

Mme Allix-Luce School in the Writings of British Women Travellers to Algeria: Barbara Smith-Bodichon as a Case Study

**SEDDIKI Sadia &
RICHE Bouteldja**
Université de Tizi-Ouzou

Abstract

*Madame Luce School for Muslim girls, which was founded in 1845 in Algiers and which dispensed a French-style education, became an obligatory stop for virtually every female English traveller to Algeria in the mid-nineteenth century. Madame Luce's work and "civilising mission" was popularised thanks to the English feminist Barbara Smith-Leigh Bodichon, whose essay *Women and Work* (1857) introduced her to English readers. Bodichon paints an idealised image of a heroic and selfless woman who fought against all odds to introduce 'ignorant' and 'illiterate' Muslim women to modern education and paid work. Bodichon's narrative is fraught with an imperialist rhetoric and superior overtones which romanticizes a European woman's endeavour and overlooks the little Arab girls who literally fade into the shadow in her writings.*

Introduction

Amongst nineteenth-century French women in Algeria, none would seem to arise as much interest and fascination among mid-nineteenth-century British women travel writers to Algeria as Véronique-Eugénie Allix, later known as Madame Luce. Founded in 1845, her school (turned into a workshop in 1864) for local Muslim girls would become a Mecca for these women starting from the mid-1850s. They professed a profound admiration for what they considered as her relentless efforts to advance the cause of local women through education and professional training. This interest began in 1857 with the publication of the celebrated English feminist activist and

painter Barbara Smith-Leigh Bodichon's pamphlet *Women and Work*, and continued with other travellers, like Mrs. Ellen Rogers, Mrs. Lloyd Evans, Mabel Sharman among many others in subsequent years. The latter's observations, which in many ways were mere rehearsals and replicates, were shaped and influenced by Bodichon's observations and contributed to reinforcing images and ideas she had already established. One does not have to scratch very deeply beneath their writings to realize that these women were highly deferential towards Madame Luce and her supposed "civilizing mission" in Algeria. Though Barbara Bodichon was very active in campaigning for the rights of women back at home, she, in general, seemed oblivious to native women's plight and suffering. She was more interested in the work of the European Madame Allix-Luce than the little indigenous girls who faded into the shadow and who were denied names. Like many travellers from the period, Bodichon blamed the local culture and religion for the wretched lives these women were leading. She argued that the salvation of Algerian middle-class women, about whom she once wrote "the wife of a French workman is a thousand times more civilised than the richest Moorish lady," victims of such religious and social tyranny, would only come through introducing these women to paid work and Western dress. For Bodichon, Madame Allix-Luce's school was doing just that.

1. Barbara Bodichon's Biography

Born in 1827 at Watlington in Sussex, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon was the illegitimate eldest daughter of radical MP Benjamin Leigh Smith and Anne Longden, a milliner. Her grandfather was the Radical abolitionist William Smith who campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade. She came from a background of radical nonconformity and religious tolerance. She was unusual for her time in that she received an

education traditionally reserved for men. This unconventional pedigree prepared her for a life full of battles for the rights of women. She was active on many fronts. As active member of the Married Women's Property Committee, she worked for a change in the law of *couverture* giving husbands control over their wives' financial assets.

Bodichon was also the leader of the famous Langham Place Group which was at the heart of feminist activism in mid-19th century Britain and which was active in the struggle for women's suffrage, paid employment, education and legal status for married women. She played an important role in establishing the *English Woman's Journal* in March 1858, and which ran for six years. From its first days, "the first feminist newspaper run only by women" (Rebecca Rogers, 148:2013) was interested in industrial employment for women and sought opportunities to expand this employment. Reforming laws affecting the "property and condition of the sexes" was also one of the declared objectives of the publication. Bodichon fulfilled one of her lifelong aspirations in 1865, when she founded, along with Emily Davis, the first university college for women, Girton College, Cambridge. This was a dream come true for Barbara and something she remained proud of till her death in 1891.

2. Bodichon in Algiers

Barbara Leigh Smith came to Algiers in 1856 with her sisters, Bella and Nanny and brother Ben. Their father Benjamin arranged for this visit to get Barbara away from England after a breakdown she suffered following an unfortunate affair with the married publisher John Chapman. Mid-nineteenth-century Algeria was fast becoming a favourite winter resort amongst many Victorians, especially for sufferers from consumption and tuberculosis. Algiers boasted of a fairly sizable English community which had a very active social and cultural life.

They had their own library, an English club and several small churches for the most devoted ones. Most of them chose Saint-Eugène and Mustapha Supérieure as their place of residence. Like many other visitors, Barbara, who was “never happy in an English genteel family life...[and who]longed always to be off on some wild adventure”(Quoted in Pauline Nestor,2005), was so impressed and excited about the country and its exotic and savage beauty which brought to her mind scenes from *The Arabian Nights* she so loved that she wrote:

I have seen Swiss mountains and Lombard plains, Scotch lochs and Welsh mountains, but never anything so unearthly so delicate, so aerial, as the long stretches of blue mountains and shining sea; the dark cypresses, relieved against a background of a thousand dainty tints.[...] The newness of everything the strange intoxicating effect of the exhilarating air [...] seems to make all who breathe it forget home, country, friends, troubles, and annoyances for a time, and give themselves up to the pure enjoyment of living.(Pam Hirsch,121:1998 and Herstein, 111:1985).

Algeria offered Barbara Leigh-Smith a unique opportunity to indulge in her favourite hobby: painting. She once said that she longed to “go to some wilder country because [she] believes [she will] paint well”(Quoted in Ibid.). Algiers fulfilled this wish and offered her a much needed respite from her depression and from the tiring long hours of campaigning and work on women’s issues in London. She would spend endless hours untiringly sketching and painting the remarkable Algerian sceneries she was so unused to. She “did not expect anything half so wonderfully beautiful ...and [she] never saw such a place!”(Deborah Cherry, 75:2000). Such was the intoxicating effect of Algerian landscapes on Barbara’s senses. This ‘savage’ beauty awakened her appetite for more painting.

This explains why more than half of her exhibited paintings were Algerian paintings.

It is in Algiers that she met her eccentric future husband, Eugène Bodichon, a French army surgeon who had settled in the colony in 1836 and whom most of her acquaintances disapproved of and considered “ugly and terrific”(Pam Hirsch,126:1998). Eugène Bodichon was a Saint-Simonian who fervently believed in the merits of the French “civilizing mission”. For the rest of their married life, Barbara would spend six months in Algiers with her husband tending to her artistic work and social activities and the rest six months she would spend in England where she continued her feminist work and campaigning.

3. Women’s and Work and Madame Allix-Luce School

In 1857 Barbara Bodichon published her *Women and Work* which she wrote in Algeria to celebrate and encourage women’s professional achievements and economic independence. The pamphlet was above all written “to advocate the need for gainful employment among middle-class women. Rhetorically, she used the tale of individual Western women’s achievements to illustrate their qualifications for undertaking a wide variety of activities.” (Rebecca Rogers, 147:2013). The essay insisted on the value of work for both men and women. Paid work was an obligation for every woman regardless of her marital status and social class. Such ideas were unheard of in the Victorian society which cherished rigid traditional gender roles. Many of her statements on work and family like “To bring a family of 12 children into the world is not in itself a noble vocation, or always a certain benefit to humanity. To be a noble woman is better than being mother to a noble man” were scandalous to say the least for the ordinary Victorian. (Sheila R. Herstein, 1985:127-8). *Women and Work* describes with unparalleled admiration the achievements of

notable and pioneering brave women who fought against all odds to achieve their goals and make other people's lives much less insufferable. It underscores the lives and combats of women such as the celebrated nurse Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Dorothea Dix, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Marie Pape-Carpantier, along with Madame Luce of Algiers.

Barbara Bodichon had a very active social life in Algiers. Her home was the site of regular visits from different English and French friends and acquaintances. She even, not infrequently, received many of her friends who came from England for a short stay in the country. Shortly after her settlement in the country, she opened a Saturday salon which "quickly became a meeting place for the cosmopolitan elite who lived there or visited." (Rebecca Rogers, 147:2013) She established this salon, in part, to cope with the lack of the "intellectual companionship that she was used to in Britain." (Pam Hirsch, 137:1998) Along with her painting and other activities, it filled Bodichon's long days. She would discuss, with her guests, subjects dear to her heart like women issues and she shared with them many of her aesthetic interests. Most of these discussions she carried in English and when necessary in her very rudimentary French.

It is, partly thanks to this celebrated salon, that Barbara Smith Bodichon came to know about Madame Allix-Luce School and workshop over the winter of 1856–1857. We hear of Madame Allix-Luce, "the first Christian woman who has made a breach in the prison life of Eastern woman" (Barbara Bodichon quoted in Rebecca Rogers, 147:2013) and her School for the first time in her *Women and Work* (1857) where Bodichon raves about her endeavour and heroism. Bodichon also devotes considerable space to this school in her subsequent writings. *Guide Book: Algeria Considered as a Winter Residence* (1858), which she wrote to introduce her English readers to the

history, people, customs, climate, and life in the country, gives a quick overview of Madame Luce School. She, along with her life-long feminist friend and confidante Bessie Rayner Parkers, worked a lot to popularize the work of Madame Luce through publishing a series of articles in the English Women's Journal they co-founded. It is thanks to these writings that Madame Luce would become a legendary figure in the imaginary of many British female travel writers. The school became an obligatory stop for practically every female English visitor to Algiers between the mid-19th century and the turn of the 20th century. Travellers like, Mrs. Ellen Rogers engaged in the same praising rhetoric and devoted several pages to the description of the school and its founder. These accounts were mere replicates and carbon-copies of what Bodichon and Bessie Parkers had written earlier.

4. Madame Allix-Luce School and the “Civilizing Mission”

Eugénie Allix-Luce (1804-1882), who was born as Veronique-Eugénie Berlau in Touraine, was a French schoolteacher who fled a supposedly violent husband (Alexandre Allix) and entrusted her daughter to the care of her parents, and migrated to Algeria in 1832. She was one of the first French women who saw Algeria as a land of opportunities and looked forward to a new beginning there. She would become a central figure in debates around educational policies concerning native women in the mid-19th century. She was convinced that any talk about the assimilation of the natives into French culture would prove futile without involving their women who, she insisted, were pivotal in the French “civilising mission”. It is this conviction that prompted her to establish the first school for Moorish girls in Algiers in July 1845 with personal funds which consisted mostly of her inheritance from her recently deceased husband. To convince the parents to entrust her with their daughters, Madame Luce paid them two francs per month .The school

offered French elementary education in reading, writing and mathematics and lessons in Arabic and religion. It also had the mission to teach the young girls,

all the tasks which are the exclusive prerogative of the woman: needlework, household chores, grooming .to inspire them with love for the beautiful and the good, for the habits of cleanliness ,moral well-being , and the instinct of refinement [typical]of their gender. To establish with these regenerated young women, legitimate workshops for dressmaking, for embroidery, for drapery, for linens. (AbiMershed, 139-140).

5. Instruct to Conquer

Napoleon is credited with coining the notion of “mission civilisatrice” or the civilising mission during his Egyptian Campaign. The “idea of the civilising mission rested upon the twin fundamental assumptions of the superiority of the French culture and the perfectibility of humankind.” The conquered races were too backward and primitive to rule themselves so they needed to be guided and shown the right way to run their social, political and economic affairs. Europeans were convinced of their superiority because, to be civilised meant “to be free from specific forms of tyranny: the tyranny of elements over man, of disease over health, of instinct over reason, of ignorance over knowledge and of despotism over liberty.”(Harald Fischer-Tiné, Michael Mann, 4:2012). It was such a state they were trying to bring colonized people to.

Central to the “civilizing mission” is the idea of assimilation of the indigenous population into the mainstream French colonial culture. The French colonial authorities believed that this “assimilisationist” policy would liberate Algerians from their supposed social and cultural “backwardness” and “savagery”. French-styled Education was thought to be the key in such a move. Benrabah (2010:26) quotes one leading spokesman of

colonialism as saying, “the way to dominate a people is to assimilate it, to seize the youth in its infancy ...North Africa will only belong to us definitively if we conciliate the Arabs and, to a certain extent, Frenchify them.”

Madame Allix, who saw herself as “an apostle for female education,” and “an expert on Islam and Algeria” (AbiMershed, 139:2010), seized on this opportunity and proposed opening schools for Muslim girls. She was convinced that any step towards assimilating the different indigenous populations into mainstream French culture would prove futile if women were excluded from this venture. She insisted that women were a critical dimension of the French effort to effect a fusion of the races. In this respect she wrote to the French Minister of War, The most powerful of all influences in Africa, as in Europe and even more than in Europe, is the woman. If you convert to your civilization one thousand indigenous girls taken from all classes of society and all the races of Regency, those young girls having become by the force of the things, the privileged spouses of the most important men of their class, will guarantee you the everlasting submission of the country and irrefutable guarantee of its future assimilation.(Ibid, 139)

Madame Allix was concurred by many colonial leaders who agreed about the importance of female education for the future of the colony. They claimed that the conditions of Moorish women were abject and morally inferior to their European counterparts. One civil inspector of public instruction lamented the fate of these women who were condemned to a life of idleness and total wretchedness. Their patriarchal and misogynistic culture and religion forbade them from devoting themselves to any serious or honest activity. Their lack of refinement and education made them easy prey to vices. Accordingly, education was thought as a necessary tool to civilize and ‘uplift’ these women and their race. In this respect

colonial officers in the Central Directorate of the Arab Bureaux asserted:

One cannot doubt the advantages which the Government will derive from educating the Arab woman. It is from her that the child receives his first impressions and one knows the degree of influence she will exercise upon him for the remainder of his life. By regenerating the Arab woman, one regenerates society in its entirety, not immediately, but by the second generation at the latest. (Ibid, 136-7)

Madame Allix-Luce school which was she opened in 1845 had high hopes and great ambitions for native women. She insisted that only through an education that stressed values like work ethics, domesticity and female virtue would the native women, and with them their race, aspire to leave backwardness and misery behind and embrace civilisation and progress. So in order to convince colonial authorities of the merit of such an enterprise she pledged to:

keep the majority of [the young women through education] out of the prostitution in which poverty would have infallibly engaged them; and to hand them back to their grateful families one day, as made women, hard working, domesticated..., and thus the natural intermediaries for the civilisation that has conquered them, and the mothers of a new generation that will belong to us by heart and by mind. (Ibid, 140).

6. Barbara Bodichon, Madame Luce School, and the Local Women

It is against such background, in a time wrought with heated discussions around educational policies regarding indigenous populations, that Barbara Smith-Leigh Bodichon was first introduced to the school and workshop over the winter of

1856–1857. Her essay *Women and Work*, and her other writings, is characteristic of many feminist writings of the time which failed to rid themselves completely of imperialist overtones. She considered that this school and its likes had the “civilising mission” of teaching “dirty” native girls who lived in “utter debased ignorance” to “learn to conceive of their own sex as rational and responsible beings ...and think that they can support themselves.”(Quoted in Candida Ann Lacey, 51:1987) .Barbara Bodichon seems to fall into the imperialist rhetoric of her time which considered Oriental women (in her case Algerian women) as eternal minors who needed the constant assistance of their more able , educated and illuminated western sisters to go through their everyday lives. One passage from *Algeria Considered as a Winter Residence* (1858) reveals her low opinion of Algerian women who, she considered, were not autonomous subjects and to whom she denied any agency or control over their lives and destiny which she, no doubt, partly blamed on their lack of education, a favourite subject of hers:

Mrs. T was of little use, for the Moorish ladies have very little to converse about; all

the Moorish families are very much alike, the ladies always ask if you are married, how many children you have, and what your clothes cost; and when you have asked them the same questions, there is little more to be said. (Pam Hirsch, 1998:121)

Bodichon was known for her many battles for women’s rights in her home country; so she was, of course, well aware of these women’s deplorable conditions. Nonetheless she still thought that Algerian women’s circumstances were far worse than their western counterparts because of their culture and religion which, Bodichon thought, were inherently tyrannical and misogynistic. Because she was a hard-line Francophile, she

never seemed to ask the question whether French colonization had anything to do with the wretched situation and economic destitution of the Algerian population in general and their women in particular. Instead she firmly believed that native women's emancipation would, without a doubt, pass through having a western education, especially an industrial education which would guarantee them financial independence. Adopting a western mode of life and a Western styled dress instead of the traditional Algerian Muslim veil would certainly help them to reach such an end. She, for instance, was pleased to see the Muslim teacher in Madame Luce school "who in all ways look[ed] like a French woman." On one occasion, thirty-two pupils and this Arab sub-mistress received a delegation which was on official inspection to Madame Luce School unveiled. The mistress of the school considered this event as a great moral triumph for her cause. Barbara Bodichon sanctioned her attitude and declared that, "[Madame Luce] always works against the use of the veil, thinking, and truly thinking as it seems to us, that it is far from conducive to true modesty, which should be simple and straightforward." (Qtd in Candida Ann Lacey, 51:2010).

This patronizing and somehow condescending attitude, towards the Islamic veil and other indigenous cultural motifs is by no means limited to Bodichon, but is a familiar one in many western women's writings of the period. The veil, which she considered a by-product of "religious and social tyranny", was the symbol of oppression and seclusion par excellence. Contrary to Lady Montagu, for instance, who considered the oriental attire more comfortable and practical, Bodichon considered it a sign of false modesty and purity and equated it with backwardness and a desire to restrict women's movement and subdue them. She believed that Christian societies were far more superior and in a higher stage of civilization, because in Christian theology "women are God's children equal with men:

in Mohammedan countries this is denied” (qtd in Pam Hirsch, 138:1998).

Barbara Bodichon’s Arabic, contrary to Madame Luce, was virtually nonexistent and her French was of limited order, that is one of the reasons why her contact with the locals was very restricted. She formed her opinions based on her husband’s. Eugène Bodichon, though in many cases “went native” by wearing the Arab burnous, dwelling with Arab Bedouins on several occasions and offering medical services to the indigenous populations, believed, like many of his contemporaries, in the superiority of the European race. In his book *Considérations sur l’Algérie* (1848), he conceptualized a hierarchy of the races which placed the Arabs below Europeans. He based his scale on classical representations of beauty which placed light skin colour at the top and dark colour at the very bottom. He considered that Arabs, because of their lack of crossbreeding with other races, were prone to many repulsive features like thieving, raping, over-excitability and unreliability. To cure such unpleasant traits, Eugène Bodichon advocated the “amalgamation” of the Arabs with more civilised races to improve morally and physically. (Pam Hirsch, 124:1998). Such arguments justified the French “civilising mission”. Dr. Bodichon believed that because of the existence of this racial hierarchy “the lot of mankind has been placed in the hands of the fair races, for they had conquered the ‘tree of science’ which would make them god-like” (Patricia Lorcin, 1995:126). Such ideas, and many others, on the Arabs which Barbara discussed in animated and never-ending discussions with her husband, certainly influenced her and helped her to form her own ideas on this race. Dianne Sachko Macleod (12:2010) alleges that Barbara Bodichon was one of those very few travellers who took a keen interest in the local culture by collecting Kabyle pottery and embroideries, living in a Moorish styled villa and wearing Arab vests over her blouses.

She was genuinely worried about the loss of traditional skills and handicraft to French cheap and ‘hideous’ imports. She was so eager to preserve old Arab manual work and Kabyle pottery that “she made it her mission to send back traditional Kabyle designs to the museum at South Kensington (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), which tried to preserve the finest examples of decorative art.” (Pam Hirsch 140:1998). But the influence and investment of Bodichon, besides her magnificent paintings depicting Algerian scenery and everyday life, in the local culture stops there and does not go beyond these mere folkloric aspects and details.

Bodichon always viewed Algeria as, first and foremost, a French territory and, like her husband, was a fervent believer in the French “civilising mission” and the benefits of colonialism. She “praised the French colons for opening schools, giving medical advice, including vaccinations, and helping to improve agriculture.”(Ibid, 140). She was excited about Madame Luce’s project and shared her belief that the “civilising mission” would only bear its fruits by directly and actively involving native women. She thus maintained that, “every Moresque thus educated carries into her home the seed of a better state of moral thought and feeling, germs of a kindlier sentiment towards the conquering race.”(Qtd in Candida Ann Lacey, 52:2010)

It is true that Bodichon believed wholeheartedly that education, especially professional education, was the best way to further the women’s cause and was a key factor in their road towards full emancipation and equality. But some of her writings, at times, reveal a cool woman with an aloof and condescending attitude towards the local women who play a lesser role than their European counterparts in these writings and appear as mere shadows and who have no voice of their own. So it’s quite interesting to note that a woman of her caliber and

background, and despite her long sojourn in the country, fails to get more involved in the lives and issues of Algerian women or take any practical measures to further their cause. Instead she focuses on drawing an idealized portrait of a selfless and philanthropic Madame Luce “who pawned her plate, her jewels, even a gold thimble, the gift of a friend, and set off for Paris ...and there she sent in to the Minister of War and visited in person most of the influential deputies, and endeavoured to prepossess them in favour of her plans.” (Ibid , 49). Such a portrait reveals Bodichon’s admiration of pioneering and enterprising women, but also the role many colonial women played in the imperial projects of their countries in the 19th century.

Rebecca Rogers (2008) puts forward an interesting illumination to account for Bodichon’s, and other British women travellers, laxity and lack of involvement with the local population and its concerns. She contends that British women travellers to French colonies like Algeria did not have what Antoinette Burton calls the “white woman’s burden” their counterparts had in British colonies like India, as a result their writings carry a much lighter tone. British women in India collaborated in their country’s imperial ‘ideological work.’ (See Antoinette Burton). They were actively involved in Britain’s colonial projects which were tinted with a supposed civilizing mission that had the grandiose aim of ridding the local populations of their barbarism and backwardness. Whether as missionary wives, missionaries themselves, wives of colonial administrators, social reformers or teachers, these women worked relentlessly to save their less fortunate ‘sisters’ and had the ambition to reform indigenous cultural and social systems which subjected women. For instance, Mary Carpenter, the famous social reformer, had a very active life in India and “wanted to assist Indian men...who sought to change some social conditions for the women of their own class.” She spent

long years in India trying to increase the number of female school teachers by lobbying and presenting memorials to convince the government in India to grant financial support for female schools to provide secular female teachers for schools for girls. On her return to her home country, Mary Carpenter worked to raise awareness on the conditions of Indians in general and their women in particular. (Barbara N. Ramusack, 121-2:1992) This was not the case with Barbara Bodichon who, despite a prolonged residence in Algeria (because of her husband's refusal to leave the country), "behaved as a tourist in colonial Algiers, visiting the city and its environs, sketching the countryside and the people, collecting pottery, and socializing." (Rebecca Rogers, 146:2013). At any rate, Bodichon's attachment to Algeria proved not strong enough and she left the land shortly after the death of her husband in 1885. In fact, Algiers was never quite home.

Barbara Bodichon maintained that French colonization was essentially positive and that one of its countless advantages was to introduce the local population to education. And when one reads her accounts one might easily be misled into thinking that no form of instruction preceded the French takeover of Algeria or that the country was a land where ignorance reigned. We are also made to believe that local women led an "idle slovenly existence" (qtd in Candida Ann Lacey, 47:1987) because of the absence of any manual work in their lives. Nothing could be further from the truth than such sweeping generalisations. Bodichon herself, perhaps without realizing it, rebuffed the supposed idleness of women in her detailed description of different tasks they performed in Madame Luce workshop like embroidery, drapery, needlework... Such handwork, as she herself acknowledged was the subject of admiration of all those who visited the school. There was even "a proposal for the handkerchiefs [the girls] made to be sold at the feminist premises in central London" (Jill Beaulieu,

113:2012). And many historians (like Julia Clancy-Smith) speak of a very flourishing local manual crafts production. Traditional female crafts were no exception. Local women excelled in pottery, embroidery, textile weaving, and carpet production to name but few. These traditional skills were an important source of revenue for numerous families, including women. So many women, contrary to Bodichon's assertions, had some source of money or other.

Bodichon herself, as we have seen earlier, lamented the unfair competition these valuable products were subjected to because of cheap machine-made imported French goods. But she quickly passes over this fact and doesn't mention the fact that because of French colonization, many families and women lost their sole source of living. The French feminist and women's suffrage activist Hubertine Auclert (1892) was far more critical of the irreversible effects of colonization on traditional crafts and on Algerian women when she said,

We would not have to denounce the colonial administration in French Algeria-which is responsible for ruining native women's crafts because of its policies-if women, who are better able to appreciate beautiful needle work than men, had been allowed to serve as adjuncts to the male-dominated organizing committee for the Paris Exposition.

The pre-colonial local educational system (whose existence Barbara Bodichon chose to ignore) though very elementary, mainly religious, archaic and different from the French one proved effective in keeping the rates of illiteracy low. One French general said that "nearly all the Arabs can read and write; in each village there are two schools" (Benrabah, 43:2011). Another testimony of Senator Combes attests to the existence of widespread education:

Si l'on croit les affirmations de plusieurs lettrés musulmans, corroborés par le témoignage de nos officiers généraux, l'instruction publique musulmane, à l'époque de la conquête française, était moins arriérée que ne l'admet l'opinion publique d'Algérie, généralement peu bienveillante dans ses jugements à l'égard des indigènes. assurément elle avait perdu de son ancienne prospérité sous la domination brutale et ignorante des Turcs. Néanmoins elle conservait une partie de sa grandeur primitive. On comptait 2000 écoles primaires ou supérieures dans le territoire de la Régence. (Combes, 1894 quoted in KamelKateb)

But soon after the invasion, things started to change and deteriorate. The invasion had devastating effects on the religious, cultural and social organization of the Algerian society. The colonizer engaged in systematic and deliberate attempts to deracinate and annihilate social structures that had, for long, guaranteed the continuity of social stability. Brutal methods were used to subdue the populations and silence any attempt at resistance. Acts of resistance were thus responded to by, for instance, the destruction of houses, mosques .cemeteries...and land expropriation. Attacking the existing educational system was one of the strategies adopted to weaken and 'deculturate' the indigenous society. Many historians agree that this invasion 'dealt a deathblow' to the local educational system. The liberal thinker and politician Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited Algeria and wrote two parliamentary on the country, was aware of this when he declared:

We have reduced the charitable establishments, abandoned the schools, dispersed the seminaries. Around us the lights have been turned off, the recruitment of men of religion stopped and men of law has stopped ;that is we have made Muslim society much more miserable, more disordered ,

more barbarous than it was before knowing us.(Quoted in Saliha Belmessous,145:2012)

7. After Madame Luce School

Madame Allix-Luce's interest in Algerian women's education would find its echo some years later in HubertineAuclert's *Women and Algeria*. HubertineAuclert, unlike Barbara Bodichon, who did not speak of any form of education, acknowledged the existence of a local educational system which predated the French invasion and was really impressed with the little girls' intelligence, brilliance and eagerness to learn and discover a world mysterious and unknown to them. HubertineAuclert was a well-known figure in women's rights who recognized the weight of a modern education in native women's lives and its significance in the assimilation of the natives into mainstream French culture. In her many writings and articles, she criticised French colonial authorities for their reluctance to open school for girls. She was aware of the double yoke of colonialism and gender Algerian women were victim of, when she wrote:

Instead of encouraging education for Arab girls in Algeria, the French administration has closed the schools that existed prior to the [1830] conquest, allowed conservative Muslim men to shut down those schools for girls that were established after the conquest, and thus the capital of Algeria has not had a single [academic] school for native girls for thirty-five years. When the rector of the Academy of Algiers, Monsieur Jeanmarie, opened a class where young Arab girls could receive education, these girls proved so prodigiously intelligent that the French became alarmed. (HubertineAuclert, 1896)

However, these efforts and others, whatever their motives might be, found little resonance with French colonial authorities. They coincided with an atmosphere permeated with heated debates about the form of education to offer to the natives and the place of women in French society and not only native women. Soon after the opening of her school, rumours began to circulate about the improper conduct of Madame Luce. There was a lot of talk about her living in concubinage with a man, Napoléon Luce, who, for long, was believed to be her husband. The Government General received reports of the institution nonrespect of the strict laws which required the separation of the sexes. The families rarely welcomed back their graduating daughters who were considered too 'frenchified'. Some reports even accused the school of acting as recruiting boards for the colonial army or brothels. the Du Manoir Commission member Adolphe Michel accused the workshop of producing 'concubines for European men'. Because of these alarming accounts the colonial authorities decided to investigate and in 1861 the school, along with all other Arab-French schools, was turned into a workshop. (Abi Meshed, 141-2:2010) withdrawal of Financial support for the school was quick to follow. Madame Luce died in 1882 in France, but her workshop which now was run by her granddaughter continued to be the site of frequent visits by mostly British and American women travellers thanks to the reputation established by Bodichon in the mid-1850s. The workshop continued but the school was an unfinished story success. The French authorities focused, instead, on Arab boys' education though the efforts were not on a large-scale level. Benrabah (33:2013) says that the number of schooled boys at primary level went from 3200 in 23 schools in 1883 to 25300 in 228 in 1901. This was nothing of spectacular when one considers that the total indigenous population was 1.5 million.

References

- ABI-MERSHED, Osama W. (2010). *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians & the Civilizing Mission in Algeria*. Stanford, Stanford University Press,.
- BEAULIEU, Jill and Roberts (2002). *Mary. Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*. Durham Duke University Press.
- BELMESSOUS, Saliha (2013). *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541-1954*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- BENRABAH Mohamed (2013). *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence*. Bristol, Multilingual Matters.
- BODICHON, Barbara (1987) *Women and Work*. 1857. Reprinted in Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group, ed. Candida Ann Lacey, 36–73. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- BODICHON, Barbara (1858). *Guide Book: Algeria Considered as a Winter Residence for the English*. London: Englishwoman's Journal Office,.
- BOURGUINAT, Nicolas (2008) . *Le voyage au féminin: Perspectives historiques et littéraires (XVIII-XX siècles)*. Strasbourg, Presse Universitaires de Strasbourg,.
- CHAUDHURI, Nupur & STROBEL(1992). Margaret. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*. Indianapolis, Indiana University Press,.
- CHERRY, Deborah (2000). *Beyond The Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900*. New York, Routledge,
- Harald Fischer-Tiné (2004). Michael Mann. *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*. London, Anthem Press.
- HERSTEIN, Sheila R. (1985). *A Mid-Victorian Feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- HIRSCH, Pam (1998). *Barbara Bodichon: Feminist, Artist and Rebel*. London, Chatto&Windus,.
- Kateb, Kamel (2014). *Les séparations scolaires dans l'Algérie coloniale*. In <http://insaniyat.revues.org/6242>. Accessed on 15 March.
- LORCIN, Patricia (1995). *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria*. London, I.B. Tauris&Co Ltd.
- Nestor , Pauline. (2013). *Negotiating a self: Barbara Bodichon in America and Algiers*. In <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13688790500153562#.VHiIzNd5O90>. Accessed on 12 March 2013.
- POMEROY, Jordana (2005). *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*. Vermont, Ashgate,.
- ROGERS, Rebecca (2013). *A Frenchwoman's Imperial Story: Madame Luce in Nineteenth-Century Algeria*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- ROGERS M, Ellen. (1865). *A Winter in Algeria, 1863-4*. London, Sampson Low, Son, and Martson.