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**The Representation of the Algerian Muslim Women
from Western and Eastern Lenses Trough “Women of
Algiers in Their Apartment”**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of « Master » in Literature and Civilization.

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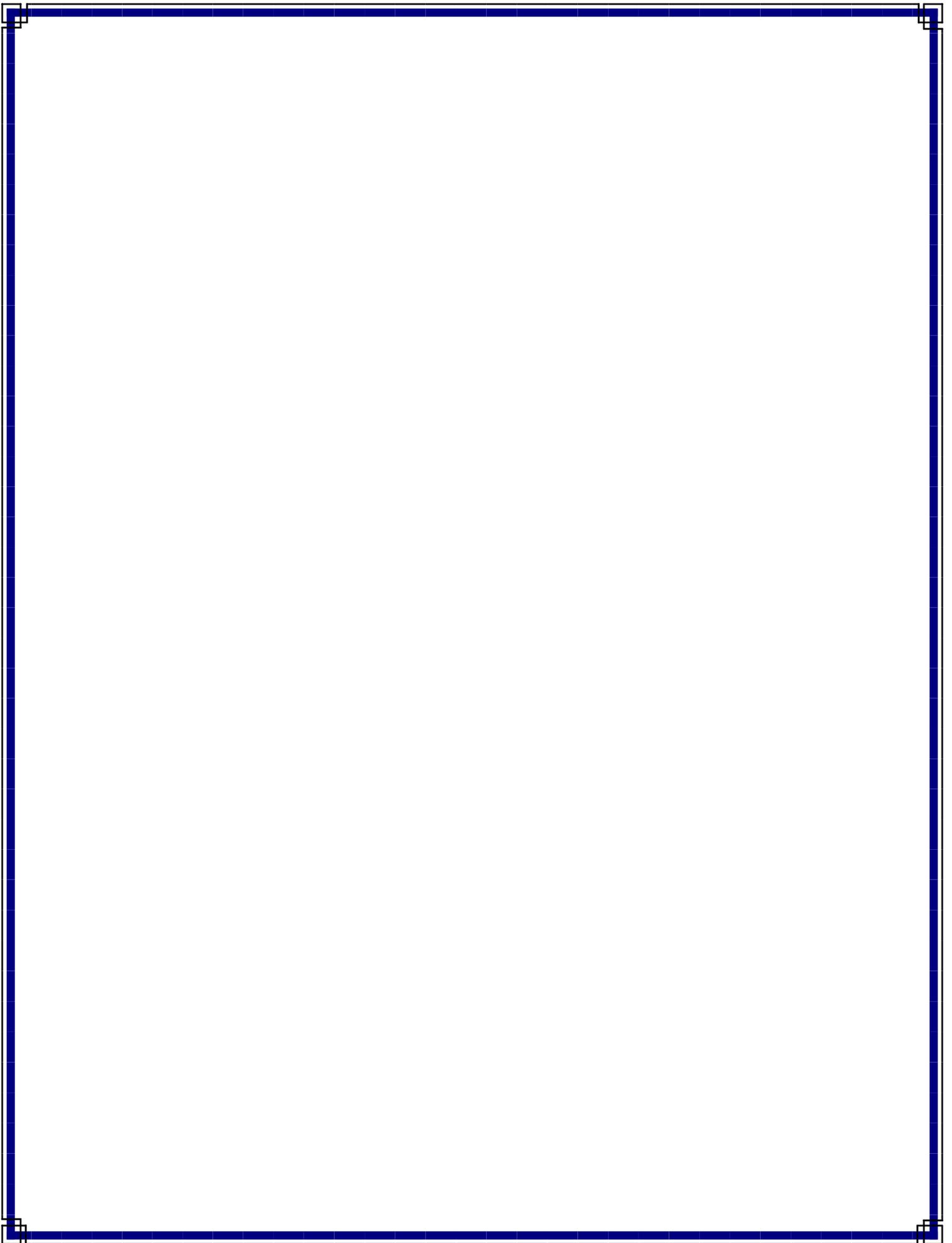
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Dedications

I dedicate this complete dissertation work to my family, source of success.

I dedicate it to my dear parents, especially to my wonderful mother Naziha who is always with me and her love always strengthens my will.

To my little brother Ayoub for his care and love.

To all my friends, especially Farida who is my aunt and my best friend, for her help, encouragement and support.

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Abstract

The present research sheds some light on ‘Orientalism’, ‘Colonialism’ and ‘Postcolonialism’, that open the way to understand the reasons and the shape of the westerns view of the Eastern world. However, since Algeria is an African Arab, and specially, Islamic nation, it was subject to colonialism and one of the *Orientalists* topics. Therefore, this research took Algeria as a case study to this western phenomenon during the 19th century. Also, the dissertation presents the great French artist Eugene Delacroix with his painting *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* as an illustration to the western or colonizer description and imagination about the Arab Islamic society, and this example was about the Algerian woman indeed. The analyses of the artist personality and identity and his portrait leads to discover what is real and what is nothing but a French colonial fantasy. Furthermore, the research presents the original Oriental side that is represented in the novel of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* by the Algerian writer Assia Djebar, which was a respond and a defence of the real Algerian identity against the colonizer attacks. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to investigate both colonized and colonizer’s point of view of the position of the Algerian Muslim women in the 19th century throughout an analytic artistic historical work.

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General Introduction

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, the European continent witnessed important transformations in thought, politics and economy. These changes helped to strengthen its countries, while it was negatively reflected on the Asian, African and American people through the colonial movement. This movement began with the help of geographical discoveries in the 15th century, which made the European powers put their stamp on America. Furthermore, because of the ‘European Renaissance’ in the 15th century, ‘The Industrial Revolution’ and ‘The decline of the power of the Islamic world’, the European Empire raised to colonize about 80% of the entire world until the 20th century. The first motivation for colonialism was the opportunity to make money by searching for raw materials and foreign markets. Next, to find a new land for their people to live, especially the unwanted ones, and establish military bases to gain more power. In addition to an important reason which is the spread of the European civilization and Christianity, and the elimination of the Arab and Islamic world, under the slogan of ‘to civilize and help those savage people in this rich land’. However, Africa suffered from this colonial movement that took about 90% of it, especially the French one. Moreover, the colonial damage still influences on Africa until nowadays. The French presence in Africa dates to the 17th century, but the main period of its colonialism started in the 19th century with the invasion of Ottoman Algiers in 1830, and it expanded to colonize around 40% of Africans land.

Colonialism is not only a physical conquest but also a political, economic, and cultural domination, and this is what *Orientalism* and *Postcolonialism* deal with. Furthermore, the colonialism begins with the total destruction of the colonized identity throughout destroying its education and beliefs, and replace them with the colonizer’s culture. And that what any colonizer power did it in their colonies. Therefore, Algeria suffered, and it still does, from the French colonization. France was working on stripping the Algerians of their true identity; specially the “Algerian Muslim Women Identity” because they are

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mothers and represent more than the half of the community. This process was by using several strategies, and the art and literature were the most important ones.

The great French Artist 'Eugene Delacroix' was one of the most influential artists in the 19th century. Therefore, throughout his trip to North Africa and his works there, he became an orientalist who gave different images about the Eastern world, and specially, the 'Muslim Women' throughout his portraits. *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment (1834)* was one of Delacroix's biggest and most famous works that pictured the Algerian women in the 19th century. However, the painting conveyed a western view of the Muslim women in the Algerian society. And this view was welcomed in the western world which put its paintings in splendid museums, unlike the Islamic world and the Algerian society that considered it an insult.

Because every action has a reaction, the Algerians did not accept the wrong colonial views that Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* gave it about their culture and Muslim women. As a result, many Algerian artists appeared to respond to this insulting allegations to their community. Assia Djébar was one of those great Algerian artists, with her novel *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment (1980)* that is a challenge and respond the Delacroix's painting and to the French domination in general. However, Djébar told different stories about the Algerian women during and after the colonization to restore and defend the 'Algerian Women Position and Identity'.

The university study, especially in the 'Postcolonial studies' and 'Middle East and North African Literature' modules, made the Western societies imagination of the Arab Islamic world, and how they try to make the whole world believe it as a kind of humiliation, an attractive research topic. This phenomenon still exists until nowadays in a purpose of justifying the Western violence and murders against the Eastern nations, therefore, it is an important case study to deal with for more enlightenment about its dangerous and bases. This purpose guides this Master dissertation's topic to search about answers to: why did the Western world give a different view about the real Eastern

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world?, How did the orientalist make these imaginations work and for what?, and how does Assia Djebar defend the Algerian women's real identity?.

The first chapter deals with the most important concepts that open the way to understand the reasons and the shape of the westerns view of the Eastern world, i.e. their colonies. Then, the second chapter analyses a famous French artist painting in the 19th century as an illustration to the western or colonizer imagination about the Arab Islamic society. And this example was about the Algerian Muslim woman indeed. Next, the last chapter was a respond by the Algerian woman writer Assia Djebar to the wrong view that was given by Delacroix. As well as, she is representing the real Algerian women identity. Finally, the work is concluded with the answers that was searched for throughout an analytic artistic historical work.

Chapter One:

General Backgrounds

of Orientalism, Colonialism

and Postcolonialism.

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to shed the light on the main concepts that help understanding the following analysis and theories. The specific studies that connect the West and the East, the Islamic and non-Islamic world, or the Arabs and foreigners mainly are within *Orientalism*, *Colonialism*, and *Postcolonialism*. Therefore, *Orientalism* gives the research the important bases to discover the sources which the western view based on. Then, the real meaning of *colonialism* shows the reasons and goals behind this views. Finally, with *Postcolonialism studies*, the dissertation highlights the Eastern defence of the reality of its identity.

2. Orientalism

The word *Orientalism* is a noun of the adjective “Oriental”, which means something related to the Eastern countries. Moreover, in the view of Edward Said, the word *Orientalism* refers to the Western perception and depiction of Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies.

Orientalism is a book by Edward W. Said¹, which was published in 1978, that is giving a comprehensive meaning to the term ‘Orientalism’. However, Edward Said defines *Orientalism* as follows: *Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (p2)*

In the academic sense, Orientalism is the research discipline of any scholar of the Orient. In a broader sense, it is a style of thinking based on the ontological² and

¹Edward W. Said (1935-2004) was a Palestinian American literary theorist. He was born in Jerusalem and emigrated to the United States in 1951. He was a professor of comparative literature at Columbia University. He is the author of more than twenty books that translated in over thirty languages. (Britannica)

² Ontology is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the existence and reality. In other words, it deals with the nature of reality or truth. (Jupp, 2006)

epistemological³ distinction between 'the East' and (most often) 'the West'. Said in his *Orientalism* was fascinated by how Westerns perceive the people and the way of thinking and live from a different culture. He argued that *Orientalism* is a Western style of domination and restructuring over the East, and it is a part of the colonial policy. Therefore, Said points out that Orientalism traces back to the period of European colonization of the Arab World.

Said, in his *orientalism*, called attention to the pejorative stereotypes that the Europeans and Americans created of the peoples of the East who are unlike themselves, thereby making it easier to justify military or economic conquest to, what they named, the “other” world.

2.1 The Other:

In general terms, the ‘other’ is anyone separated from the western’s self. *Orientalism* is inevitably coloured by their own cultural, political, and religious backgrounds, leading them to depict those unlike themselves as inferior and objectionable.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000) stated that: *The colonized subject is characterized as ‘Other’ through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view. (p155)*

Therefore, the westerns are often seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized and at times dangerous; by contrast to the “self”. In this regard, Edward Said, in his *Orientalism*, pointed out:

Orientalists or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, “devoid of energy and initiative,” much given to “fulsome flattery,” intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientalists cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered

³ Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis. It is concerned with how we gain knowledge or how we get to know something and different methods of gaining knowledge. (Jupp, 2006)

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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. (p46)

This is what Lord Cromer⁴ confirmed by saying:

As I am only a diplomatist and an administrator, whose proper study is also man, but from the point of view of governing him, ... I content myself with noting the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European. (cited by Said, 1978, p46)

The differences between who named the “Other” and the Europeans made them use several terms to describe the colonized nations as a method of racism, which are:

- a. The Third World:** this term was first used in 1952 during the so-called Cold War period, by the politician and economist Alfred Sauvy. The term is referring to developing nations, such as those in Africa, some Asian nations or South America. They use it to differ them from what has come to be known as the ‘First World’ countries, those in most of Europe and North America, which are characterized by industrialization, democracy and the dominant economic powers, generally, they are the colonizers. While the ‘Second World’ was employed to refer to the Soviet Union and its satellites. This term used to show that the colonized nation is less than the colonizer nations, and it still exists till nowadays. (Spivak, 1986)
- b. Savages:** it is also a term that refers to the colonized, which means a primitive and, specially, uncivilized person. In English, the OED⁵ defines ‘uncivilized’ as ‘existing in the lowest stage of culture (1588)’; ‘pertaining to or characteristic of savages (1614)’. The notion of civilizing cultures (or persons) goes back at least to 1601: ‘To make civil. To bring out a state of barbarism; to instruct in the arts of life; to enlighten and refine.’ (cited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 2000, p191).

⁴ Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer (26 February 1841 – 29 January 1917) was a British statesman, diplomat and colonial administrator. He served as the British controller-general in Egypt during 1879. He later became the agent and consul-general in Egypt from 1883 to 1907 during the British occupation. (Britannica)

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary

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c. **Exotic:** ‘Exoticism’ is a term that denotes a quality of someone who is unusual and exciting because he comes from, or seems to be from, a faraway place. While *Orientalism* is a much more loaded and complicated term. However, the westerners use this term in many contents, especially in oriental literature, to show how much the Eastern nations are different and unlike themselves, which is a kind of racism. This ‘Exoticism’ made the Westerners excited to discover this ‘Exotic’ World (the East); in other words, to dominate and colonize it.

The word exotic was first used in 1599 to mean ‘alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous’. By 1651 its meaning had been extended to include ‘an exotic and foreign territory, ‘an exotic habit and demeanour’. As a noun, the term meant ‘a foreigner’ or ‘a foreign plant not acclimatized (OED, cited by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000, p87).

d. **Exile:** A state of exile involves an idea of separation and alienation, whether from a true homeland or from cultural and ethnic origins. According to Edward Said, Exile is:

... ‘the achievements of any exile are permanently undermined by his or her sense of loss’ (1984:49). ... the canon of modern Western culture ‘is in large part the work of exiles’ (49). This tension between personal desolation and cultural empowerment is the tension of exile in Said’s own work, ... Consequently, Said’s view of the intellectual is of a person whose detachment from the centres of power, whose ability to ‘speak truth to power’ is deeply enhanced by the experience of exile despite the debilitating sense of loss it engenders (Said 1994: 47–64). (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000, p87).

Exile was also produced in other ways by colonialism, which forced many colonized peoples to exile themselves from their cultures, languages and traditions. The creation of this “middle class” was often a conscious feature of colonial practice. This is the situation of many African educated intellectuals. The fact that such colonial-educated "natives" were able to incorporate their positions into radical and exiled nationalist political strategies did not mean that they were not subjected to profound exile. Such conditions of exile may sometimes help generate new social and cultural practices and challenge old traditions (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000) Then, with this colonial strategy, the colonizer was able to conform his goodwill in entering the colonized lands with the help

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of its people and show to all the world that they need them with the help of these Exile persons who already accepted the colonizer existence.

Finally, the colonizer used these concepts to justify his actions toward the Orientals, as if they need the colonizer to develop.

2.2 The Self:

It is a term which describes the 'Western World', 'First World', and specifically in our study, the Colonizer. The self ("Europeans" and "Americans") is defined as good, upright, and moral. The westerns called themselves as good, upright, and civilised people.

However, they are the real racists. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000)

The Eastern nations are given all the negative characteristics that the Westerns do not want to see in themselves, to show that the 'Other' world is in need for Western intervention and rescue, which was the disguised justification of colonialism, racism and imperialism.

2.3 Orientalism and the Art:

In an interview with Edward that introduced by Sut Jhally⁶, when he was asked about the reasons for his interest in Orientalism, he answered:

"My interest in Orientalism began for two reasons, one it was an immediate thing, that is to say, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which had been preceded by a lot of images and discussions in the media in the popular press about how the Arabs are cowardly and they don't know how to fight and they are always going to be beaten because they are not modern. ... And the second one, which has a much longer history in my own life was the constant sort of disparity I felt between what my experience of being an Arab was, and the representations of that that one saw in art. I'm talking about very great artists, you know, like Delacroix and Ang and Gerome and people like that, novelists who wrote about the Orient like Disraeli or Flaubert and you know the fact that those representations of the Orient had very little to do with what I knew about my own background in life. So I decided to write the history of that." (EDWARD SAID: On 'Orientalism', 2005, p2)

⁶ Professor in the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

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As a result, to what he said, we find that there is a strong relationship between Orientalism and the art. In addition to the important role of the artists in Orientalism studies, and of course, the colonial movement. Said mentioned the name of the great European Artist ‘**Delacroix**’ (who has a main role in this study), who travelled to North Africa, because he was in special mission to the Sultan of Morocco by the French Government in 1832, and Algeria was an important station to him. Delacroix’s trip was between January and July 1832, and at that time, Algeria was under the French colonization.

Richard Martin and Harold Koda, in their *Orientalism: Vision of the East in Western Dress* (1994), stated in the introduction of their work that:

“Orientalism, the historical term used to describe the West’s fascination with and assimilation of the ideas and styles of the East, is richly represented in the collection of Metropolitan, specifically in the areas of European and American paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts. ... Orientalism is fabrication of the West. The perilous voyages to Cathay and Edo, and even the narrower crossing to the mysterious harems and itinerant lifestyles of North Africa and the Middle East, gave Europe a secular heaven-on-earth, a paradise undefiled by Western civilization.” (1994, p7-8)

In addition, they showed the changes and the developments that the Arab dress has undergone to become similar to the Western dress as a kind of radical cultural change. Therefore, the artists’ voyages had an important role in Orientalism and specifically in the colonial movements; first, because it was a way to gathering information and studying the culture and the way of thinking of the colonized people, since at that time there were no advanced tools, like camera or social media, to facilitate the colonial process. Then, the art was used to change the culture and way of thinking to make the colonized people accept the colonizer’s presence in their lands as if its existence is for everyone’s benefit. Simply, the Western’s paintings of the Arab were reflecting a kind of backwardness and ignorance that needed to be civilised, and we will see that with Delacroix’s work.

Algeria, as any colonized nation, included several French artistic missions for colonial purposes. The arts during the colonial period in Algeria were the successful means of conveying the image that the French government wanted to promote inside and outside the Algerian colony. And they help on spreading the French policy, which was based mainly on the method of propaganda to glorify imperialism and the ideas of the empire. However, among the most important artistic manifestations in Algeria: the public buildings were decorated with drawings, organizing art galleries, establishing museums to preserve paintings and antiquities, in addition to building a large theatre in colonial Algeria in 1853, which became the first monument of France in the Algerian land. All these arts were subject to strict French censorship.

3. Postcolonialism

The “Postcolonialism” Study works on analysing several sides of *Colonialism* and what it did and how it affected colonies over all world on any period.

a) Colonialism:

It is the subjection of one population to another through a physical conquest and also a political, economic, and cultural domination. Thus, the French rule in Algeria did not only involve the use of force, but also they imposed their institutions, tastes and culture. When people are under colonization, their traditions and practices are supplanted by imitations of those of the colonizer, which tend to disappear because they are either hidden or replaced to be removed from history. However, the term colonialism is sometimes used to challenge the meaning attributed to it by the colonizers, who use the term to refer to the positive, civilizing effects of their efforts. (said, 1978)

b) Postcolonialism:

Post-colonialism (With hyphen) is an era coming after colonialism or independence, the Algerian post-colonialism started in 1962. However, Postcolonialism (Without hyphen) is a theoretical concept, a theory, and philosophy. This theory analyses, explains

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and responds to any legacy (whatever it is in politics, economic relations, culture, language or identity) of colonialism that persist long after former colonies have gained independence; i.e., the influences and effects of the colonizers on the colonized nations. However, Edward Said's "Orientalism" was a significant influence on what would become known as **Postcolonialism**.

The term "postcolonial" first appeared in the scholarly journals in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's writings in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the term established itself in academic discourse to include nationalism, postmodernism, representation and resistance, ethnicity, feminism, language, education, history and politics (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003). It was born out of the colonized people's personal and cultural clashes with conquering culture, and their fears, hope, and dreams about the future and their own identities. Postcolonial study does not only tell about a particular historical period, but also refers to a transformed historical situation and the creation of a new cultural practices and values

Furthermore, it is a field that has been created as a voice to the powerless and the poorest members of the global community. The main postcolonial scholars are Frantz Fanon "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952), Edward Said "Orientalism" (1978), Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Homi Bhabha "The Location of Culture" (1994). Their works raised this theory that gave the colonized nations their real position and highlighted the idea that colonizers need colonial 'Other' to reinforce their own sense of identity. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003).

b.1 Postcolonial literary theory

It deals with the literature written in any colonized nation, which deals with colonization and colonized peoples. It focuses on how the literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority of the colonized people, as well as it was a way to attempt to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of enemy. However, this what the Algerian writer 'Assia Djebar' deals with. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003).

b.2 Postcolonial Feminism:

Generally, the feminists find parallels between colonialism and the subjugation of women. While the western feminists were focusing on the general belief that all women should be equal to men in the different domains since they did not examine the ambiguities of different cultures. The Postcolonial feminists believed that gender cannot be extricated from other aspects of their identity, and also one cannot gloss over the differences between the western and third world countries, i.e. they were defending their identity against the colonizer himself. (Mishra,2013).

The theory of postcolonial feminism is an evidence of the fact that there exist feminisms indigenous to the third world countries and a hopeful discourse; it seeks social, cultural, economic, and religious freedoms for marginalized women. (Mishra,2013).

4. Algeria and the Colonization

a. Pre-colonial Algeria:

When the Spanish conquered numerous possession in the North of African coast, the Ottoman privateer the brothers *Barbarous* asked for the protection of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 to help Algeria, and that ended with a big success to the liberation of the whole North Africa from the Spanish Occupation. Therefore, Algeria joined to the Ottoman Empire in 1518. However, in that period the power was in the hands of the sea captains or marines that led to the beginning of the Algerian fleet and the establishment of the territorial unit of Algeria to become the stronger military fleet. Algeria flourished during this period when political life was characterized by stability and the alliance of all against the European enemy. Furthermore, the people in Algeria were living in peace under the Islamic rulings, specially the women. Thus, Algeria's strategic and economic importance made her a subject of the European ambitions, and with the crash of the Algerian fleet in the Battel of "*Navrin*" in 1827, and the economic and political crises, France took its opportunity to put its stamp on Algeria in 1830. (Roughton, 1962)

b. Colonial Algeria:

The French conquerors took *the fan accident* as a pretext for war to set its feet in Sidi Fredj on June 14th, 1830. Algeria lost the battle against France which made *El Day Hosine* sign the surrender document on July 5th, 1830, which led Algeria to become a French Colony that was known by “*French Algeria*”. Furthermore, the colonial politics was so aggressive, as examples:

- Issuance of a decree, on June 22nd, 1834, stating that Algeria is a part of the French possession.
- Issuance of the “*Creneo Law*”, on October 24th, 1870, that gave all the Jews the French citizenship with the abolition of Arab offices.
- The Compulsory Conscription of the Algerians on February 3rd, 1912.
- The expropriation of the properties of the indigenous people for the French settlement.
- The decree of January 17th, 1845 that imposed heavy taxes on Algerians, especially in rural areas, and take over all the banks.
- Forcing the Algerian workers to do hard work for little pay, such as working in the mines.
- The elimination of the Algerian Islamic identity by opening of French co-education⁷ schools and banning the Arabic and Islamic studies.
- The missionaries to spread Christianity. (The private Law, 1947)

Therefore, people did not accept this racist and savage treatment, and started the Algerian revolution on November 1st, 1954, in which both men and women participated and ended with the Algerian Independence in 1962.

c. Post-colonial Algeria:

After the Algerian Independence, Algeria, as any colony, faced many difficulties to fix what the French colonialism destroyed it. First, the Algerian government was working on

⁷ Co-education means the education of males and females in the same school. (Britannica)

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restoring the real Arab identity and separating it totally from the French one by the Arabization of schools and stopping the French co-education. These changes were not easy because the Algerians were under the French rule for a long time (around 132 years) and French language dominated the educated class.

Since France caused a great damage in Algeria with its abusive policy, the political disagreements after the independence could lead to a civil war, and when Houari Boumediene became the Algerian State President, Algeria began to regain its identity, stability and strength. (Stora, 2012). Finally, Algeria is still under the French influence till nowadays.

5. Conclusion

The theories, that *Orientalism* and *Postcolonialism* discuss, make the understanding of the western view more clear and easy. Throughout this chapter, we conformed that ‘The Self’ is never fair with ‘The Other’ and he always works to destroy ‘The Other’ image and reality. The colonizer has always seen himself as better than the colonized and his job is to civilize his colonies. Therefore, with this justification, the Europeans started the colonial movement whose real reason was only for the sake of making money and power. The art was the perfect way to spread the colonizer’s views and imaginations of the Eastern world, and with the same way the colonized defended of his real identity and image. *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* is a perfect illustration to this artistic phenomenon.

Chapter Two: Eugene Delacroix's “Women of Algiers in Their Apartment”

**(an overview about the artist and
the analysis of his painting)**

Chapter Two

1. Introduction

Colonization is not only a military power or physically conquered territories but also a cultural practice by replacing the beliefs of the native culture with the colonizer's values and belief through different ways, and the use of literature was the most important tool. "Romanticism" at first started as an English literature movement in the 18th century, but it grew to include the visual art in all Europe. Furthermore, Eugène Delacroix is considered as the father of the French Romantic Art movement in the 19th century. He explored new artistic methods and style, not only throughout Europe, but also in the oriental space, where the "other" is deemed to have a natural beauty, to be the exotic. However, his works gave many meanings and reflected political and social topics. Therefore, the historical relationships between Algeria and France made Delacroix's Romanticism one of the evidence of this relation through his works, especially "*Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement*" painting. Through gathering information about Delacroix and his works, the research analyses the painting of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and its view of the Algerian Muslim Women.

2. A Biography of Eugene Delacroix

Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix was born on April 26th, 1798, in Charenton-Saint-Maurice and died on August 13th, 1863 Paris, France. He was the fourth child of Charles Delacroix, a Foreign Minister under the French government, and Victoire Oeben, a descendant of the Oeben-Riesner family, which had created furniture for the French king and court in the 17th and 18th centuries. Delacroix is the greatest French Romantic painter, who started at the age of twenty and his uses of colour was influential in the development of both Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting. His mother's brother, Henri François Riesner (1767-1828), was a painter at the Russian court. He had two brothers; Charles Henry (1779-1845) was a retired 'Baron de l'Empire' after Napoleon, and Henri (1784-1807) who was killed at the battle of *Friedland*, and one sister who was the wife of the Diplomat Raymond de Verninac Saint-More; Henriette (1780-1827).

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After the death of Charles Delacroix, Mme Delacroix moved to live with her daughter Henriette de Verninac in Paris, where Eugène attended the imperial high school *Louis le Grand* to study classics, philosophy, history and literature, and he won his first honorable mention in drawing competition. When Eugène was sixteen, his mother died and his sister took care of him. He was having financial problems, which made him in need to choose his career. Delacroix was admiring his painter uncle Henri François Riesner, who was aware to his artistic interest and introduced Eugène to the Neo-classicist painter Pierre Narcisse Guérin⁸. Then, in October 1815, Eugène join to Guérin studio of the Neo-classicist instruction, and the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in 1816 where he met the English watercolorist Richard Parkes Bonington⁹ and shared a studio in Paris with him. From this start and experiences, Eugène Delacroix adopted his special style to became one of the greatest painters of his era. (Strupp, 2014)

A. Delacroix's Style and Works:

Delacroix's style was reflected over different periods of time in different places and areas.

a. In Europe:

Guerin was a natural teacher who helped his students to develop their artistic qualities on their own, he taught them linear perspective which Delacroix never mastered. Delacroix copied the old masters Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian and Rubens in Louvre¹⁰.Delacroix's work demonstrated the influence of Michelangelo's and Peter Paul Rubens. He explored the appearance of Michelangelo's characters and the appearance of the living and even the dead and exhibited the aspects of *Rubénisme*¹¹ in his colour and

⁸ Pierre-Narcisse, Baron Guérin, was born on March 13th, 1774, in Paris, and died on July 16th, 1833, in Rome, Italy. He was a French painter and the teacher of both Eugène Delacroix and Théodore Géricault. He won the 'Prix de Rome' in 1797. (Britannica)

⁹ Richard Parkes Bonington (October 25th, 1802 – September 23rd, 1828) was an English Romantic landscape painter, who moved to France at the age of 14 and can also be considered as a French artist, and an intermediary bringing aspects of English style to France which was inspired by the old masters. (Britannica)

¹⁰The Louvre, or the Louvre Museum, is the world's largest art museum and a historic monument in Paris, France, and is best known for being the home of the Mona Lisa. (Britannica)

¹¹ Rubénisme is a French art movement of the late 17th century whose members voiced that colour was more important than design in the composition of a painting. (Britannica)

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brushwork that illustrate colour and texture rather than form and detail, as it is seen in Dante and Virgil in Hell which the artist exhibited to the Salon of 1822.

Eugène Delacroix was one of the most famous figures of the Romantic Art, he was influenced by Romanticism and described as a leader of the 19th century French Romantic movement. (Strupp, 2014)

Delacroix was influenced by Theodore Géricault¹² who his portraits were known for madness since he had an interest in human psychology. His modern subject matters in art made him one of the important developers of the 19th century painting. Then, there was a unique relationship between these two famous artists that appeared in Delacroix's art. Eugène Delacroix stated that:

Although he received me familiarly, the age difference and my admiration for him put me in the position of a respectful student in regard to him. He had been with the same teacher (Guerin) and when I was starting out, I had already seen him as a famous painter, do several studies at the studio. He let me see his Medusa while he was working on it in a peculiar studio he had near Ternes. The impression that I got of it was so vivid that when I left I ran like a madman all the way to ru du la Planche, where I was living then.” (Manuscript memoirs of Delacroix ‘Sa vie et ses Oeuvres. (cited by Mary Strupp 2014, p 6)

The Barque of Dante (see figure 1) was Delacroix's first work in the Paris Salon¹³ in 1822. This portrait had a particular theme of a fragile craft in rough water that was influenced by *Raft of the Medusa* of Géricault. He adopted swaying upright figures and horizontal naked bodies, in addition to the usage of watercolor and unblended colors, in his painting. These would later become a key technique for the Impressionists. With this unusual, Delacroix get a foothold in the French Art World, starting by his *The Barque of*

¹² Jean-Louis André Théodore Géricault (September 26th, 1791 – January 26th, 1824) was an influential French painter and lithographer, whose best-known painting is *The Raft of the Medusa*. He was one of the pioneers of the Romantic movement. (Britannica)

¹³The Salon, or rarely Paris Salon, beginning in 1667 was the official art exhibition of the Academic of 'Beaux-Arts' in Paris. Between 1748 and 1890 it was arguably the greatest annual or biennial art event in the Western world. At the 1761, Salon had thirty-three painters, nine sculptors, and eleven engravers contributed. (Britannica)

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*Dante*¹⁴, that inspired by the death of Géricault which affected on Delacroix and had made him avoid his work and erase everything he had done, as he said. (Jobert 1997)

In 1824, the second work of Delacroix, *The Massacre at Chios* (see figure 2), was exhibited in the ‘Salon’. It is a painting that describes the event of early nineteenth century war of independence by the Greeks against Turks, where thousands of Greeks were massacred on the island of Chios, and from the site it got its name.

Delacroix knew nothing about Greece or Turks before he created *The Massacre at Chios*¹⁵, his imagery was only inspired by the reports of the event. Delacroix, in this portray, highlighted the faces and bodies to give a perfect expression of fear and weary despair. He showed the Greeks’ defeated through the semi-nudity, the physical lassitude and bloods. (Jobert 1997)

As a consequence, to the big success of Delacroix’s great work, the French government bought this portray for 6000 Frances, which made Delacroix travel to England in the summer of 1825. In England, this painter was able to develop his skills in watercolour techniques, through the influence of Copley¹⁶ and Thalés¹⁷ Fielding’s works. (Johnson, 1963)

Delacroix had an interest in English theatre and the Oriental world. However, he drew the painting of *The Combat of the Giaour and Hassan*¹⁸ which was a title of three works that produced in 1826, 1835 and 1856 (see figure 3 and 4). *The Giaour* is Lord Byron's¹⁹ poem (1813) which is a fragment of a Turkish tale, where the Christian Giaour had fallen

¹⁴ See Figure 1 in Appendix 1.

¹⁵ See Figure 2 in Appendix 1.

¹⁶ Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding (November 22nd, 1787 – March 3rd, 1855), was an English painter born in Sowerby. He is famous for his watercolour landscapes. At an early age Fielding became a pupil of John Varley. In 1810 he became an associate exhibitor in the Old Water-colour Society. (Britannica)

¹⁷ Thales Fielding (1793–1837) was an English watercolour painter. Like his brother Copley, he is mainly known as a painter in watercolours. He was an associate exhibitor of the Royal Society of Painters in Water-colours. (Britannica)

¹⁸ See Figure 3,4 in Appendix 1.

¹⁹ George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron, (January 22nd, 1788 – April 19th, 1824), known simply as Lord Byron, was an English peer who was a poet and politician. He was one of the leading figures of the Romantic movement, Byron is regarded as one of the greatest English poets. He remains widely read and influential. (Britannica)

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in love with Leila, a slave in Turkish Hassan's *Harem*, but Hassan had discovered this her killed her. Delacroix presented the fight and revenge in his portray with high emotions that appeared through his watercolour techniques, with lithographic crayon, and in oils. The painting reflects the western imagination of that time about the Orient that put the 'Other' in the high level of moral. (Strupp, 2014)

Then, Delacroix submitted his third work *The Death of Sardanapalus*²⁰ (see figure 5) to the 'Salon' in 1827. It is an oil painting that based on the tale of Sardanapalus, the last king of Assyria, which Delacroix inspired it from Lord Byron's play 'Sardanapalus' (1821). He got his imagery from the end of the play, when the king commits suicide on a pyre with his favorite concubine, Myrrha. (Strupp, 2014)

As usual, Delacroix used a painterly brushstroke and based on his watercolour techniques in this painting, which allows for a strong sense of movement in the portray that it is a scene of violence. *The Death of Sardanapalus* had negative responses with a loss of public interest, which led Delacroix to experiment with new topics such as animal studies, oriental scenes nudes, and chaotic battels, that were topics he wanted to deal with. Linda Nochlin²¹ in her *The Imaginary Orient* (1989) stated that this painting scandalized the salon because it was understood by contemporaries as a destructive sexual fantasy of Delacroix's own and a collapse of the distinction between the "Other" of Orientalism (i.e., Sardanapalus) and western man. The work was a combination of Romanticism and Orientalism style. (Strupp, 2014)

Delacroix's next work, *Liberty Leading the People*²² (1830) was created to commemorate the July Revolution of 1830, which removed Charles X of France from power. He considered it as a way of fighting for his country and, perhaps, it is his most influential and recognizable painting. The French government bought the painting in 1831

²⁰ See Figure 5 in Appendix 1.

²¹Linda Nochlin (January 30th, 1931 – October 29th, 2017) was an American art historian and writer. Also a prominent feminist art historian, she became well known for her pioneering 1971 article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?". (Britannica)

²² See Figure 6 in Appendix 1.

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for the new king Louis Philippe. Lady Liberty was eventually the model for the Statue of Liberty, which was given to the United States 50 years later, and has also been featured on the French banknote.

The portrait had an allegorical depiction of France and sobering mood compared to Delacroix's other pieces. The great painter reflected his idea through a young working class woman, who is bare breasted and unashamed, with the French flag behind her to rally the common people. He used more muted colours to help the emphasize on the realism of the history. As it is noted, Delacroix's style did not change; he still used his watercolour techniques and the shape of humman bodies. (Johnson, 1963)

Delacroix's journey to North Africa had a big influence on his style which was reflected on his works during this voyage. He added a new style to his work, but is not so different.

b. Delacroix's Journey to North Africa:

Eugène Delacroix's trip to North Africa was due to political problems that needed resolution on that period, he was in special mission to the Sultan of Morocco by the French Government. His trip was between January and July of 1832, accompanied Comte Mornay to Morocco, Algeria and Spain. Delacroix prepared different kinds of artistic materials and media to document the diplomatic voyage, in addition to his accompanying personal correspondence to friends, which had a unique view about North Africa that represented the western point view.

A month after arriving to the North of Africa, Eugène Delacroix wrote a letter to his friend Frédéric Villot (February 29th, 1832, Tangiers) mentioned that: "This place is made for painters." (Mongan, 1963). After he returned from the journey, he had a newfound style for his work that inspired from the formal qualities of North Africa. However, Delacroix's fascination with the Eastern world did not suddenly spark when he first set foot in Tangiers. Before the trip, Delacroix had an attraction to the East, mainly brought about by the interest of his friends and contemporaries. He wrote, "God grant that I

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manage to go [to Egypt] ... Everyone is mad about it.” (cited by Megan Barrett, 2019, p17), and he had a desire to learn Arabic. His interest was due to the presence and popularity of the Orientalist narratives in France dating back to Napoleon’s 1798 invasion of Egypt. (Strupp, 2014)

Delacroix’s first painting in his journey was *View of Tangier*²³ (1832), which is a painting of the most crucial city and the major trade post in the country, Tangier. At that time, Ramadan began and it was a perfect chance for Delacroix to discover the oriental culture, which made him write to his friend:

The picturesque is all around you. At every step there are ready made pictures, which would make the fame and fortune of twenty generations of painters. You believe yourself in Rome or Athens without Atticism, but with the robes, togas, and a thousand other of the most authentic touches (cited by Wilson-Smith, 1992, p 103)

This experience and admiration made him inspire several paintings with a different style that had a big success²⁴. Delacroix returned to his homeland with several pictures in his mind, which he had painted over many years, that brought about a turning point in his career. Among these drawings, that interest us in this research, there is *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (see figure 8, 9, 10, 11)

Figure 8, 9: The women of Algiers (study), 1832, watercolor, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix#/media/File:Frauen_von_Alger_\(Studie\),_Eug%C3%A8ne_Ferdinand_Victor_Delacroix.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix#/media/File:Frauen_von_Alger_(Studie),_Eug%C3%A8ne_Ferdinand_Victor_Delacroix.jpg)

²³ See Figure 7 in Appendix 1.

²⁴ there is a collection of oriental paintings, Figures 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 in Appendix 2.

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Figure 10: The women of Algiers in Their Apartment, 1834, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/the-women-of-algiers-in-their-apartment-1834-1>

Figure 11: The women of Algiers in Their Apartment, 1849, Oil on canvas, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France.



Delacroix's paintings of the North Africa were more formal than the European one, in which he dealt with nature, architecture and culture. But his *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* was somehow against the real Algerian culture which made her a case of study.

3. The Painting of “The Women of Algiers in Their Apartment”:

La Perle, the ship of Delacroix, left to France on June 10th, 1832 but it made a stop at Algeria from the 25th to 28th, 1832, which gave a chance to him to visit a *Harem* (is a part of a house allotted to the women in the Muslim households). Delacroix, during his trip, found difficulties to sketch Arabic women, due to religious constrictions, but they

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attracted his attention. While he was trying to paint them from afar, the Arab women who were spreading laundry on the roof immediately alerted their husbands. Then, at the Algerian port, where he met a merchant who gave him access to his household's private *Harem* after a long negotiation. Delacroix created two small sketches of the women in the *Harem* that he later used to create his oil painting *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, but according to Wilson-Smith, 1992, Mary Strupp stated that Delacroix made no mention of visiting a *Harem* in his notes, and This is Cornault's retelling of that event:

Secrecy was promised on both sides. The woman, warned by her husband, dressed herself in the richest costumes and waited, seated on a divan. Algerian women are thought by the Orientals to be the most beautiful on the Barbary Coast. They know how to bring out their beauty by rich fabrics of silk and velvet, embroidered in gold.... When, after traveling some dark corridor, one penetrates the part that is reserved for them, the eye is really blinded by the vivid light, the fresh faces of the women and children appearing suddenly amid this mass of silk and gold. For a painter, that is a moment of fascination and strange happiness. (Jobert, 1997, p147). (2014, p22-23).

Women of Algiers in Their Apartment (figure 10) is a painting of a closed female space of the *Harem*, which represents a Moorish interior with four Algerian women, in which one of them is leaning against a set of cushions, two of them are seating near a hookah (shisha), and the fourth is standing as she lifts a heavy curtain and she looks like a servant who allowed the painter to gaze upon the odalisques and their cloistered room. In his painting, the three women are half-absent, looking at the void, wrapped in a situation of mystery and sensuality in their luxurious prison, these women are suspended or "Frozen" in a silence, neither withdrawing from, nor abandoning themselves to the gaze of the voyeur. The enigmatic silence of their gaze, shown on the canvas, that is the index of the male domination perpetrated over the centuries on the body of women, and was accentuated during the period of colonial rule, as a form of defence and preservation of culture and tradition with the arrival of the stranger. The fabric of the clothes as well as the tapestries and draperies of the room are bright and exquisitely detailed. Delacroix

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repainted *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* in 1849 (figure 11) with the same characters, but this one is less realistic. Furthermore, Maher stated that:

Ranjana Khanna suggests that the second rendition was painted because the first began to decay. In his second portrayal, however, Delacroix revises significantly. The same four characters, three wives and servant, are distanced from the viewer and from each other. Much of the room (as well as the women) become lost in the shadows. The distance and shadow of the women accentuate the sense of orientalism, 'otherness', and voyeurism. The detailed fabrics and expression of the women fade into the unknown of oriental otherness. In this way, Khanna argues if the 1834 'Women of Algiers in Their Apartment' was painted as a memory, the 1849 version is about the process of forgetting (2010, p72)

So, to understand this portrait, we have to look at it from a double “othering”, first as the “Self” of the western voyeur’s stolen gaze, and second as “other” of the Algerian gaze in Post-independence Algeria.

The first gaze is the painter’s, the western’s or what Edward Said called, in his *Orientalism*, the self’s view. However, compared to Delacroix’s previous paintings in Europe, we notice that this one is not much different in style, especially, with regard to the use of, almost, unashamed woman’s body. He put his Romanticism in the Arabian portrait, as Lee Johnson, in *Delacroix States*:

Owing to the supple monumentality of the figures and the subtlety of colouring, the picture transcends the genre triviality that is latent in this kind of subject and only too patent in the works of lesser Orientalists than Delacroix. Romantic in subject and feeling, documentary in origin, it yet exhibits the classic qualities which Delacroix once defined as characteristic of antique art: ' skilful breadth of form combined with the feeling of life (1963, p62)

Delacroix’s friend Cornault notes that he was as mellow because of the scenery that in front of his eyes. He was so excited to discover this new and mysterious life, and described his view of the scene as drunken. He wrote down every single name and detail in that room because of his ambition, but the owner of the house acted as his interpreter and made his questions rapid, which did not give him enough time. Delacroix exclaimed: “It’s beautiful! It’s just like Homer’s time! The women in the *gynocecium* took care of

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their children, spun wool, and embroidered the most marvellous fabrics. This woman as I understand her!” (Strupp, 2014, p22).

However, *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement* has a great artistic success that bedazzled not only the biggest artists in the Western and Eastern world, but also some chemists with Delacroix's techniques. Lee Johnson, in his '*Delacroix*' (1963, p62...71), gives a Very accurate description of the painting.

The second gaze is the oriental or, what Said called, the 'other' view. Of course no one denied the ingenuity of this artist and how wonderful is *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement*, but there are some contradictory opinions about the content of the portrait. As Linda Nochlin, in her *The Imaginary Orient* (1989), suggests that the Orientalist exhibition makes us wonder whether there are other questions besides the “normal” art-historical ones that ought to be asked of this material, and she also stated:

Donald Rosenthal, suggests that there are indeed important issues at stake here, but he deliberately stops short of confronting them. “The unifying characteristic of nineteenth-century Orientalism was its attempt at documentary realism,” he declares in the introduction to the catalogue, and then goes on to maintain, quite correctly, that “the flowering of Orientalist painting . . . was closely associated with the apogee of European colonialist expansion in the nineteenth century. (1989, p33, p34)

In addition, Edward Said's Orientalism described the Western Art as: “*a mode for defining the presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient . . . part of the vast control mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance,*” (cited by Nochlin, 1989, p34),

And that what it was found in Delacroix's portrait. We notice that the content of the painting (the women's dresses, behaviour and the presence of foreigners with them) is against the Algerian Islamic and traditional society of that time. If we go back to the political and colonial side, especially that the painter was in a special mission for the French Government. Furthermore, the *Harem* was for a rich Merchant who travels most of the time to Europe, and newly humbled to the power of French colonists, Monsieur

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Poirel is considered as an 'Exile' person. We conclude that this painting does not present the real Algerian women and society. Moreover, this artistic phenomenon is discussed by Stuart Hall who points out:

The meaning of the picture is produced, Foucault argues, through this complex inter-play between presence (what you see, the visible) and absence (what you can't see, what has displaced it within the frame). Representation works as much through what is not shown, as through what is. (cited by Nakkouch, 2014, p2,3)

In "Gendered Othering in the Plastic Arts" (2012), Nakkouch notes that in Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement*, the image of the Algerian women who are looking in the void emphasizes the meaning of this work as being the unreal and shadowy existence of the Algerian women. Delacroix showed us that he did not have the right to see, the painting being a stolen gaze, and that what the Algerian society put it as boundaries between the woman and the foreign man. This sends us back to the reality of these women during the Algerian war of Independence, when they fought side by side with men. He focused in the sense of seclusion and forbiddance but forgot the women themselves (Nakkouch, 2014, p3). Then, if we compare this work with others that describe the Algerian women, that were painted by Orient, we find big differences, in lifestyle and way of thinking, between the Western and the Eastern view.

4. Conclusion:

To conclude, Delacroix is a great influential artist in Romanticism era, was the perfect person for the artistic and politic French mission to North Africa, and this fact leads us to what Said called a "kind of intellectual power". His ambition makes his works one of the Oriental topics to be discussed, especially what we see in his Algerian portrait that links between the art and politics, and between the colonizer and the colonized, which made it a subject of ambiguity and differing opinions. *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement* is not the real reflect to the Algerian woman and society, we can say that is what the colonizer wants to show it to the world as a justification for the colonization to civilized this society of trapped women. Of course, it is a great artistic work and somehow close to

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the real description of the shape of a woman in terms of body (plump) and dress style, but it is not the whole Algerian woman reality. One of this famous work's influences appeared on Pablo Picasso's paintings, who produced 15 oil based on this portrait in a frenzied period of activity in the winter of 1954-1955. But, Picasso's works were described as 'a concrete and daily liberation of women' (Djebar, p142), contrary to Delacroix's painting. Finally, this fact prompted some artists to respond to it as a defence of the Algerian women's place, identity and society, one of this great defenders is the Algerian woman writer *Assia Djebar*.

Chapter Three:

Assia Djebar's

“Women of Algiers in Their Apartment”

**(an overview about the writer and
the analysis of her novel)**

1. Introduction

The inner exile was one of the colonial policies to strip the Algerians of their identity and beliefs to facilitate persuading them to accept French Algeria. One of the means of this process is art and literature like what we find in Delacroix's work. However, women were the most influential by this political process. Like any society in the world to the past decades, women had difficulties to practise their rights or, in other word, to live free as men do because of gender racism. Furthermore, 'Feminism' appeared to defend women's position in the whole world as well as Algeria. Therefore, one of the influential Arab feminist novelists appeared in Algeria to give a voice to these women, like Assia Djébar who her works were not only famous in Algeria but in different nations in Africa, Europe and America. Djébar was writing in a strongly patriarchal Algerian Islamic context, with the intention of changing the status and image of the Arab woman that has been distorted by colonialism, and saving them from this inner exile. Moreover, Djébar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* is the most successful novel which reflects her feminist aim to fight the colonial and patriarchal forces against the Algerian women and to show their true identity to the world.

2. A Biography of Assia Djébar

Fatima Zohra Imalayen, known by her pen name Assia Djébar, was born on June 30th, 1936 in Cherchell, Algeria, and died on February 6th, 2015 in Paris, France. She is the daughter of Tahar Imalayen and Bahia Sahraoui, a family of Chenouas Berber origin. Djébar's father was a French teacher at Mouzaïaville, a primary school that she was attended, which was one of the reasons that made her interested in the French language. She was an Algerian novelist, academic, essayist, writer, and filmmaker who is noted for her feminist stance. Assia Djébar attended a Quranic private boarding school in Blida, where she was one of only two girls in class, then the primary school of Mouzaïaville, where her father encouraged her to study. Later, she studied at the high school of Blida College, where she was the only Muslim student in her class. Then, she attended the

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‘École normale supérieure’²⁵ in 1955, which made her the first Algerian and Muslim woman to be educated at France's most elite schools. However, she participated in the strike of the Algerian students on May 19th, 1956, which led to her expulsion from the institute but later she continued her education in Tunisia, where she took a degree in history.

In 1957, she chose *Assia Djebar* as a pen name to publish her first novel *La Soif* (The Thirst) and she was only twenty years old. She changed her name to begin her career because of her family and society culture and the way of thinking at that period. Also, in 1958, she got married with the writer Walid Garne and they adopted a boy named Mohammed Garne in 1965, but they eventually divorced. Then, she married again the Algerian poet Malek Alloula in 1980 and lived with him in Paris until her death.

After the Algerian Independence, Djebar returned to Algeria and started teaching history and literature at the University of Rabat and Algiers and also working in the Algerian FLN newspaper *El Moudjahid*, publishing interviews with Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco with her interest in cinema and theatre. Then, she became the department head for the French section at this university. However, in 1980, Djebar immigrated to France and her new successes had begun. First, she won the Franco-Arab Friendship Prize, for *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, in 1985, in addition to the prestigious *Neustadt International Prize for Literature*²⁶, in 1996, for her contribution to world literature, the ‘*Marguerite Yourcenar Prize*’²⁷ in 1997, the prestigious *Friedenspreis des*

²⁵ École normale supérieure was a French institute of higher education, which was founded on July 29th, 1881, in Sèvres, now a commune in the suburbs of Paris. The school educated girls only, especially as teachers for the secondary education system. (Britannica)

²⁶ The Neustadt International Prize for Literature is a biennial award for literature sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and its international literary publication, *World Literature Today*. It is considered one of the more prestigious international literary prizes, often compared with the Nobel Prize in Literature. (Britannica)

²⁷ Marguerite Yourcenar Prize is an award named after the late novelist, short story writer, autobiographer, poet, translator, essayist, and literary critic Marguerite Yourcenar. It was created by Scam (Civil Society of Multimedia Authors) for the great writers. (Britannica)

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*Deutschen Buchhandels*²⁸ in 1997 also, and the *International Prize of Palmi*²⁹ in 1998. Next, she became the director for the center of French and Francophone³⁰ Studies at Louisiana State University in 1997. Moreover, Djébar continued her international success with the *Peace Prize of the German Book Trade*³¹ of 2000. In 2005, the great writer was elected to the French Academy³², and she was the first writer from North Africa to be elected to this organization, and the fifth woman to join the Academy. Furthermore, Djébar was a professor of Francophone literature at *New York University*, and she was named as a contender for the Nobel Prize for Literature, unfortunately, she did not receive it. Finally, Djébar is considered to be one of North Africa's eminent and most influential writers, and the pride of Algeria. (Hiddleston, 2006)

A. Assia Djébar's Works:

Assia Djébar, through her literary and cinematic career after the Algerian Independence, reflects the experiences of Algerian women that are lost in their severed voice, and gives them a voice to this silenced woman. Her topics focused on the difficulties that Algeria faced, especially its women, during the colonial and post-colonial period. Djébar wrote four novels during the first phase of her career between 1957 and 1967, which are: *La Soif (The thirst)*, *Les Impatients (The Impatients)*, *Les Enfants du nouveau monde (The Children of the New World)* and *Les Alouettes naïves (The Naive Larks)*, these early novels set out to identify Djébar's specific concerns as a writer and to develop a sense of the position of women in Algerian society. (Hiddleston, 2006)

²⁸Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels is an international peace prize awarded annually by the 'Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels', an association of German book publishers and book sellers. The prize has been awarded from 195, which the recipient is remunerated with €25,000. (Britannica)

²⁹International Prize of Palmi is an international award for art that established in Italy.

³⁰ Francophone is to have or belong to a population that is using French as its first or sometimes second language. Also, the Francophone studies is a special field that explore the cultural practices in their historical and geographical diversity, literature, cinema, media...etc. (Britannica)

³¹The Peace Prize of the German Book Trade is an award that given in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, Germany. it represents the peace, humanity and understanding among all peoples and nations of the world, and promotes international tolerance by acknowledging individuals who approve themselves through their exceptional activities, especially in the fields of literature, science and art. (Britannica)

³² which is an institution tasked with guarding the heritage of the French language. (Britannica)

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First, *La Soif* is Djébar's first novel that was published in 1957. It is a story where the narrative follows closely the thoughts and actions of a single character called Nadia. At the beginning of the story, Nadia is depicted as a narcissistic and selfish person, who is preoccupied with her own self-image, and seeks the attention of male admirers without consideration for the damage she might inflict, and the story ends with relationships damage and Nadia's regret when it is too late. However, the writer focused on the character's changing perception of her social role rather than looking beyond the immediate context at historical movements and ruptures, which led to criticisms levelled by the Algerian intelligentsia, who accused her of ignoring the reality of contemporary Algeria and deal with silly things like the intimate relationships that were forbidden in this Algerian society at that time. As a result, Djébar later disowned '*La Soif*' and she has explained her creation as 'a kind of dream' because of her intimate and personal preoccupations when she was only twenty years old. (Hiddleston, 2006)

Second, *Les Impatients* was published in 1958. As usual, there is an Algerian female protagonist, who named Dalila, and the novel deals with the notions of identity construction, specifically, in the context of women's subordination and revolt and the traditional social chains of marriage and family duty that imprison the women. In addition, the story pays little attention to the political reality of that the colonial period. Moreover, as in *La Soif*, Djébar focused on the language of the woman's body and the intimate relationships as a result calculated to serve as a symbol of resistance, but both female protagonists evolve and reach by the end a position of increasing maturity and understanding that they have learned from break out the silence and their mistakes. However, these two novels reflect Djébar's rejection of colonial imposition and her reaction against the women's position in a relationship with social and Islam structure, which made them the topics of high criticism and contradiction. (Hiddleston, 2006)

Later, *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* published at the end of the Algerian war in 1962, when Assia Djébar returned to Algeria after the Independence. It is a long story, that is not about only Algerians or Frenches, but also the global community, and it also

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had contradictory roles where there is an Algerian traitor to his country and an Algerian hero who did not hesitate to fight his brother for the sake of his homeland, a Frenchman thinks himself a good person when he gives the dirty work for another person. However, Djébar did not change her inspiration about the Algerian woman, when the novel tells about the female character 'Chrifa' who never hesitated to show her love for her husband and sacrifice for him without any fear from the cruel colonizer, and also the teacher 'Salima' who never hid her rejection of the colonial policy. The novel was reflected the first step towards a more political mode, and focused on the role of women during the Algerian war of independence, which has not been discussed in detail in French histories of the colonization and has subsequently been forgotten by politics, by the social organization, and by collective memory. Furthermore, Djébar highlighted women's activity and agency to liberate their country, which was quickly seen as a threat to Islamic values and as an imitation to what is called *Western Individualism*, and their achievements that were forgotten after the war to become again invisible. Finally, *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* asks the question of 'what did the revolution do to its children?', where they are all living the struggles of this new world, that is being built around them and by their hands, to make them its children. (Merini, 1999-2001)

Then, *Les Alouettes naïves* another work by Djébar that was published in 1967, when she returned again to France. The novel's context is steeped in realism, the reality of what really happens between individuals, as well as the reality of the world around them. However, Djébar, in her novel, talks about memories and meetings of friends who were released from the colonial prisons, more specifically, she talks about her country and its struggle against the colonialism. The writer used a male leading narrator (Omar), but she focusses on his own past experiences in the *maquis* and his relationship with a female character, that is always in Djébar's interest, named *Nfissa*. *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* and *Les Alouettes naïves* analyse a similar examination of Muslim women's situation at home and abroad, their relation with the society and the effects of the war on feminine agency. Djébar evokes women singular struggles to make sense of the political

and social changes occurring at the time. Finally, Djébar, in these previous works, did not change her aim of reflecting the reality of the French Colonization in Algeria and role of the women on it, and, of course, her goal to raise the Arabian Muslim Woman's Identity in whole world as she really is and deserves. (Merini, 1999-2001)

In 1969, Assia Djébar became a well-known novelist, but she stopped writing and remained silent for a period of about ten years. Furthermore, this period knew a turning point in Djébar's career when she directed her first feature film *La Femmes du Mont Chenoua (The Nouba of the Women of Mont Chenoua)* in 1977-1978, which received the grand prize at the 'Venice Film Festival' in 1979. Then, the great filmmaker followed this success by *La Zerda ou Les Chants du L'oubli (Zerda or The Songs of Oblivion)* in 1982, which is a documentary about Maghreb history between 1912 and 1942. Both fiction and documentary were a memory of the Algerian sufferings from the colonization and, especially, the women's place. However, in an interview with Djébar, she explained that "it was her experience as a filmmaker that allowed her to go back to writing in French" (Le Clézio, cited by Anne Donadey, 1996, p885), and her comeback was strong with her short stories' collection *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement (The Women of Algiers in Their Apartment)*, which published in 1980. (Mortimer, 1996)

3. The Novel of "The Women of Algiers in Their Apartment":

Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement is a collection of short stories about women from different backgrounds: the intellectual, the country women, the young, the old, the fighter and the silent, who share the experience of rape, imprisonment, exile, widowhood, prostitution and silence from 1958 to 1978. The first publication of the book was in 1980 in French, the original language, then, in 1992, it was translated by Marjolijn de Jager³³, afterword by Clarisse Zimra³⁴ into the English language. After that, it was translated into

³³Marjolijn de Jager is a tri-lingual (Dutch, English, French) writer, teacher, and editor of all forms of literary work. Also, she is a literary translator with a special interest in Francophone African literature, both Sub-Saharan and from the Maghreb. (Britannica)

³⁴CLARISSE ZIMRA is an associate professor of English at Southern Illinois University, specializing in literary theory and Continental and Caribbean literature. (Britannica)

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Arabic through a group translation under the supervision of Abdelkader Bouzida³⁵ in 2017. It is like all Djébar's works that analyse the Algerian women's struggle against both French colonialism and indigenous patriarchy. The book is divided into three parts, which are 'Today', that includes two stories *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *The Woman who weeps*. Then, 'Yesterday', and this part combines for stories that are successively, *There is no Exile*, *The Dead Speak*, *Day of Ramadan* and *Nostalgia of the Horde*. And the last one is 'Postface' that includes an essay of 'forbidden gaze, severed sound', which reflects Delacroix's painting. (Kathryn, 2016)

Djébar has been criticized for writing in French, but she has said that

The standard Arabic tongue of the patriarchy does little justice to the feminine tones, uttered from lips underneath a mask...an excoriated language, from never having seen the sun, from having sometimes been intoned, declaimed, howled, dramatized. ... Reality no longer appears through 'the eyes of the French language' but through the 'voice-eyes' of Algerian women. ... Work somehow cleansed me of any unease I had felt with respect to the French language (cited by Maher, 2010, p70).

Another practical reason for writing in French is that during the colonial period, when it was called the *French Algeria*, the colonizer only recognized French as the official language. Moreover, during Djébar's school years, French was the language of education; students were discouraged from studying written Arabic and educated within the colonial French system, so Djébar's primary literate language is French. For that, Djébar has used French as a tool of communication rather than let it become an obstacle to it. In addition to that, she has developed a specific writing style for her literature, with lyrical run-on sentences, halting fragments, slippages of the Arabic vernacular, and irregular punctuation, which made her readers feel ambiguous, somewhat difficult to understand, complexity, and certainly excited, which created some difficulties in the novel's translation.

³⁵Abdelkader Bouzida is a professor and director of the translation laboratory at the University of Algiers. (Britannica)

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Djebar's short stories provide a glance that is rare and accurate of the lives of women in postcolonial Algeria. Each of her fictional characters introduce a part of the trauma of Algerian women which it is traditionally associated with colonialism and did not find resolution in the postcolonial world. The individual experiences of the characters are representative of the common sense of loss, betrayal, helplessness, despair, and sorrow. That was because of the French colonialism and Algerian patriarchy. Djebar's goal through these stories is to make the theme of healing for Algerian women becomes through testimony. However, the novelist introduces forms of 'Exile'³⁶ through these stories and female characters, but, in fact, she was somehow reflecting her own Exile. (Kathryn, 2016)

In 'Study of Community in Exile' (2016), Laura Kathryn Ann noted that the women's sinner exile is reflecting through *Fatma*, one of the *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* characters, by her flashbacks about her life's shards. *Fatma* refers to herself as "the Excluded One", and presents exactly the ostracism of inner exile. Moreover, her trauma was not only from spending most of her life under French colonization and her family's impact by French occupation, but also, her personal difficulties were from patriarchal oppression. However, *Fatma* herself is more clearly a victim of patriarchal society in particular, as her father replaced her by two bottles of beer, and she married at the age of thirteen years, a child bride into an abusive family. After she ran away from her family, she fell into prostitution to survive, before continuing a life of servitude as a water carrier at the bathhouse. What is noted is that from colonial occupation, the war, to independence, *Fatma's* situation has never changed for the better. Concluding that, beyond colonial oppression, the biggest challenge that the woman has faced is the patriarchal tradition. Furthermore, the great grandmother in the short story "Nostalgia of the Horde" recounts a similar childhood of *Fatma*, who has experienced the difficulty of being a female in the home and being a child bride, she was expected upon her marriage to become the obedient toiling wife. She speaks of the abuse she endured from sisters in

³⁶ There is more explication about the term of 'Exile' in the first chapter.

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law, and from a husband who beat her to the point of bloody injury without any human mercy. In addition, the great grandmother tells the story of *Mma Rkia*, an old woman from her own childhood, whose experience shows the twofold aggression upon women by colonial and patriarchal society. Mma Rkia gives birth to a girl, while the French were invading her town, and the bullet's sound was everywhere. In that moment, Mma Rkia is cursed by her sister in law for giving birth to a girl, instead of blame the French for their actual violence. Unfortunately, the baby girl dies immediately after birth, and Mma Rkia is convinced that the curses were what killed her daughter. The child's death can be interpreted as a murder by patriarchal expectations, demonstrating how traditional society rejects and suffocates females, denying them the ability to freely exist. In 'Yesterday' voices of the past are connected to 'Today', which emphasizes that the inner Exile of the woman was exist for a long time, and that because of both colonial domination and the patriarchal society. (Kathryn, 2016, p16)

The collection of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* is based on dialogue more than narration, and this is due to Djébar's aim to clarify the importance of the talking and break the woman's silence. Djébar point out that: "Today, how do I, as water dowser, craft words out of so many tones of voice still suspended in the silences of yesterday's seraglio? Words of the veiled body, language that in turn has taken the veil for so long a time." (WAA, cited by Boersma, 2010, p17)

She consists that talking is the only way for the Algerian women to succeed in changing their situation of the social, political and inner Exile, in addition to state of the forgotten war heroes in the official story of Algeria's history. Djébar writes down these stories that are still veiled with the creation of characters that experience the struggle to express their stories within their conversations with each other. However, the best example, for this fact, is the characters of *Leila* and *Sarah*. *Leila* are an ex-resistance fighter of the Algerian War of Independence who experienced the tortures of the French prison, while she was fighting for liberation of her country together with the male soldiers, and *Sarah* was involved in the war as well and spent her adolescence in prison.

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Both women met in the hospital, and *Leila* starts flashes of her memories, while *Sarah* chose the silence and weep:

Sarah says weeping: “[...] ‘be quiet, my darling, don’t talk anymore! ... Words, what good are words?’ Leila answers with: “[...] I’ve got to speak, Sarah! They are ashamed of me. I’ve dried up, I’m the shadow of my former self. (WAA, cited by Boersma, 2010, p18)

After the Algerian Independence, the female soldier, who sacrificed her life for homeland, ended up in the unwanted position of the Algerian woman, who is not allowed to participate in the public spaces with Algerian man, and has fewer rights than him and more restrictions. The hero of yesterday became, as she says, a *shadow of her former self* today. Moreover, Djebbar is aware of the importance of talking about *Leila’s* experiences, which is the only way to retell the real story of the war that dominated by the male perspective, and to show that there are more versions of the story of the Algerian War of Independence that did not succeed only by men’s struggle. In addition, the conversations between *Sarah* with her friend *Anne* reflect another fact of the importance of words and new version of Algeria’s past. *Anne* is a French woman that has an egalitarian lifestyle and for her the life in a silent *Harem* is equivalent to death, so her presence in the ‘silent lifestyle of Algeria’ signifies the importance of women’s communication within any society. Then, there are several other characters in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* who share this view of Algerian women’s place and silence, and show the diversity within Algerian society.

Some Djebbar’s characters are the symbol of fight while others present the weakness and sadness, and the both are society prisoners. But, she also presents the new strong woman that fight for her freedom, such as some young women from *Sarah’s* family who change their way of thinking from the traditional role of Algerian women to what they deserve. They do not only stay at home to take care of their husband and kids, and isolate themselves from the outside world. They study, practice sports and work, for example: *Sonia* decided to become a physical education teacher, *Baya* works as a laboratory assistant at the Cytology Department, and *Sarah*, in spite of all the tragedies that have

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happened to her, works at the institute of musicology studying women's songs. Their stories are considered as a challenge against the Algerian society in which women are absent in the public and work spaces. Even though this use of the characterization of the women of Algeria, Djebbar avoids the creation of a new determined feminine Algerian identity, and Hiddleston says about this strategy:

[...] her texts initially strive to unveil or conceive a specific feminine Algerian identity, rescuing Algerian women from occlusion both by colonialism and by Islamic law, and giving voice to this particular oppressed group. This does not mean that they are passively specified, but that they are positioned in relation to a series of specific influences and negotiate between them. Despite Djebbar's belief in the necessity of this project, however, she then troubles the determinations of that position (cited by Boersma, 2010, p20)

Djebbar aimed to defend, retell and restore the position of the Algerian woman as a strong fighter and successful person, not just a household with no sense, she highlighted her real identity that deleted from the Algerian history by the male and colonial power, but she did not try to change it.

As it is noted, the title of the collection is taken from the title of the portrait of the French painter Delacroix, *Femmes d'Alger Dans Leur Appartement*, and the first story also has the same title. As well as, Djebbar wrote down a whole essay (forbidden gaze, severed sound) about Delacroix and his painting. If we go back to this portrait, we will find silent women that look like they stop talking when they see others coming and a servant tries to hide them. While in the novel we find, there are women talking and talking to prove that they really exist and have a role in the life and especially in society. Furthermore, in Kathryn's view in her 'Study of Community in Exile' (2016), Djebbar shows how the women in the painting were put in double exile at the beginning of the colonial period, and they did not only eroticize as Oriental subjects, but they are also eroticized as sexual objects by a male gaze. The novelist own characters, such as the grandmother, Mma Rkia, and Fatma, experienced this inner exile of the male gaze, and she used them to show that they suffered, endured and were patient to prove that they are not only bodies empty of feelings as it is imagined by the gaze of the western voyeur

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which Delacroix's emphasis it on the relation that these women have with their bodies and with their cage. On the other hand, there are the talkative characters, in the case of *Leila*, *Sarah* and *Anne*, who were involved in a dialogue which Delacroix freezes in time as it takes place.

However, in the short story *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* Djébar's protagonists consist of three women, *Sarah*, *Anne*, and *Leila*, and one servant figure *Fatma*, who are characters that directly mirror Delacroix's paintings. Djébar works on changing Delacroix's representation of Algeria women by creating these characters who work, study, drive, walk outside and play sports, but, in the same time, she criticizes this dynamic position of the Algerian woman by showing how a lot of Algerian women are still imprisoned, physically and mentally, though the characters' conversations about how they still feel like they are living in a prison. Also, Djébar works on translating the painting by using the '*Hammam*' (is a public Arab steam room) in her stories to replace the room in the portrait. As Mary Maher argues that:

They mourn the lives of women while explaining what, in fact, is tragic about their past experiences. Particularly important are the two laments 'For a diwan of the water carrier' and 'For a diwan of the fire carriers' that appear in the short story "Women of Algiers in Their Apartment". Djébar uses the equivocation of Divan and Diwan to her advantage. One of their meanings is a Muslim council or the room in which the council is held (Khanna 163). The council for Djébar's 'For a diwan of the water carrier' includes the [Muslim] women of the hammam; the chamber of this council would be the hammam, itself. In the lament 'For the diwan of fire carriers', this council would extend to all the female fighters who carried concealed bombs and fire arms during the war. Divan and diwan are also the name of an Arabic style couch. This couch refers to Delacroix's 1834 rendition of an Algerian Harem in which one of three wives reclines on a low lying couch or divan which references the book's title and its implications (2010, p 75-76)

Djébar's characters from 'Today' and 'Yesterday', reflect the wrong view of the colonizer about the Algerian women and prove that the colonization was one of the reasons for their suffering, and in the same time show the abilities of the women to

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develop, change and fight as well as men. This western view was shown by the essayist at the end of her book.

The 'Postface' part includes a kind of essay (Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound) that describes and interprets, and in the same time discusses and criticizes the western view and opinion about the Algerian women which was imagined in *Femme D'Alger Dans Leur Appartement*. This part is divided into three chapters, where Djébar redefines Delacroix's gaze in a verbal rendition in depth details, thus, for her, the idea of the gaze must be found within the speaking and silences of the text as a literary technical translation for the visual art. In the first chapter, Djébar gave a little overview of Delacroix's trip to Algeria, then she started describing and re-painting the portrait by words, she wrote:

Women of Algiers in Their Apartment: three women, two of whom are seated in front of a hookah. The third one, in the foreground, leans her elbow on some cushions. A female servant, seen three quarters from the back, raises her arm as if to move the heavy tapestry aside that masks this closed universe; she is an almost minor character, all she does is move along the edge of the iridescence of colors that bathes the other three women. The whole meaning of the painting is played out in the relationship these three have with their bodies, as well as with the place of their enclosure. Resigned prisoners in a closed place that is lit by a kind of dreamlike light coming from nowhere -a hothouse light or that of an a quarium-Delacroix's genius makes them both near and distant to us at the same time, enigmatic to the highest degree. (FGSS, 1992, P135)

In addition, she stated that the second vision (1949) of Delacroix's painting is:

almost identical, but the recurrence of several changes has rendered more obvious the latent meaning of the painting. In this second canvas—in which the features of the characters are less precise, the elements of the setting less elaborate—the vision's angle has been widened. This centering effect has a triple result: to make the three women, who now penetrate more deeply into their retreat, more distant from us; to uncover and entirely bare one of the room's walls, having it weigh down more heavily on the solitude of these women; and finally to accentuate the unreal quality of the light. The latter brings out more clearly what the shadow conceals as an invisible, omnipresent threat, through the intermediary of the woman servant whom we hardly see any longer, but who is there, and attentive. (FGSS, 1992, p136)

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Through her way of writing, we notice a kind of admiration and attraction. Djébar's fascination with Delacroix's painting also caused by, as she commented,

The distant and familiar dream in the faraway eyes of the three Algerian women, if we make an attempt to grasp its nature, makes us in turn dream of sensuality: a nostalgia or vague softness, triggered by their so obvious absence. As if behind those bodies, and before the servant lets the curtain fall once more, a universe is displayed in which they might still live continuously, before they take their pose in front of us, who look on. (FGSS, 1992, p137)

However, what Djébar pays attention to it is not the enigmatic and luxurious orient, but she was rather attracted by those women whose drama cannot be guessed. (Bendjedou, 2000, p60). Also, in her statement:

Thus the woman's body, as soon as she leaves her seated waiting in the cloistered interior, conceals dangers because of its very nature. Does it move around in an open space? All that is suddenly perceived is that straying multiplicity of eyes in and on that body. Around this feminine drifting away, the dispossessed man's haunting feeling of paranoia crystallizes. (FGSS, 1992, p140)

We notice that Djébar suggests that this painting shows no difference between the eye of the Algerian patriarch and the eye of the colonial artist, which both proceed to a gendering of space and the differentiation of the female body as "other". (Nakkouch, 2012). In addition to more passages that made a number of critics of postcolonial critic, such as Nicholas Harrison who draws attention to the ways in which Djébar's very engaged with the painting that seems to agree with the imperialist rhetoric; indeed, Djébar's project encounters both the limits of representation and the difficulties of "speaking for" others. (Fallaise, 2008, p111)

Furthermore, Mildred Mortimer explained that Djébar positions herself not only as viewer who, like the painter, participates in the "stolen glance," but as informed art historian.

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Between them and us, the spectators, there has been the instant of unveiling, the step that crossed the vestibule of intimacy, the unexpected slight touch of the thief, the spy, the voyeur. Only two years earlier, the French painter would have been there at the risk of his life. ...For a few decades—as each nationalism triumphs here and there—we have been able to realize that within this Orient that has been delivered unto itself, the image of woman is still perceived no differently, be it by the father, by the husband, and, more troublesome still, by the brother and the son. (FGSS, 1992, p137)

That is obvious for a 'University History Professor'. So, by using her literary technics, Djébar writes down the history of Algeria but just with themes that revolve only around women, where she sad:

For a few decades—as each nationalism triumphs here and there—we have been able to realize that within this Orient that has been delivered unto itself, the image of woman is still perceived no differently, be it by the father, by the husband, and, more troublesome still, by the brother and the son. [...]. Hence the razor-sharp chorus of long cries uttered by the other women (a sisterhood of spasms that tries to take flight in the blind night), hence also the din of the gunpowder in order to better envelop that same silence. (FGSS, 1992, p 138-141)³⁷

From this standpoint, we find that Djébar criticizes the society in which the Algerian woman lived, as if she agrees with Delacroix's gaze, and that what some postcolonial critics realized too. But on the other hand, this was the reality in the ancient Algerian society where the woman's place was just at home under a male domination. According to Mildred Mortimer, in his *Reappropriating the Gaze in Assia Djébar's Fiction and Film*, Djébar assumes the task completely beyond Delacroix's cognitive competence, that she was restoring sound to the silent, and the right to see and be seen to the right to speak and be heard. However, in undertaking this task, Djébar is forced to reflect on her position in relation to Delacroix's Orientalist representation. In addition, the circumstances surrounding the painting, and the painting itself, create a tension between disclosure and dissimulation; what to show against what to hide. So, from all the above, we conclude that Djébar's position was neutral, and she worked on reporting only the true facts.

³⁷ The whole essay is in the list of appendices.

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In addition to Djébar's social opinions, she criticized the use of the Islamic roles in the Algerian society when she said:

Now, this look of the sex steeped in blood sends us back to the first look, that of the mother at term, ready to give birth. The image of her rises up, ambivalent and flooded with tears, completely veiled and at the same time delivered naked, her legs streaked with blood in spasms of pain. The Koran says, and this has been often repeated: "Paradise is found at the feet of mothers." If Christianity is the adoration of the Virgin Mother, Islam, more harshly, understands the term mother to mean woman without pleasure, even before seeing her as the source of all tenderness. Thereby obscurely hoping that the eye that is sex, the one who has given birth, is no longer a threat. Only the birthing mother has the right to look. (FGSS, 1992, p 142)

Add to her opinion about the *Hayek* (is a women's traditional dress in the North-west of Africa). Also her view about the 'Yes' which the Islam gives to the woman as a right in marriage, i.e. to say 'yes' to accepting a man as a husband, or 'no' as a reject him, to give the women her freedom to choose. Then, the father's monopoly over a daughter's life forbade her from this right, to give her no choice. This part from the novel, that gives an example about the Algerian marriage, makes us puzzled whether the writer is against the Islamic roles itself or only against the way which the Algerians used these Islamic roles as a justification for the male domination over women. As Said explained, the western world tries to destroy the reality of Islam, to make it look like some societies or religions that see women as a body and a means of procreation only, as Djébar pointed out.

Then, in the second chapter on *Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound*, the writer moved to tell a historical story in 1839, which was during the era of El-Amir Abdu Elkader³⁸. It is a story of a woman whose her village's name was El-Harazla, was under the French attack and its men were running away. This woman, who was called *Massouda*, showed her courage by jumping in the middle of the battlefield to call her tribesmen to fight for the homeland and freedom, the fight that ended with a victory, which made *Massouda* a song of victory for the southern tribes. Djébar used this character to show that the women's

³⁸Abdu Elkader ibn Muhieddine (6 September 1808 – 26 May 1883), known as the Emir Abdu Elkader, was an Algerian Islamic scholar and military leader who led a struggle against the French colonial invasion of Algiers in the early 19th century. (Britannica)

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silence has been broken due to the war of independence in the nineteenth century. But in same time, she criticized the Orientalist view that was translated by the colonizer to cover up his heinous acts and to change and destroy his original beliefs, as well as the Algerian male's view of feminine society.

Finally, the last chapter on *Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound* is a kind of repainting Pablo Picasso's portraits of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*. As she stated at the beginning:

As the war of liberation in Algeria was just barely getting started, Picasso, from December 1954 to February 1955, goes to live every day in the world of Delacroix's "Women of Algiers." There he comes face-to-face with himself and erects around the three women, and with them, a completely transformed universe: fifteen canvases and two lithographs carrying the same title. It moves me to think that the Spanish genius presides in this manner over a changing in the times. (FGSS, 1992, p148-149)

In *The powerful writing strategies of Assia Djébar*, Sanne Boersma argues that:

The painting of Eugène Delacroix from 1834, with the similar title as the collection, and Pablo Picasso's version 120 years later are the main focus to conclude on the stories that were narrated in the preceding chapters. ... While Delacroix's women are cloistered in their home, Picasso's version of the harem 120 years later sets the women of the harem free. His women are totally nude and the paintings are full of light. These two remarkable different representations of Algerian women are in the background of Djébar's collection of stories on dialogues between Algerian women. ... While Delacroix's traditional painting helps to raise questions on the position of women in the Orient, Picasso's version 120-year slater represents the liberation of the women of the harem. ... Picasso's painting is full of light and exposes the woman's body naked that bursts out into the open space. His painting stresses the necessity for women to be free to do this. (Boersma, 2010, p16-17-24)

According to this analysis and Djébar's description of Picasso's painting, we notice a kind of compatibility and admiration with the meaning that the painting symbolizes, as she said:

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"Picasso reverses the malediction, causes misfortune to burst loose, inscribes in audacious lines a totally new happiness. A foreknowledge that should guide us in our everyday life..."Picasso has always liked to set the beauties of the harem free." Glorious liberation of space, the bodies awakening in dance, in a flowing outward, the movement freely offered. But also the preservation of one of the women, who remains hermetic, Olympian, suddenly immense. Like a suggested moral, here, of a relationship to be found again between the old, adorned serenity (the lady, formerly fixed in her sullen sadness, is motionless from now on, but like a rock of inner power) and the improvised bursting out into an open space. (FGSS, 1992, p149)

Djebar added to Picasso's painting description with admiration:

For there is no harem any more, its door is wide open and the light is streaming in; there isn't even a spying servant any longer, simply another woman, mischievous and dancing. Finally, the heroines—with the exception of the queen, whose breasts, however, are bursting out—are totally nude, as if Picasso was recovering the truth of the vernacular language that, in Arabic, designates the "unveiled" as "denuded" women. Also, as if he were making that denuding not only into a sign of an "emancipation," but rather of these women's rebirth to their own bodies. (FGSS, 1992, p149)

For her, Picasso's work can reflect a highest ambition for Algerian women, thus she commented at the end of her collection:

Only in the fragments of ancient murmuring do I see how we must look for a restoration of the conversation between women, the very one that Delacroix froze in his painting. Only in the door open to the full sun, the one Picasso later imposed, do I hope for a concrete and daily liberation of women. (FGSS, 1992, p151)

In this last part of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Djebar changes her narrative style to a more essayistic style of writing. She mixes her previous fictional short stories, in 'Today' and 'Yesterday', with the analysis of the position of women in Algeria. In addition, she used a strategy of restoration of conversation in her collection of short stories with the creating of the transformation from the traditional cloistered Algerian women, which represented in Delacroix's painting, to setting of the free *Harem* as expressed by Picasso. (Boersma, 2010, p23-24)

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Djebar's essay is full of Algerian social criticism and artistic translation into words, which was later presented in her films. As Mildred Mortimer, in his 'Reappropriating the Gaze in Assia Djebar's Fiction and Film', argued:

the essay marks an important stage in Djebar's personal quest and explains her decision to become a filmmaker. On the one hand, her work will restore the lost sound of her maternal language; on the other hand, it will defy and oppose the male dominating gaze. (p860)

That what made this collection was an important transition point in her career after a long silent period. She challenges her society and the view of the other societies of the Algerian women by broking the silence and giving a voice to these women to express and impose themselves on the public with no more hiding.

4. Conclusion:

After the Algerian Independence, the Algerian women faced a new form of exclusion. Their sacrifices and fight in the war of independence have no place in the historical narrative of the new nation and they just returned to their normal live as a housewife under the male domination. While women's own nation became unfamiliar and their image and identity distorted to became just an Orientalist delusion, and the victims who banished from and by their own patriarchal community to be exiled from their own image, flesh, and live to became under the command of the other. As a result, a new feminist literature appeared to break up this silence and to tell the official story of the Algerian fighter women, and Assia Djebar's collection is a perfect model that seeks to achieve this goal. Djebar worked to restore what was lost from the Algerian women, who have been forced into inner exile by colonial forces. Furthermore, Djebar criticized both of woman's position in the Algerian society and the colonizer's policy, which was destroying the real identity and image of the Algerians and making them just an interesting oriental subject as people who need help to became civilized, with the intention of creating an excuse for colonialism and violence. However, it is a bit difficult to understand what Djebar really means and her message to her readers, for example, in

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the essay of *Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound*, in some lines we find that she is against the western view about the women in the portrait of Delacroix and she argues that the Algerian woman is not like this image, but in other lines we notice that she agrees with this image of the lost woman that is just dreaming. Moreover, her point of view about Picasso's painting, that she saw on it *a concrete and daily liberation of women* (Djebar,1992, p151), while most of the Algerian, and especially, Muslim male and female readers see it as unmoral western imagination that denigrate their beliefs. However, everyone agrees that Djebar is a great woman and successful writer who fights for the rights of the Algerian women in her own way. She showed to whole world the reality of a strong Algerian woman especially throughout her collection of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* which reflects a strong response to the representation of *Harem* in Algeria in the European Delacroix's painting.

General Conclusion

Since the ancient centuries, the western world's imagination about the eastern world, specifically the Islamic one, was a kind of fantasy of magic, barbarism and ignorance, which were used as a justification to the colonial crimes. Islam in the past was widespread in the whole Eastern part of the world, and in that time its nations were known by power, richness and their beautiful lands, which made them enemies of the Christen world and its ambitions. Thus, *Orientalism* appeared to study and analyse these imaginations and views that led to the large colonial movement. Therefore, Algeria, as any African and Arab Islamic country, was a subject to *colonialism* and its big influences.

The understanding of the concepts of *Orientalism*, *Colonialism* and *Postcolonialism* helped on analysing and understanding both Western and Eastern way of thinking and their thought conflicts. Said's *Orientalism* answers the question of 'How does the western world view the East, Oriental and Islamic world?' to show that these views were almost all wrong to make *colonialism* a normal and acceptable or somewhat necessary movement. Furthermore, Algeria was a subject of this movement, since it is an African Arab Islamic nation, and France, like any colonizer, was working on justifying its crimes and opening the way for itself to take control over Algeria. and what is seemed is that the colonizer did nothing but destroying its colonies, but the colonized nations never stopped fighting for their rights and identity, like the Algerians.

The great artist Eugene Delacroix, in his artistic and politic French mission in Algeria, drew his famous portrait *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1834) that reflects the imagination of the westerns about the Arab women and society. Of course, it is a great artistic work and somehow close to the real, but it is just what the colonizer wants to show it to the world. However, the Algerian history and real identity denied this picture of the Algerian women. Assia Djebar called it a "forbidden gaze" because in that time the stranger males were not allowed even to take a look on the women when they were not wearing their Hijab, that what makes this imagination far from reality. Furthermore,

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France in that time was working on destroying the Algerian identity to make Algeria a part of its proprietary. Therefore, the Algerian Muslim Women in Delacroix's painting were seen as uncivilized, useless persons who are far from the Islamic rules. Delacroix's biography and his workstyle showed the artist's tendency to depict women in indecent ways, which puts his imagination of the Algerian women in doubt.

After the Algerian Independence, the Algerians were working on regaining their real identity and literature was an important tool. Assia Djébar in her *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1980 in the French language) was fighting to restore the Algerian Women's identity and position, where she showed the valour and the braininess of the Algerian women during and after the colonization, in contrast to what Delacroix showed in his description of the Algerian women. However, Djébar criticized both of woman's position in the Algerian society and the colonizer's policy of destroying the real identity and image of the Algerian women and making them just an interesting oriental subject without an aim in life. Then, Assia Djébar in her writing seems as she is herself influenced by the Western lifestyle, since she got her education in French schools with French teachers which made her an "Exile" person who criticizes even her society's rules.

The Analyses of the representation of "Algerian Muslim Women" from both Western and Eastern lenses in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* gave formal answers to the questions that were posed in this research. First, the Western world gave a different view about the real Eastern world to destroy its identity and beliefs because of jealousy and the love of control over the world, specially over the powerful and rich nations, and it made these wrong imaginations as a justification to start the colonial movement. Then, the orientalist were working on conveying the wester views of Orientals to the whole world and making it real throughout the artistic works, such as poems, tales, fantasy stories and paintings (like Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*), to open the way for Western and Christian expansion and spread its ideas. Finally, the Eastern Arab Islamic nations were committed to their identity and principles, even if they affected by the Western attempts, they were always working on restoring them and show the reality to the

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world throughout the enlightenment and awareness, and art was a successful way for it (like in Djébar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*).

The Western views still attack our Arab Islamic world till nowadays, so this research gave a small example of this phenomena as a defence to the Algerian Muslim women real identity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Assia Djebar: Women of Algiers in Their Apartment, forbidden gaze.

On 25 June 1832, Delacroix disembarks in Algiers for a short stopover. He has just spent a month in, Morocco, immersed in a universe of extreme, visual richness (the splendour of the costumes, reckless frenzy of fantasias, the pomp of a royal court, the rapture of Jewish weddings or of street musicians, the nobility of royal felines: lions, tigers, and so forth).

This Orient, so near and of his own time, offers itself to him as a total and excessive novelty. An Orient as he had dreamed it for *The Death of Sardanapalus*—but here washed clean of any association with sin. An Orient that, in addition, and only in Morocco, escapes from the authority of the Turks, loathed ever since *The Massacre at Chios*.

Thus, Morocco is revealed as the place where dream and its incarnation of an aesthetic ideal meet, the place of a visual revolution. In fact, Delacroix can write a little later: "Ever since my journey, men and things appear to me in a new light."

Delacroix spends only three days in Algiers. This brief stay in an only recently conquered capital city directs him, thanks to a felicitous combination of circumstances, toward a world that had remained foreign to him during his Moroccan trip. For the first time, he penetrates into a world that is off-limits: that of the Algerian women. The world he had discovered in Morocco and that he freezes in his sketches is essentially a masculine and warrior world, in a word, a virile one. What his eyes saw was the permanent spectacle of an exteriority made up entirely of pomp, noise, cavalcades, and rapid motion. But, as he passes from Morocco to Algeria, Delacroix crosses, at the same time, a subtle frontier that is going to invert every sign and will be at the root of what posterity shall retain as this singular "journey to the Orient"

The adventure is well-known: the chief engineer of the harbour of Algiers, Monsieur Poirel, a lover of painting, has in his employ a chaouch, the former owner of a privateer—the sort who used to be called a *raise* before the 1830 conquest—who after long discussions, agrees to allow Delacroix entry into his own home.

A friend of the friend, Cournault, reports the details of this intrusion to us. The house was situated in what used to be the rue Duquesne. Delacroix, in the company of the husband and undoubtedly of Poirel as well, crosses "a dark hallway" at the end of which, unexpectedly and bathed in an almost unreal light, the actual harem opens up. There, women and children are waiting for him "surrounded by mounds of silk and gold." The wife of the former *rais*, young and pretty, is sitting in front of a hookah. Delacroix, Poirel reports to Cournault, who writes it down for us, "was as if intoxicated by the spectacle he had before his eyes."

With the husband as intermediary and impromptu translator, he begins a conversation and wants to know everything about "this new and to him mysterious life." On the many sketches that he draws—women seated in various positions—he writes what seems to him to be the most important and not to be forgotten: specification of colors ("black with lines of gold, lac-quered violet, dark India red," etc.) with details of costumes, multiple and strange references that baffle his eyes.

In these brief and graphic or written annotations, there is an almost feverish hand at work, an intoxicated gaze: a fugitive moment of evanescent revelation standing on that borderline in motion where dream and reality converge. Cournault notes, "that fever that the sherbets and fruits could barely appease."

The completely new vision was perceived as pure image. As if this all-too-new splendour might blur the image's reality, Delacroix forces himself to note down, on his sketches, the name of every woman. Like a coat of arms, watercolors bear names like Bayah, Mouni and Zora ben Soltane, Zora and Kadoudja Tarboridji. Penciled bodies coming out of the anonymity of exoticism.

This abundance of rare colors, these new-sounding names, is that what arouses and thrills the painter? Is that what causes him to write: "It is beautiful! It is straight out of Homer!"

There, during that visit of a few hours with women in seclusion, by what shock, or at least by what vague stirrings was the painter seized? This heart of the half-open harem, is it really the way he sees it?

From this place through which he had passed, Delacroix brings back some objects: some slippers, a shawl, a shirt, a pair of trousers. Not just trivial tourist trophies but tangible proof of a unique, ephemeral experience. Traces of a dream.

He feels the need to touch his dream, to prolong its life beyond the memory, to complete what is enclosed as sketches and drawings in his notebooks. It's the equivalent of a fetishist compulsion augmented by the certainty that this moment lived is irrevocable in its uniqueness and will never be repeated.

Upon his return to Paris, the painter will work for two years on the image of a memory that teeters with a muted and unformulated uncertainty, although well-documented and supported by authentic objects. What he comes out with is a masterpiece that still stirs questions deep within us.

Women of Algiers in Their Apartment: three women, two of whom are seated in front of a hookah. The third one, in the foreground, leans her elbow on some cushions. A female servant, seen three quarters from the back, raises her arm as if to move the heavy tapestry aside that masks this closed universe; she is an almost minor character, all she does is move along the edge of the iridescence of colors that bathes the other three women. The whole meaning of the painting is played out in the relationship these three have with their bodies, as well as with the place of their enclosure. Resigned prisoners in a closed place that is lit by a kind of dreamlike light coming

from nowhere—a hothouse light or that of an aquarium—Delacroix's genius makes them both near and distant to us at the same time, enigmatic to the highest degree.

Fifteen years after these few days in Algiers, Delacroix remembers again, reworks it, and gives the 1849 Salon a second version of *Women of Algiers*.

The composition is almost identical, but the recurrence of several changes has rendered more obvious the latent meaning of the painting.

In this second canvas—in which the features of the characters are less precise, the elements of the setting less elaborate—the vision's angle has been widened. This cantering effect has a triple result: to make the three women, who now penetrate more deeply into their retreat, more distant from us; to uncover and entirely bare one of the room's walls, having it weigh down more heavily on the solitude of these women; and finally to accentuate the unreal quality of the light. The latter brings out more clearly what the shadow conceals as an invisible, omnipresent threat, through the intermediary of the woman servant whom we hardly see any longer, but who is there, and attentive.

Women always waiting. Suddenly less sultanas than prisoners. They have no relationship with us, the spectators. They neither abandon nor refuse themselves to our gaze. Foreign but terribly present in this rarefied atmosphere of confinement.

Elie Faure tells us that the aging Renoir, when he used to refer to this light in *Women of Algiers*, could not prevent large tears from streaming down his cheeks.

Should we be weeping like the aged Renoir, but then for reasons other than artistic ones? Evoke, one and a half century later, these Bayas, Zoras, Mounis, and Khadoudjas. Since then, these women, whom Delacroix—perhaps in spite of himself—knew how to observe as no one had done before him, have not stopped telling us something that is unbearably painful and still very much with us today.

Delacroix's painting has been perceived as one approach to a feminine version of the Orient—undoubtedly the first one in European painting, which usually treated the theme of the odalisque as literature or evoked only the cruelty and the nudity of the seraglio.

The distant and familiar dream in the faraway eyes of the three Algerian women, if we make an attempt to grasp its nature, makes us in turn dream of sensuality: a nostalgia or vague softness, triggered by their so obvious absence. As if behind those bodies, and before the servant lets the curtain fall once more, a universe is displayed in which they might still live continuously, before they take their pose in front of us, who look on.

For that is exactly it, we look on. In reality, that look is forbidden to us. If Delacroix's painting unconsciously fascinates us, it is not actually because it suggests that superficial Orient within a luxurious and silent semidarkness, but because, by placing us in the position of onlookers in front of these women, it reminds us that ordinarily we have no right to be there. This painting is itself a stolen glance.

And I tell myself that, more than fifteen years later, Delacroix remembered especially that "dark hallway" at the end of which, in a space without exit, the hieratic prisoners of the secret keep to themselves. Those women whose distant drama cannot be guessed at except for this unexpected backstage scene that the painting becomes.

Is it because these women are dreaming that they do not look at us, or is it that they can no longer even glimpse us because they are enclosed without recourse? Nothing can be guessed about the soul of these doleful figures, seated as if drowning in all that surrounds them. They remain absent to themselves, to their body, to their sensuality, to their happiness.

Between them and us, the spectators, there has been the instant of unveiling, the step that crossed the vestibule of intimacy, the unexpected slight touch of the thief, the spy, the voyeur. Only two years earlier, the French painter would have been there at the risk of his life.

What floats between these Algerian women and ourselves, then, is the forbidden. Neutral, anonymous, omnipresent.

That particular gaze had long been believed to be a stolen one because it was the stranger's, the one from outside the harem and outside the city.

For a few decades—as each nationalism triumphs here and there—we have been able to realize that within this Orient that has been delivered unto itself, the image of woman is still perceived no differently, be it by the father, by the husband, and, more troublesome still, by the brother and the son.

In principle, they alone may look at the woman. To the other male members of the tribe (and any cousin who may have shared her childhood play becomes potentially a voyeur-thief) the woman shows—in the early days of an easing of the customary rigors—if not her entire body, at least her face and hands.

The second period of this easing turns out, paradoxically, to be dependent upon the veil. Since the veil completely covers the body and its extremities, it allows the one who wears it and who circulates outside underneath its cover, to be in turn a potential thief within the masculine space. She appears there above all as a fugitive outline, half blinded when she can only look with one eye. The generosity of "liberalism" has restored to her, in some cases and certain places, her other eye and at the same time the integrity of her gaze: thanks to the veil, both her eyes are now wide open to the exterior.

Thus, there is another eye there, the female gaze. But that liberated eye, which could become the sign of a conquest toward the light shared by other people, outside of the enclosure, is now in turn perceived as a threat; and the vicious circle closes itself back up again.

Yesterday, the master made his authority felt in the closed, feminine spaces through the single presence of his gaze alone, annihilating those of other people. In turn, the feminine eye when it moves around is now, it seems, feared by the men immobilized in the Moorish cafes of today's medinas, while the white phantom, unreal but enigmatic, passes through.

In these lawful glances (that is to say, those of the father, the brother, the son, or the husband) that are raised to the female eye and body—for the eye of the dominator first seeks out the other's eye, the eye of the dominated, before it takes possession of the body—one runs a risk that is all the more unforeseeable since its causes may be accidental.

It takes very little—a sudden effusiveness, an unexpected, unusual motion, a space torn open by a curtain raised over a secret corner—for the other eyes of the body (breasts, sex, navel) to run the risk in turn of being fully exposed and stared at. It is all over for the men, vulnerable guardians: it is their night, their misfortune, their dishonor.

Forbidden gaze: for it is surely forbidden to look at the female body one keeps incarcerated, from the age often until forty or forty-five, within walls, or better within veils. But there's also the danger that the feminine glance, liberated to circulation outside, runs the risk at any moment of exposing the other glances of the moving body. As if all of a sudden the whole body were to begin to look around, to "defy," or so men translate it.... Is a woman—who moves around and therefore is "naked"—who looks, not also anew threat to their exclusive right to stare, to that male prerogative?

The most visible evolution of Arabic women, at least in the cities, has therefore been the casting off of the veil. Many a woman, often after an adolescence or her entire youth spent cloistered, has concretely lived the experience of the unveiling. The body moves forward out of the house and is, for the first time, felt as being "exposed" to every look: the gait becomes stiff, the step hasty, the facial expression tightens.

Colloquial Arabic describes the experience in a significant way: "I no longer go out protected (that is to say, veiled, covered up)" the woman who casts off her sheet will say, "I go out undressed, or even denuded." The veil that shielded her from the looks of strangers is in fact experienced as a "piece of clothing in itself," and to no longer have it means to be totally exposed.

As for the man who agrees to share in this, his sisters' or his wife's most timid of evolutions, the slowest possible one, he is hereby condemned to live ill at ease and sick with worry. He imagines that no sooner will the lacy face veil, then the long body veil, be lifted, then the woman will (she can't help it) move on to the stage of fatal risk, that of uncovering the other eye, the eye-that-is-sex. Halfway down this slippery path, he glimpses the only stopping point of the "belly dance," the one that makes the other eye, the navel-eye, grimace in the cabarets.

Thus the woman's body, as soon as she leaves her seated waiting in the cloistered interior, conceals dangers because of its very nature. Does it move around in an open space? All that is suddenly perceived is that straying multiplicity of eyes in and on that body.

Around this feminine drifting away, the dispossessed man's haunting feeling of paranoia crystallizes. (After all, the only man in Algiers who, in 1832, permits a foreign painter to penetrate into the harem, is precisely a former little pirate, now a conquered chaouch who is henceforth accountable to a French civil servant.)

In Algeria, it was precisely when the foreign intrusion began in 1830—an intrusion contained at all costs at the doorways of impoverished seraglios—that a gradual freezing up of indoor communication accompanied the parallel progressive French conquest of exterior space, an indoor communication becoming more and more deeply submerged: between the generations, and even more, between the sexes.

These women of Algiers—those who have remained motionless in Delacroix's painting since 1832—if it was possible yesterday to see in their frozen stare the nostalgic expression of happiness or of the softness of submission, today their desperate bitterness is what must strike our most sensitive nerve.

At the time of the heroic battles, woman was watching, woman was crying out: the gaze-that-was-witness throughout the battle, which ululations would prolong in order to encourage the warrior (a cry, extended, piercing the horizon like an infinite abdominal gurgling, a sexual call in full flight).

But, throughout the nineteenth century, the battles were lost one after the other, further and further to the south of the Algerian territories. The heroes have not yet stopped biting the dust. In that epic, women's looks and voices continue to be perceived from a distance, from the other side of the frontier that should separate us from death, if not from victory.

But for those born in the age of submission, feudals or proletarians, sons or lovers, the scene remains, the watching women haven't moved, and it is with a retrospective fear that the men began to dream of that look.

Thus, while outside an entire society partitions itself into the duality of the vanquished and the victorious, the autochthons and the invaders, in the harem, reduced to a shack or a cave, the dialogue has become almost definitively blocked. If only one could force that single spectator body that remains, encircle it more and more tightly in order to forget the defeat! . . . But every movement that might recall the fury of the ancestors is irremediably solidified, redoubling the immobility that makes of woman a prisoner.

In the oral culture of Algeria, primarily in the thoroughly occupied small towns, there develops the almost unique theme of the wound, which comes to replace the lively unpredictability of the expression of ironic desire, in poetry, in song, and even in the patterns of the slow or frenzied dances.

The fact that the first encounter of the sexes is not possible except through the marriage ritual and its ceremonies sheds light on the nature of an obsession that profoundly puts its mark on our social and cultural being. An open wound is etched into the woman's body through the assumption of a virginity that is furiously deflowered and the martyrdom of which is consecrated by the marriage in a most trivial manner. The wedding night essentially becomes a night of blood. Not because the partners become better acquainted or, even less, because of pleasure, but a night of blood that is also a night of the gaze and of silence. Hence the razor-sharp chorus of long cries uttered by the other women (a sisterhood of spasms that tries to take flight in the blind night), hence also the din of the gunpowder in order to better envelop that same silence.

Now, this look of the sex steeped in blood sends us back to the first look, that of the mother at term, ready to give birth. The image of her rises up, ambivalent and flooded with tears, completely veiled and at the same time delivered naked, her legs streaked with blood in spasms of pain.

The Koran says, and this has been often repeated: "Paradise is found at the feet of mothers." If Christianity is the adoration of the Virgin Mother, Islam, more harshly, understands the term mother to mean woman without pleasure, even before seeing her as the source of all tenderness. Thereby obscurely hoping that the eye-that-is-sex, the one who has given birth, is no longer a threat. Only the birthing mother has the right to look.

III

As the war of liberation in Algeria was just barely getting started, Picasso, from December 1954 to February 1955, goes to live every day in the world of Delacroix's "Women of Algiers." There he comes face-to-face with himself and erects around the three women, and with them, a completely transformed universe: fifteen canvases and two lithographs carrying the same title.

It moves me to think that the Spanish genius presides in this manner over a changing in the times.

As we entered our "colonial night," the French painter offered us his vision that, the admiring Baudelaire notes, "breathes I don't know what heady perfume of evil haunts that leads us rather quickly toward the unplumbed limbo of sadness." That perfume of evil haunts came from quite far off and will have become even more concentrated.

Picasso reverses the malediction, causes misfortune to burst loose, inscribes in audacious lines a totally new happiness. A foreknowledge that should guide us in our everyday life.

Pierre Daix remarks: "Picasso has always liked to set the beauties of the harem free." Glorious liberation of space, the bodies awakening in dance, in a flowing outward, the movement freely offered. But also the preservation of one of the women, who remains hermetic, Olympian, suddenly immense. Like a suggested moral, here, of a relationship to be found again between the old, adorned serenity (the lady, formerly fixed in her sullen sadness, is motionless from now on, but like a rock of inner power) and the improvised bursting out into an open space.

For there is no harem any more, its door is wide open and the light is streaming in; there isn't even a spying servant any longer, simply another woman, mischievous and dancing. Finally, the heroines—with the exception of the queen, whose breasts, however, are bursting out—are totally nude, as if Picasso was recovering the truth of the vernacular language that, in Arabic, designates the "unveiled" as "denuded" women. Also, as if he were making that denuding not only into a sign of an "emancipation," but rather of these women's rebirth to their own bodies. Two years after this intuition of the artist, there appeared the descendants, the carriers of the bombs, in the Battle of Algiers. Are these women merely the sisters-companions of the nationalist heroes? Certainly not, for everything takes place as if the latter, in isolation, outside of the clan, had made

a long trek back, from the 1920s to almost 1960, in order to find their "sisters-lovers" again, and that in the shadow of the prisons and the brutal treatment by the legionnaires.

As if the guillotine and those first sacrificed in the coldness of the dawn were needed for young girls to tremble for their blood brothers and to say so.¹⁰ The ancestral accompaniment had, until then, been the ululation of triumph and of death.

It is a question of wondering whether the carriers of the bombs, as they left the harem, chose their most direct manner of expression purely by accident: their bodies exposed outside and they themselves attacking other bodies? In fact, they took those bombs out as if they were taking out their own breasts, and those grenades exploded against them, right against them.

Some of them came back later with their sex electrocuted, flayed through torture.

If rape, as a fact and a "tradition" of war, is in itself horribly banal ever since wars have existed, it became—when our heroines were its victims of expiation—the cause of painful upheaval, experienced as trauma by the whole of the Algerian collective. The public condemnation of it through newspapers and legal intervention certainly contributed to the spread of scandalous repercussions: the words that named it became, where rape was concerned, an explicit and unanimous condemnation. A barrier of words came down in transgression, a veil was shredded in front of a threatened reality, but one whose repression was too strong not to return. Such repression submerged a solidarity in misery that for a moment had been effective. What words had uncovered in time of war is now being concealed again underneath a thick covering of taboo subjects, and in that way, the meaning of a revelation is reversed. Then the heavy silence returns that puts an end to the momentary restoration of sound. Sound is severed once again. As if the fathers, brothers, or cousins were saying: "We have paid plenty for that unveiling of words!" Undoubtedly forgetting that the women have inscribed that statement into their martyred flesh, a statement that is, however, penalized by a silence that extends all around.

Sound severed once again, the gaze once again forbidden, these are what reconstruct the ancestral barriers. "A perfume of evil haunts," Baudelaire said. There is no seraglio any more. But the "structure of the seraglio" n attempts to impose its laws in the new wasteland: the law of invisibility, the law of silence.

Only in the fragments of ancient murmuring do I see how we must look for a restoration of the conversation between women, the very one that Delacroix froze in his painting. Only in the door open to the full sun, the one Picasso later imposed, do I hope for a concrete and daily liberation of women.

February 1979 Women of Algiers in Their Apartment

Translated from the French by Marjolijn de Jager.

Appendix 2:

Figure 1: The Barque of Dante (Dante and Virgil in the underworld) 1822, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/the-barque-of-dante-dante-and-virgil-in-the-underworld-1822-1>

Figure 2: Scenes from The Massacre of Chios, 1822, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



<https://medias.gazette-drouot.com/prod/medias/mediatheque/51411.jpg>

Figure 3: The Combat of the Giaour and Hassan, 1826 version, oil on canvas, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, U.S.A.



Figure 4: The Combat of the Giaour and Hassan, 1835 version, Found in the collection of Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris.



<https://www.artres.com/C.aspx?VP3=ViewBox&VBID=2UN3654S73Y48&VBIDL=&SMLS=1&RW=1349&RH=625>

Figure 5: The Death of Sardanapalus, 1827, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/death-of-sardanapalus-1827-1>

Figure 6: Liberty Leading the People, 1830, Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/the-liberty-leading-the-people-1830>

Figure 7: View of Tangier, 1832, watercolor and pencil on paper, Musée du Louvre, Department of Graphic Arts, Paris, France.



<https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/view-of-tangier/>

Figure 12: Arab Fantasia, 1832, Watercolor, Musée de Louvre, Paris, France



Figure13 : Morocco Horsemen in Military Action, 1832, Oil on canvas, Musée du Fabre, Montpellier France.



Figure 14: Saada, The Wife of Abraham Ben Chimol, and Préciciada, one of Their Daughters, 1832, Watercolor, The Museum of Art New York



Figure 15: Jewish Bride, 1832, Watercolor, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.



Figure 16: A Jewish Wedding in Morocco, 1941, Oil on Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

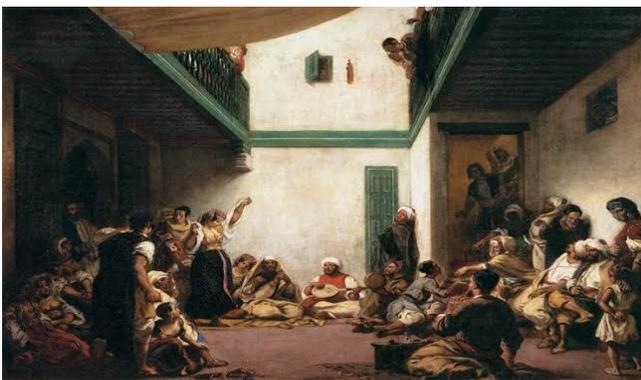


Figure 17: The Sultan of Morocco and on his canvas, Entourage, 1945, Oil, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, France.



Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix, Self-Portrait, 1860.

