

Colonial and Postcolonial Gaze: Algerian Women in French Postcards

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Abstract:

Le Colonial Harem (١٩٨١) by Malek Alloula is a collection of essays that analyzes a series of ٩٠ photographic reproductions of colonial postcards featuring Algerian women. When French male photographers first came to Algeria they were so eager to capture the highly sexualized and beautiful Orient women that had been previously portrayed in Orientalist paintings. However, they could not because they were denied access to the harem, and even the Algerian women they encountered outside were veiled. Subsequently, denial of sight and experience resulted in fictitious harems and an obsession with the Algerian women's veil and later on their unveiling. The purpose of this work is to examine the representation of Algerian women in French colonial postcards. The method used in this study is analytical, and the study is based on a close reference to a number of seminal works written by authors such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said.

Key Words: harem, veil, orient, Algerian women, postcards.

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١. INTRODUCTION

In ١٨٣٠, the French armies invaded the city of Algiers, marking the beginning of a lengthy colonial regime that would last ١٣٢ years. During that period, the Algerian resistance, which initially confronted the invading forces, was met with severe repression and violence due to the relentless and brutal "pacification campaign" that was waged by the French and was not only limited to armed resistance. The French colonial authorities also sought to impose their own lingual, cultural, social, religious and political norms on Algerians in order to suppress and weaken their identity and practices.

They also used every possible way to terrorize the Algerian population and suppress any type of resistance in addition to settling French and European colonists in Algeria. However, after over a century of immense suffering and destruction, with countless lives lost, the Algerian War of Independence eventually brought the French control to an end.

At the time of French colonial rule in Algeria, researchers, authors, artists, journalists _more specifically photographers_ were also among the troops that arrived on the newly colonized land. In the case of this work, the pictures were taken in Algeria from late ١٨٩٠'s to ١٩٣٠'s by photographers working for the French government as well as various publishing firms to document the locals for scientific (anthropological photography), missionary (missionary work), and entertainment purposes (postcards produced for both the French and tourists alike in both Algeria and France).

In addition to that, these photos were used by the French government to gain support from the French back home and to justify colonialism _and any act of violence used against the locals to evolve the "Algerian barbarians" and liberate women_ to the whole wide world. Nonetheless, these photographs served as a medium of visual history that reflected how the French displayed their power. Hence, this study mainly focuses on examining postcards featuring Algerian women during the French rule in Algeria.

٢. THE STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN ORIENTALIST ART

Initially, the "Orient" was either depicted in different literary works or paintings; however, with the birth of photography in late ١٨٤٠'s, it could also be photographed. Additionally, Orientalist/western photography portrays the "Orient" as exotic, romantic, and mysterious, bound by religious doctrines, and incapable, or more likely unwilling, to progress without foreign, precisely European, interference. Barbra Harlow in her introduction to *The Colonial Harem* claims that the phantasmic

depictions of the Orient in Western art have always been the center of conflict between the East and the West. Misconceptions about women's roles and places in Arab societies have contributed throughout time to strained relations between the two cultures (Alloula, ١٩٨٧; Nochlin, ١٩٨٩; Warraq, ٢٠١٠).

Hence when the French photographers first came to Algeria, they already had false perceptions of the "East" because they were influenced by different literary works and arts that had long given Europeans _in general_ an idea of what the "Orient" looked like. Nonetheless, these perceptions, while captivating and intriguing, were far from accurate.

For centuries, the "Orientals" were depicted as the exotic other, barbaric, socially and intellectually inferior in comparison to the "enlightened" Europeans. According to Edward Said, Europe generated and established an illusion of the "orient" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through literary works, art, and various social studies conducted by imperial, colonial Europeans. Initially, Said used the notion of Orientalism in relation to photography in order to expose and critique fictitious stereotypes of the "East" in European photographic productions (Nochlin, ١٩٨٩; Said, ١٩٧٨).

Furthermore, Said says that the "Orient" is a European invention, "*a place of romance, exotic being, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences*" (Said, ١٩٧٨, p. ٢٣; Quinn, ٢٠١٧). Thus, French photographers sought to capture and document what they believed the "Orient/ East" should look like based on the various works they had been exposed to. However, instead of testing and challenging those negative stereotypes and prejudices, photography served to strengthen them for they were considered as a means that visually documented history and truly and objectively portrayed reality (Behdad & Gatlan, ٢٠١٣)

The colonial photographers' only authentic visual reference of true "Oriental" women was in the form of "Harem" paintings such as Eugène Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger dans leur Appartement* which was considered by art critics as the "first true Orientalist painting". Delacroix's painting, like many other Orientalist works, was a French colonial projection of an imagined world that never truly existed (Fraser, ٢٠٠٤; Nicholas, ٢٠١٣; Said, ١٩٧٨). The depiction of Algerian women in exotic costumes and translucent veils created an unusual and controversial ambiance that captured the Europeans' imagination. Therefore, the colonial photographers were very eager to capture images of "Oriental" Algerian women as they envisioned them: lounging in harems, smoking hookahs, imprisoned at home, semi-naked, passive and easily sexually available.

Nevertheless, when they first came to Algeria, they were unable to capture with their cameras "Oriental" women because the ones they encountered in reality were veiled, modest and visually and physically inaccessible; especially to them. The

French photographers were desperate to give a solid proof to the French back home how Algerian women were submissive, immodest, and backward; yet they still wanted to stimulate and satisfy the viewer's sexual fantasies.

٣. THE POWER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The birth of photography in the mid-nineteenth century has been regarded as one of the most important modern instruments for depicting reality for it is a neutral practice that eliminates any traces of bias, and in Don Slater's view, photography is the "*epitome of positivist representation*" and should take its place "*within a project of total disenchantment*" (Slater, ١٩٩٥). However, Slater's perspective is lacking for it does not adequately explain the nature of photographic practice and the underlying agendas and intentions of the photographer, as well as their control over what is captured through his camera lens which ultimately evokes reactions from the viewer.

The linkage between photography and power is much deeper than what meets the eye and as Paul Frosh points out, "*certain people are made visible to others through the agency of a third party: photographers. This mediating function does not, however, guarantee symmetrical power relations between photographer, viewer and viewed . . . varying degrees of control over the production, distribution and iconography of the images . . . gives photographers themselves a degree of power over those they photograph*" (Slater, ١٩٩٥).

And in the case of this study, the French male photographer, was initially denied access to the Algerian households, and was prevented from penetrating the privacy of its harems and women. Consequently, he was unstoppable when violating the Algerian women's body and space when creating fictitious harems in order to satisfy the French male colonizers fantasies. Hence, the colonial photographer is already in a privileged position as a male colonizer and has more control over the Algerian women he photographs and aims to portray.

٤. THE DEPICTION OF ALGERIAN WOMEN IN COLONIAL POSTCARDS

Le Colonial Harem (١٩٨١) (originally titled *Le Harem Colonial: Images d'un Sous Erotisme* then later translated by Myma Godzich and Wlad Godzich as *The Colonial Harem* ١٩٨٦) by Malek Alloula, an Algeria poet and literary critic, is a collection of essays that analyze a series of ٩٠ photographic reproductions of postcards featuring Algerian women during the French rule in Algeria. These photographs are dated from ١٩٠٠ to ١٩٣٠, and Alloula considers these photographs as a reflection of the colonizer's sexual fantasy of colonized Algerian women. He states that these postcards serve as an evidence of the violation of Algerian

households and families, as well as the unveiling of Algerian women by French authorities.

Alloula arranged these postcards in an increasing order of degradation, ending his book with what he calls an "anthology of breasts" where half naked women from different regions, age categories and social status pose and are accompanied by sexual imbedded captions. Additionally, these postcards cannot be dissociated from their colonial context since the unveiling, and the exposure and accessibility of Algerian women as well as the penetration of the household harem symbolized the political and military conquest of Algeria (Porterfield, ١٩٨٨).

٤.١. The Colonialist Postcards

Initially, photographers were challenged when they could not capture women through the lens of their cameras neither in the privacy of their households or in public for Algerian women were even more concealed from these photographers' sight by virtue of the veil that covered them from head to toe with only their eyes _or one eye_ showing. As Alloula claims, "*These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack upon him. It must be believed that the feminine gaze that filters through the veil is a gaze of a particular kind: concentrated by the tiny orifice for the eye, this womanly gaze is a little like the eye of the camera, like the photographic lens that takes aim at everything*" (Alloula, ١٩٨٧).

Ironically, the photographers felt frustrated _and somehow threatened_ as they were stripped of their role when the veiled women switch positions with them, quietly challenging them and looking at them with the same gaze they have whenever they are taking pictures and hiding behind cameras. The Algerian veiled women reversed roles, positions and power with the French photographers without even trying. Alloula adds, "*The photographer makes no mistake about it: he knows this gaze well; it resembles his own when it is extended by the dark chamber or the viewfinder. Thrust in the presence of a veiled women, the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object-to-be-seen, he loses initiative: he is dispossessed of his own gaze*" (Alloula, ١٩٨٧).

At the beginning _just like Delacroix when he painted *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*_ these photographers were able to unveil Algerian women and penetrate the privacy of families and households with the help of the French military either by threatening women, their families or simply by using force. They were determined to recreate with their cameras a more realistic and better version of Oriental paintings. They were highly influenced and misguided by the false representations created by Orientalist painters such as Delacroix and Henry Adrien Tanoux that they became so transfixed with an illusion.

The art historian Todd Porterfield states in *the Allure of imperialism: Art in the service of imperialism* ١٧٩٧- ١٨٣٦ (١٩٨٨) that: "*the Orient of 'The Women of Algiers' is an orient that was a creation of Delacroix's culture*". However, the first pictures that were taken by French photographers were incapable of truly satisfying the Frenchmen phantasm of Oriental women that were previously portrayed in many paintings.

Nevertheless, when challenged by "powerless inferior" women, photographers became relentless. They violated the holiness of the veil and gave exotic false representation of the forbidden _the Harams or households. And hence, "*The photographer will respond to this quiet and almost natural challenge by means of a double violation: he will unveil the veiled and give figural representation to the forbidden*" (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٤). When Algerian women did not reveal themselves willingly, the photographers' only solution was to create one and take revenge on the conservative society that denied them access to its women. They persisted, employing marginal models to pose and dress up. In their studios, props and backdrops were used to create bedrooms and harem-like atmospheres, hookahs and coffee pots were positioned on the floor, and windows were blocked to create the impression of imprisonment (Alloula, ١٩٨٧; Auclert, ٢٠١٤).

The postcards reflect the French colonial presence in Algeria from late ١٨٩٠'s to ١٩٣٠'s and provide an insight into its distorting effects on the Algerian society. Alloula describes the act of writing *The Colonial Harem* as a form of what he referred to as "my exorcism" because the appropriation of the Algerian women's violated body is in fact a violation of the Algerian society (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. xiii). He claims that the large amount of women who were photographed and delivered to the public view had never been seen before in history; and that these women's bodies were eroticized as they were both easily and visually accessible to the colonial as well as postcolonial gaze. He argues that he, among all colonized Algerians, were powerless against such violations.

In each chapter, Alloula reproduces a series of similar postcards of veiled women, women in prison, women in their homes, couples and families, women in harems, entertainers, pairs of women, women exposing their breasts. Moreover, He asserts that the French tried to use these pictures as one of "*the forms of the aesthetic justification of colonial violence*" and to convince those living in France that Algeria along with its topless and imprisoned women were better off being colonized (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٢٠).

Nevertheless, He also asserts that those revealing pictures were deceptive due to the fact that the Algerian women who were forced to pose had a beautiful resilient gaze which conveyed their utter hatred for the colonial photographer in specific and the French colonizer in general, or as Alloula puts it, returning "*this immense postcard to its sender*". He claims that French men are hypocrites and sexists who had pornographic intentions concealed under the pretext of documenting the

Algerian population and its practices (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. xi). Even though, the French authorities used photography to justify colonization and sexually objectify Algerian women; later on the same photographs that were taken by French photographers were also used to proof how the French violated, defamed and oppressed an entire country without taking into consideration any human rights that they consistently kept defending and preaching.

٥. THE HAREM

Alloula asserts that ever since the French set foot in Algeria, they were so transfixed on Algerian women and were curious and even obsessed with the harem. The term "harem" originated from the Islamic culture, more specifically the Turkish one. It's a private space where women usually from the same family are protected from the male gaze as they gather either to learn something or for entertainment. However, in Oriental paintings, these harems were a place for excessive sexuality.

In late ١٨th century, the English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham came up with a concept called "Panopticon" which is a prison system where it is possible to keep the maximum number of prisoners under surveillance with the fewest possible guards. He claimed that "Panopticon" is an optical system designed to easily and effectively solve the problems of surveillance and discipline. In ١٩٧٥, Foucault coined and expanded the term of "Panopticon" to represent social control that extended into everyday life for all citizens, not just those in prison (Brunon-Ernst, ٢٠١٢)

Under the light of Foucauldian expansion of Bentham's idea of "Panopticon", Aloula claimed that the positions of power between the French and the Algerians were reversed at the beginning. In the Colonial Harem, the French male colonizers who have control over the colonized Algerian women are unable to gain access to the harem, and the surveillance of the space is impossible (See Figure ١ and ٢).



Figure ١: Moorish women taking a walk



Figure ٢: Moorish women at home

These photographs are taken in the streets or from outside the harem, and Alloula remarks, the way the Algerian feminine world “*threatens him in his being and prevents him from accomplishing himself as the gazing gaze*” (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٤). Additionally, even from outside, French photographers showed the harems as prison with metal bar windows. In the absence of a counter response that could challenge these colonial depictions or prove deception, the colonialist photographs taken by French colonizers further strengthens the misleading representations of Algerian harems, women and society.

٦. THE VEIL

It is nearly impossible to talk about the veil in colonial Algeria without mentioning the works of the Martinique-born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon for he was an essential reference when discussing the subject of the veil in colonial Algeria. Fanon was among the first scholars to emphasize the profound importance of the veil within the context of the complex colonized-colonizer dynamics in colonial Algeria. In the first chapter of his book “Sociologie d'une Révolution” (L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne) in ١٩٥٩ (later translated as “A Dying Colonialism” in ١٩٧٩), Fanon boldly claims that the French colonial forces in Algeria waged a relentless war against the veil, and treated veiled women in particular with violence.

Fanon argues that the French colonial forces perceived the veil as a symbolic barrier that portrayed the resistance of Algerian women without even using any form of force. They believed that true and total colonization could not be achieved without the act of unveiling Algerian women: “*if we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society[...] we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil*” (Fanon, ١٩٧٩), p.٣٧). Fanon asserts that the French colonizers were so transfixed on veiled Algerian women to eventually unveil them in order to highlight their beauty, to expose their secret, to make them easily accessible and available to

everybody in order to eventually break their resistance. He also states that these women who see without being seen frustrated the French colonizers for there was no reciprocity (Fanon, ١٩٧٩, p. ٢٦; Decker, ١٩٩٠).

The veil was another barrier that protected the Algerian women from the gaze of the French male colonizer even outside the privacy of the households. In *"Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism"*, ١٩٩٨ by Mayda Yegenoglu, she discusses the politics of the veil, *"the veiled woman is not simply an obstacle in the field of visibility and control...the loss of control does not imply a mere loss of sight, but a complete reversal of positions: her body completely invisible to the European observer except for her eyes, the veiled woman can see without being seen"* (Yegenoglu, ١٩٩٨, p. ٤٣).

In this context, Alloula also mentions this, *"the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object-to-be seen, he loses initiative: he is dispossessed of his own gaze"* (See Figure ١) (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٤). The colonizers want to unveil the "phantasm" beneath the veil, not just to satisfy their sexual fantasies, but also to display their dominance over the colonized. Hence why the French colonizers reacted so aggressively to these limitations of their perceptions even before the outbreak of physical resistance, whereas, the colonialist photographers' goal was the double violation of the Algerian women's space and body.

٧. THE UNVEILING OF ALGERIAN WOMEN

Since the beginning of the French colonization, the French were captivated and repulsed by the veil and the secrecy of the Algerian households for two main reasons. The first one is that the French male colonizer was prevented from seeing and communicating with Algerian women _let alone touch them_ which led to the colonizers' frustration and violent response. Additionally, Alloula states that the veil and the harem gave French photographers a fantasy and dangled the promise of exotic and sensuous adventures because from the colonizers' perspective, the Algerian women would not be fully covered unless they were exceptionally beautiful or special (Alloula, ١٩٨٧; Pouillon & Mégnin, ٢٠١٠).

٧.١. The Unveiling of Algerian Women in Postcards

Alloula emphasizes that when the French photographers saw Algerian women were bewitched with their strange and unusual beauty. However, as mentioned before, they were denied access to Algerian households, and even when Algerian women went outside they were fully veiled by the Haik or the Mlaya. Hence, he had to create and suffice the French males' fantasies through unveiling them by force which still did not fully deliver an erotic vision due to the unwillingness and the resistance reflected in the Algerian women's gazes. In this context, Fanon states: *a European visiting Algeria who... had had the opportunity of seeing a few Algerian*

women without the veil. These men, he said, speaking of the Algerians, are guilty of concealing so many strange beauties. It was his conclusion that a people with a cache of such prizes, of such perfections of nature, owes it to itself to show them, to exhibit them. If worst came to worst, he added, it ought to be possible to force them to do so" (Fanon, ١٩٧٩, p. ٤٣)

Moreover, Alloula claims that even when veiled, Algerian women were objectified because the colonizers were undeterred and their phantasm has no end. They forced veiled women who were originally inaccessible for them to pose for their cameras with the veil, and then they were gradually "unveiled" with the veil completely removed or drawn aside to reveal the face, the hair or even the upper half of the body. (See Figure ٣) (Alloula, ١٩٨٧; Pouillon & Méglin, ٢٠١٠).



Figure ٣: Southern Algeria. Dance



Figure ٤: Kabyl woman covering herself with the haik

Eventually, the colonialist photographers were so eager to depict the exotic stereotypes that were initially represented in Orientalist paintings that they had no alternative but to hire Algerian models who ended up not only unveiled but also semi-naked. The photographers were so adamant on fulfilling both his and the viewers phantasm that they photographed half naked Algerian women while still wearing "the sacred veil". (See Figure ٤)

In figure ٤ is one of the numerous models hired by the colonialist photographers. The photographer uses a description for the postcard that tarnishes the image of veiled women by claiming that the woman is "covering herself with the Haik".

However in reality, this is far from the truth because the model is adorned with jewelry while her head is covered by the veil whereas the second veil that is supposed to cover her body is drawn aside by both hands to reveal her breast to both the photographer and the viewer in the form of an invitation that the former fully staged. The distorting nature and hidden message behind such photograph is that Algerian women can be easily accessible, available and gradually unveiled until they have nothing to hide.

Furthermore, the photographs quickly escalated from fully covered Algerian women from head to toe, to an anthology of different breasts, "*the viewer gets to know a large variety of bosoms: first the Beduin, then the Kabyl, then the 'Uled-Nayl, and so on*" (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٠٥; Pouillon & Mégnin, ٢٠١٠) to even taboos such as out of wedlock affairs and sapphism/lesbianism.

Nevertheless, unveiling and exposing the bodies of Algerian models was eventually not enough for the French photographers. They started staging photographs that were complete replicas to European ones. If not being aware of the existence of the French photographers behind the camera, one would think that Algerian women and men in those photos were trying to imitate and mimic European photographs and paintings. Other pictures copied poses that originated in French pornographic postcards found in books such as *Nudes of Yesteryear* (١٩٦٦), a portfolio that showcases French women in dim and drafty *fin de siècle* Parisian studios (Maxwell, ٢٠١٥).

The French photographer also had a voyeuristic and active presence in the images, as he guided the setting and stance of the women. The photos of the veiled women and the harem pictures from outside exposed the photographer's voyeuristic gaze (See figure ١ and figure ٢), whilst the depictions of the semi-naked woman showed the photographer as the director of the photographs (See figure ٣ and figure ٤). He manipulates the social and political perception of the Algerian society in general and the Algerian women in specific to what serves his purpose or more particularly France's agenda.

Hence, while the French colonizers unveiled Algerian women to satisfy their sexual fantasies and reinforce the stereotypical depiction of the Orient's endless sexuality, they veiled their own sexual desires. In addition to that, the colonialist photographer was so adamant on unveiling and tantalizing the Algerian women to hide his strong hidden ambition to dominate and possess Algeria itself. Alloula says: "*The phantasm of the harem is only a transparent and convenient mask behind which is hidden an even more sordid meaning, the key to which is colonization*" (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. ١٠٣). Therefore, the French colonizers' phantasm and political agenda were closely interconnected.

٧.٢. The Unveiling Ceremonies

In ١٩٥٨, there were propagandas and even ceremonies preaching the Algerian women to emancipate themselves through unveiling and removing the Haik. These propagandas were both in France and Algeria and directly addressed Algerian women that if they want to be more beautiful, they simply could remove the veil. For instance, one of the numerous ceremonies _or as known as "The unveiling Ceremonies"_ were organized in Algiers in May ١٩٥٨ where French women applauded and stood by some Algerian women who publically unveiled themselves. (See Figure ٥, ٦ and ٧)



Figure ٥: A European
"emancipating" an indigene,
Algiers ١٩٥٨



Figure ٦: Unveiling
propaganda

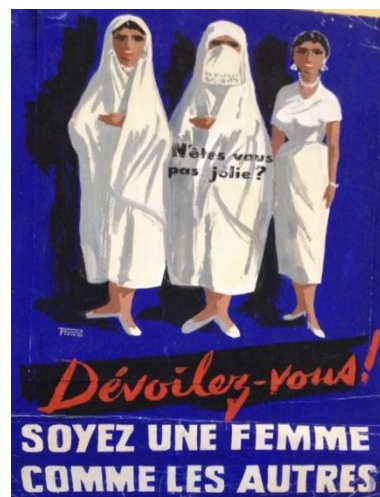


Figure ٧: Unveiling
Propaganda

Initially, the French colonizers claimed that they wanted to save and liberated Algerian women by removing the Haik or the veil, because they knew that they both were weapons against Westernization, as they eventually became an instrument of anti-colonial resistance. The French depicted it as an unbearable burden by labeling it a symbol of enslavement that prevented the emancipation and the evolvement of the Algerian women (Fanon, ١٩٧٩; Decker, ١٩٩٠). They never really acknowledged that maybe these Algerian women that they desperately wanted to emancipate were already that by wearing the veil, the Haik, and the Mlaya by choice. They never considered that they truly wanted to veil themselves out of self respect along with honoring the Islamic beliefs.

٧. ٣. The Unveiling and then Veiling of Algerian Women during Resistance

Barbra Harlow in *The Colonial Harem* added a historical essay on the colonial experience. She began it with a scene from the Italian director Gillo Pontecorvo's film *"The Battle of Algiers"* in which Djamila Boupacha, an Algerian girl working for the National Liberation Front (FLN), Smuggles explosives past French guards in

a cosmetic bag. She hides her mission by unveiling herself and wearing makeup in order to appear Europeanized. Her disguise gives her an easy access from the Arab Quarter of Algiers (the Casbah) to the French one (Alloula, ١٩٨٧).

Pontecorvo depicted Algerian women who stood up to the armed French soldiers while maintaining both her modesty and anonymity. Hence, the French believed that the conquest of Algeria can be easily accomplished through conquering and unveiling Algerian women for it offered anonymity and represented their religious, national and cultural identity. Harlow underscores how Algerian women during resistance ironically used the French colonizers' fantasy of unveiled Algerian women _who were initially portrayed in postcards_ to participate in the conquest of the French (Alloula, ١٩٨٧). The Algerian women's faces, hair and bodies were exposed and refashioned into European apparel to reach their ultimate goal and bring the French rule in Algeria to an end.

The French photographer Marc Riboud popularized the model of the Algerian women in Haik in his photographs, to represent both the Algerian resistance in general and the public participation of Algerian women in the war of independence. In addition to that, Pontecorvo shows the heroic representation of Algerian women fully covered in white Haik and Mlaya which functioned as national symbols, and both veils were linked to the Algerian resistance that led to the country's independence.

Moreover, Harlow's "Introduction" along with Alloula's analysis follows and illustrates Fanon's claims and opinion in *A Dying Colonialism*. In the chapter "Algeria unveiled", Fanon Writes: *"In the beginning, the veil was a mechanism of resistance, but its value for the social group remained very strong. The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but also because the occupier was bent on unveiling Algeria. In a second phase, the mutation occurred in connection with the Revolution and under special circumstances. The veil was abandoned in the course of revolutionary action. What had been used to block the psychological or political offensives of the occupier became a means, an instrument. The veil helped the Algerian woman to meet the new problems created by the struggle"* (Fanon, ١٩٧٩, p. ٦٣).

Therefore, Harlow states that whereas the veil was initially a symbolic instrument for Algerian norms, traditions and resistance, Algerian women thought to fit and mold themselves according to the French male colonizer's fantasy as a distraction that allowed them to participate in the liberation struggle. Furthermore, she claims that the makeup and the Western clothes ironically became a part of the Algerian resistance to the French colonialism; however, later on when unveiled Algerian women were suspected as well, the veil once again returned and was used by Algerian women to conceal within its folds the weapons and bombs they used to kill the French or transported them between the French and Arab quarters and even smuggled them to the Algerian soldiers (Alloula, ١٩٨٧).

٨. FEMINIST CRITICS AGAINST ALLOULA'S ANALYSIS

Carol Shloss in her article "*Algeria, Conquered by Postcards*", ١٩٨٧, criticized Alloula for his masculinist/ patriarchal gaze because she claims that he was angry not for the Algerian women who were the subjects of colonialist postcards; but for the absence of Algerian men and their defeat. He also considered women as property or as what Shloss called "symbolic marks of (dis)honor or status for the men in their families because at the end of the book, he probably unconsciously states that veiled woman is a symbol of Algeria, not a being of her own right (Shloss, ١٩٨٧). Additionally, the Arab feminist Nawel El Saadawi in *The Hidden Faces of Eve*" writes "*Segregation and the veil were not meant to ensure the protection of women, but essentially that of men. And the Arab woman was not imprisoned in the home to safeguard her body, her honor and her morals, but rather to keep intact the honor and morals of men*" (Sa'dāwī, ٢٠١٥, p. ٢٠٦)

Hence according to Shloss, the French colonists unveiled the Algerian women as they took pride in such act and to display their power on one side; while the Algerian men veiled them to show theirs on the other. She further claims that _besides colonialist photographers_ there was a double violation the Algerian women's space and body due to "*being vulnerable and disgraced by their own original display on colonial postcards, they are once again exposed by their display in this book*" (Shloss, ١٩٨٧).

The numerous photos leave them silent as they are re-victimized once more by a book that was supposed to defend and liberate them because when Alloula criticized the French erotic gaze towards Algerian women; he likely did the same thing by exposing them and their bodies to a bigger audience without either their consent or a chance to tell their stories and testimonies in order to eventually reclaim their bodies and spaces. Therefore, the Algerian women became mute victims of a double gaze, that of the male colonizer and the male post-colonizer.

Besides Shloss, other critics like Marnia Lazreg claim that there are gaps in Alloula's book because he mentioned that the half-naked women who posed in the colonialist postcards were lower class Algerian women due to the fact of being paid models; yet there were other photos of fully clothed women who might have been from the lower class as well (Lazreg, ٢٠٠٩). They considered the degree of nudity or coverage was not a true indicator of the French exploitation of the Algerian women's socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, posing veiled, unveiled, half-naked alone or with a man or with another women might have been on outlet of self-expression for some of those Algerian women, because both the veil and the harem might have been barriers established by the patriarchal Algerian men and those women had no other choice but to hide their extramarital and lesbian affairs as well (Lazreg, ٢٠٠٩). Hence, the French photographers provided them with a sense of freedom and sexual expression.

According to Harlow, Alloula did not regard the important role veiled women played in the liberation struggle; but instead he only considered them as passive victims of oppression. He dismissed the torture and the traumatic experiences that the Algerian women went through during the French-Algerian war, and perhaps even those women who posed in the same postcards he used in his book were also subjected to different levels and types of torture (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. xiii). Therefore, the French had to be careful about which body part they inflicted violence, in other to not leave marks on their bodies since they usually posed semi-naked; or used other family members to threaten and mentally manipulate them to do as they wished

Furthermore, in his book Alloula did not highlight the vast number of Algerian women who joined the National Liberation front as they were so resilient in their rebellion and resistance against the French colonizers while also maintaining their power over their own bodies and identities. Also, due to the fact that Alloula was a man and did not truly and completely understand the sufferance of the Algerian women, Harlow discusses the works of Algerian feminist contemporary female authors such as Fadila M'rabet and Assia Djebar. According to her, their works, unlike Alloula, took into account the perspective of Algerian women as well as include oral testimonies of those who took part in the Algerian liberation struggle from ١٩٥٤ to ١٩٦٢ (Alloula, ١٩٨٧, p. xiii).

٩. CONCLUSION

The first nationalist Algerians sought integration _or what Alloula called "assimilation"_ into France on terms of equality, and the French photographers granted them that form of equality in the form of postcards of "liberated and sensual Algerian women" just like French women were emancipated. The colonialist photographers used various aspects that were believed in his homeland to be authentic and native like the different concepts (nudity, adultery, prostitution) accessories (jewelry, hookahs), furniture (rugs and tents) (Alloula, ١٩٨٧; Nochlin, ١٩٨٩). They had an artistic imperialistic tendency or more likely hunger to shape another culture only in accordance with their own self interest or ethnocentric ideology. Nonetheless, Alloula claims that colonial postcards are "an art of simulacrum" because they failed to truly and objectively document the native population.

Although those photos have fragments of the truth in term of using indigenous people, cloths and accessories; yet, they depicted imprisoned Algerian females _from different age groups both covered and half nude_ in the harem peering through barred windows, or singing, playing the music and dancing among themselves, drinking coffee and smoking the hookah, displaying their jewelry, meeting their lovers _from both genders_ only half dressed and even openly prostituting themselves. In spite of all that, the photographers were banned from entering the private households of true nationalist Algerians; hence, they went to extreme ends just to frame the Algerian women.

Nevertheless, critics who opposed Alloula's analysis did not condemn the Algerian women who complied with the colonialist photographers for they were also probably traumatized. They might have been in need of money and their modeling in various provocative poses, whether clothed or semi-naked was probably the only way to feed their families or avoid being targeted by the French as they were victims as well.

In addition to that, the imperialist French male colonizers in general and the photographers in specific were at fault for desperately wanting to unveil and defame Algeria's female population because on one hand they were both smitten and threatened by veiled and modest women; and even by those who were later on unveiled. They also knew deep down that to defeat the Algerians they had to target their weakness (i.e., the Algerian women) and tarnish their "honor". They wanted to erase and at the same time possess a nation whose identity, religion and norms they denied.

The Colonial Harem may not have been completely fair to all the Algerian women due to mostly ignoring their victimization, perspective and role that they actively played in the Algerian resistance war. Nonetheless, Alloula's book was still used as a testimony to expose the French's true intentions and their use of power to control, oppress, degrade and frame an entire country to what serves their personal interests and mostly France's agenda.

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