.
- Spring, Joel. *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Association Publishers, 1998.
- Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, travel writing, and Imperial Administration*. London: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Stampfl, Tanja. "The (Im)possibility of Telling: Of Algeria and *Memory in the Flesh*." *College Literature*, 37. 1 (Winter, 2010) :129-158
- Still, Edward. "Mouloud Feraoun, Masculinist Systems and Feminine Thanatos." *The Irish Journal of French Studies* 17 (2017): 1-26.
- Stora, Benjamin. *La gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*.

- Tageldin, Shaden M. "Which Qalam for Algeria?: Colonialism, Liberation, and Language in Djébar's *L'amour, la fantasia* and Mustaghanimi's *Dhakhirat al-Jasad*." *Comparative Literature Studies* 46.3 (2009): 467-497.
- Tahon, Marie-Blanche, et-al. "Women Novelists and Women in the Struggle for Algeria's National Liberation (1957-1980)." *Research in African Literatures* 23, 2 (Summer 1992): 39-50.
- Taleb-Ibrahimi, Khawla. "L'Algérie: coexistence et concurrence des langues." *L'Année du Maghreb* (2006), 207-218.
- Tengour, Habib, ed et al. *Poems for the Millennium: Volume Four*. California: University of California University Press, 2013.
- Temlali, Yassine. "La genèse de la Kabylie: aux origines de l'affirmation berbère en algérie (1830-1962)." *La découverte* (2016): 13-26.
- Tilmatine, Mohand. "Arabization and Linguistic Domination: Berber and Arabic in the North of Africa." *Language Empires in Comparative Perspective* (14 Jul 2019): 1-16, 2015.
- Tilmatine, Mohand. "French and Spanish colonial policy in North Africa: Revisiting the Kabyle and Berber Myth." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (2016): 95-119.
- Twohig, Erin. "Gender, Genre, and Literary Firsts: The Case of Zhor Wanisi and Ahlam Mosteghanemi". *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15.3 (2019): 286-306.
- Utsey, Shawn O. et al. "Assessing the Psychological Consequences of Internalized Colonialism on the Psychological Well-Being of Young Adults in Ghana". *Journal of Black Psychology* 41.3 (2015): 195-220.
- Varisco, Daniel Martin. *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.
- Viktus, Daniel. "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century." *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*. David R., Blanks, et-al eds, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
- Vince, Natalia. *Our Fighting Sisters: Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015.
- Vince, Natalya. "Literature as post-colonial reality? Kamel Daoud's The Meursault Investigation." *Fiction and Film for Scholars of France* 1-8 <https://h-france.net/ffh/maybe-missed/literature-as-post-colonial-reality-kamel-daouds-the-meursault-investigation/>.
- Von Rosk, Nancy. "'Exhuming Buried Cries' in Assia Djébar's 'Fantasia'." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 34.4 (December 2001): 65-84.

- Whistler, Grace. "What-it's-Like for the Other: Narrative knowledge and Faith in the Meursault Investigation". *Literature & Theology* 32. 2 (2018): 161–177.
- Williams, Patrick. Laura, Chrisman, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: a Reader*. London, New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Willis, Michael J. *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Willis, Michael J. *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996.
- Wojcik, Agata. "Adolf Sandoz, an Orientalist Painter in Algeria." *RIHA Journal* 0149 (01 April 2017).
- Zaoui, Amin. "Mouloud Feraoun le féministe." *Liberté*. 01 April 2017. Web. 17 Mars 202. [https://www.liberte-algerie.com/chronique/mouloud-feraoun-le-feministe-379?fbclid=IwAR0s-Ir-athBVw6Q\\_m8cXhBjrUSI8yuXGCNgXtWpO2c1t0GOADrF5dk1cJo](https://www.liberte-algerie.com/chronique/mouloud-feraoun-le-feministe-379?fbclid=IwAR0s-Ir-athBVw6Q_m8cXhBjrUSI8yuXGCNgXtWpO2c1t0GOADrF5dk1cJo)
- Zaoui, Amin. Interview. Conducted by Daoudi, Anissa. 21 May 2020.
- Zarobell, John. *Empire of Landscape: Space and Ideology in French Colonial Algeria*. Pennsylvania State : Penn State Press, 2010.
- Zebiri, Kate. "The Redeployment of Orientalist Themes in Contemporary Islamophobia." *Studies in Contemporary Islam* 10 (2008): 4-44.
- Zerofsky, Elisabeth. "An Algerian Rebuke to 'The Stranger'." *The New Yorker*. 13 March 2015. Web. 11 May 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-algerian-in-paris-kamel-daoud>
- Zuylen, Marina Van. "Maghreb and Melancholy: A Reading of Nina Bouraoui". *Research in African Literatures* 34.3 (2003): 84-99.

