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**The Algerian War theme in Anglo-
American Literature**
The Case of Robert Irwin's Novel: *The Mysteries of Algiers*

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The Requirements for the Degree of Master

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dear family especially my parents and to all my friends and classmates.

Acknowledgments

I would like to show gratitude to Allah who guided me to this moment. My thanks to my supervisor Mr. Khalfa Sayah for his great help, precious advice and patience. I also benefited a lot from his sharp efforts as a teacher so my highest gratitude goes to him. My warmest thanks go also to all the teachers who taught me throughout all my education.

Abstract

This dissertation thesis deals with the Algerian War theme in Anglo-American literature, the war had been a subject of literary production in the Anglo-American range during a period between the sixties and the eighties. This study investigates the scope that the Algerian War took in the Anglo-American literary production, the motives of the writers and the characteristics of those literary works. The aim is to shed light on this particular area that have a significance to the Algerian academia since it deals with the most important period in the Algerian contemporary history. This study uses a comparative approach between fiction and historical records, to find out how the Algerian War is represented from an Anglo-American point of view. the study case in this study is *The Mysteries of Algiers*, a novel by the British writer Robert Irwin. The research outcomes suggest that the Algerian War was a topic of interest to some Anglo-American writers. In addition, They were, in general, sympathetic with the Algerian cause, as a reaction to the atrocities of war. Beside that they had knowledge about the specificities of the Algerian War, however, their view is guided by a western (orientalist) view when it comes to deal with the Algerian people and culture. This research opens the gate to further discussions concerning other aspects of the Algerian War literary representations in English, not forgetting the Algerian presence in the Anglo-American Literature concerning other periods.

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General Introduction

Themes are the central topic (or topics) of any literary work, Studying themes means studying that topic through a study case, it is a kind of a reverse process to the creation of the work itself, a reverse process of the author's job, which is composing a narrative inspired by an actual phenomena, theme study is a mean to identify and analyze Those phenomena. This thesis is a literary theme study. Our phenomenon is the Algerian War, a conflict occurred in 1954 and lasted seven years. For decades after, it had an importance as a thematic area to both Algerians and French. Since this study is an English degree oriented, the focus is specified in the production of English language writers and novelists, native ones, in other words, Anglo-Americans (Anglo-Saxon) which is a term used to relates to, or characterizes of Anglo-Saxons, their descendants, or their language or culture, (English. American Heritage Dictionary, 2016); which is in our case, the novel: *The Mysteries of Algiers* (released in 1988) by the British historian, novelist and writer of Arabic literature, Robert Irwin (1946-). In *The Mysteries of Algiers* by Robert Irwin, the author accurately depicts the Algerian War to the extent that one can draw parallels between the novel and the Historical records of the Algerian War. For the motives of this study are first, the Algerian War is the most important event in the contemporary Algerian history. Second, comprehending how Anglo-Americans see the War, can give us an idea about the international reputation of the Algerian war considering that the Anglo-Saxon culture is the dominant culture in the world. Third, it is interesting to discover how relevant the local culture and history to the foreign literature.

This thesis is trying to answer the following questions:

-Did the Algerian War inspire Anglo-Saxons to create fiction? Then how vast is the scope that the Algerian War took in the English literature library?

-What are the characteristics of the Algerian War theme? And is it relevant to the actual historical record?

The hypothesis of this dissertation suggests that The Algerian War had become a fertile topic which inspired fiction creation among Anglo-American writers, and that fiction embraced the nature of the Algerian war which is mainly violence, torture, that elements created a unique theme.

The sources we came across in the course of research varied in terms of function to the study. The most relevant studies are those concerning the literary representations of the Algerian War by Anglo-American writers which are quite rare, except of some articles, such as: “Anglo-Saxon Literary and Filmic Representations of the French Army in Algeria” by Philip Dine (?-), the Professor and Head of French Department at the National University of Ireland and the writer of *Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film 1954–1992*, Philip Dine is an expert in that area, he also published similar works about French literary representations of the Algerian War as well, the second article is: “The Algerian War through the Prism of Anglo-Saxon Literature, 1954-66” by Michael Brett (1923-2000), an expert in the History of North Africa. Those are very relevant articles to the targeted topic of this dissertation. For definitions and short biographies we relayed heavily on Encyclopedia Britannica, since it is a non-free encyclopedia like Wikipedia, its articles are written by experts and academics. For words and concepts, we used dictionaries like Merriam Webster, oxford learner dictionary, Collins dictionary, American heritage dictionary (all of them are websites)...etc. In the first chapter the need for a specialized dictionary occurred when Marxist terms were needed to be defined, so we used: *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism* by Jozef Wilczynski (1922-1984). Concerning the historical records, we came across several books, articles and filmed

documentaries. One of the sources that provide a modern overall study of the Algerian War is: *The Algerian War, The Algerian Revolution* by Natalya Vince (? -) a reader in North African and French Studies at the University of Portsmouth, UK. She is the author of *Our Fighting Sisters, Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954–2012* (2015), (Vince, 2020, p7), the book is a neutral gathering of different views of the Algerian War history. Concerning the study case in this thesis is *The Mysteries of Algiers*, 21 chapter thrill novel (180 pages). We chose *The Mysteries of Algiers* among other Algerian war themed novels because it is the most popular one: “Perhaps most notable of these is Robert Irwin’s *The Mysteries of Algiers* (1988), a work which the author himself has been conspicuously keen to promote.” (Dine, 2002). Another important source which serve as a background about what drove Irwin to write about Algerian War; his memoirs (*Memoirs of a Dervish*) recalling the summer he spent in Algeria the year 1964, were which he converted to Islam and joined a Sufi monastery.

The importance of this thesis ley on the fact that the Anglo-American literary production concerning the Algerian War remained mainly untouched especially in Algeria, even in the Anglo-American academic zone; there are few articles about it. So it was an opportunity to provide the Algerian bibliography with such study. For the methodology of this thesis is a comparative study between fiction and real historical context. So the method is analyzing the study case text and selecting what can be related to the Algerian War, then compare it with the actual event or any other cultural or social details from academic sources. Quoting from the study case would be essential to provide the reader with the targeted samples from the study case as well as the historical documents which the later works as a control, which leads to the structure of this paper, there are three chapters, the first chapter deals with the theoretical issues concerning the general topic which is the Algerian War beside the ideologies encountered in *The*

Mysteries of Algiers that is important to elaborate. The second chapter is about the representations of the Algerian War by Anglo-American writers, especially, the common features between those works. The third chapter deals with the elements of the Algerian War theme, extracted from the study case novel.

Chapter One:
Theoretical Framework

Analyzing a literary work is demanding, according to what topics the work itself is engaging in, the work we are encountering in this study is *The Mysteries of Algiers* by Robert Irwin, it deals with the last years of the Algerian war. Which is, as a historical context, a very complicated struggle in terms of its nature (guerrilla warfare, intelligence and counter-intelligence), its factors, its results and the number of people effected (million and a half Algerian victims, a million European settlers caused to leave the country permanently), but most importantly in this chapter is the ideological contrast between the colonial power and the revolutionary rebels. In this chapter we will discuss the theories and ideas that collectively helped building the novel.

I.1.The Terminology of the Algerian War:

The name of any political event reflects the position of the side naming it.

Considering the Algerian War, Natalya Vince¹ did an overall study of that issue in her book *The Algerian War, The Algerian Revolution*. She found that from a French point of view, the Algerian War was not considered a War till 1999, when the French parliament passed a law to rename the ‘operations in North Africa’ to the ‘Algerian War’ (Guerre d’Algérie); a similar issue appeared in *The Mysteries of Algiers*, while Raoul Demeulze (young lawyer who is sympathetic with the Arabs) called it a war, Philippe (as a French military in public) had another choice: “Raoul and Philippe had locked horns over the conduct of the present war – or containment operation as Philippe pompously called it.” (Irwin, 1988, p7), in another spot Philippe (as his true self) said: “...like me, believes that the French are going to lose this war.” (Irwin, 1988, p13). Back to the passed law, the term ‘Algerian War’, opposite to what it suggests,

¹ Natalya Vince is Reader in North African and French Studies at the University of Portsmouth, UK. She is the author of *Our Fighting Sisters, Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954–2012* (2015), which was the winner of the 2016 Women’s History Network Book Prize.(Vince, 2020, p7)

is not a neutral term and serves a French perspective as well. The recently emerging term is the ‘French Algerian War’ which is not “satisfactory “because it means an even struggle between two similar powers, not the fact that the sides are in one hand a colonial power and in the other are guerrillas² within a civilian population. That is why the Algerians call it ‘the Algerian Revolution’ or ‘War of National Liberation’ (Vince, 2020, p13). Some scholars see that “the different terminology used to refer to the war should be used simultaneously to reflect the multiple ways in which the war has been understood and interpreted, both at the time and subsequently” (Vince, 2020, p13). For that, Natalya Vince chose to compose her book’s title using both. We chose the name ‘Algerian War’ for this study because it is the name used, primarily, on the official level in the Anglo-Saxon scope. Encyclopedia Britannica for example uses primarily the term ‘Algerian War’ as an article title while the term ‘Algerian War of Independence’ is a secondary one, for that, it was more convenient to search using the term ‘Algerian War’ than the secondary choices.

I.2. A Summary of the Plot of *the Mysteries of Algiers*:

To make the reader of this study relevant to the characters and capable of comprehending quotes, we provided him with a summary of the plot:

The plot have the form of a journey (between 1959 and 1960). Philippe Roussel (Foreign Legion³ officer) is the protagonist, a former French veteran in Indochina, he had been drifted to the Algerian Sahara. His last days in Vietnam changed him into a devoted Marxist, for that he

² A person who engages in irregular warfare especially as a member of an independent unit carrying out harassment and sabotage.(Merriam-Webster, 2022)

³ A body of foreign volunteers serving in an army, especially that of France. (Collins English Dictionary, 2022)

took the side of FLN⁴. Working undercover and providing FLN with information. One day, while he was investigating Mercier's (his friend from Indochina) murder and because of Chantal de Serkissian (intelligence agent and his mistress), his cover was disclosed in a meeting of French Army leaders (including his barracks chief, Colonel Joinville and his colleague Lieutenant Schwab) preparing for a Military coup. so he had to flee the barracks to be lost in the desert for days until a group of nomads (turned to be FLN) took him (unconsciously) to Laghouat, where Zora, the wife of Al-Hadi ben Shaykhoun (Philippe's link to Tughril, his FLN commander), took care of him. Raoul Demeulze (the young lawyer of de Serkissian family) knew his hiding place and helped him escape Zora's house. After that he managed to find another source for his medication. (Eugene the pharmacist) how invites him to dinner. Philippe ended up murdering him with his wife Yvonne. Then, he traveled to Algiers using Eugene's car to report the coup in person to his FLN commander Tughril. Philippe succeeded to meet him through Nounourse (Algerine FLN agent and ex-con). It turns out that Tughril is actually Jalloud (psychology student). After checking his identity, they try to assassinate French figures and sabotage an anti-independent manifestation in Algiers which led to the failure of the coup. Finally Philippe was free of duty to solve his personal issues with Chantal.

Those were the key events and the key characters of *The Mysteries of Algiers* to help the reader of this thesis to understand the role of each character and the chronological order of events.

⁴ Abbreviation of the French: Front de libération nationale. It was the principal nationalist movement during the Algerian War and the sole legal and ruling political party of the Algerian state until other parties were legalized in 1989.(Europa World Year Book, 2014, p565)

I.3.War in Literature:

Since our study is dealing with the Algerian War theme, it is necessary to make a review of the war theme in general. Wars are frequent and major human experience since ancient times, we find epics, stories and poems of battles and victories:

The literature of war has existed since the first literary texts were written...The Iliad⁵ and The Odyssey⁶ reflect a culture of war...Even the ancient Sumerian epic Gilgamesh⁷ includes an epic battle with an enemy force that must be defeated. These literary works and many others that span the centuries since the classical era remind us that war is a constant in society and a topic that will continue to ensure critical debate. It is as universal as themes of love or death or time or human frailty. (Calloway, 2018).

War is also a matter of the present which made it a famous topic of publication. Since 1890, it has produced almost 23,000 books, essays, theses, dissertations...etc. (Calloway, 2018).

We can see now, the importance of War in the past as in the present which is reflected in the abundance of the literary production related to war throughout the history.

I.4. Post Colonialism theory in the novel:

The Algerian War is placed in history as “one of the most violent wars of decolonization of the Twentieth century” (Vince, 2020, p12). However, most of what had been written about it focused on the psychological impact of the war (atrocities and violence), neglecting somehow the aspects that gave the Algerian War its international reputation:

⁵ Epic poem in 24 books traditionally attributed to the ancient Greek poet Homer. It takes the Trojan War as its subject, though the Greek warrior Achilles is its primary focus. (Britannica. 2021)

⁶ Odyssey, epic poem in 24 books traditionally attributed to the ancient Greek poet Homer. The poem is the story of Odysseus, king of Ithaca, who wanders for 10 years trying to get home after the Trojan War. (Blumberg, 2021)

⁷ Ancient Mesopotamian odyssey recorded in the Akkadian language about Gilgamesh, the king of the Mesopotamian city-state Uruk.(Britannica. 2020)

For if much has been written about the impact of the war, and especially its psychological legacy, on the societies of the principal protagonists, France and Algeria, then very little has been said about its impact on the wider world. This is doubly ironic in that the Algerian revolution, precisely as an example of decolonization... (Dine, 2015)

It is well known that postcolonial theory⁸ emerged from influential writings like Frantz Fanon's⁹ *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, where the Algerian War was showcased as an example of 'the effects of colonialism' (Rosewall, 2020). In fact, Frantz Fanon starting point of his 'anti-colonial quest' was him working as head of the psychiatry department of Blida-Joinville Hospital from 1953 to 1956, treating Algerians and French soldiers, made him realize the effects of colonial violence on the human psychology. (Peterson, 2021).

There is a sort of commemoration for Frantz Fanon in *The Mysteries of Algiers*. When Chantal was searching Philippe's room, she found *Black Skin, White Masks* and she called him 'traitor' for having such a book (Irwin, 1988, p19). In another spot, when Philippe and Jalloud were waiting to enter the Verdun Hospital for Nervous Diseases in Algiers, they saw one of the guards screaming at an old Kabyle woman: "You cannot see Dr Fanon. We have no Dr Fanon here." (Irwin, 1988, p122). Perhaps Irwin here was making a fictional scene based on the fact that Frantz Fanon worked as a psychiatrist in Blida, so he must had a reputation between the

⁸ Body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world in the 18th through the 20th century.(Elam, 2019)

⁹ West Indian psychoanalyst and social philosopher known for his theory that some neuroses are socially generated and for his writings on behalf of the national liberation of colonial peoples. His critiques influenced subsequent generations of thinkers and activists.(Peterson, 2021)

locals as the ‘doctor of the poor’ or something in that range. After that Jalloud gave Philippe a tour inside the hospital, showing him different cases of mentally effected patients by French Army or police violence (see chapter three), as if Philippe was trying to follow Fanon’s steps in order to justify his anti-colonial attitudes, these attitudes are clear throughout the novel, like when he was arguing with Raoul about each other’s believes, Philippe said (after his collaboration with FLN was discovered): “Because it is going to lose. It is stupid to back losers. Colonialism is the last gasp of the crisis of capitalism.”(Irwin, 1988, p85). Such argument comes from his deep believe in Marxism¹⁰, which rejects colonialism and view it as a form of capitalism and responsible for global uneven development. (Watts, 2005)

I.5. Marxian theory in the novel:

Marxism is another field we get to explore reading *The Mysteries of Algiers*. Considering that Philippe is Marxist and he is our protagonist which we travel as reader through the novel riding his mind (first person point of view). We get to see how a Marxist view the world, especially during a war between an imperial power and a liberation movement.

I.5.1.Philippe’s Marxism:

As we saw earlier Philippe have thoughts which cross with colonialism, those believes has driven him to embrace the Algerian cause against his own country and the army he served for years. Which reflect a deep devotion to Marxism. The starting point of a French soldier (Philippe) to have such believes was a re-education¹¹ camp outside Lang Trang¹². He was took as

¹⁰ A body of doctrine developed by Karl Marx and, to a lesser extent, by Friedrich Engels in the mid-19th century. It originally consisted of three related ideas: a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political program. (Chambre et al, 2021)

¹¹ Prison camps operated by the Communist government of Vietnam following the end of the Vietnam War. In these camps, the government imprisoned up to 300,000 former military officers, government workers and supporters of the former government of South Vietnam. (Sagan,2016)

¹² Perhaps fictional, a village in the gulf of Tonkin, forty miles from Hanoi, Vietnam. (Irwin, 1988, p36)

a prisoner in the aftermaths of Dien Bien Phu¹³. There, he had been taught Marxism in an unusual way:

...it was like that at the political education center Lang Trang. Everything they gave me to drink just went straight through me. Horrible sores developed on my legs. The sores attracted bugs. If I had my hands free I used to try and catch the bugs and eat them. They never allowed me to sleep. Lights shone day and night...They made me beg to be given permission to drink urine... I look back on Lang Trang with nostalgia and on my educators with respect...Of course they showed me the truths of Marxism. But it is not just that. The generals and politicians who sent us to Dien Bien Phu in such a hurry, once Dien Bien Phu was lost and that strategy seen to be not so smart, what hurry did they take to get us captives out of the hands of the Viet Minh¹⁴? They didn't really care...we had been abandoned by our own generals. (Irwin, 1988, p54-55)

We can understand from that quote that Philippe did not encounter Marxism in a normal way, he was forced into it as a prisoner under torture, this is clearly not a healthy or fair way in terms of embracing a new believe with conviction. It is more close to a brainwash process, which he confess and justifies when he said:

¹³ Decisive engagement in the first Indochina War between France and the Viet-Minh (1946–54). The Viet Minh victory in this battle effectively ended the eight-year-old war (Indochina war). (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015)

¹⁴ Organization that led the struggle for Vietnamese independence from French rule. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015)

...for sure, some people would say that I have been brainwashed by the Viet Minh...What is this freedom? Who is not conditioned? Life brainwashes everyone. My masters at the re-education center at Lang Trang on the Gulf of Tonkin simply took out what my parents, the lycée and Saint-Cyr¹⁵ put in. (Irwin, 1988, p46)

In addition, the way of him being thankful and respectful about his torturers (which he calls masters) and look back to the whole experience with nostalgia, indicates some sort of ‘Stockholm syndrome’¹⁶, look to the contradiction of Philippe when he admit that those captured him (interrogators, teachers and educators) were cruel, but in the same time, it was a ‘care’ in their part. In the end of the first quote he was likely blaming his superiors whom did not negotiate for them sooner, which is apparently another reason drove him to be attached to his capturers. He even consider that moment in his life as a moment of ‘rebirth’: “My enlightenment was born in pain and hardship. I guess that Chantal thinks her boyfriend is some good-looking ox graduated out of Saint-Cyr, but the truth is that she is being violated by a Vietcong¹⁷ peasant, for my spiritual rebirth, the birth of the me that I am”(Irwin, 1988, p36), “I was born in Indochina” (Irwin, 1988, p63). All that indicates that Philippe’s Marxism is a result of a trauma not a reasonable intellectual learning; in addition to his ego (‘my enlightenment’), we can consider him as a fanatic Marxist.

¹⁵ Special Military School of Saint-Cyr, a French military academy.

¹⁶ Condition in which hostages develop a psychological bond with their captors during captivity. (Jameson, 2010)

¹⁷ The guerrilla force that, with the support of the North Vietnamese Army, fought against South Vietnam (late 1950s–1975) and the United States (early 1960s–1973). (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020)

I.5.2Marxian Class Theory:

Through Philippe (despite what have been said), the reader can learn about the Marxian way of thinking. One of the pillars of Marxism is the class theory which assists that the position of an individual is determined by their role in the production process and according to that same factor the ideological and the political awareness is also determined. (Parkin, 1979), according to that theory, society can be categorized into different classes. Philippe always tends to classify and judge people according to that; starting with Chantal, she is from the Bourgeoisie¹⁸ class due to her father's wealth: "The de Serkissians own vineyards, olive groves, tobacco plantations, a bauxite mine and a casino." (Irwin, 1988, p22). In another place Philippe judged Al-Hadi and Zora by calling them bourgeois, only because they purchased an expansive furniture, which is for him, not appropriate for a revolutionary family:

Looking round the room and at its French furniture and tapestry...what I see in this ill-conceived clutter is clear evidence of al-Hadi's and Zora's determination to belong to the bourgeoisie. After all that this woman has gone through and all that the revolution should have taught her, all she wants to be is a big bourgeoisie and hoard expensive furniture and clothes. (Irwin, 1988, p79)

Moreover, Philippe judges his own life decisions according to how far or close it got him from 'evil bourgeoisie'; once, while he was thinking about his youth, he was thankful that he chose a military career instead of working in pharmaceuticals: "It is all amazing drivel...If I had become

¹⁸ A term commonly used by Marxists to denote the wealthy ruling class in a capitalist society. The term originated in France in the late Middle Ages meaning the urban class of freemen of common birth acquiring wealth in the form of capital (not land).(Wilczynski,1981)

a pharmaceuticals salesman in Grenoble¹⁹...I find it hard to imagine quite how evil I would have become, the million little evils and petty lies of my everyday bourgeois existence, all contributing to the single great evil of capitalism.” (Irwin, 1988, p96). So, according to Philippe, a successful domestic life is considered as bourgeois and therefore ‘evil’ while his military career serving, what he would call, an ‘oppressing power’ and committing crimes against colonized people (he served in Indochina and Algeria) is less ‘evil’, just because it put him, by coincidence, in the path of struggle: “No pharmaceutical salesman from Grenoble could have put himself through what I have been through for the sake of the cause²⁰. To end up wounded, drugged and threatened by a young fascist maniac with a gun (referring to Chantal)”. (Irwin, 1988, p88). Ironically, even as a Marxist he committed a criminal acts of murder (but because they served ‘the cause’, they are justified (see chapter three) in the whole process of ‘Class Struggle’ which is one of the cornerstones of Marxism, because it explains all history as struggle between conflicting social classes (Wilczynski, 1981).

Philippe also uses Class Struggle as a tool to explain different sorts of phenomenon; Zora hates Philippe mainly for him killing her husband: “Captain Roussel, you are not just a bad man, you are full of folly. They told me you killed my man. Now you tell me how you killed my man...I do not think you are a man at all. You are a djinn, a very evil djinn.” (Irwin, 1988, p80). Zora made it clear for Philippe. However, he had put this hate in the context of class struggle, when he felt that she was quite aggressive and uncomfortable while she was nursing him (before she openly confronted him about her husband):

¹⁹City, capital of in southeastern France (Dauphiné), southeast of Lyon. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017)

²⁰Referring to the ultimate goal of the struggle from a Marxian perspective.

I think she hates me. Objectively I approve of that. She, her late husband and I - and the Arabs in the desert and the oppressed women of Algeria - we are all on the same side. Even so, it is good for people like Zora to hate people like me. For though I am on her side, it is still good for her to hate the man, the European...the colonialist officer...Class envy is one of the greatest forces for good in the world. Hatred is the engine of change. It is good to hate the rich, the powerful and the successful...I accept that and I understand and approve of Zora's ambivalent attitude towards me. (Irwin, 1988, p47)

We can see that Philippe here is seeing an individual situation through the colored glass of Marxism and disfigure the hate of Zora and every Arab towards every European to a 'good thing' that change the world to the best; that can contrast with the religious moral attitude that condemn envy and hate, however, for Philippe even murder is justified by objectivity within class struggle.

Another character Philippe has classified according to the class theory is Nounourse. When he started talking about his criminal past, Nounourse (a surname means teddy bear in French, his real name is unmentioned) proudly described how he used to make living using his physical strength to guard nightclubs and protect drug sellers, Philippe, and in a thorough way, shows us the 'intellectual process' of Marxist social classification: "Nounourse is one of 'the dangerous class', the social scum...He belongs to the class that Marx calls 'the lumpenproletariat'²¹. As Marx describes it in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, the lumpenproletariat consists of 'vagabonds, discharged soldiers...beggars..." (Irwin, 1988, p180). Notice that Philippe here is showing his reference to support his claim but the author

²¹Ragged proletariat (working class), in German. A Marxian term denoting the worst elements ousted from different social classes and reduced to poverty by the conditions peculiar to capitalism.(Wilczynski,1981)

made him mistaken in telling the title of the book which is *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* or *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* not *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, to indicate the lack of intellectual competence Philippe had (see chapter three: Marxism). Back to Nounourse, in the eyes of Philippe he belongs to a class that lack ‘revolutionary potential’ so the FLN have no use for him and they must expelled him. For that, Philippe tried to convince Jalloud:

Ex-criminals are not to be relied upon, at least not as the leaders of revolutionary cadres. Listen to what Engels²² says, “Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action to be a traitor to the movement.” For your own good, I suggest that you get rid of him.’(Irwin, 1988, p135)

According to the Marxian theory of class, Philippe tends to categorize, classify then judge any character he encounters, in his social and professional life.

I.5.3 Historical Materialism:

Another cornerstone of Marxism is the historical materialism²³. Philippe uses that concept to judge the course of history, to the extent that he predict future, the proletariat²⁴ for example will eventually control the world hence the oppressed will overcome the oppressor. He then make a projection on the historical context of his present; the result is a strong believe in the final outcome no matter where the events are going. That sort of thinking is expressed by

²² German socialist philosopher. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015)

²³ Philosophical, economic and sociological doctrine, also known as the materialist interpretation (or conception) of history. It essentially consists in the application of Dialectical Materialism to explain historical events, processes and developments in society. It emphasizes the role of basic material human needs, the development of PRODUCTION FORCES and changing PRODUCTION RELATIONS as the fundamental determinants of the course of history and progress.(Wilczynski, 1981)

²⁴ The class of industrial wage earners who, possessing neither capital nor production means, must earn their living by selling their labor.(Collins English Dictionary, 2014)

Philippe in this quote, after days of being lost in Sahara, a 'near death experience' made him renounce his deepest thoughts:

...I am exactly the man I wish to be in exactly the place I wish to be. I shall certainly die, but it is no less certain that my cause will triumph. It is only a matter of understanding the laws of history, for it is certain there are such laws. Of course the Marxist laws of historical development²⁵ cannot predict the behavior of an individual from moment to moment, no more than a geologist can determine the movement of an individual grain of sand, but the pattern of these dunes, the overall movement of the individual grains of sand in their near infinite numbers is predictable given a knowledge of the prevailing direction of the winds. It is like that with history the direction is determinable²⁶, once one has understood the labor theory of value²⁷. And having understood what direction it is that history is traveling, one would be a fool not to travel in it oneself. It is not because the proletariat is the suffering class that we fight for it, but because it is ultimately the triumphant class. (Irwin, 1988, p60)

Maybe Philippe here is hallucinating or had a heat stroke, nevertheless he expressed his most profound thoughts about Marxism, and especially how he is confident that he is going in the

²⁵ The Marxist view of history is that history is governed by universal laws and that according to these laws, a society moves through a series of stages, with the transition between stages being driven by class struggle.[42] These stages are: Slave society, feudal society, capitalist society, socialist society and finally the world communist society. (Dirlik,1985)

²⁶ The doctrine that all events, including human choices and decisions, are necessarily determined by motives, which are regarded as external forces acting on the will. (Ologies & -Isms, 2008)

²⁷ The Marxist doctrine of prices, according to which value is determined by the socially necessary labour time embodied in the product and that individual market prices are, on the whole, proportionate to values.(Wilczynski,1981)

same direction of history, even if he failed to accomplish his mission, the tiny individual effort he is making gets its significance from being in harmony with the 'laws of historical development'. In the other hand, the oppressors, the bourgeois are doomed to failure because they are moving upstream: "Those who do not move in the direction in which the historical process is moving are condemned to impotence. I am not without compassion for them, but it will be as if their lives had never been." (Irwin, 1988, p45)

The Marxian view of history is giving Philippe a Birdseye view of his surrounding course of events; another tool to rise above his rivals and judge 'others' (no other character in the novel shares Marxism believe with Philippe).

Perhaps, because Philippe did embrace Marxism through a trauma, he took it very seriously; he classify others then judge and sometimes, he executes according to his judgments (murder). He knows a lot about it despite his weak intellectual abilities. Those are the criteria of a fanatic despite what it seems like a rational organized thinking.

Conclusion:

In this chapter we looked to different theories and ideologies appeared in *The Mysteries of Algiers*, postcolonial theory and Marxism, and few other conceptual issues concerning the Algerian war. Note that the author is not necessarily a Marxist or post-colonialist, but it was a tool to reflect the ideological dispute between the colonial and colonized and to put the Algerian War among international changes that took place at that time (cold War and decolonization)

Chapter Two:

The Algerian War in Anglo-American Literature

The Algerian War was a Major event in the end of the fifties' France; it caused the collapse of the Fourth Republic, the return of De Gaulle to power and the repatriation of one million European settlers (Batty, 1984), for the west it was certainly noticeable. That led to a number of novelists and filmmakers to produce works concerning that conflict. So what was the starting point of such orientation towards the Algerian War topic? What were the Features of such works?

II.1. the Beginning of Interest:

For the British and the American writers and filmmakers, they were motivated toward The Algerian War due to different reasons. Philip Dine²⁸, believes that there were different reasons. First, the interest for The Algerian War started when The FLN gained some international success, particularly after the incident of Sakhiet-Sidi-Youssef, the Tunisian frontier village that was bombed by the French air force in February 1958: “a ‘blunder’ which required the intervention of an Anglo-American ‘good officers’ team in order to restore normal relations between the France of Félix Gaillard²⁹ and the Tunisia of Habib Bourguiba³⁰.”(Dine, 2002). The second reason was the rise of awareness about torture in The Battle of Algiers and other pacification methods adopted by the French Army in Algeria due to some publications, such as Henri Alleg's³¹ *The Question. Lieutenant in Algeria*. It was translated and published in

²⁸ This chapter will be based mostly on his article “Anglo-Saxon Literary and Filmic Representations of the French Army in Algeria”

²⁹ Félix Gaillard d'Aimé: was a French Prime Minister under the Fourth Republic from 1957 to 1958.

³⁰ Habib Bourguiba: a Tunisian lawyer, nationalist leader and statesman who led the country from 1956 to 1987 as Prime minister of the Kingdom of Tunisia then as the first President of Tunisia.

³¹ Henri Alleg: Was a French-Algerian journalist, director of the Alger républicain newspaper, and a member of the French Communist Party.

New York in 1957 and London in 1958, prefaced by Sartre (1905-1980)³²; it condemned the brutality of the repression and exposed the use of torture by the French police and army (Brett, 2002). So: “It should come as no surprise, therefore, to discover that a number of Anglo-Saxon (i.e. British and American) authors and film-directors should, throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, have taken a keen interest in the Franco-Algerian dispute.”(Dine, 2002). Third, the nature of the topic, the Algerian War provided authors with themes popular at that time (60s), mainly sexuality and violence in addition to Exoticism³³, ”...they look to the Algerian War as a topical, and conveniently exotic, backdrop for the sensational treatment of sex and violence...”(Dine, 2002)

Anglo-American writers and filmmakers did take an interest in the thematic area of the Algerian War, for moral and commercial motives.

II.2. Literary and Filmic Representations:

There are a considerable number of novels and films depicting The Algerian War. Philip Dine suggests that the exact amount is unclear, “The total number of such narratives is hard to estimate” (Dine, 2002); also he said that most of those works are the products of a particular period of time since most of this works are made between 1961 and 1971. We can name a group of those works with the year of first edition and a brief overview:

Novels:

³² Jean-Paul Sartre: French writer and existentialist philosopher.

³³ the quality of being exciting and unusual that something has because it is connected with foreign countries (oxford learners dictionaries, 2021)

- Harry Whittington³⁴, *Guerrilla Girls*, (1961): group of FLN women fighters (European and Muslim), experience intimate relationships with other male fighters, and within each other's, while fighting the French Army in the Aurès mountains.
- Maurice Edelman³⁵, *The Fratricides*, (1963): newly came from Paris, the daughter of an Algerian neurosurgeon, is married to a man engaged with the OAS.
- Alan Williams³⁶, *Barbouze*, (1963): a journalist come to Algeria to spend the holiday and find himself within a terrorist war.
- Alan Sillitoe³⁷, *The Death of William Posters*, (1965): a factory worker from England travels to Spain, Morocco then Algeria.
- Alan Sillitoe, *A Tree on Fire*, (1967): the later worker disappeared into the Algerian desert fighting with the FLN.
- Francis Fytton³⁸, *The Nation Within*, (1967): FLN disturbance in Paris through a meeting of a Lebanese man and Muslim militant woman.
- Frederick Forsyth³⁹, *The Day of the Jackal* (1971): professional assassin who is contracted by the OAS, to kill Charles de Gaulle.

Films:

- Mark Robson⁴⁰, *Lost Command*, (1966): freed from a prison in Vietnam, a lieutenant comes to fight in Algeria by forming a paratrooper unit.
- Fred Zinnemann⁴¹, *The Day of the Jackal*, (1973): an adaptation of the same novel above.

The list contains American and British novelists and filmmakers, most of these works contains common indications towards sex and violence, because those works would be made for “their time and their perceived market” (Dine, 2002). Novels in the sixties (as for present) were products of consumption. Which mean that the teaser component and commercial objective is

³⁴ American mystery novelist and one of the pioneers of the paperback novel.

³⁵ British novelist.

³⁶ British novelist and writer of thrillers.

³⁷ British novelist and short story writer.

³⁸ British novelist.

³⁹ English novelist and journalist.

⁴⁰ Canadian-born American film director.

⁴¹ Austrian-born American film director.

present in most of those works. That means that certain features were common among such works.

II.2. Common Features:

II.2.1 Sexuality in the Mysteries of Algiers:

Sexuality is a key component in the literature of the sixties, knowing that this particular era started with the famous *Lady Chatterley's Lover*⁴² trial, which is an attempt from Penguin Books⁴³ to authorize the publishing of the complete version of a novel, that its first authorized version was censored (1932) due to its sexual content, the trial took place in 1960, it was a landmark for the sexual freedom, not only in literature and publishing but in social life in general, (Historyextra, 2021). There is a signal concerning this in *The Mysteries of Algiers* when Raoul suggested, as part of a conversation about hunting, “that the pleasure can be as great for the hunted as the hunter” (Irwin, 1988, p.29), then he proceeded to relate that pleasure to a sexual motive, even hide and seek game, in his opinion, is somehow a sexual experience. The reply to that comes from the old generation, Maurice de Serkissians (Chantal’s father): “When Maurice’s response came, it was more melancholy than angry. ‘Everything sexual these days. The young are supposed to live for nothing else. It’s fashionable now,’” (Irwin, 1988, p.29). Since most of the works discussing the Algerian War are made during this period, it is probable for this works to contain sexuality, starting from the cover:

⁴² English novel by the English writer DH Lawrence.

⁴³ British publishing company.

A number of the books consequently have lurid cover designs...which seek straightforwardly to titillate a ‘popular’, and undoubtedly male, audience.

Whittington’s title, *Guerrilla Girls*, is a particularly obvious appeal to the dubious attractions of the Algerian War as a source of ‘cheap thrills’, while the subtitle ‘The Female Legion of the Damned’ and the cover photographs remove any possible doubt as to the likely nature of the volume’s contents. (Dine, 2002, p140)

The cover which Philippe Dine is talking about indicates also one of the main tools used in such novels which is the “Femme Fatal” (French for lethal woman), a stock character⁴⁴, which portrays a very attractive woman and dangerous at the same time (dictionary.com, 2021). Such characters was heavily used in works depicting the Algerian War.

II.2.1.a Femme Fatal:

The femme fatal incarnation in our study case, *The Mysteries of Algiers*, is Chantal de Serkissian, she have the qualities of it. They are beauty, enchantment, sexual maturity, manipulating wit, and destruction of the male (ÖZDİNÇ, 2020)

Starting with the appearance, Chantal is very attractive and elegant woman: “she was both pretty and intelligent-looking” (Irwin, 1988, p.4). However, Chantal is not only a good looking French woman, the writer wanted the reader to imagine it according to the sixties’ fashion criteria, which is basically the American influence on beauty standards. Philippe describes Chantal as: “One sees many American girls like Chantal – strong teeth, strong jaws,

⁴⁴ A character in literature, theater, or film of a type quickly recognized and accepted by the reader or viewer and requiring no development by the writer (dictionary.com, 2021).

big bones...healthy diet, assurance that comes from family love and a good income.”(Irwin, 1988, p.21). About the good income, Philippe was referring to the wealth of her family, that wealth enabled Chantal to be extravagant about her appearance, and to be showcased in most desirable and luxurious way possible: “she produced an exotically carved cigarette holder. The dress she was wearing – an extraordinary Schiaparelli creation, low cut and of pink silk.”(Irwin, 1988, p.7), Schiaparelli is an Italian fashion designer that was living at that time (1890-1973), having such an item do express wealth.

For the other half of the femme fatal requirements, which is the lethality, Chantal did not appear killing anyone in the novel, however she have the ability, she is an agent in the SDECE⁴⁵, which means that she is likely to have a weapon and a license to use it in some situations. The nearest situation that express the dangerous side of Chantal is when she tricked Philippe by stealing his gun and threatening him:

Chantal is taking her time. She said that she was just going to remove her earrings...Then the door swings open and my doubts are answered.

‘Hands on your head, Philippe.’

My gun is in her hands. I know it is loaded. I do as she suggests. ‘Stand right where you are.’ And she sidles round me to reach the bed. ‘You can turn round now – but slowly, with your hands on your head. ’She has settled herself back comfortably against the pillows. Though she still holds the gun with both hands...

(Irwin, 1988, p.19)

⁴⁵ Section de la Documentation Extérieure et du Contre-espionnage or External Documentation and Counterespionage Service, secret intelligence and counterintelligence service that operates under the defense ministry of the French government.(Britannica, 2015)

Then Chantal started provoking Philippe with accusations of treason based on files she saw, until it seems to the reader that Philippe's cover is over, however it turns to be a joke: "She likes to flirt and play around a lot" (Irwin, 1988, p.53). Obviously, Chantal was not totally joking, she had her suspicions and tried to make a test. It was a demonstration of Chantal's seduction and intelligence skills. There are moments where the femme fatal image is disordered, Chantal is a charming woman but she has more dimensions, according to Philippe, she is a naive spoiled daughter of a rich man (she keeps calling her father "daddy"), and other times, contrasted with her beauty, she becomes a devoted fascist with fanatical thinking:

I detest and adore the woman, that body, those hips like a cavalry officer's and that mind like a sewer. Simultaneously angel and pig, she rises before my vision as the flying pig: She is committed to Action Française⁴⁶ of course. Daddy's estates are in hock to the Jews and the Masons. De Gaulle is a crypto-communist preparing to sell us out. (Irwin, 1988, p.53)

And that is a disorder of the femme fatal image because it must be, supposedly, a cold blooded beautiful agent, not to be emotional and ideologically driven, in a particular spot in the novel a monstrous side of Chantal is revealed when she co-participated in the mutilation of Raoul by cutting his nose.

Chantal did embodied the role of a femme fatale in the novel by being the armed attractive woman agent.

II.2.1.b Ouled Nail Dancers:

⁴⁶ Influential right-wing anti republican group in France during the first 40 years of the 20th century.(Britannica, 2015)

Sexuality in *The Mysteries of Algiers* does not move around Chantal alone, the local Arab women are also a matter of sexual attraction. When Philippe met al-Hadi in Laghouat he encounters the local tastes of female seduction, the famous Ouled Nail dancers:

It was actually a lodging house, almost a brothel, patronized by the dancing girls of the Ouled Nail when rooms elsewhere were full. The Ouled Nail women came from the south to towns like Bou Saada and Laghouat. They came to earn their dowries by dancing in public and engaging in prostitution. Then they went back to their tribes again, their dowries carried as jewelry and pierced coins about their bodies. (Irwin, 1988, p.71)

Ouled Nail were famous symbol of local female beauty in the colonial era due to: First, the prostitution as we read in the previous quote, Ouled Nail prostitutes were active throughout Algeria and North Africa to collect their dowry. Bernard B. Fall⁴⁷ (1926-1967) mentioned that fact in his book *Street Without Joy* when he was describing the French Army's attempts of providing their soldiers with a "controlled sexual release" during the Indochina War:

The girls themselves are volunteers, usually from the Oulad-Nail tribe of Constantine, whose beautiful women have made it a century-old tradition of serving as prostitutes throughout North Africa, until they had assembled sufficient amounts of money for their dowry. Once they have their dowry, they return to their villages, settle down with the home-town boys and become devoted family mothers ever after. (Fall, 1961, p127)

⁴⁷ Prominent Austro-Franco-American war correspondent, historian, political scientist, and expert on Indochina during the 1950s and 1960s.

Speaking of Indochina, Philippe mentioned in recalled memories from Dien Bien Phu about Ouled Naïl women that were brought to Indochina's French camps: "the Ouled Nail madames from the army's mobile field brothel"(Irwin, 1988, p.39). Bernard B. Fall witnesses: "In Indochina, the B.M.C.'s⁴⁸ functioned admirably well...all of a sudden to spot a two and half-ton truck loaded with the Oulad- Naïl in their gaily colored Algerian garb, shouting jokes at the soldiers. (Fall, 1961, p127)

Second, the French depictions of the Algerian Women, which was heavily affected by the orientalist view to the Algerian people and culture. Postcards for example (which was a widely used medium for touristic promoting at that time in addition to illustrations and paintings), used partially nude (sometimes full) photographs of Ouled Naïl women:" Algerians had to suffer the exotic gaze of photographers. Young Muslim girls from the Ouled Naïl were brought into make postcards, where they appeared bare to the waist, in order to affirm the virility of the colonialist gaze." (Bedjaoui, 2020).

We can see that sexuality played an important role in the literature concerning the Algerian war through the use of special sexual character types like femme fatal, and oriental forms of sexual seduction portrayed in Ouled Naïl women.

II.2.2 Exoticism and Orientalism:

Despite that Robert Irwin is an expert in Orientalism and Islamic civilization, *The Mysteries of Algiers* is not an orientalist work, however, since Algeria is the location, so it was suitable for him (as for the rest of the writers) to bring and use signals that convey Exoticism and

⁴⁸ Abriviation for *Bordels Mobiles de Campagne*, which is a mobile brothels used during World War I, World War II and the First Indochina War to supply prostitution services to French soldiers fighting in areas where brothels were unusual.

Orientalism, for ideas about the relationship and the contrast between the French and the Algerian cultures, especially how the French characters look to the Algerians.

II.2.2.a Exoticism:

There are many spots in the novel where Algeria and Algerians are shown and described as exotic. Exotic is the quality of being exciting and unusual. In the first page for example, and in the first step Mercier took in the Algerian land, the author gave an idea of how he saw Algeria:

Mercier had arrived off the...He had stood blinking on the overheating tarmac and marveled at the sharpness of everything – the air-control tower hacked out in hard-edged white against the brilliant blue sky, the stunning yellow hills in the distance and the fierce profiles of the Arab porters. (Irwin, 1988, p. 4)

So Mercier was stunned at first for a moment to comprehend the new environment that he is encountering for the first time. The climate, the poor vegetation and the “fierce” faces of the locals, which is for a foreigner, do give an exotic feeling. That was made also for the reader (which is in this case a western) to place him in that exotic mood.

Another example is when Philippe was in Zora’s care, and while he was under the morphine effect, he gazed into her face and started describing her facial features. Since Zora is an Arab woman she obviously had different features from a western woman, however, Philippe added another level away from a human normality, he said: “There is something reptilian in her face, not unattractive, but suggesting some sort of ancient pre-human wisdom and a resignation to the ways of the world”(Irwin, 1988, p. 72). We can see that he saw a rather mystical and animalistic features in an ordinary Arab woman from Laghouat. We can relate that to the ideas surrounding race, which was dominant at that time, which considered other races (non-European)

as less human or inferior. Anthropology⁴⁹ was the main scientific field responsible for that, and Algeria was a renowned territory for collecting and analyzing “specimens”:

...with photography, of more sophisticated means of communication and representation of the world. In Algeria, as in America, they were used to developing ethnographic⁵⁰ ideas based on theories about inferior races and other superior ones. Human types were photographed and classified. They were shown in schoolbooks. After the Orientalists’ lascivious images of natives under the sun, Algerians had to suffer the exotic gaze of photographers. (Bedjaoui, 2020)

Another spot in *The Mysteries of Algiers*, that suggests an exotic load to the novel is when Philippe was lost in the middle of the Algerian Sahara, he started mocking the idea of “French Algeria”, how a two completely different regions are considered as organically one country, so when he see the vast desert dunes, he started to compare it with the stereotypical France that he grew up in, and most known to the world:

La belle France, whole and indivisible from Dunkirk⁵¹ to Tamanrasset. France is a country whose two halves are joined by the Mediterranean...as I walk over and round these rolling and curving dunes, bleached of all colour by the noonday sun, that I am taking a walk in Metropolitan France⁵². Over there to the left, one might see the mairie, a tabac, some cafés and a few old men playing pétanque⁵³...only

⁴⁹ “The science of humanity,” which studies human beings in aspects ranging from the biology and evolutionary history of Homo sapiens to the features of society and culture that decisively distinguish humans from other animal species.(Barclay et al, 2022)

⁵⁰ Descriptive study of a particular human society or the process of making such a study. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022)

⁵¹A city in the most north of France.

⁵²Mainland France (European French territory).

⁵³Boules, French Jeu De Boules, also called Pétanque, French ball game. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022)

there is a very large sand dune in the way...One cannot see it, because of all the sand that is in the way, but it is there. Our legislators and map drawers tell us it is there, so it must be so... (Irwin, 1988, p. 59)

In the end the Exoticism was the way sometimes Algeria and Algerians were portrayed in the *The Mysteries of Algiers*, as foreign and unusual to the French (French characters in the novel) and the English reader in general.

II.2.2.b Orientalism:

Some of the authors who wrote about the Algerian war had an Orientalist heritage when it comes to imagine the Algerian topics:” especially the literary and artistic tradition of Orientalism and the supposed charms of the harem and the slave-market are never far away from the thinking of some of these writers and film-makers”(Dine, 2002, p138). For Robert Irwin, he is considered an Orientalist himself. He is the writer of *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*⁵⁴ which basically defends the Orientalists against Edward Said’s (1935-2003)⁵⁵*Orientalism*⁵⁶, especially the relation between Orientalism and imperialism (worldcat, 2022), we find in *The Mysteries of Algiers* references to that interest when Philippe encounters a place or an event that is considered folkloric or traditional. When Philippe entered the brothel in Laghouat he encountered the traditional Naili Dance. The author described that image in details:

⁵⁴ Robert Irwin’s non-fiction book that Discusses the history of Orientalism and criticizes Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. (worldcat, 2022)

⁵⁵ Palestinian American academic, political activist, and literary critic who examined literature in light of social and cultural politics and was an outspoken proponent of the political rights of the Palestinian people and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.(Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022)

⁵⁶ Best-known work of Edward Said and one of the most influential scholarly books of the 20th century. In it Said examined Western scholarship of the “Orient,” specifically of the Arab Islamic world (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022)

...where Shirina was performing. She stood and swayed in a long flounced dress. With every movement the coined turban and belt jingled. Then two women seated in the corner struck up on their tambourines and Shirina began the Dance of the Daggers...but the fiercely spiked bracelets warned the men to attempt nothing. Her eyes, brilliant in the midst of the dark kohl...In short it was the usual tatty bogus oriental stuff the Ouled Nail offered to sex-starved soldiers and tired commercial travelers.(Irwin, 1988, p.71)

The author here is trying to bring to the English reader the oriental mood he is familiar with. Originally, the dance of the dagger recalls a famous dance scene from *the Arabian Nights*, which Irwin is an expert in⁵⁷. The scene is from the story of Alibaba, when Morgiana dances with a dagger in her hand then kills the chief of the thieves with it. Notice that he described that as “In short it was the usual tatty bogus oriental stuff”, as if he is not even moved with such performance, like it is cheap thing to sell to tourists. Some of that can be returned to Philippe’s personal taste, however other orientalist mentions in the novel suggests that mocking attitude towards Orientalism as a way to view the Algerian reality. When Philippe entered the Kasbah he assumed what its outer appearance can suggest to a western tourist, however, he knew better than anyone, the true situation and the type of life people there are living which have nothing to do with the enchantments of the *Arabian Nights* :

A fanciful man might dream that he stood or walked in the Cairo of the Arabian Nights and revel in its mysteries. I have no time for such rubbish. What savour can there be in the stink of poverty? And certainly the Kasbah stinks – some of

⁵⁷ Jakeman, Jane (10 April 1999). "The Books Interview: Robert Irwin - No sympathy for the devil". The Independent.

the stink is shit and rotting vegetables...What sort of a literary turd can take pleasure in the Kasbah, a racial ghetto⁵⁸ and a cheap labour camp? This is the charmed world of Harun al-Rashid! And who is it who contemplates those thickly studded doors and windows covered with closely worked mashrabiyya⁵⁹ and seriously thinks that some sort of enchantment lies beyond them? (Irwin, 1988, p.107)

Notice that Philippe called who thinks there is an oriental amusement in the Kasbah, just because it has the Islamic traditional appearance, a “fanciful man“ and a seeker of “rubbish”. As if the reality of Algeria is like any other third world issues (poverty, pollution and ignorance), it no longer a reflection to the image Orientalists drew in the past.

The author attempted to create orientalist context in the novel not because the work is somehow celebrates orientalism, but only to mock it and to destroy the stereotypes that is no longer suited to describe a society like any other in terms of its issues. However in the same time he may wanted to keep the tradition of those who preceded him by borrowing oriental images.

Conclusion:

The Algerian War literary representations were product of consumption in the sixties, so they had common features to satisfy that era’s taste, that include sexual attractions, exotic and Oriental images.

⁵⁸ A quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure.(Merriam Webster, 2022)

⁵⁹ Or moucharaby :a Moorish projecting oriel window or enclosed balcony of which the enclosure is largely made up of carved wooden latticework.(Merriam Webster, 2022)

Chapter Three:

The Elements of the Algerian War Theme

Any literary theme consists of numerous elements, covering the whole atmosphere needed for the plot to thrive, for the Algerian War, according to our study case novel: *The Mysteries of Algiers*, elements varied from people taking part in it, to historical events and war related subjects. Originally the impression about the Algerian War in the author's mind was decisive; Robert Irwin had strong feelings about it, he mentioned that in his *Memoirs of a Dervish*, when he encountered a document while he was preparing for his novel, which gave him an idea about the Algerian war:

When I started to research my novel *The Mysteries of Algiers*, I came across a booklet put out by the French army at the time. It was full of photographs of victims of the FLN, including those men whose penises had been hacked off and shoved in their mouths before their heads were severed. Algeria was a cruel country then and it still is. (Irwin, 2011)

After seeing the quotation, we can say that for the author, the guiding idea for writing about that piece of history is Atrocity and cruelty. So to what extent, the elements of the Algerian War theme are reflecting that impression? That will be discussed in this chapter.

III.1 Torture:

Torture is one of the main aspects associated with the Algerian War, according to the French historian Raphaëlle Branche (1972-) it was largely used by the French army as a tool of intelligence gathering and a way to terrorize the wider population into submission (Vince, 2020, p.94), for that it is naturally occupying a place in many novels and films depicting the Algerian War, in *The Mysteries of Algiers*, especially that the novel concentrates on the intelligence side

of the Algerian War, rather than the military side, torture had occurred mainly in chapter two when Philippe was torturing al-Hadi.

III.1.1. Methods of Torture:

The Mysteries of Algiers displayed some of the popular methods of torture during the Algerian War. The quotation from the chapter two goes:

Al-Hadi was stripped and bound with leather straps to the wooden plank...As for the two leads of the field telephone, one went up his nostril and the other we had fixed to the tip of his penis with Scotch tape. Crocodile clips would have been better, but we did not have any. The current surged up again, and al-Hadi rocked and rolled. The eyes dilated and bulged as if the skull was going to spit his eyeballs out at us. (Irwin, 1988, p.11)

Such method had been reported by Pierre Stibbe (1912-1967), a French Protestant lawyer who visited Algeria. He reported that “what he witnessed was highly alarming...others had received electric shocks on their genitals”. (Adams, 1998, p.26). One of the witnesses that experienced torture during the Algerian War is Henri Alleg (1921–2013); he gave his testimony about torture in an interview within a documentary by the English filmmaker Peter Batty. The documentary’s title is: *The Algerian War, 1954-1962*. It was made to mark the 30th anniversary of the outbreak of the Algerian War. In the Episode 2: *A Question of Conscience*, Henri said that he had been arrested in June 1957 and tortured like other “” thousands and thousands of people who were arrested at that time by the paratroopers⁶⁰”, electricity was used, among other tools, the

⁶⁰ 10e division parachutiste, a French Army unit that took responsibility of Algiers security during the Battle of Algiers.

method was stretching the victim's naked body on a piece of wood, strapped with leather straps then putting wires on the chest and other spots to apply the current on using a magneto⁶¹, the most painful is the gradual change of intensity up and down, it gives the feeling as if the head is going to explode and the eyes are about to go out of the head (Batty, 1984). The description of what Henri Alleg's own experience is identical to what is illustrated in the novel. In another quotation from the chapter two Philippe said to Lieutenant Schwab when the later complained about the slow going of the interrogation of Al-Hadi: "I've been working with these techniques since '55. Lesson 1: If you are going to use the magneto, there is no point in shooting up to top voltage from the start and keeping it there...you work through gradations of pressure and fear. It is a matter of finesse. Finesse. (Irwin, 1988, p.15). The wooden plank, the leather straps, changing the intensity of the current, attaching electrodes to genitals and most importantly the feelings of head explosion and the eyes coming out, are similar details mentioned in the novel and was reported and experienced by real figures. A remark considering the later quoted passage, Philippe was describing torture as a skill which have techniques and years of practice are needed to master it, however when he repeatedly say " Finesse" he was giving it a class of an art, not just a job. Henri Alleg mentioned a "school of torturers" in his interview, established in Constantine to "educate officers to use, correctly, torture against prisoners" (Batty, 1984), which means that torturing was not given to chance, it was a profession. In conclusion the methods of torture appeared in *The Mysteries of Algiers* is reported in historical documents especially the use of electricity.

⁶¹ Permanent magnet generator mainly employed for ignition of compressed gasses in internal combustion engines. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015)

III.1.2. Justifications of Torture:

Torture was justified by the French Army, mainly because it provided information that would prevent terrorist attacks. It was an unavoidable necessity of war. An article titled “Torture in the Algerian War” by Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017), a Bulgarian-French historian. The article mentioned how French military leaders justified the use of torture:

...torture was the only way to win the war. The Algerian war was not a traditional war, they explained; the enemy did not engage them on a mutually recognized battlefield that both sides had agreed to beforehand. This was a civil war and the army did not know who its enemy was. The French were being ambushed and violently attacked, but by whom? And who was giving aid and comfort to these invisible adversaries? The army needed to know, and for this they needed information; if no one was offering it voluntarily or for a price, then it had to be coerced—through torture...(Todorov, 2007, p.19)

In *The Mysteries of Algiers* that excuse appeared, when Lieutenant Schwab was unpleasant and even “disgust” with the Philippe’s ways of deep questioning, the later put torture as a condition for the safety of both French civilians and military:”...you saw the pictures. That girl will be a freak on two stumps for the rest of her life⁶²...You cannot stand back and do nothing. That is not on offer. If you are it will be because...one of our men has submitted one of theirs to deep questioning.” (Irwin, 1988, p.14)

However, torture justification display in the novel and through its characters, especially Philippe and Colonel Joinville, had passed the practical and the pragmatic level; it rather hits a

⁶² One of the French victims of the FLN explosion mentioned in chapter one in the novel.

philosophical level. For Colonel Joinville, being tortured is the price that must be paid by colonized nations to mature and earn civilization, as well as the Europeans who had their share of torture which made them well-behaved and obedient. When he was concerned if Colonel Joinville is annoyed about the slowness of Al-Hadi's interrogation, Philippe remembered what colonel Joinville thinks about torture:

As far as our colonel is concerned, it is not the results achieved by torture that are valuable, but rather the torture itself. Torture is precisely the forcing engine for bringing the benighted races of the world to civilization ...Pain, is not a penalty. It is part of civilization...The European peoples have had to suffer in order to attain to reason and obedience. (Irwin, 1988, p.13)

Such an idea is clearly related to the concept of “the white man’s burden⁶³” that justified colonialism at large not only torture. Moreover, Philippe told Lieutenant Schwab that his ways (French Army ways) of torture is more civilized and humane than the ways adopted by Marxists and communists at that time:”...it is not torture in the sense that the communists practice it. They use horrible methods to break a man’s spirit, to make him into a zombie who will renounce anything, denounce anything. But here we respect a man’s physical and moral integrity...” (Irwin, 1988, p.14). As we can see, communists are seen as the opposite side because it was during the cold war⁶⁴: “More than half the French army in Algeria...have a vague idea that they are here to fight ‘international communism’, but beyond knowing that international communism is evil they don’t know what it is.” (p.26) that clarifies why “the cruelty of torture” (breaking a man’s spirit), is attributed by Philippe to the enemy while the colonial and western torture is

⁶³ The supposed responsibility of the white race to provide care for their non-white subjects. (Word Web Dictionary)

⁶⁴ Many French officers saw The Algerian war as a struggle between western civilization and international communism. (Batty, 1984)

moral, reasonable, professional and protects the integrity of the interrogated person, to the extent that ‘it is not torture’.

Despite of his claims in the later quotation (that French ways of torture are not blindly cruel as the communist ways), Philippe appeared in chapter two demanding Al-Hadi, which was under torture, to open up about his private sexual life and his wife, then when Lieutenant Schwab disagreed because that was not the interrogation’s objective, Philippe responded: “the nature of the Arab mentality is such that if we can get al-Hadi to talk about his wife and his private life...He will indeed be a broken man”. (Irwin, 1988, p.13). In another spot:” I explained to the lieutenant that it was the ultimate betrayal. Once an Arab’s honor has been broken, like an egg it can never be put together again” (Irwin, 1988, p.77). We can see from Philippe’s explanation that, opposite to what he claimed earlier, breaking a man’s spirit to make him “denounce anything” is also an objective of French methods of torture. In chapter fifteen Philippe visits The Verdun Hospital⁶⁵, he was in front of patients who their mental health was severely damaged due to being submitted to torture, for example:

...The patient conforms perfectly to the classic symptoms of cenesopathy⁶⁶. He has difficulty in speaking, for he is in constant terror that he is about to swallow his tongue...like continuous pins and needles, but much more painful...Also he is terrified of touching light switches...These symptoms first appeared after he was taken in for a week’s questioning by the gendarmerie. (Irwin, 1988, p.123)

We can see that Philippe is contradicting with his own claims about communist objectives of torture, he have the same objectives, simply because that Philippe is in fact (as the plot gradually

⁶⁵ A nervous diseases hospital in Algiers at that time.

⁶⁶ Mental disorder.

reveals) a double agent working for FLN, he was obliged to torture Al-Hadi (his FLN comrade) just to maintain his cover, for the same reason, he resembles and denounces pro-French positions and beliefs (which is more important for this part of study) in front of his fellow officers and French acquaintances as a Foreign Legion officer who gives lectures in counter-insurgency. Despite his true position, he did not regret torturing Al-Hadi, Philippe himself was a victim of torture, when he was imprisoned by the Viet-Minh after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu he claimed that everything he applies on his prisoners, he had experienced it: “I would not ask any of my prisoners to undergo anything that I have not myself undergone’ line. In my case it is more or less true. After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, I spent ten grim weeks in a special detention camp...” (Irwin, 1988, p.15), which is another justification for torture, if the torturer had experienced some methods of torture and survived so those methods are, in some sense, harmless. What is remarkable is that being a victim of torture, Philippe did not abstain from committing torture. And that was the case of many French veterans who served in The Algerian War:

Nor is the memory of having been the victim of torture enough to prevent a person from taking part in torture, though it may cause second thoughts. Cases of victims turned into torturers or silent accomplices to torture are not uncommon: a good number of French officers came out of the ranks...or had fought...against the Nazis. Some of these men had suffered mistreatment by enemy hands, yet their experiences did not stop them from torturing... (Todorov, 2007, p6)

As a conclusion, Justifications of torture in the novel, had many forms, practical from one hand and moral in the other hand, without being affected by the severe physical and mental impacts, moreover being tortured themselves, did not prevent French officers (as Philippe) from committing and justifying torture.

The element of torture occupied a space within *The Mysteries of Algiers and* that helped building and enriching the Algerian War theme in it.

III.2. Marxism in the Algerian War:

Marxism took the largest scope of *The Mysteries of Algiers*, considering that Philippe the protagonist is a devoted Marxist, and the author use of the first person point of view in the novel⁶⁷, it became a large display of Marxist philosophy, ideas and opinions and quotes of Marx and Lenin. Philippe is heavily affected by Marxism; he cannot think out of it. It gives him confidence to the extent that, for him, it can supersede intellectual competence (which he lacked), he said once: “Mercier was reading Marx...That was Mercier’s intellectual dabbling. It went nowhere, except towards more books. You can’t understand Marxism by reading, you have to live it”, he said also:

I am not an intellectual, but I am a Marxist and Marxism is a powerful engine for the production of thought. On a very wide range of issues it does my thinking for me, so that I can talk with a Jalloud or a Raoul on more or less the same level, confident that my ideology has the answers. (Irwin, 1988, p.131)

We can see that Marxism is serving him as a tool that can decipher anything. When he was in the opera house watching an opera piece he started interpreting it using Marxism. ”Ideology is the key which unlocks all art” (p.143) he said. Unlikely, his fellow FLN did not share that with him, both intellectual Jalloud and the ignorant Nounours, were skeptical about it, in favor of Islam.

⁶⁷ Starting from the second chapter, the first was written using third person point of view.

III.2.1. FLN between Marxism and Islam:

No doubt that Marxism was the main ideology that inspired Algerian nationalists starting with Ahmed Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas moving to the FLN leaders like Ahmed Ben Bella. However, Islam was always present within those national movements, it was clearly stated in the proclamation of the FLN (Declaration of 1 November 1954), “they declared that its goal (the revolution) was ‘national independence’, defined as ‘The restoration of the sovereign, democratic, and social Algerian state, within the framework of Islamic Principles” (Vince, 2020, p.74). According to Jeffrey James Byrne (?-), professor of history at the University of British Columbia in his book: *Mecca of Revolution Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order*, some of FLN leaders, the FLN was a left-wing revolutionary movement, inspired by major communist figures like Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong and Hồ Chí Minh with the purpose of becoming a Third World pilot state. Others are skeptical about such interpretation and consider most FLN leaders much more attached to Islam than Marxism. (Vince, 2020, p.26). Another historian Alison Drew (?-) from Boston University mentioned in her book: *We Are No Longer in France. Communists in Colonial Algeria*, mentioned that even Muslim members of the Algerian Communist Party did not see a problem with Islam as their European comrades:

Unlike many of the members of European origin, who were atheists, most Algerian communists did not see religion as a form of reactionary superstition in contradiction with Marxism. In 1935, Boukkort⁶⁸ (1904-1983) published *Peuple d’Algérie, quels sont tes amis?* [People of Algeria, who are your friends?] In which he argued Islam and communism were compatible: ‘If the prophet

⁶⁸ Algerian communist politician.

Mohammed lived today, in this period where Muslims are subjugated and chained in the majority of countries, he would call them to the liberation struggle. (Vince, 2020, p.50).

The Mysteries of Algiers displayed signals of that attitude. Philippe thought his FLN ‘comrades’⁶⁹ share his enthusiasm towards Marxist ideas. In an earlier phase in the plot, when he arrived in Algiers to meet his FLN superior, he thought that the days of him working alone are going to an end, and it was the time to work with the “comrades”: “I am careful also to have more positive thoughts, so I think to myself how good it is that I who have worked as a loner for so long will be now able to jettison solitude and deception and walk shoulder to shoulder with my comrades.” (Irwin, 1988, p.104). However, When Philippe tried to convince Jaloud to abolish Nounourse, because of his criminal background that can harm the values of the revolution all that using a quote from Engels, (see chapter one) Jaloud responded:

Well, I can see that you two have not hit it off. But you listen, Engels is not in charge of the Algiers wilaya. I am and I say Muhammad before Engels or before Marx. Muslim does not murder Muslim. Social justice is not going to be achieved that way. (Irwin, 1988, p.136)

Before that When Jaloud was trying to convince Nounourse to kill Philippe, Jaloud said to him: “you and me and Ait Ahmed, Abou Missoum, Khadir (FLN figures) and the others, we are not Marxists, we are Muslims and of course we fight against the French, but we do not love murder like this man. (Irwin, 1988, p.146). We see here that ideology is not the only thing they disliked

⁶⁹ Originally, one who shares the same chamber. The term has been adopted by socialists and communists for Party members. In the Socialist countries the term is commonly used in a semi-formal manner as a form of address, in lieu of 'Mr', 'you' or 'Sir'. (Wilczynski,1981)

Philippe for, his brutal ways of murder (when he murdered Yvonne and Eugene), however “we are Muslims” was the bottom line between ‘us’ and ‘him’.

Philippe, as we saw, found himself a loner Marxist, the revolution according to Jaloud, rejected him because FLN nationalism tended towards Islam more than to Marxism, and that clears why most of Marxism in the novel was irrelevant to the Algerian War theme.

III.3. Violence in the Algerian War:

Since it is a thrill (*The Mysteries of Algiers*), violence is highly important component. However, like the previous element, only the violence relevant to the Algerian War is discussed. From the side of history, the Algerian War, normally, as any war produced violence, However, the Algerian War was certainly a special case, “between 1954 and 1962, one of the most violent wars of decolonization of the twentieth century took place”.(Vince, 2020, p.12) For that, the novel showcased a wide range of violent acts occurred in historical sources.

III.3.1 The Violence of The French Army:

Generally that reputation earned due to the nature of the war, guerrilla warfare⁷⁰ in particular, it was adopted by the FLN, “it sought to chip away at French will to remain through rural and urban guerrilla warfare in both Algeria and mainland France.”(Vince, 2020, p.12) For the French Army to stand against that they needed to apply tactics which included aerial bombing, massive population displacement, army-led police operations.”(Vince, 2020, p.12), in

⁷⁰ Type of warfare fought by irregulars in fast-moving, small-scale actions against orthodox military and police forces and, on occasion, against rival insurgent forces, either independently or in conjunction with a larger political-military strategy. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015)

an article called: “The War Culture of French Combatants” by the French historian Jean-Charles Jauffret (1949-), those violent tactics, are more illustrated:

...that became part of the obscure reality of this guerrilla war. In particular, torture, forced population movements and actions bordering on the transgression of normal acceptable wartime conduct took place in restricted areas where anything was permitted (the use of napalm, the destruction of villages, the burning of crops, livestock rustling, etc.(Jauffret, 2002, p.110)

Back to the novel, Colonel Joinville expressed such tactics: “We burn their douars⁷¹, we rape their women, we confiscate their crops...we round up those who are left into what I can only call concentration camps...” (Irwin, 1988, p.13). In another spot in the novel, Philippe was morally comparing the murder he committed (Yvonne and Eugene) to the Army’s destruction of complete villages:

Why the death of this old couple should be so shocking, I don’t know. Oh yes, I do. They are Europeans. But if forty villagers in the highlands of the Kabyle are killed in a pacificatory bombing raid, that is different...the people are Arabs, not fully people. (Irwin, 1988, p.100)

French army violations against civilians in rural areas are depicted in the novel. For the urban areas like Algiers; most military action, including the surrounding of the Kasbah with checkpoints and barbed wire (Vince, 2020, p.101), mass arrests and torture, took place during

⁷¹ Algerian dialect for village.

The Battle of Algiers⁷² by the paratroopers led by General Jacques Massu (1908–2002) the head of the tenth parachutist division, The plot of *The Mysteries of Algiers* starts at 8 September 1959, so The Battle of Algiers is already ended, however, the fear rest to control the algerine life:

The Battle of Algiers was won for the French almost two years back. Massu's paras no longer guard the entrances to the Kasbah. There are only bored gendarmes at the Médée checkpoint. There is no longer any curfew. Nevertheless, as the darkness comes on, I hurry and those few people I meet in the Kasbah are hurrying too...(Irwin, 1988, p.107)

III.3.2 The Abuses of the FLN:

FLN in return, also embraced violence. A violent terrorist attack occurred in the chapter one (of the novel): “when Al-Hadi, shadowed by Mercier, entered the café, left a brown-paper parcel, then he left, after seconds the timed bomb within the parcel exploded.” (Irwin, 1988, p.10) that was the main way for the FLN to execute their terrorist operations:

In its first major bombing, The FLN used well-to-do Algerian women who could pass through Algiers checkpoints, disguised by their “European” looks and undisturbed by French soldiers. These women planted bombs in three locations frequented by Europeans, and two detonated effectively. (Lilley, 2012, p.5)

More shapes of violence by the FLN had been mentioned in the novel. In chapter eighteen Philippe met Raoul in Algiers, and he was shocked when he saw that Raoul's nose had been cut off, he first thought the FLN did it:

⁷² The Battle of Algiers (1956–57), fighting took place in and around Algiers, where FLN fighters launched a series of violent urban attacks.

In 1955 the FLN ordered all Muslims to abstain from smoking. They said that smoking only filled the coffers of the grand-colon tobacco companies. Some Arabs ignored the FLN'S command and kept on smoking. They were taken by the FLN and they had their noses removed. (Irwin, 1988, p.151)

Muslim population for Algiers did become a subject to The FLN use of violence, because the FLN wanted to control it, such incidents of cutting the nose as a penalty of smoking had been reported:

The FLN also attempted briefly to cripple the Algerian economy by eliminating the consumption of tobacco. An individual regional leader decreed that any person caught smoking would have his nose cut off by the terrorists of the FLN, but the policy proved to be unworkable and damaging to the FLN cause.(Wales, 1969, p.7)

Characters within the novel did some violent acts; however, it was to build the plot and had a poor connection to the history. It was an interaction between characters away from the major events and aspects of the Algerian War. Like when Philippe murdered Yvonne and Eugene, after they invited him to dinner when Eugene sympathized with him and his health situation, but he killed them anyway, because of a practical need to escape from Laghouat, however he justified it with Marxism moral thoughts that condemn bourgeois life style:

Of course they weren't innocent. Of course not. Their style of life battens on the poor and feeds off the Arabs. It would cost an Arab a year's work to buy some of Eugene's medicines...And when I was torturing Arabs on behalf of Algérie francaise, did this man try to stop me?...He knew perfectly well what I and others

were doing...all so that the 'innocent' pharmacist might keep his beehives and pig-sties. In the context of a country in revolution, this innocence is a form of evil. (Irwin, 1988, p.100)

The FLN did take the pieds-noirs as a target in their operations like the Massacre of Philippeville (from 20 to 27 august 1955), nowadays Skikda, or like Algerians call it: the Attacks of the North Constantinois. 123 people were killed, 52 of whom were Muslims.”Those attacks were political not ethnic (Vince, 2020, p.78), and those who participated in it, were not Marxist as the Majority of the FLN militants, that was cleared in the previous Chapter about Marxism.

Violence in *The Mysteries of Algiers* took many shapes and was committed from both the FLN and the French Army. However it didn't directly happened it was recalled from Character's knowledge; direct violence by Characters had little to do with the Algerian war context.

III.4. Indochina War Relation to the Algerian War:

Indochina and Indochina war have some sort of significance in *The Mysteries of Algiers*, despite that it happened in the other side of the globe, it had a strong relation to the Algerian War, Philippe, Mercier and Colonel Joinville, all of those, were militants participated in the Indochina War, Philippe remembered the Battle of Dien Bien Phu as a turning point in his life, historically, for most of the French military officers who fought in Algeria, they came from Indochina War, the Indochina War ended in 1954 the starting year of the Algerian War, they had the chance to apply their experiences in counter-intelligence and guerilla warfare, beside they were keen not to lose in Algeria as they did in Indochina, that and more is detailed in: “From Indochina to Algeria: Counter-Insurgency Lessons” by Alexander J. Zervoudakis. Philippe

talked about that when he stated several names of the Algerian military leaders in Algeria who fought, like him, in Indochina:

Bigeard is another old Indochina hand. We all came out here. Salan the mandarin, Massu the victor of the Battle of Algiers, Trinquier the counterinsurgency expert, Argoud the tough-talking hero of the paras. We are all here in Africa, keen to apply the lessons we learned from Ho Chi Minh and General Giap⁷³. (Irwin, 1988, p.41)

Those are big names in the French Army, those days Militants came from Indochina, played a big role in The Algerian War, Philippe and his comrades-in-arms Mercier and Colonel Joinville are a metaphor for them.

III.5. The Algerian Community during the Algerian War:

To build a comprehensive image of Algerians, comparing to the foreigner protagonist, Philippe, the author needed to give some models to illustrate the Algerian people, for that we find in *The Mysteries of Algiers* several types of personalities during the War.

III.5.1. Arab Algerians:

Arabs are majority in Algeria, for that, Arab Characters conveniently dominated the Native Muslim Algerian presence in the novel. Berbers, specifically Kabyles, are mentioned in several occasions; however, they are tertiary characters. Arabs, men and women are portrayed, mainly as secondary characters; nevertheless they contributed significantly to the plot.

⁷³ Vietnamese military and political leaders.

III.5.1.a. Arab Men:

The Native Arab personality embodiment within the novel is the character of Al-Hadi, Jaloud and Nounourse. Al-Hadi is an Arab man from Laghouat who works for the FLN; however, Al-Hadi is a special case. He is not a typical Muslim, while most of Muslims in Algeria at that time were poor; Al-Hadi is a wealthy man who owns a hotel. In addition to that he is an alcoholic to the degree that when Mercier was shadowing him, he found it strange for a Sahrawi (southern Algerian) to order a pernod (French liquor) because:” few of the Sahrawis had a developed taste for alcohol” (Irwin, 1988, p.8). “Al-Hadi was a hard drinker but a good Moslem in his own eyes at least”. Al-Hadi’s lifestyle was not typical for an Arab Muslim at that time; it was a western lifestyle, beside alcohol he aloud dogs in his household which also had western furniture. Despite of that he did not see problem with his religion, he would always justify that by some hadiths: “God pardons the man who performs even one-hundredth of his obligations to Him,” and ‘The man who has given as much as a quarter dirhem to the poor will never face the fires of Hell.”(Irwin, 1988, p.72). Al-Hadi used to address Philippe by ‘sidi’, which is a respectful way of addressing a man of higher social rank. The use of it nowadays shrunk in Algeria including Laghouat. Arabs used to address Europeans using that word. When Al-Hadi was under torture he used to beg Philippe using that word and Philippe was sarcastically used it to address him back. Philippe never saw Al-Hadi with respect, for things he saw in most Arabs like the lack of taste. Al-Hadi, when he was hosting Philippe, told him how he hid explosives, for the FLN, within the wall of the room using tiling:

‘What do you think, Sidi?’ he asked anxiously. All that was in my head was the question, what had possessed him to put a floral frieze of bathroom tiling in the

living room? But I kept that to myself. ‘Very good, al-Hadi,’ I said. (Irwin, 1988, p.72)

Clearly Philippe is finding Al-Hadi as a backward uneducated man who tries to adopt western ways but he fails at that. Al-Hadi in general, was a sample of the majority of Algerian Arab men during the Algerian War.

Exceptions of that type, is the Character of Jaloud, the educated young man, who earned the rivalry of Philippe, he is the symbol of the new generation of enthusiastic Algerian youth⁷⁴.

Second the character is Nounours, the name is the French word for a Teddy bear, and he had this name because: Nounourse is almost a giant, heavily muscled, bearded and smiling with the genial ferocity of a Barbary pirate”. Nounourse is a simple man with criminal background, which was common type in Algiers: “the overwhelmingly unemployed youth that lived in the Kasbah found the FLN’s cause alluring and FLN leaders like the infamous Saadi Yacef successfully recruited said youth.” Yacef Saadi (1928-) is one of the leading figures in The Battle of Algiers. Nounourse supported Philippe against Jaloud just because Nounourse felt that Jaloud was underestimating his intelligence, he treated him as ‘the muscle’. While ‘the intellectual’ Jaloud is ‘the brain’, and that made Nounourse risk everything and kill his FLN superior Jaloud because of anger and jealousy.

As a conclusion the men characters in *The Mysteries of Algiers* covered the main types of FLN militants. Al-Hadi is the uneducated old fashioned Sahrawi, Jaloud the intellectual young man and Nounourse the ex-con.

⁷⁴ Most of the FLN leaders were under 30 when the revolution started.

III.5.1.b. Arab Women:

Women played an important role in the Algerian War, the famous image is the FLN women soldiers and nurses in the mountains, that side is not present in the novel, Arab women in the *The Mysteries of Algiers* are urban and domestic.

Zora is the main Arab woman character, she is Al-Hadi's wife, like Al-Hadi, her character serves as an embodiment of an Arab Algerian women during the War, she have a fierce look and tough personality. She is involved in her husband's work with the FLN, same as Saphia, Nounours's wife, Both Zora and Saphia, are treated harshly by their Husbands, when Zora came to bring food for Al-Hadi and his guest (Philippe): "he bawled her out of the room" and when she came again "he just shouted at her, 'Go away, cow! Cow! Cow!'" (Irwin, 1988, p.72). Indeed Arab men did treat their wives that way at that time, in the same subject Raoul once complained about how the paras treated native women during operations in the bled (countryside), rape in particular, Philippe interrupted by: "As for complaints about the way the security forces treat the fatmas, the army could not treat those women worse than their own fathers and husbands treat them..." (Irwin, 1988, p.32), Philippe refers to Muslim women as 'fatmas', which is the French word for Muslim women at that time, especially when they are veiled, (linternaute.fr, 2021) It occurred several times in the novel. "Zora is still young, at least ten years younger than her husband" (Irwin, 1988, p.72). This was common among Muslims at that time; the age difference between married couples was wide, especially from a western perspective.

Arab women were displayed in *The Mysteries of Algiers* to draw an image about the domestic life of Arab Algerians during the war.

III.5.2. European Algerians:

The pieds-noirs, literally meaning “Black-Foot”, was originally a term coined to refer to any white settler born in Africa, later evolving into a slang name for French settlers in Algeria (Algeria.com, 2021); the novel depicted them in so many levels, social and political. The main aspect of the pieds-noirs in *The Mysteries of Algiers* is their political position, they are according

to Philippe a rightwing, fascist⁷⁵ and racist, and that puts them as the enemies of Marxist Philippe.

Historically that idea was shared by the majority of metropolitan French towards the end of the war, especially when the OAS⁷⁶ emerged. Todd Shepard (1969-) the American historian did mentioned that situation: “in the eyes of metropolitan society the pied-noir community had become amalgamated with the OAS, leading to the popular assumption that those opposing independence were racists and fascists.” (Barclay, 2018) Such attitudes were shown through Eugene, the pied-noir from Laghouat, when he complained to Philippe about how the metropolitan French (mainland France population) were despising the pieds-noirs:

... Eh, they look down on us in France. I know or at least I can imagine. All right, I don't read Camus⁷⁷ or Robbe-Grillet⁷⁸ and the wife can't afford to dress from

⁷⁵ Fascism, A system of government marked by centralization of authority under a dictator, a capitalist economy subject to stringent governmental controls, violent suppression of the opposition, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism.(American Heritage Dictionary, 2011)

⁷⁶ A French secret terrorist organization based in Algeria, formed in 1961. Its aim was the destruction of the French Fifth Republic in the interest of French colonial control of Algeria. It plotted an unsuccessful assassination attempt on President de Gaulle in 1962. Its action had little effect on the French government, which by now was determined to grant independence to Algeria. Subsequent riots in Algiers were suppressed, and the OAS itself eliminated (1963) by the capture or exile of its leaders. (oxfordreference.com, 2021)

⁷⁷ French novelist, essayist, and playwright, best known for such novels as *L'Étranger* (1942; *The Stranger*), *La Peste* (1947; *The Plague*), and *La Chute* (1956; *The Fall*) and for his work in leftist causes. He received the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature. (Cruikshank, 2022)

Vogue⁷⁹. I raise pigs and keep bees. Is that such a bad thing? Eh ... Now how have I offended my fellow countrymen that I must lose my home, my garden, my pigsties, say goodbye to the church in which I worshipped and the school where I learned my letters and my daughters are learning theirs? (Irwin, 1988, p.98)

Chantal de Serkissian, is the main pied-noir character and the second important character after Philippe. She is the daughter of Maurice de Serkissian, a wealthy pied-noir: "The de Serkissians own vineyards, olive groves, tobacco plantations, a bauxite mine and a casino" (Irwin, 1988, p.22). Although Chantal filled the 'femme fatale' role in the novel, her political attitudes were primarily showcased along the novel, she is considered by Philippe's 'Marxist ideology' as a far rightwing, devoted Catholic and pro-colonialist: "Chantal and her friends...The sword, the axe and the horse are their symbols. Their blood and their faith have given them the right to rule over the Arabs" (Irwin, 1988, p.50). Here Philippe is criticizing Chantal and her friends (pieds-noirs and Foreign Legion leaders), the sword, the axe and the horse stands for the model image of 'French true spirit' which is, according to Chantal, is embodied in the heroes of the famous novel, *The Three Musketeers*:

She is devoted to The Three Musketeers. She knows all their adventures by heart and she has told me that on the day of her first communion she took a secret vow before the altar to live her life exactly as D'Artagnan (one of the the main characters) would have lived it – if D'Artagnan had been a woman living in French Algeria. (Irwin, 1988, p.23)

⁷⁸ Representative writer and leading theoretician of the nouveau roman ("new novel"), the French "anti-novel" that emerged in the 1950s. He was also a screenwriter and film director.(Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022)

⁷⁹ Influential American fashion and lifestyle magazine. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021)

Moreover, the novel depicts Chantal and her family as supporters of Vichy regime⁸⁰, Vichy was considered as fascist and anti-liberal regime. Historically that was true; the Pieds-noirs, during te World War II, did support pro-German Vichy over De Gaulle's Free France⁸¹. Back to the novel, Chantal's father, when he was complaining about the moral decline of France's youth he said:

‘Everything sexual these days. The young are supposed to live for nothing else. It's fashionable now, I know, to badmouth Pétain, and certainly there were excesses and terrible mistakes were made, but I can't help feeling that something really rather fine perished with Vichy. And what have we now? (Irwin, 1988, p.29)

Here Maurice de Serkissian is glorifying Vichy. As a model for conservatives, against the new generation of desire obsessed Liberals, Those attitudes opposed to the liberal current of de De Gaulle.

The European Algerians in *The Mysteries of Algiers* are represented as evil, fascist and racist, opposing to the liberal current of postwar France and Philippe's Marxism.

Conclusion:

These are the main elements of The Algerian War theme extracted from *The Mysteries of Algiers*; they covered the general aspects of the nature of the struggle, the people that took part in it and the relating historical events, all that mirrored with historical documents, the elements discussed, in general, helped realizing the author's impression about the War in Algeria.

⁸⁰ The regime (1940–4) that was set up under Marshal Pétain after the German occupation of northern France, to administer unoccupied France and the colonies. Never recognized by the Allies, the regime functioned as a puppet government for the Nazis. (oxfordreference.com, 2021)

⁸¹ A World War II organization of Frenchmen and women in exile. Led by General de Gaulle. (Batty, 1984)

General Conclusion

The Algerian war was one of the most brutal and violent among the decolonization conflicts, a globally important historical event that quite a significant number of Anglo-American writers took an interest in it, to reflect their own impression about it and share the impact that the war had on them, alongside the social and cultural criteria of Algeria in the last years of French colonization, they created a unique theme. Through Robert Irwin's novel *The Mysteries of Algiers* as a study case, we experienced Algeria during its most controversial era.

In the first chapter there was a theoretical and conceptual issues concerning the study beside theories included in the novel that was important to elaborate, especially Marxism that took most of Philippe's thinking thus the novel, beside signals here and there that convey a postcolonial points of view and attitudes towards the Algerian War, although we cannot conclude that the author himself embraced such believes, especially Marxism. He used it as a tool to give the novel the right ideological asset that took place in the targeted era (cold War and decolonization) and to relate the topic to an international reader.

The second chapter we displayed the Algerian War representations by Anglo-American writers especially the common features of those representations. We found that since they belong to a certain era (the sixties); they had certain features which they are: sexuality, orientalist and exotic views of the Algerian environment and community.

In the third chapter we discussed the elements of the Algerian war theme displayed in the novel; We found that those elements do reflect the impression the author had about the Algerian war, which was brutality and violence of the war in addition to other elements concerning the

Algerian War history, helped drawing a historically accurate image about the related criteria of the people who took part in the War and the nature of the conflict. That leads us to a conclusion that the author is so cultured about the Algerian War to the extent that the novel is quite suited as textbook about the Algerian War for an English speaker (the historical record and the setting of the War only)

In the end it was quite important that this study engaged in such an uncelebrated area of research, however, this study couldn't tackle all aspects of the Algerian War in Anglo-American literature that maybe are hoarded in other literterary works and suggests further researches in that the Algerian history field especially that related to the Anglo-American world.

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