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**The Representation of the Saidian Secular Intellectual in  
Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960)**

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## **Dedications**

I would like to dedicate this work to every member of my family and every person who helped through this path. I would like thank my supervisor and colleague for their patience and motivation.

*Saad Bouzid Samir*

For this great achievement, I dedicate everything I did to every member of my beloved family particularly *my parents* and *all my brothers* for their consistent support, encouragement, and love throughout this academic experience.

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the British literary representation of colonial violence, racial injustice, and the silence surrounding atrocities in Algeria during its War of Independence (1954–1962). It examines how these themes are depicted in Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1961). The title itself, *Darkness Visible*, is symbolically charged, suggesting the presence of concealed truths and moral obscurity under the French colonial rule. The research further examines how colonial power structures work in French-occupied Algeria; it focuses on how narrative forms of resistance confront and expose the dehumanisation and control embedded in French colonial ideology and systemic violence. The analysis is framed within postcolonial theory, particularly Edward Said's theory of the intellectual as a figure morally compelled to speak truth to power and challenge dominant narratives. In this context and thesis, the protagonist, Steve Lavers, is interpreted as a *secular intellectual* who fulfils this role. Through his observations, moral discomfort, and eventual refusal to remain silent, Lavers embodies the ethical duty of the intellectual: to resist injustice not through ideology, but through honest engagement with reality as being experienced in Algeria during wartime. The findings reveal that *Darkness Visible* stands a significant critique of French colonialism by exposing its brutality, moral collapse and failure. Moreover, the narrative depicts the French military's efforts to preserve authority through fear, coercion, and systemic violence as represented through the organisation (The Red Hand), yet all of these are fiercely met with the resistance of the F.L.N-ers. Pronouncedly, Lewis's novel positions Steve as a *Saidian and secular intellectual* whose personal awakening represents a form of moral and human resistance to imperial domination.

**Key words:** Secular Intellectual; Saidian intellectual; Edward Said; Literary Resistance; Norman Lewis; *Darkness Visible*; postcolonial literature.

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# **The Representation of the Saidian Intellectual in Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960)**

## **1. General Introduction**

French colonialism in Algeria (1830–1962) represents a violent and complex chapter in the histories of both Algeria and France. It was marked by the systematic oppression of the Algerian population by imposing a structured form of injustice, which was faced by a sustained resistance against colonial domination. Historically, the colonisation began with the invasion of Algiers in 1830, an event commonly attributed to what became known as the ‘Fan Affair’ or ‘Fly Whisk Incident.’ In 1827, France seized upon a diplomatic confrontation between Hussein Dey, the ruler of the Ottoman Regency of Algiers, and the French consul as a pretext for military intervention. During a meeting, the Dey struck the consul with a fly whisk in response to France’s prolonged failure to repay debts incurred for grain shipments provided during Napoleon’s military campaigns (De Lange, 2024, pp.167-170).

This incident directly prompted the French Empire to launch its invasion of Algiers, landing at Sidi Fredj on June 14, 1830. French forces swiftly occupied key coastal cities, including Oran, Mostaganem, Arzew, Béjaïa, Annaba, and Jijel. While the Fly Whisk Affair was publicly presented as the immediate cause of the invasion, it served primarily as a diplomatic pretext. France’s true motivations lay in broader imperial ambitions. In that context, many writers discussed the system of expansions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; while France sought to expand its empire by securing control over many countries such as Algeria. Algeria’s rich agricultural lands, valuable mineral resources (such as phosphates, iron, and oil), and strategic location on the Mediterranean made it a target of both economic exploitation and geopolitical significance (Julien, 1970, p. 45).

From the outset, Algerians fiercely resisted the French invasion, with key figures such as Emir Abdelkader, Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, and Larbi Ben M'hidi emerging as national heroes and enduring symbols of resistance. In response, the French military employed brutal tactics, including massacres, targeted assassinations, mass arrests, and the systematic destruction of villages, to suppress uprisings. This initiated a prolonged cycle of violence and repression that lasted for decades. During this period, France facilitated the migration of thousands of European settlers, referred to as *colons*, to Algeria. These settlers appropriated the most fertile lands, relegating much of the native population to poverty and marginalisation. In parallel with territorial domination, the French colonial administration launched cultural policies aimed at erasing Algerian identity. Arabic was prohibited in schools, Islamic traditions were undermined, and French customs were promoted in their place (Ageron, 1991, p. 52). The legacy of French colonialism in Algeria is one of economic disparity, cultural disintegration; affecting both Arab and Berber communities—and a deeply rooted national longing for liberation.

Following the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, the Algerian people demonstrated immediate and determined resistance to defend their identity, culture, and land. This resistance was initially led by Emir Abdelkader, who successfully unified numerous tribes and organised sustained military campaigns against French colonial forces. Despite his strategic skill and diplomatic efforts, relentless French military pressure eventually forced him to surrender in 1847 (Benchérif, 1997, p.71). Nevertheless, localized uprisings persisted throughout the Nineteenth century, often led by many tribal leaders and regional chiefs; among them were Lalla Fatma N'Soumer in Kabylie during the 1850s and Sheikh Bouamama in the southwest. In addition to armed resistance, Algerians engaged in cultural and religious resistance aimed at preserving their language, Islamic faith, traditional values, and communal practices. However,

due to the systematic fragmentation of tribal communities, the resistance remained largely uncoordinated, with different regions and groups acting independently (Evans, 2012, p. 32)

The most significant challenge to French colonial rule came during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). It was a sustained and committed struggle that ultimately led to Algeria's liberation and sovereignty. Unlike typical colonial administrations, Algeria had been officially integrated into France since 1830 and was governed not as a colony but as an extension of French national territory. However, this integration served primarily to benefit the French settler population, who held control over vast resources and fertile lands. While the indigenous Algerian population faced systemic discrimination, economic exploitation, forced labour, and military repression (Shepard, 2006, p. 18). The Algerian War of Independence was led by the National Liberation Front (FLN) in 1954. The FLN united various nationalist factions with the aim of ending French domination and establishing an independent Algerian state. The movement launched its armed campaign on November 1, 1954, through coordinated attacks across the country, marking the official beginning of the Algerian War of Independence. Over the course of the conflict, both the FLN and French forces employed a range of tactics such as guerrilla warfare, bombings, and sabotage on one side, and systematic torture, mass arrests, and brutal military operations on the other. The confrontation between colonisers and the colonised was marked by extreme violence and substantial civilian casualties, leaving deep psychological and social scars on Algerian society (Evans, 2012, p. 75).

In addition to official military operations and institutional repression, France also relied on covert methods to maintain its colonial grip on Algeria. A clandestine organisation known as the *Main Rouge* ('Red Hand') illustrates a darker dimension of French counterinsurgency during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). Officially portrayed as an anti-terrorist group, the Red Hand operated as a covert paramilitary force aligned with the French colonial authorities. Although little known to the public at the time, its primary objective was not merely

to combat terrorism but to destabilise nationalist movements, particularly the FLN, and reinforce French dominance in Algeria (Evans, 2012, pp. 259–262).

The Red Hand engaged in acts of sabotage, bombings, and assassinations targeting pro-independence figures and FLN supporters. While unofficial, its operations were integral to the broader strategy of dismantling resistance and spreading fear among the Algerian population. The group's campaign of violence included the systematic elimination of key FLN leaders in an attempt to undermine the movement's organisational capacity and morale. This legacy of state-sponsored covert violence has only recently received official acknowledgment. On November 1, 2024, *Le Monde* reported that French President Emmanuel Macron publicly recognised France's responsibility for the 1957 assassination of Algerian nationalist Larbi Ben M'hidi, one of the FLN's most prominent figures (Le Monde, 2024).

While the Red Hand's violent operations disrupted the FLN in the short term, by sabotaging key missions and targeting prominent leaders, these actions ultimately served to strengthen the nationalist cause. The brutality employed by the French colonial apparatus, including covert assassination and psychological warfare, intensified the Algerian people's sense of injustice and solidarity. In this sense the emergence of the intellectuals was a necessary part of this movement to interfere and report the reality of the Algerian cause against the brutal colonialism. (Evans, 2012, pp. 261–262).

The symbol chosen for this illegal organisation that is the hand was cynically selected to evoke the *Hand of Fatima*; a traditional Muslim emblem associated with protection and blessing. However, due to the Red Hand's violent legacy, it has come to represent fear and terrorism (Riegler, 2012, p. 22). A 1959 investigation by West German authorities confirmed that many assassinations during the Algerian War were carried out by *La Main Rouge*, which operated in coordination with French intelligence. Initially thought to be an independent

counterterrorist group, later findings revealed that the Red Hand was in fact a front for the French *Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage* (SDECE), formerly known as the *Deuxième Bureau*, and its paramilitary arm, the *Service Action* (Faligot and Krop, 1989, p. 160).

The Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) is rarely explored in British literature. Few works directly engage with the realities of colonial violence and nationalist resistance. Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible*, however through his characterisation, confronts the brutality of French imperial rule and the determined struggle of the Algerian people. The novel addresses the mechanisms of state violence, political suppression, and moral complicity, offering a rare British literary perspective on the human cost of decolonisation during wartime. Through its portrayal of fear, injustice, and resistance through the eye of Steve Lavers, Lewis's novel contributes meaningfully to the literary discourse on the colonial conflict in Algeria.

Based on the previous discussion, this thesis argues that Steve Lavers, the novel's protagonist, functions as a secular intellectual in the Saidian sense—an individual who, while positioned outside institutional and political structures, is morally driven to speak truth to power. *Darkness Visible* is set during the early years of the Algerian Revolution, a period marked by intensifying resistance to French colonialism and the emergence of covert organisations such as the Red Hand. By centering the narrative on an outsider, Norman Lewis critiques the systemic violence inflicted by the French regime and highlights the political legitimacy of Algerian nationalist aspirations. Through his encounters with both Europeans and Algerians, Steve develops a critical awareness of the socio-economic exploitation and political marginalisation faced by the native population. Steve sympathises with the natives as he discovers that it is their right to change their destiny by the same means the colonists used and still using to maintain their presence and dominance. The natives are marginalised in their own country. They are living a hard life where possessions and basic rights are taken from them,

so that they have the right to defend themselves. Moreover, Steve exposes the fact that the natives are aware of the economic causes of their condition which they desire and work for its change. His growing solidarity with the colonised reflects an intellectual commitment to justice and truth, positioning him as a Saidian intellectual who uses narration as a form of literary resistance and affirms the Algerian people's right to reclaim and rebuild their nation.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960) remains one of the more neglected novels in modern scholarship. The most notable literary reference to this work is Osman Bencherif in *The Image of Algeria in Anglo-American Writings, 1785–1962* (1997), in which he emphasizes Lewis's humanist approach to the subject matter. Bencherif argues that Lewis "is committed to no ideology but to the right of all to a life of decency, dignity and self-determination" (p. 237). This insight underscores how Lewis, in his narrative, distances himself from ideological extremes, instead focusing on universal themes of human dignity and the right of colonized peoples to self-determination. Yet, he does not deeply analyse the novel, but he mentions it as one of the novels in his literary survey.

The second study is Dilnoza's article, "Literary Analysis of the Novel *Darkness Visible* by Norman Lewis" (2020), that examines the novel not only as a work of fiction but also as a "document against colonialism" in the aftermath of World War II. The article highlights the novel's significance in exposing the crimes committed against Algerians under French colonial rule, describing how colonialists "plunged Algeria into darkness visible" (p. 656). It underscores the novel's role in portraying the oppressive and dehumanizing effects of colonialism on the Algerian people, giving the text a critical historical context that positions it as a testament to the enduring impacts of colonial violence.

In the article titled “The Franco-Algerian War: Narrating the Failure of the French Imperialist Project in *Darkness Visible*” (1960), Karima Aissat examines Norman Lewis’s critique of the French colonial mission during the Franco-Algerian War (1954–1962). Aissat argues that the novel portrays the French mission, intended to bring “civilization” to Algeria, as a failure. This failure is depicted through an anti-colonial lens, with the novel raising important questions about the moral and ethical contradictions of French imperialism (Aissat, 2024, p. 526). The portrayal of the Algerians’ suffering under colonial violence is a central theme, and through the character of Steve Lavers, an American engineer, Lewis emphasizes the psychological and social trauma inflicted on the colonized people. The immediacy of the narrative technique is employed to draw readers into the action and make the experiences of the colonized more visceral, showing the harsh reality of French colonialism in real-time. Through Lavers’ perspective, the novel critiques both physical violence and the cultural disintegration caused by colonialism (526-535).

Aissat further explores how the novel examines the growing nationalist movement and the role of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in resisting French colonial rule. While the novel is critical of colonial oppression, it also highlights the importance of self-determination and liberation for the Algerian people. The evolving moral consciousness of Lavers is central to the novel’s exploration of colonial guilt and the legitimacy of the Algerian resistance (Aissat, 2024, p. 535-539). Lewis’s use of Manicheanism is evident in the stark moral binary between the colonizers (often depicted as oppressive and morally corrupt) and the colonized (who embody resistance and moral righteousness).

However, the existing articles and studies do not sufficiently explore the intellectual role of Lavers in the novel. While his moral development is a key aspect of the narrative, his intellectual engagement with the Algerian resistance is underdeveloped. They focus on Lavers as a passive observer, and as such, they miss an opportunity to analyse how he could serve as a

potential intellectual bridge between Western and Algerian perspectives on colonialism and postcolonial justice. This absence limits the literatures analysis of the deeper intellectual and philosophical dimensions of Lavers' role in challenging French colonialism in Algeria. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill this gap left in academic research by offering a critical exploration of Lavers as an intellectual figure who grapples with colonialism and speaks truth to power, highlighting his potential as a conduit for dialogue between the coloniser and the colonised in the context of Algeria's War of Independence.

### **3. Issue in context**

This research examines how *Darkness Visible* reflects both the ethical role of the intellectual and the political awareness of the colonised during the Algerian War of Independence. Building on Edward Said's concept of the intellectual as someone who "speaks truth to power" who discusses broader issues and not narrowed to his political cultural or social milieu (Said, 1994, pp. 84-88), the hypothesis argues that Steve Lavers embodies this role by critically observing and denouncing the injustices of French colonial rule. As a secular intellectual, Lavers associates himself with the Algerian struggle, not through ideology but through moral conviction and a commitment to justice. At the same time, the novel presents Algerians not as passive victims but as politically aware individuals who understand the structures of their oppression and assert their right to self-determination. It also shows how Algerians seek to get their political rights and self determination to preserve their identity and freedom. Through the intersection of Lavers's testimony and Algerian resistance, *Darkness Visible* demonstrates how anti-colonial struggle and intellectual responsibility converge in the fight against injustice.

### **4. Methodology Outline**

This thesis follows the IMRAD methodology. It begins with a General Introduction, followed by two analytical chapters, and ending with a General Conclusion. The General Introduction

outlines the context of the research and its main argument. Chapter One entitled “Steve Lavers’ Testimony of the Colonial World during Wartime” and Chapter Two entitle “Steve as a Saidian intellectual who challenges the French and speaks truth to power”. The two central chapters apply Edward Said’s theory of the intellectual, drawing on key concepts to analyse *Darkness Visible* within a postcolonial framework. The General Conclusion summarises the main findings and suggests recommendations for further research in the field.

## **5. Methods and Materials**

### **5.A. Methods:**

This thesis is based on the ideas of Edward Said, particularly his theory of the intellectual from his book *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996). Said presents the intellectual as someone who does not only observe the world but actively speaks out and challenges power and systems. This section focuses on four key concepts that guide this research: the intellectual, the intellectual duty, the intellectual exile, and the Saidian intellectual who speaks truth to power.

#### **1. The Intellectual**

Edward Said defines the intellectual as “an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for a public” (Said, 1996, p. 11). In simple terms, the intellectual is someone who expresses ideas and defends causes that may not have a voice. They do not speak only for themselves, but for others, especially the marginalized. They take part in public life by sharing knowledge, questioning authority, and promoting awareness. He adds that his/her role as an intellectual “has edge to it, as well as for, a public” (p.11). Therefore, the intellectual’s position of dissent and resistance, as they challenge dominant power structures and expose uncomfortable truths.

The intellectual is, therefore, not just a passive observer but an active agent who uses their platform to create dialogue, question norms, and push society towards progress and justice.

The role of the intellectual, Said further argues, is rooted in the belief that all people deserve basic rights to freedom, dignity, and justice from the powers that govern them, whether these are nations or other institutions. Intellectuals argue that when these fundamental rights are violated, whether intentionally or through negligence, it becomes their duty to speak out against these wrongs. They must do so not passively but with courage, standing firm in their commitment to expose injustices and challenge those in power who perpetuate them (pp. 11-12). For instance, during times of war, this role is especially highlighted as intellectuals are often at the forefront of challenging the moral and legal violations carried out by governments or military powers.

## **2. Intellectual Duty**

For Said, being an intellectual means more than just thinking or writing. It is a moral responsibility. He writes:

the principal intellectual duty is the search for relative independence from such pressures. Hence my characterizations of the intellectual as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power. (Said, 1996, p. xvi)

This duty means that the intellectual should not just follow political or institutional demands. Instead, they should act independently and speak honestly, even when it is uncomfortable. Said believes that intellectuals must challenge the systems that silence others. They must tell the truth with courage, even if it brings personal risks. This challenge comes first as an emotion of duty inside the individual who will be connecting to the role of an intellectual.

Furthermore, “an intellectual his duty was not to serve any power or authority at all” but must be free from any pressure or constraints (Said,1996, p.82). Intellectuals must be aware of their own social and political context, as their perspectives and privileges influence their ability to speak out. Their role involves more than just criticism; it requires offering alternatives and solutions to the injustices they denounce. Intellectuals are called to stand as moral witnesses in times of crisis (as in *Darkness Visible*, Lavers is a witness), ensuring that the struggles of the oppressed are not forgotten. This deeper commitment to justice demands a courageous intellectual who not only critiques but also inspires change, acting as a catalyst for societal progress.

This duty is not optional for intellectuals but rather a moral responsibility, especially when the state they live in is complicit in unjust actions. Edward Said emphasizes that intellectuals cannot remain silent when their own nation is involved in unethical practices that harm its citizens or others. He notes that while the United States is a global power with significant influence, the same principle is relevant in other contexts as well. For intellectuals, their duty is not simply about speaking out when it is easy but about challenging those in power when it is difficult, particularly when those in authority are engaged in actions that are morally indefensible. As Said writes,

There is a special duty to address the constituted and authorized powers of one's own society, which are accountable to its citizenry, particularly when those powers are exercised in a manifestly disproportionate and immoral war, or in a deliberate program of discrimination, repression, and collective cruelty. (Said, 1996, p. 98-99)

This responsibility positions the intellectual not just as a thinker but as a moral agent, working to ensure justice and fairness within society, especially during wartime.

### **3. The Intellectual Exile**

Connected to Intellectual Duty, Intellectual exile is another significant concept that this thesis *appropriates* from Said's theory. Said often describes the intellectual as an exile. This does not only mean physical exile from one's homeland, but also a kind of distance from mainstream culture and power. Because he admits "exile is also for my purposes a *metaphorical* condition," (p.52), italics original). He explains that many people think exile means total isolation, but this is not true: "There is a popular but wholly mistaken assumption that being exiled is to be totally cut off, isolated, and hopelessly separated from your place of origin" (Said, 1994, p. 48).

Instead, exile allows the intellectual to see things more clearly and speak more freely. From this position outside the center of power, the intellectual can better understand injustice and connect with the struggles of the oppressed. Said writes about two types of people: the "yea-sayers," who accept society as it is, and the "nay-sayers," who feel out of place and speak up against injustice. He says, "the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned" (Said, 1994, pp. 52–53).

### **4. The Intellectual Who 'Speaks Truth to Power'**

One of the most important roles of the intellectual, according to Said, is to 'speak truth to power'. The one who can speak truth to power is an intellectual in Saidian sense (Said, 1996, p.8). This means standing up to political, economic, or social institutions when they are wrong and "for whom no worldly power is too big" (p.8). Said insists that the intellectual must remain independent and not serve governments or corporations blindly. He states: "The intellectual, properly speaking, is not a functionary or an employee completely given up to the policy goals of a government or a large corporation" (p. 86).

Said also makes a difference between professional and amateur intellectuals. Professional intellectuals usually work in institutions like universities or media organizations. Their work can be limited by rules, funding, or politics. On the other hand, amateur intellectuals are moved by care and conscience. They speak and act because they truly care about justice. Said describes amateurism as “an activity that is fueled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialization” (Said, 1996, p. 82).

To speak truth to power is not easy. It often means going against the mainstream and risking criticism. But for Said, this is exactly what makes intellectuals important. They are not just thinkers; they are agents of change who use their voice to defend truth and dignity. Their role is to speak out when others remain silent, even if it costs them their status or comfort. And they face many important questions like how can some express the truth? What kind of truth should be spoken? Who will receive it and where (p. 98)? These are not simple questions, but intellectuals must confront them, navigating the complexities of truth, power, and resistance.

More importantly, Said links the intellectual who speaks truth to power with the concept of the secular intellectual. To Said, the true intellectual is someone who operates outside the constraints of religion or ideology, someone who questions authority and speaks out against injustice. In the final lines of his book, Said powerfully states, “For the secular intellectual, those gods always fail” (Said, 1996, p. 121, italics original). He views that intellectuals must not blindly follow any authority, whether it be religious, political, or ideological, but instead must challenge these powers and confront their shortcomings.

Edward Said’s theory gives this research a strong foundation for understanding the role of intellectuals. Through these four concepts—the intellectual, the intellectual duty, the exile, and the commitment to speak truth to power or the Saidian and secular intellectual. Said shows us how intellectuals can act as voices of conscience in a world full of injustice. This framework

helps us explore how intellectuals speak out, challenge systems of power, and stand with the marginalized in Algeria during the War of Independence (1954-1962).

## **5. B. Materials**

### **a. Biography of the author:**

Norman Lewis (1908-2003) was one of the influential twentieth century Welsh British. He is a prolific writer; among his novels are *Samara* (1949), *A Single Pilgrim* (1953), *Darkness Visible* (1949), and *The Cuban Passage* (1982), *A Small Made to Order* (1966), *The March of Long Shadows* (1987). He has different books of travel writing and autobiographies narrating his experience with the British Army serving during the Second World War. For instance, in his autobiography *Jackdaw Cake* (1987) he mentions that on the fifth of December 1941 he “reached Algiers” (Lewis, 1987, 139) after he was enrolled into the Intelligence Corps group (134). Having been in Algeria provides him with a background for his novel as *Darkness Visible*. This experience influences the content of his novel to politically engage the theme of the war in his plot.

### **b. Synopsis of the novel**

*Darkness Visible* by Norman Lewis explores the life and circumstances of Algerians during the final years of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). The novel is narrated by the protagonist Steve Levers, a geological engineer working for an American oil company in Algeria, specifically in El Milia. Initially, Levers believes that the colonialists and the Algerian people might eventually reconcile, finding a common understanding. However, as he witnesses the brutalities and suffering of the Algerian natives, particularly the torture and massacres they endure, his perception shifts, and he grows increasingly sceptical of the legitimacy of French colonial rule. Through Levers’ eyes, Lewis presents a harsh and realistic portrayal of the French

colonial presence in Algeria, highlighting the deep injustices faced by the native population. The novel goes beyond simply conveying anti-colonial sentiments; it also reflects a shift in the representation of French colonialism during this period. *Darkness Visible* engages with the political and cultural impact of the Algerian Revolution, illustrating how the conflict between the French colonizers and the revolutionary Algerians influenced American writers' thematic choices. It shows how this war inspired writers to critically engage with colonialism and reflect on its consequences within their work.

## **6. Results**

This study examines the Representation of the Saidian Intellectual in Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1961).

Chapter one is about the narrative draws attention to different episodes that portray the suffering of human being and also animals, each exposing different aspects of brutality. The French dehumanization clarifies the cruelty of the French government and its settlers as it is exposed by the murder of Spanish Joseph by a secret organisation during this colonial period. All the French attempts to maintain control over Algeria and its people were face by widespread resist in all of the land, and for that Algerians were driven by a unified desire to achieve their autonomy, moreover, to create a new future led by the local youths. Therefore, many scenes are exposed in *Darkness Visible* (1960) to show the Algerian war of independence as a dark chapter in history which characterised by brutality and sadness that led to freedom. In addition to that, Steve's testimony and narration represent the general collaboration of the marginalised people to face the coloniser's cruelty, offering a new story from the lens from an American outsider whose own purpose is to narrate the current events and the reality of the French existence and struggle with the Algerian locals.

In *Darkness Visible* (1960), British Norman Lewis characterised the colonial brutality in many occasions through various scenes that Steve exposes to public nation. Steve takes completely the role of a qualified intellectual who observe and reveals the French brutal system that marked by violence, oppression, and crimes. For that, his own role here is to universalise consistent events and crimes neutrally, seeking for a beneficial change for the marginalised. Chapter One is about an American outsider called Steve Lavers who gives his testimony of the colonial world during the Algerian war of independence. It also applied Edward Said's Theory of the intellectual from his *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996) to affirm that Steve is an intellectual who narrates the brutal reality of the time from a neutral point of view and how Algerian resistance was really combating for a free Algeria. Being a witness to cruelty, Steve portrays several scenes from different places to show how the French coloniser damaged the Algerian country by torturing its people and burning its villages as well as hiding the reality of the Algerian struggle for independence. While narrating the scenes Steve tries to give emphases to language and the vocabulary he uses following the Saidian's idea that language must be mastered by any intellectual, since it is a kind of power. By applying the role of an intellectual, Steve gives a voice to the marginalised people and generalising their cause to all public. He does not only observe the reality of the war but how Algerians resisted against the but reporting its brutality and how Algerians resisted until the French empire declines.

Chapter two has important results as well. Steve Lavers who is as a powerful example of what Edward Said described as Saidian and secular intellectual. Someone who is aware of systems power and their injustices. As an American oil worker in colonial Algeria, Steve openly challenges the French colonial power by exposing its violence, atrocities and hypocrisy rather than taking side with the other side and choosing silence. Resulting from this, he accomplishes Said's description of the intellectual, who refuses to be part of the corporations and to resist to injustices, even when unpopular. Steve's resistance becomes evident by his

support for Algerian women, who suffer under colonial violence and oppression. Him taking side with the fatmas expressed not only in words but also in action reflecting what Said talked about the intellectual's duty, that is to speak for those who are unheard. This ethical position grounded in a secular, humanistic commitment to truth showing Steve's transformation into a secular intellectual. Steve fulfils the intellectual's role as a speaker of truth. Through his persistent pursuit of justice, his investigation of the massacre while speaking to one of the survivors and his confrontations with figures like Colonel Latour, Steve demonstrates with whom he is taking a side and what kind of intellectual he really is. Through the novel the narrator rejects colonial framework and takes the side with the oppressor. Steve as a secular intellectual who speaks truth to power is responsible of making oppression visible. He embodies the concepts of the secular intellectual through his resistance, confrontation and refusing the imperial system. Steve's friendship with Kobtan, aa figure who represents the Algerian mind, teaches him to see the reality of colonial power, plays a crucial role in shaping Steve's transformation and his position.

## **CHAPTER One: Steve Lavers' Testimony of the Colonial World during Wartime**

### **I. Introduction**

Chapter One explores the brutal reality of the French colonialism in Algeria, exposing both hidden and open violence. The hidden violence which means maintaining oppression through institutions, culture and even the ideology of the Algerians such as in schools. On the other hand, open violence which is direct, visible, and even includes physical attacks or tortures. Therefore, all this deep human suffering and repression caused by the French colonizer is reported through the eyes of an American outsider, Steve Lavers. Steve is an American oilman

works for an American oil company in Algeria called *DeBry Exploration* during the mid-twentieth century, who portrays the real events and the reality of the Algerian struggle for independence. In one of the significant and overlooked novels in academic research, Norman Lewis wrote his *Darkness Visible* (1960) to portray the dark and visible situation in Algeria during wartime through Steve's testimony.

Steve can be seen as an intellectual in the way Edward Said defines the role. In *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), Said argues that intellectuals are not defined by academic positions but by their commitment to truth and justice (Said,1994,p.11). Based on this definition, the true intellectual is not about holding a name, a specific job, or even a social status. Instead, it is about remaining independent from political powers, challenging powers and speaking the truth. What matters most is their ability to speak honestly on behalf of the marginalized. Through his truthful account of the Algerian war of Independence, Steve fulfils this role of the intellectual by exposing injustice and giving voice to the silenced. Although he is an intellectual, as this chapter argues, he first appears as a witness; reporting the reality of war, and giving real images to public before gradually evolving into a Saidian intellectual who speaks truth to power and involves directly in the cause as Chapter Two will be discussing.

Notably, Steve is an outsider allows him to observe actions at El Melia during this period and retell it objectively. In other words, this outsider statue allowed him to portray reality as it is and invite the readers to know more about the war in French Algeria. Steve portrays the cruel crimes committed against the Algerian people not only the physical but also psychological ones; it was a sustained operation of dehumanization and awful deprivation in all areas of every part of their lives. Nevertheless, in the midst of this ongoing suffering, he offers a special perspective on the war, a viewpoint that mediate between the ruler and the ruled offering a new perception into power and resistance. His major role is to mirror the reality of the war in Algeria but showing all the stressful images of misery that Algerian experienced.

## II. Steve as an intellectual witness to cruelty

As a narrator who witnesses the suffering and daily struggles of the Algerian population, Steve, as Chapter One argues, gradually takes on the role of an intellectual. Emerging from a working-class background in the oil camp, he offers a truthful account in *Darkness Visible*, giving voice to the marginalized people of Algeria. Edward Said describes the intellectual as “someone who possesses the ability to represent and express a message, perspective, or opinion to and for the public—someone who embodies and communicates the concerns and experiences of others (Said, 1994, p. 11)”. In this sense, Steve fulfils this role by reflecting the harsh conditions of colonial rule and exposing the injustices faced by the oppressed. He does not speak for personal or political gain, but rather to represent the voiceless and bring their reality into public awareness.

At the beginning of the novel, Steve appears neutral in his stance toward both the French and the Algerians, which appears during his conversations with his colleague J.G. Hartney about the war and Latour’s so-called pacification policy. J.G., a senior figure in the oil company, reflects the general attitude of the camp’s workers—detached from the political conflict and concerned primarily with the continuation of business. He openly expresses that, as oilmen, they care less about who wins the war than about seeing it end. As he puts it:

'So you think that Latour's famous pacification policy is going to come off. Now would you like to hear what I think, Steve? I don't think there's *a hope in hades of peace*. Shall I tell you something else? I-don't personally see *that it matters much to us as oil men, who wins this war*. What's really important is *that some-body wins it and gets it over with. It might even suit our book if the F.L.N. did pull it off*.(Lewis, 1960, p.20, emphases added)

Such opinion highlights the prioritization of economic stability over political or moral engagement, a stance that sharply contrasts with Steve’s developing perspective as he gradually distances himself from the company’s position. Remaining silent or neutral in the face of oppression often equates to complicity, as neutrality may inadvertently support the status *quo of injustice*; that is, the existing social, political, or economic conditions in which unfairness and oppression are allowed in society. Literature, as a reflection of society, also cannot escape this moral dilemma. As Dr. Adnan Bozan eloquently states “Can literature remain outside this battle? And if it can, should it stay neutral, or should it have the courage to side with justice and humanity?” (Bozan,2023, para. 4, translated by the authors).<sup>1</sup> This powerful question challenges both individuals and intellectuals to reconsider the ethical implications of neutrality in times of conflict.

Steve, from the start, was asking and looking about the reality of the war and how it was working during this period. After that, J.G. adds, “We’ve been in the clear so far for one reason, and one reason only. Because everyone in this area pays off”(Lewis, 1960, p. 21). At that time, the camp was paying off both the French ruler as a power and must be paid to live and work in peace in Algeria, and the F.L.N as those who are rightfully fighting for their land and their own property. They also pay the Algerians off, since are the indigenous people. System of payoffs is ultimately about avoiding any attack in the area from both sides, it is a kind of insuring their lives, benefits, and existence.

At this early stage, Steve is not yet an active participant in the conflict but rather a careful observer, paying close attention to both minor and significant details of the unfolding events. A key episode that reflects his role as a witness occurs when he is sent to locate Malem Hocine, an Algerian worker from the oil camp who was abducted by French parachutists and now he is

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at the hospital at Libre Ville, few miles from El Melia. Upon reaching the hospital, Steve narrates: “*They put Arab patients in an annex which turned out to be a large, converted army hut in a space littered with empty oil drums at the rear of the hospital. The doctor’s breath smelled of spirits*” (Lewis, 1960, p. 35, italics added). This scene reveals the institutionalized discrimination faced by Algerians, who are placed in substandard facilities—an annex rather than the main hospital—suggesting their dehumanization under the French colonial rule. The setting, marked by neglect and debris, underscores the denial of basic rights and dignity. Moreover, the brief but pointed observation from Steve about the doctor’s breath offers a powerful critique of the unprofessional and morally compromised nature of the colonial healthcare system, indirectly pointing to the broader disregard for Algerian lives.

At the hospital, Steve depicts the suffering of other Algerian patients with a strong sense of moral responsibility, reflecting the role of a true intellectual. He is not constrained by professional obligations or institutional loyalty. ‘The intellectual, in this context, is understood as someone who does not serve the goals of governments, corporations, or professional circles, but instead remains independent and committed to truth and justice’ (Said, 1994, p. 86). Although Steve works for an American oil company under French colonial rule, he refuses to conform to its ideological or political interests. He critically exposes the violence and inhumane treatment inflicted on Algerians, demonstrating ethical engagement and a refusal to remain silent in the face of injustice. For instance, he narrates:

The stench hung like a curtain over the threshold. About eighty to a hundred Arabs were lying, fully dressed, on blankets on the concrete floor. Others were propped up, heads fallen on chests, along the walls. In a far corner a man squatted, supported by another on a plank resting on a row of buckets. The vast room was full of the sounds of snoring and gargling, and of rattlings in the throat. (Lewis, 1960, p. 36)

This vivid scene that a reader can easily imagine conveys the inhumane and degrading conditions endured by Algerian patients like the overcrowding, lack of medical care, and physical suffering.

Steve takes the opportunity to talk to the doctor about the Algerian patients and reveals another scene about the Algerian suffering, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, when many die from neglect and poor conditions. The doctor's comment, "In Ramadhan they die off like flies. Perhaps it's nature's way of keeping down the numbers" (Lewis, 1960, p. 38). The doctor's words reflect his dehumanizing view of Algerian patients after likening their deaths to flies, and he reduces their lives to something disposable, reinforcing the colonial perception that their existence is insignificant. Through Steve's perspective, the brutality and moral decay of the French colonial healthcare system are vividly brought to light.

While observing the conditions inside the hospital, Steve inquires about Maalem Hocine's state, to which the doctor responds: "Severe abdominal pains. Slight bleeding per rectum. Query—perforated bowel." Steve immediately follows with a direct question: "The result of torture, I suppose?" The doctor's face collapses as he replies, "That's a question I'm unable to answer. I can't answer a question like that" (Lewis, 1960, p. 38). Steve intellectually and powerfully exposes the concealed violence of the colonial regime. He, though not yet a secular and Saidian intellectual in its fullest sense, fulfils the intellectual's role by posing difficult questions that challenge official silence. The doctor's evasive reply reflects institutional complicity and the systemic denial of brutality inflicted on colonized subjects. As Fanon (1963) argues, colonial domination is inherently violent, maintained through both physical force and the suppression of truth, rendering silence and denial central to the operation of colonial power.

The colonial period was marked not only by physical violence against the colonized but also by the influential role of media as a tool of ideological control. Media served the interests of hegemonic power by shaping public perception through newspapers, radio broadcasts, and official messaging, often without revealing the sources behind the narratives. In this way, it operated as a silent yet powerful agent of persuasion, normalizing colonial authority and suppressing dissent. In the context of French colonization, the media functioned as a strategic instrument to sustain dominance over both territory and population, reinforcing colonial legitimacy while obscuring the mechanisms of control. During the Algerian War of Independence, media functioned as a strategic actor in reinforcing colonial narratives and discrediting the liberation movement. Rather than providing balanced coverage, it worked to delegitimize Algerian resistance by framing it as irrational violence or terrorism. In *Covering Islam* (1981), Edward Said emphasizes that media often participates in the construction of meaning shaped by political power, selectively presenting information to support dominant interests. In the Algerian context, this meant erasing the political and historical motivations behind the struggle, portraying the colonized as a threat rather than a people seeking self-determination. Such portrayals served to justify colonial repression while concealing the systemic violence imposed by the French regime.

The colonial period is marked not only by widespread violence, but also by the concealment of many crimes committed under the shadow of unidentified organizations, reflecting the criminal nature of the era. These acts were often hidden or ignored, denying justice to the victims and fostering fear and uncertainty within Algerian society. One such crime in *Darkness Visible* is the murder of Joseph Del Giudice, a Spanish settler in Algeria associated with a secretive organization, along with his wife and a guest. Steve shares a news report from a French newspaper called ‘the *Eclaireur* of Liberville’, which reads:

It was learned this morning from El Milia that during the night *a band of fellaghas carried out an attack on the farm of Monsieur Joseph Del Giudice*, a well-known personality of that town. In spite of a courageous resistance offered to the assailants by Monsieur Del Giudice, he, his wife Madame Renée Del Giudice, as well as a guest, Mademoiselle Maria Divina Gonzalez, were butchered in cold blood by the cowardly assassins... The whole population of El Milia, both Christian and Muslim, is united in its determination to discover and punish the perpetrators of this odious crime. (Lewis, 1960, p. 111, italics added).

In line with Edward Said's critique of colonial discourse, the article about the murder of Joseph reveals how colonial media frames Algerians as the sole agents of violence while omitting the structural and institutional violence enacted by the colonizer. The use of terms such as "*fellaghas*"—derived from the Arabic word *فلاقة* [felaqa], meaning bandits—reduces Algerian fighters to criminals, stripping the resistance of political legitimacy. Additionally, expressions like "*butchered in cold blood*" as *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* the verb to butcher: to kill animal and cut them up for use as meat. Such terms are used to strip Algerians of their humanity and cast them as violent threats, while portraying French settlers as helpless victims. This use of language serves to justify colonial authority by shaping public perception and reinforcing a narrative of moral superiority.

As Edward Said argues, media often operates in service of dominant political and cultural powers by shaping narratives that legitimize authority while suppressing the voices of the oppressed. In the introduction to the Vintage edition of *Covering Islam*, he observes that "over the fifteen years following the publication of *Covering Islam*, Western or American media have more focused on Islam and Muslims, often showing them with even more exaggerated stereotypes and hostile attitudes than those I originally highlighted in my book" (Said, 1997, p. xxiii). While this commentary addresses Western portrayals of Islam, the underlying

principle remains consistent: media can perpetuate fear, reinforce stereotypes, and mask systemic violence under the guise of information. This pattern mirrors the role of French media during the Algerian War of Independence, which not only circulated distorted accounts of resistance fighters but also reinforced colonial narratives by criminalizing the local population. The French journal, further adds, “the hand of the assassin had spared neither age nor sex” that makes Steve think the aim of these words is to leave “it to be supposed that children had been included in the massacre. It warned the people of El Milia not to allow their grief to provoke them into taking the law into their own hands.” (Lewis, 1960, p. 114). By presenting fabricated facts and influencing the colonists to take revenge serves the French agenda to justify their colonial and violence.

In contrast, the Algerian press also reported the murder of Joseph Del Giudice, but with a different tone and notable inaccuracies. Steve comments on the way the incident was portrayed in the Algerian newspaper, observing its lack of detail and factual precision. As an intellectual observer, he does not align with either narrative but instead presents both reports critically. He notes: “The incident at El Milia seemed even graver from the distance of Algiers than from Libre-ville. The reporting was also less accurate. No names other than Joseph's had been given, and he had been destroyed, said the paper, together with all his family” (Lewis, 1960, p. 114). By highlighting the imprecision and dramatization in the Algerian coverage, Steve underscores the limitations of local media in conveying factual truth, thus maintaining his role as a reflective narrator who distinguishes between competing ideological framings.

The French colonial period is really known by the brutality, dehumanization and contempt for the Algerian population. During his time in Algeria, Steve portrays the reality of the war and how all an Arab town burned down by the French colonizer. As the sergeant said to him ‘They’ve set fire to the Arab town,’ he said. ‘They’re burning down the Arab town.’ (Lewis, 1960, p. 152). This was as the beginning of a new crime against the locals, but the

perpetrator was the French army. However, it was more harmful for humans as well as animals and nature.

As an intellectual and witness, Steve offers a realistic testimony to the devastation brought by colonial violence, capturing its reach beyond human suffering to the natural world. In one haunting scene, he describes the destruction of a bird's nest during an airstrike, using powerful imagery to convey the ferocity and indiscriminate nature of the assault (Lewis, 1960, p. 153). This detail emphasises the overwhelming force used against vulnerable, rural communities; communities whose homes and lives are far removed from military threats. The sudden and total disappearance of the nest becomes a symbol of how colonial power annihilates without distinction, erasing not only people but the fragile ecosystems around them. Steve's account transcends mere observation; it becomes a moral testimony against a system that shows no regard for innocence, life, or nature.

According to Edward Said, the role of intellectuals is to uncover realities and current events they see in society. Based on Steve's vivid description to the burned town is a kind of uncovering real brutality practiced by the French Coloniser, and since he is telling these sad events, Steve seeks to avoid another conflict and human suffering that could happen. For that, Edward in his book *Representations of the intellectual* states "But this was, I believe, the intellectuals' task at the time, to unearth the forgotten, to make connections that were denied, to cite alternative courses of action that could have avoided war and its attendant goal of human destruction." (Said, 1994, p. 22)

Other animals are victims as well; Steve narrates:

Goats broke out of the flames and came towards us in zigzag rushes. A dog howled. A single stork flopped like a plane out of control out of the sky, and landed crumpled among the beans nearby, wings outstretched and beak stabbing feebly at an imagin-

ary enemy. In the distance the two men were rejoined, and now went on urgently, to disappear among the cactus. (Lewis, 1960, p. 153)

The scope of French colonial violence beyond its human targets, illustrating how the natural world becomes collateral damage in acts of aggression. In his book, Edward Said argues ‘an intellectual’s role is to be morally engaged in communication and critical thinking targeting social issues from their society. Their engagement is not for personal benefits or to fortify the ego but for helping and representing society’s issues’ (Said,1994, p.20). He or she have two main features to be considered as good intellectuals “Knowing how to use language well and knowing when to intervene in language are two essential features of intellectual action” (Said,1994, p.20). Edward emphasizes that an intellectual responsibility is to master the language of society and to know when and where to use when you talk about public issues. Therefore, Steve’s vocabulary to portray the burned town suggesting that he masters the language he uses, moreover he represents the marginalised by illustrating the brutality of the French coloniser in Algeria.

Throughout the novel, Steve consistently exposes the violent reality of colonialism, portraying the colonizer not as a civilizing force but as an agent of destruction and terror. His commitment to documenting these atrocities—without concern for the authority or consequences imposed by colonial power—positions him within the framework of the intellectual as defined by Edward Said. By bearing witness to the war’s brutality, including the suffering of both civilians and animals, Steve brings to light the full extent of the violence that was often silenced or distorted in official narratives. His testimony does more than recount events; it challenges dominant ideologies and demands moral accountability. In doing so, he fulfills the role of the intellectual as a principled and independent voice committed to truth and justice. In his book, Edward gives the role of an intellectual as the one who portrays the brutal realities of the coloniser as a moral and ethical work. In the other hand, he talked about the new

kind of exile by exposing “that there is a wholly mistaken assumption about exile, therefore many people think that exile is where you are totally separated from you own and land “(Said, 1994, p. 48) a person can work and live in another country independently and you have all the contact with your family, but the place still a exilic place since you are an outsider. In this case, EL Milia is considered as pro exilic place for Steve even he lives and works there independently there.

In other sections of his work, Edward Said distinguishes between two types of intellectuals within a society, calling them the “Yea-sayers” and the “Nay-sayers.” He argues that the Yea-sayers are the insider intellectuals who are originally from the country or state they live in and who align themselves with dominant powers and institutions. These individuals typically align with existing institutions. These individuals usually defend the existing political and cultural powers and they rarely criticize them for their comfort, security, and privileged position.

On the other hand, the Nay-sayers are the outsiders or exiles who remain critical of the prevailing conditions in society, often standing apart from the privileges and honors granted to those in power. These individuals are often migrants, exiles, or people who do not fully belong to the dominant structure, which allows them to maintain an independent and critical perspective. For Said, the Nay-sayer embodies the true ethical intellectual; someone who chooses integrity over acceptance, moral responsibility over reward, and truth over complicity (Said, 1994, pp. 52–53).

Based on Said's definition of exile and his distinction between these two types of intellectuals, Steve, in exile, fits the role of a Nay-sayer. He lives in Algeria and critically addresses the realities of the events, doing so with honor and a clear-eyed perspective.

### **III. The Intellectual's Witness to Algerian Resistance and the Decline of French Colonial Power**

Across more than a hundred years of colonial rule, the colonizer suppressed not only the Algerian political and economic freedom, but also their national, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity, language, history or the right to give opinion or to react. Under this brutal image of control and this civilizing mission, many people refused to remain silence and decided to revolt. This revolution against such a hegemonic power demonstrates strong national spirit, therefore Algerians sought to revolt against this power through careful and strategic planning long before announcing their attack.

Through *Darkness Visible*, Steve creates a narrative space that recognizes and honors the acts of resistance carried out by the Algerian people. He challenges the portrayal of colonized populations as passive by presenting them as active agents in the struggle for autonomy and self-determination. Through both direct observation and nuanced description, he reveals how the marginalized rejected French colonial authority, often at great personal cost. His narrative not only highlights the resilience and determination of Algerians but also exposes the structural and moral fragility of the French colonial system when confronted with genuine popular resistance. In doing so, Steve affirms the political consciousness and agency of the oppressed, portraying resistance not as isolated acts of violence but as part of a broader, organized demand for liberation. Edward Said explains how an intellectual should be an independent person from any political powers and pressures to do his role in the best way. In the introduction of *Representations of the Intellectual* Said states, "he also talks about the intellectual's independency as a duty for speaking and generating the events neutrally. An intellectual must be independent from any political or economic power in their exile seeking to add a change a help those marginalised people in society." (Said, 1994, p. xvi)

In *Darkness Visible*, Steve remains completely independent of both the Algerian and French economic and political powers. As an intellectual exile, he is an outsider, narrating the events of the Algerian War of Independence objectively, with the aim of shedding light on the harsh conditions and the suffering of the marginalized. In doing so, he fulfills Said's definition of the intellectual's duty by being an independent voice that provides a critical testimony about the realities of the war. Said suggests that "the role of an intellectual is not only to be a witness of events and war but to universalize it to the public nation" (Said, 1994, p. 44). Intellectuals have a moral and ethical responsibility to share these events and realities, as Steve does in the novel, by exposing the brutality of colonial power and highlighting the resistance of the oppressed.

Based on the events in the novel, Latour, a French colonel when Algeria was under the colonial system, by his actions it is obvious that this colonial system is built on denial, control, and deception. As an example when he wants to apply a pacification of the area as it is mentioned "*We're going to celebrate the pacification of the area, and we had the idea that it would be a good move to invite all the villages to send representatives to see how normal life is in El Milia.*" (Lewis, 1961, p. 66, emphasis added) here it is clear that colonel Latour applied his program to show that the area as calm, peaceful and under control. During colonial period the word 'pacification' used to demonstrate the control of the hegemonic power moreover to mask acts of violence and brutality. The pacification project was a French colonial policy adapted in Algeria to maintain control over the colonised while giving them the illusion of peace and stability. However the word pacification was not about ending cruelty, but about suppressing the local resistance.

In his book *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, Alistair Horn states "The French army believed that roads, schools, and food aid could pacify hearts as effectively as bullets. In many sectors, officers took to building clinics and disturbing flour as weapon of

influence” (Horn, 2006, p. 230) This can highlight the colonizer’s military approaches during the colonial time, suggesting that French efforts to control people is not only by force, but by giving projects and aids. These development aids are characterized by Colonel Latour’s pacification to control Algerians politically and psychologically, seeking to pacify and satisfy the population, moreover, to win public support.

One of the key strategies employed by colonial administration is exemplified through Colonel Latour’s approach to appeasement. Rather than recognizing the legitimacy of the Algerian resistance, Latour advocates offering material incentives—such as food, gifts, and infrastructure projects like bridges, to pacify the population and maintain control. These gestures, however, function as superficial substitutes for genuine political reform or acknowledgment of Algerian demands for autonomy. Throughout the novel, such efforts are depicted not as acts of goodwill, but as calculated tools of domination aimed at masking the violence of colonial rule. Despite these tactics, the Algerian people consistently respond with rejection and resistance, demonstrating their refusal to be pacified or manipulated by symbolic concessions.

Steve presents a clear and compelling portrayal of Algerian resistance, emphasizing the challenges the French face in maintaining control over a population determined to reclaim its autonomy. A key passage that illustrates this is Colonel Latour’s candid admission: *‘Latour was happily talkative. “The problem of defence,’ he said, ‘was the only thing that ever entered their heads. All they bothered about was keeping out the invader’* (Lewis, 1961, p. 960, italics added ). This remark reveals the depth of the Algerian people’s resolve and their unwavering focus on resisting foreign occupation. For them, the French are not seen as protectors, but as invaders whose presence is fundamentally illegitimate. Through such testimony, Steve, in his role as an intellectual, conveys the reality of Algerian courage and determination, shedding light on a population driven not by fear or submission, but by a collective will for liberation.

In several scenes, the novel highlights that Algerians are not only engaged in armed resistance but also deeply invested in knowledge, particularly in areas such as politics, economics, religion, and military development. This intellectual dimension of resistance is illustrated in a conversation between Steve and Kobtan, the only Algerian character given a narrative voice in the novel. Kobtan reflects on his limited understanding of oil and its significance, stating: “It is a pity I do not understand these things better. Knowledge is a very wonderful thing” (Lewis, 1960, p.76). His comment is more than a casual remark, it is an expression of aspiration and awareness of the role that knowledge plays in resisting exploitation. In a context where formal education is often inaccessible to the colonized, this desire to learn becomes an act of defiance. The pursuit of knowledge, even under conditions of systemic oppression, is presented as a crucial force in the Algerian struggle for independence and self-determination.

Michel Foucault’s theory on the relationship between knowledge and power is one of the most thought-provoking ideas in modern thought. He believed that power is not just about control or force, but also about how knowledge is created, shared, and used to influence our lives. According to Foucault, power and knowledge are so closely tied that they cannot be separated. As he puts it, “Power and knowledge directly imply one another... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1979, p. 27).

A further example of Algerian resistance to colonial authority appears in Steve’s conversation with a French agronomist regarding a bridge construction project initiated by Colonel Latour. When asked about the project, the agronomist replies: “*They don't want the bridge,*” the agronomist said. “*They simply don't want it. They didn't want my bigger and better pumpkins and they don't want Latour's bridge*” (Lewis, 1961, p. 98, italics added). This response conveys a sense of frustration over the population’s quiet but firm rejection of imposed

development. Their refusal is not a rejection of progress or infrastructure, but a rejection of a colonial system that uses such initiatives as instruments of control. By turning away from what are ostensibly beneficial offerings, such as food and infrastructure, the Algerians symbolically repudiate the legitimacy of the colonial presence. This understated form of resistance reveals a collective awareness that material aid can be a tool of domination when detached from justice and self-determination.

In the novel, the intellectual Steve refuses to be merely an observer. Instead, he exposes how the French system maintains control by imposing developments and launching various projects, while also highlighting the Algerian resistance to these attempts. Through his narration, he emphasizes the idea that the Algerians have learned that liberty is more important than anything else. His account serves as a way of giving voice to this hidden resilience, affirming that the revolution is not only well-organized but has a deep, long-standing cause that must be realized, even if it takes time.

This quiet form of resistance, ejecting symbolic gestures of control such as food and infrastructure, elucidates the political consciousness of the Algerian population. Therefore people got the idea that they are controlled, exploited, and treated unfairly by this cruel system. However, their defiance is not limited to passive or symbolic acts. In another scene, Steve narrates how the French military responds to a bazooka attack by bombarding an Algerian village. This shift in focus demonstrates that Algerians resist not only through the rejection of colonial projects, but also through direct, organized armed struggle aimed at reclaiming national sovereignty. Steve observes, “This I realized would be the army's answer to the bazooka attack, which almost certainly hadn't been only a rumour” (Lewis, 1960, p. 68). As an intellectual and witness, Steve recognizes the significance of these actions—not as isolated or criminal acts, as often framed by colonial narratives, but as deliberate and collective efforts toward liberation. His account challenges the French portrayal of resistance fighters as mere “Fellaghas” and

instead affirms that the uprising was a popular movement, encompassing men, women, and youth united in their pursuit of freedom.

This commitment to active resistance is further emphasized in a powerful conversation between Steve and Kobtan, one of the few Algerian characters given a voice in the narrative. In this scene, Kobtan explains the deep suffering of the Algerian people and the reasons behind their decision to join the armed struggle. He states:

Our nation is dying... *We are being exterminated while the world turns its back. They are turning Algeria into a graveyard.* If they're to survive the young men must go to the mountains and fight, with the knowledge that they are leaving their families to rot in these new Belsens. And when it's all over people will say 'We didn't know.' (Lewis, 1960, p. 196, italics added).

Kobtan's words show a strong awareness of the violence and injustice suffered by the population, and the silence of the international community. He calls for young men to resist, even at great personal cost, to defend their people and restore their dignity. Through this testimony, Steve highlights the political consciousness and determination of the Algerian youth, presenting the armed struggle as a necessary response to oppression.

Intellectuals, such as Steve in *Darkness Visible*, play a critical role in unveiling the underlying realities of the Algerian revolt, particularly the systemic violence and repressive policies employed by the colonial regime to maintain control over the population. Through his position as a narrative witness, Steve provides visibility to the marginalized, portraying both the suffering and resilience of the Algerian people. By resisting the ideological frameworks imposed by colonial authority, the Algerian resistance emerges not merely as a political uprising but as a profound expression of national identity, sacrifice, and the collective will for sovereignty. In fulfilling his role as a truth-teller, Steve exposes the moral and structural failures

of colonial power while affirming the legitimacy of the struggle for independence. This narrative engagement reflects Edward Said's conceptualization of the intellectual as one who speaks on behalf of the oppressed, challenges dominant discourses, and remains committed to truth and justice beyond institutional affiliations.

For Edward Said, "an effective intellectual is defined by two core abilities: the skilful command of language and the discernment to engage with it at critical moments in public discourse." (Said, 1994, p. 20). He underscores that the intellectual's responsibility lies not only in mastering the language of their society but also in deploying it strategically when addressing critical public issues. In this context, language is not merely a vehicle for expression but a powerful instrument for shaping thought, challenging dominant narratives, and fostering social awareness. Steve's use of language throughout *Darkness Visible* reflects this intellectual commitment. His narrative is not intended for passive storytelling, but rather for raising public consciousness and bearing witness to the suffering of the Algerian people. Through his words, Steve seeks to confront denial, counter misinformation, and assert the legitimacy of the Algerian resistance on both moral and political grounds.

The determined and organized Algerian resistance, led by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), played a decisive role in undermining French colonial authority. What began as scattered acts of defiance and localized uprisings gradually evolved into a nationwide liberation movement, culminating in a coordinated and sustained war for independence. This prolonged resistance ultimately contributed to the collapse of a colonial regime that had ruled Algeria for over 130 years (Evans, 2012). By the mid-1950s, the French colonial system faced a deepening crisis, particularly following the well-planned FLN attacks of November 1st, 1954, which struck multiple targets across the country and significantly destabilized French control (Horne, 2006). Through guerrilla warfare, especially in rural and mountainous regions, the FLN employed strategic methods to challenge the presence and authority of the colonizer. Yet, the

struggle for independence extended beyond military efforts. A strong sense of national identity and the demand for self-determination were also fostered through intellectual and cultural engagement. In this broader context, secular intellectuals emerged as key figures who, while sympathetic to the FLN, contributed to the revolution through their public discourse, political involvement, and articulation of the Algerian cause. Chapter Two will examine Steve not merely as an intellectual witness to colonial violence, but as an active representative of the resistance as secular intellectual, and a Saidian intellectual who breaks down colonial stereotypes about the colonized and challenges oppressing systems.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960) offers a fresh perspective on the Algerian War of Independence by looking at the situation of Algerians from a different and a new angle through the eyes of Steve Lavers, an American oilman. In this chapter, Steve reveals the harsh reality of French colonial presence in Algeria, depicting scenes that convey the brutal cruelty faced by the Algerian people. The violence, not only physical but also psychological, left deep scars on the Algerians during the colonial period. As an intellectual, Steve strives to remain neutral, objectively presenting the realities while giving a voice to the marginalized and oppressed under French colonial rule. His account also highlights the resilience of the Algerians, whose resistance ultimately led to the downfall of the French empire. Throughout this chapter, concepts such as the intellectual, intellectual duty, and exile from Edward Said's theory are used to show that Steve, as an outsider in exile, offers an authentic and impartial portrayal of the Algerian War of Independence. His independence from all institutions, his role as a neutral observer at El Milia, and his mediation between the colonizer and the colonized suggest that he embodies the true essence of an intellectual. In this way, Chapter One portrays Steve as a neutral observer, recounting events objectively for the public, setting the stage for his evolution into a Saidian intellectual, which Chapter Two will explore.

## **Chapter Two: Steve as a Saidian intellectual who challenges the French and <<speaks truth to power>>**

### **I. Introduction**

Chapter Two examines the representation of the Saidian and secular intellectual in Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960). Steve, the narrator, is portrayed as a figure who *speaks truth to power* and confronts the realities of colonial oppression. Through his critical questioning of French rule and his commitment to exposing injustice, Steve emerges as a voice of resistance, a morally engaged outsider who recognizes and challenges the structures of domination. He denounces the hypocrisy of the colonial system, takes personal risks, and draws attention to the violence and atrocities committed by the French regime. In doing so, he embodies the ethical role of the intellectual as envisioned by Edward Said (1994): one who refuses silence in the face of injustice and uses narrative as a tool for resistance.

In *Darkness Visible*, Steve embodies the role of a secular intellectual in the Saidian sense. A secular intellectual is a person who questions established hierarchies of power and prevailing narratives, especially those that stem from colonialism, imperialism, and cultural dominance. Said, who is most well-known for his research on Orientalism, promotes an intellectual stance that is unaffected by religious or ideological dogma. According to Said's theory, the secular intellectual is devoted to revealing the intricacies of power in the connection between the West and the East, frequently challenging the ways in which knowledge is generated and employed to legitimize dominance and oppression. Instead of just observing, this person actively seeks to dismantle colonial myths and narratives in order to promote a more diverse, inclusive world where the voices of underrepresented groups are heard.

As an outsider and American oilman in a colonized Algeria, he refuses to associate himself with the French colonial authorities and the military forces responsible for the ongoing

oppression of the Algerian population. Rather than remaining silent, Steve chooses to confront the truth, speak out, and act. His response to colonial violence reflects Edward Said's notion that the intellectual must "speak truth to power" by resisting injustice through thought, voice, and action. As Said argues, intellectuals have a responsibility to challenge dominant ideologies and stand against oppression (Said, 1994, page38). Steve embraces this role not only by exposing the brutality of the colonial regime, but also through his ethical and human engagement with the Algerian struggle, positioning himself as a voice of resistance and moral clarity. His moral conviction drives him to challenge the powers even at personal risk, using the principles of Said's critique of intellectuals who avoid uncomfortable truths. Through Steve's actions, Norman Lewis portrays *the secular intellectual as someone who not only critiques power but takes actions and works to show it*, shedding light on the moral necessity of speaking out against oppressive systems without thinking about the consequences. Then, this chapter argues, Steve reflects Edward Said's notion of the secular intellectual who remains committed to speaking the truth, regardless of the personal impact, serving as a witness to the world's injustices.

## **II. Intellectual Disobedience: Steve's Support of Algerian Women's Challenges**

The French colonial authority imposed a brutal and dehumanizing system in Algeria that undermined not only the land and resources but also the native population—especially Algerian women. Referred to by the colonizers as "the Fatmas". A term steeped in racial and cultural stereotypes; these women were subjected to both symbolic and material oppression. Algerian women were therefore subjected to both practical (economic, physical, and legal) and symbolic (cultural, social, and psychological) types of oppression during French colonial authority. Dehumanization or marginalization in colonial discourse are examples of symbolic oppression,

whereas material oppression refers to the actual forms of oppression, such as forced labor, brutality, or legal discrimination. This label served as a tool of segregation and marginalization, effectively silencing Algerian women and denying them agency within the colonial structure. As Frantz Fanon (1959) observes, the veiled Algerian native woman emerged as a potent symbol of cultural resistance in the eyes of the colonizer. According to Frantz Fanon, the veiled Algerian lady came to represent opposition to French colonization. The veil evolved from a simple article of apparel to a representation of Algerian identity and resistance against colonialism. The veiled lady was frequently portrayed as a sign of tyranny or backwardness by the colonizers, who saw her as a threat to their attempts to subjugate and "civilize" the indigenous people. Her veiling, however, was seen by the Algerians as a protest of colonial power and an integral element of their cultural identity.

The veil was not just a piece of clothing; it became a powerful political symbol that resisted the colonial gaze and fought back against the attempts to tear apart Algerian society. For the French, controlling Algerian women was seen as essential to breaking the resistance of the entire nation. They believed that in order to weaken the spirit of the Algerian people, they first had to conquer its women. As Frantz Fanon stated, "If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil, where they hide themselves" (Fanon, 1959, p. 44). Fanon reflects the colonial mindset that saw the control of women as the first step in controlling an entire culture and its fight for freedom.

Steve's first direct engagement in the narrative reflects his growing commitment to the cause. His assistance to "the Fatmas," whom he transports in his car, is far from a minor gesture. As an American geologist working for an oil company in a colonial context on the brink of revolution, Steve's act of helping these women represents a deliberate, morally significant intervention. When he recounts the incident, he states:

I overshot them by a hundred yards, pulled up, and I reversed back. I was sorry for them, but it wasn't all sympathy that made me stop. It occurred to me that it would be a kind of insurance to be carrying a carload of fatmas along the twenty-five-mile stretch of road that lay ahead. (Lewis, 1960, p. 26).

Steve's decision to help these women, even though he knows they support the FLN, speaks to his ethical resilience and his refusal to be complicit with an oppressive regime. His intervention underscores the necessity of recognizing the humanity of those systematically dehumanized by French military power. By engaging in this manner, Steve exemplifies the characteristics of a true intellectual. Edward Said, in *Representations of the Intellectual*, argues that an intellectual is someone "who cannot easily be coopted by governments or corporations and whose raison d'être is to represent those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or neglected" (Said, 1994, p. 11). In choosing empathy over passivity, Steve defines himself as an intellectual challenging dominant ideology and supporting the marginalized amidst a system characterized by brutality, injustice, and domination. Despite their affiliation with the FLN, Steve's support for Algerian women demonstrates his devotion to morality and intellectual honesty. He exemplifies Edward Said's notion of an intellectual who questions authority and stands out for the voiceless by opposing colonial tyranny and standing up for the underprivileged.

The Algerian women in *Darkness Visible* like the "Fatmas" played a huge role in the struggle against the French colonialism. They were not just regular victims of colonial injustices; many were actively engaged in the resistance and had the same desire for independence. They are ordinary women in land thrown into the war, forced to abandon their fields and homes, they are represented as powerless and weak, yet strong and resilient at the same time.

The narrator wanted to show and describe their white jellabas and their veils, which demonstrates their traditional clothing and their role within a patriarchal society in verge of war. These women are not just warriors but victims whose futures have been taken from by the French, a reality that they are aware of by saying “The war... Now we can’t go to our fields anymore.” (Lewis,1960, p.26) this shows their position in the conflict an unfair treatment their inability to provide for their children. The fatmas also suffer in silence from the war yet they fight in their own way by helping the FLN. They have contributed in so many ways in the success of the FLN's rise against the French despite all the challenges they faced. The Fatmas represented the heart and the hidden side of the resistance, yet they also suffered the harshest consequences of the war’s violence and brutality. In order to defend oppressive acts and executions, the official French narrative portrayed the Algerian rebels “fellaghas” as savage terrorists and blamed them for Joseph's death. Steve, however, disagrees with this interpretation because he understands that addressing the colonial falsehoods necessitates both moral fortitude and direct involvement qualities that are essential to Edward Said's idea of the intellectual.

### **III. Steve and the Ethics of a Secular intellectual**

In *Darkness Visible*, Norman Lewis presents a profound critique of colonial violence through Steve, whose role evolves from a neutral observer to an ethically engaged, secular intellectual. One of the pivotal events that exposes the depth of corruption within the French colonial system is the murder of Joseph, a Spanish brothel keeper. Official French narratives immediately blamed the Algerian rebels, known as the *fellaghas*, portraying them as barbaric terrorists. This portrayal served the colonial purpose of justifying repressive policies and executions. However, Steve's refusal to accept the official version marks the beginning of his active confrontation with colonial falsehoods. He understands that uncovering the truth requires direct involvement and moral courage core characteristics of the Saidian intellectual.

Frantz Fanon (1952) notes, “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards” (p. 9), revealing how colonial systems dehumanize the native population and distort truth through imposed narratives. Steve, by visiting a village destroyed by the French and documenting its devastation, offers a counter-narrative rooted in personal observation and ethical testimony. He writes: “So dehumanized had they become, so clothed with filth, that it was difficult to distinguish the men from the women... A child came out bawling, eyes closed, its mouth a bright red hole in its black face” (Lewis, 1960, p. 194). This harrowing scene illustrates not only the physical toll of colonial violence but also Steve’s transformation into a voice for the voiceless: a hallmark of Edward Said’s intellectual ideal.

The critical role of a secular and Saidian intellectual appears clearly with the murder of Joseph whose claimed killers are the Algerians. Steve’s determination to discover the truth behind Joseph’s murder leads him to Dolores, the only surviving Spanish witness. His questioning, despite the risks, reveals the involvement of “the organization,” later confirmed to be the *Red Hand*, a French paramilitary group operating to sabotage the Algerian resistance while framing the FLN. “Despite the fact that there is still no official confirmation, several key officials involved acknowledged in the meantime that all operations of the Red Hand had been approved at the highest political levels of France’s Fifth Republic” (Riegler, 2012, p.23). This shows that red hand was a French group maintained by French officers.

Riegler’s words also suggests that the Red Hand was closely tied to the French authorities during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). Although the French government has always denied any formal connection with the group, numerous accounts from military personnel and journalists reveal that the Red Hand acted on direct orders from high-ranking officials within the French government. This implicates key military and

government leaders in the responsibility for the crimes, assassinations, sabotage, and the targeted attacks on every FLN member. The fact that the government consistently denied any involvement with the group only serves to reveal the hypocrisy of the French state, which tried to distance itself from the violence it effectively sanctioned.

Dolores finally confesses: “The boss sent him a message that a job had to be done... He knew he was finished and so did everybody else” (Lewis, 1960, p. 214). These revelations expose a hidden apparatus of state-sponsored terrorism designed to suppress Algerian aspirations by any means. This breakthrough illustrates the dominance of terrorism and the fear that the Red Hand has spread. Dolores the only survived victim narrates how the organisation treated everyone with violence, doing everything just to maintain chaos, panic and madness, by taking life of those who defies them. Farid Alilat (n.d.) has shown how the French intelligence services orchestrated such clandestine operations during the war, including targeted assassinations and disinformation campaigns.

Steve’s involvement becomes increasingly dangerous and more serious as he uncovers truths that implicate high-ranking officials along with the boss that eventually revealed to be Blachon and the big boss Latour. Getting implicated in this kind of revelations is a danger on his own existence. Steve accepts the responsibility of being involved and knowing dangerous facts and truths, the kind of realities and injustices that the dominant powers want to hide. The intellectual must uncover the truth to challenge and expose the colonial domination. This gesture of telling and knowing the truth leads to a deep comprehension. With this method, the Saidian intellectual becomes a strong brave voice that speaks truth to power, this dedication to justice and doing the right thing, despite the risks is what shapes a real intellectual.

When Dolores explains how Joseph refused to carry out a murder disguised as an FLN attack, the narrative shifts: the colonizer, not the colonized, is revealed as the true source of

terror. Steve's courageous inquiry parallels Said's (1994) argument that the secular intellectual is defined by a willingness to face personal risk in pursuit of justice: "Amateurism means choosing the risks and uncertain results of the public sphere" (p. 87). According to Said, amateurism is the intellectual's conscious decision to participate in public life in spite of dangers and uncertainties, motivated by principles like justice, empathy, and honesty, and exhibiting a brave will to oppose prevailing systems. Amateurism explains that the intellectual intentionally choosing to engage with the public and to be an active figure, even when it involves risk. The amateur intellectual is motivated by many values such as honesty, empathy and justice. Their devotion to public life means that they are aiming to face doubt, conflict and danger, because they want to challenge some aspects. Unlike the professional intellectual who often operates within safe and institutional boundaries, for Said, amateurism is not a sign of weakness or lack of skill, but a courageous act of moral engagement.

The turning point comes when Steve learns that Latour may be the head of the organization, confirming the colonial state's complicity in terrorism. "He bought a bottle of champagne... embraced us all... After that I knew that it was only a question of waiting" (Lewis, 1960, p. 216). Steve is no longer just an observer. His discovery positions him as a threat to the colonial system, which now seeks to silence him. His moral stance is further confirmed when he reflects on Latour's reaction to Blachon's death, noting the cold indifference that implies complicity (Lewis, 1960, p. 246).

The killing of a high-ranking member of the organization is clear proof of Latour's involvement with the Red Hand. This shows that a more powerful figure than Blachon was behind the attacks. It also implicates the French government and military in acts of terrorism. By allowing these actions, the French colonial government confirms its role in supporting and tolerating terrorist activities. In both history and *Darkness Visible*, French colonial power is

linked to the Red Hand. This is shown through mass murders, hiding the violence, obstructing investigations, or by labeling the anti-colonial movement as terrorists, while they themselves were committing terrorist acts.

Through Steve, Lewis exposes the hypocrisy of colonial power, which masks its atrocities under the guise of civilization while branding its victims as aggressors. Steve, in actively resisting this narrative, embodies the Saidian intellectual, a figure committed to truth, ethical engagement, and solidarity with the oppressed. Said (1994) describes this role as one who “*The truth deserves to be spoken, represented by an unafraid and compassionate intellectual*”. (Said, 1994, p.101, italics added), this line is about the intellectual as a figure who does not avoid reality or unpopular truths, instead he chooses good engagement and solidarity with the oppressed. Said's statement highlights that a great intellectual is one who doesn't hesitate to face difficult realities, even if doing so makes them unpopular or risky. The intellectual deliberately confronts the truth rather than sidestepping challenging truths, exhibiting compassion and sympathy with the disadvantaged, even at personal peril.

Steve's investigation, testimony, and willingness to speak truth to power solidify his position within the intellectual tradition. As Said points out, “the intellectual, properly speaking, is not a functionary or an employee completely given up to the policy goals of a government or a large corporation, or even a guild of like-minded professionals” (Said, 1994, p. 86). In this statement, Said emphasizes that the intellectual must not serve the interests of powerful institutions or follow them blindly. Instead, the intellectual's role is to remain independent and responsible. Said warns against becoming someone who obeys orders without questioning them. In *Darkness Visible*, Steve challenges the dominant powers. Instead of cooperating with them, he questions their actions, exposes their wrongdoings, and speaks

out against them. Through this, Steve embodies the courage and integrity that define a true intellectual, a secular and thus Saidian intellectual.

On the other hand. Steve informs the reader that Dolores hides in the Casbah not only to protect herself but also because she feels that she is safer and she can take that place as a refuge. Even though she knows that the casbah is surrounded by Algerians and members of the FLN, she cannot help but to feel safer among those native oppressed people. Her presence in the Casbah means that she rebels against the French, taking side with the people that won't hurt her. The Casbah, during the Algerian War of Independence, was a location that welcomed the oppressed people, a refuge to everyone that hated the colonial power, a symbol of resistance and a sanctuary for FLN members. As Frantz Fanon mentioned, the Casbah functioned not only as a neighborhood but as a living symbol of revolutionary defiance. In *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), Fanon talks about how colonial power planning made a strict separation between the European and native Algerians, with the Casbah representing the physical and psychological heart of native resistance as portrayed by Steve.

#### **IV. Truth and Resistance: Steve, Kobtan, and the Role of the Saidian Intellectual**

The name *Kobtan* holds symbolic significance within the context of French-colonial Algeria. Derived from Arabic (كَبْطَان), and rooted in Ottoman Turkish *kaptan* and Latin *capitaneus*, the term means “captain” or “leader.” According to the Arabic-English dictionary, كَبْطَان (Kobtan) refers to someone who holds a position of authority and responsibility, guiding others through their wisdom, strength and Algerian future. Norman Lewis's decision to name this central Algerian character *Kobtan* is deliberate. He serves as a moral guide for Steve, much like a secular prophet who leads through example, not ideology. Through Kobtan, Lewis

constructs a portrait of the colonized subject not as passive or reactive, but as intellectually and ethically elevated. Steve reflects on Kobtan's moral strength when he says:

I'm surprised,' I said. 'I must admit it. I always thought of Kobtan as, well—a religious man. He was a religious man. Surely a religious man doesn't have to be afraid of action in defence of what he sees as right? (Lewis, 1960, p. 253).

This conversation with G.J. illustrates Steve's evolving understanding of Kobtan's depth; not simply a devout man, but someone whose moral clarity is rooted in both religious belief and ethical responsibility. Kobtan becomes a lens through which Steve, and the reader, come to understand Algeria not as a passive territory, but as a country of thoughtful, principled resistance. At first, Steve considers Kobtan to be a devout guy, believing that his moral fortitude stems only from his faith. But as they talk, Steve comes to see that Kobtan's bravery is rooted in a more profound moral obligation, exposing him as a thoughtful and moral leader who personifies principled opposition to colonial injustice.

In *Darkness Visible*, Kobtan is portrayed with honour and restraint. Unlike other characters who might succumb to violence or despair, he represents a dignified resistance grounded in knowledge, ethics, and national pride. He is a symbol of hope for Algeria's future: self-governed, morally coherent, and intellectually capable. Lewis uses Kobtan to critique colonial stereotypes and to present an alternative vision of Algerian identity, one marked by strength, wisdom, and compassion. His character in the novel serving as a symbol of the indigenous leadership and the struggle for freedom and autonomy.

Kobtan's symbolic role may be compared to that of Virgil in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a moral and rational guide who leads the protagonist through darkness toward truth. As Singleton notes, Virgil embodies wisdom and ethical reason, essential for Dante's understanding of sin and justice (Singleton, 1970, p. 21). In a similar fashion, Kobtan functions as Steve's guide

through the moral and political inferno of colonial Algeria. French Algeria becomes the modern “Inferno,” and Steve’s intellectual journey is shaped through Kobtan’s calm, rational exposure of injustice. Steve in the beginning of the novel is a naive outsider politically neutral and do not know the truth of the colonial injustice. Kobtan, on the other hand, is deeply engaged in the resistance, embodying knowledge and. Like Virgil Kobtan provides direction and serves as a voice of clarity, revealing to Steve the real truth.

Kobtan’s farewell letter to Steve further reveals the depth of their relationship:

Dear Mr Lavers, it grieves me to have been compelled to leave El Milia without even shaking your hand... We hope that when peace comes at last you and all our friends will return to help us with our great labour of raising it up again from its ruins. (Lewis, 1960, p. 254).

The tone of this letter is marked by mutual respect, political vision, and shared commitment to the future. Their bond is not simply personal; it is intellectual and moral. Kobtan becomes the catalyst for Steve’s transformation from neutral observer to engaged intellectual. Kobtan is acknowledging the sad part that Steve saw Algeria only through its wounds, yet he does not close the door. Instead, he expresses hope that Steve will return to witness better days.

Through their discussions and encounters, Kobtan offers Steve a model of ethical clarity. He exposes injustice through lived example, not rhetoric. His calm and strategic articulation of truth awaken Steve’s own conscience. By the end of the novel, Steve carries the emotional burden of what he has witnessed and, ultimately, leaves Algeria with the truth. He understands that justice cannot thrive in a system built on repression. In choosing to leave, Steve fulfils what Edward Said describes as the secular intellectual’s duty:”to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug,” while resisting cooptation by dominant powers (Said, 1994, p. 11). Steve's experiences with Kobtan provide him with an

example of moral strength and ethical clarity, which wakes his conscience to the reality of colonial oppression. Steve's departure from Algeria satisfies Edward Said's description of the secular intellectual's obligation to stand up for the downtrodden and oppose the established power structures.

Again, the secular intellectual is someone who actively and critically engages with the ruling ideas and challenging them while exposing the truths. Said is admitting that searching and questioning traditional ways of power such as colonial powers, governments or religious institutions has helped expose the truths that are not discovered. This perception is central to the role of the secular intellectual. In Said's point of view, a secular intellectual is not led by others' beliefs; he expects for his commitments to his own way of thinking and the public engagement. "The intellectual is someone who cannot easily be coopted by governments or corporations and whose *raison d'être* is to represent those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or neglected." Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994, p. 11)

An intellectual like this is driven by the need to challenge authority and speak truth to power. As Said puts it, the most important job of a secular intellectual is to protect the freedom to think and express ideas without restriction. If they fail to defend this freedom or allow it to be compromised, they are essentially betraying their calling (Said, 1996, p. 89). Said stresses that an intellectual's role is to stand up for the voices of the oppressed, ensuring that diverse opinions are heard. If intellectuals stop fighting for this right, they lose their purpose, because their mission is to speak the truth and do what is right, even when it is difficult.

Steve's relationship with Kobtan is central to his moral awakening and to his eventual role as a Saidian intellectual. He does not merely report what he sees; he learns from the lived knowledge of the colonized. Kobtan's quiet authority, like Virgil's in the *Divine Comedy*, leads him through the darkness of colonial injustice toward ethical engagement. It is through Kobtan

that Steve becomes not only a witness but a bearer of truth as a secular intellectual committed to justice beyond borders.

This moral awakening, one task of a true intellectual, is mentioned through Steve's use of intertextuality. Early in the novel, Lavers recalls a powerful historical moment about the peasants who had worked for the French settlers on their farms:

One afternoon in August, after a Roman peace that had lasted a hundred years, the Arab field-laborers had risen and slaughtered their white masters. The Arabs had taken up their pitchforks, their sickles and their ancient shotguns and they had killed in one afternoon every European they could lay their hands upon, slaughtered their animals and burned down their houses [...] They had risen like the slaves of Spartacus to annihilate and be annihilated. (Lewis, 1960: 29-30)

This event took place in the 1930s, with Lavers specifically referring to the 1939 uprising. The years 1936 and 1937 are considered a golden period for the revolting Algerian farmers and laborers, especially in regions like Sidi Bel Abbés, Tlemcen, Ain Timouchent, Mostaganem, Metidja, Batna, and Jijel (Tikran, 2018:122-23).

By recalling this, Fanon's idea of decolonization is echoed: it is not an event that happens overnight, but rather "a historical process" between two opposing forces (Fanon, 1963:36). This means that the Algerians' desire to fight back against their oppressors had already been set long before the Algerian War of Independence officially began in November 1954. By highlighting this historical event, Lewis reflects on the transition in both French colonialism and the long struggle for Algerian emancipation. In other words, the novel presents two opposing forces: French civilization and the Algerian revolution, the collapse of France's colonial project and the rise of Algerian liberation thinking, using political, economic, and historical contexts.

In examining the passage about the peasants' violence toward the European settlers, Lewis, through Steve, does not view their actions as negative. Instead, he symbolically compares their revolt to that of the Roman rebel Spartacus, who led an uprising against Roman authorities. Spartacus is widely regarded as a conscious revolutionary leader who fought for the oppressed slaves and the proletariat, becoming a symbol of resistance with clear ideals and a social agenda. His story has since inspired numerous novels and films (Baldwin, 1967, p. 289). Additionally, Lewis remains aware of his role as a novelist, allowing readers to draw conclusions about his sympathy toward the revolutionaries. In doing so, his use of symbolism reflects his partiality and highlights his recognition of the Algerian struggle for freedom. Lewis symbolizes the peasants' struggle for freedom as a kind of revolutionary resistance by drawing a comparison between their aggression and Spartacus' uprising. By doing this, he acknowledges his influence on the story while quietly expressing support with the Algerian cause.

In Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible*, Steve is described by Edward Said's as a secular intellectual. A figure who challenges dominant ideologies and resists injustices Steve, an American oil worker in French colonial Algeria where he starts to become aware of the injustices around him, and acts against the oppression. The secular intellectual's role as defined by Said: a figure who speaks truth to power and stands in opposition to the oppressors. Steve's mind starts to know and accepts the truth. His effort to understand the native perspective gives a shift from passive observer to a more active, committed figure and critically aware. This transformation shows Said's ideal of the secular intellectual who refuses the comforts of silence or complicity and instead insists on justice.

## **V. Conclusion**

In *Darkness Visible*, Norman Lewis offers a compelling critique of colonial oppression through the character of Steve, whose transformation exemplifies the moral and political responsibility

of the intellectual. Initially a neutral observer, Steve gradually evolves into a figure who questions authority, empathizes with the oppressed, and seeks to uncover the truth behind the colonial narrative. His encounters with characters such as the Spanish characters Kobtan and others, his assistance to Algerian women, and his growing awareness of the colonial system's brutality mark his intellectual and ethical development. These experiences align closely with Edward Said's definition of the intellectual as someone who refuses silence, challenges dominant ideologies, and speaks truth to power regardless of institutional or political affiliations. Steve does not passively document the violence he witnesses; instead, he assumes the burden of testimony, using his position as an outsider to reveal the realities suppressed by colonial authority.

As a secular and Saidian intellectual, Steve fulfills his role through moral engagement rather than institutional loyalty. He embodies the qualities Said attributes to the intellectual: independence of thought, resistance to cooptation, and a commitment to represent the silenced and marginalized. Through his ethical choices, whether by offering support to women aiding the FLN, recognizing Kobtan's leadership and wisdom, investigating the murder of Joseph at the hands of the Red Hand organization, or ultimately carrying the truth with him as he leaves Algeria, Steve exemplifies the intellectual who acts, not just observes. His transformation underscores the idea that intellectual responsibility involves more than knowledge; it demands action, risk, and solidarity with those subjected to injustice. In this way, Lewis does not merely depict the colonial situation but presents a powerful meditation on the role of the intellectual in confronting and exposing systemic violence.

## **VIII. General Conclusion**

In conclusion, this dissertation examined The Representation of the Saidian Intellectual in Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1961). To study Edward Said's theory of the intellectual in *Darkness*

*Visible*, this research is divided into two chapters: it relied on several theorists and concepts. Through the protagonist's experiences in the novel, it has demonstrated how a true intellectual should act and what kind of intellectual the protagonist really is.

Chapter One is about Steve Lavers, an American outsider works for an American oil company called DeBry Exploration the Algerian war of independence. Throughout the novel, Steve provides us with a truthful testimony about the reality of the war. This chapter applies Edward Said's theory of the intellectual based on *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996) to affirm that Steve is an intellectual who narrates the brutal reality of the time how Algerian resistance was really combating for a free Algeria. As a witness, Steve portrays several scenes from his exile to show how the French colonizer damaged the Algeria and torturing its people through both open and hidden violence. From Edward Said *Representations of the Intellectual*, this chapter is relied to many crucial concepts such as the intellectual as the one who portrays reality objectively, the intellectual duty, and the intellectual exile. Therefore, Steve is considered as an intellectual, who narrates the reality of the Algerian war against the French empire, applying his duty independently and seeks to add a change to society by representing the suffering of the voiceless people. Steve in his a pro exilic place does not only observe and report the reality of the war, but how Algerians resisted against the coloniser, leading the French empire to its collapse.

Chapter two argues that in Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible*, Steve Lavers is as a powerful example of what Edward Said described the secular intellectual. Someone who is aware of systems power and their injustices. As an American oil worker in colonial Algeria, Steve openly challenges the French colonial power by exposing its violence, atrocities and hypocrisy rather than taking side with the other side and choosing silence. Resulting from this, he accomplishes Said's description of the intellectual, who refuses to be part of the corporations and to resist to injustices, even when unpopular. Steve's resistance becomes evident by his

support for Algerian women, who suffer under colonial violence and oppression. Him taking side with the fatmas expressed not only in words but also in action reflecting what Said talked about the intellectual's duty, that is to speak for those who are unheard. This ethical position grounded in a secular, humanistic commitment to truth showing Steve's transformation into a secular intellectual. Steve fulfils the intellectual's role as a speaker of truth. Through his persistent pursuit of justice, his investigation of the massacre while speaking to one of the survivors and his confrontations with figures like Colonel Latour, Steve demonstrates with whom he is taking a side and what kind of intellectual he really is. Broadly, Steve in this narrative is a Saidian intellectual in an *Emersonian sense and spirit*.

Throughout the novel, the narrator rejects the colonial system and stands with the oppressed. Steve, as a secular intellectual who speaks truth to power, takes on the responsibility of exposing the reality of oppression. He embodies the role of a true intellectual through his resistance, his willingness to confront authority, and his rejection of the imperial system. His friendship with Kobtan, a figure who represents the heart of Algerian resistance and future, helps Steve see the harsh truths of colonial power. This relationship is central to Steve's transformation, guiding him toward a deeper understanding of his role. Their bond is not just about friendship; it is a shared moral journey, a search for truth. By the end, Steve does not pretend to "save" or "rescue" the colonized, but instead listens, learns, and stands firmly with the oppressed. This reflects the Saidian idea that the true intellectual must stay committed to justice, remain uncomfortable with power, and have the courage to speak out, even when it is difficult.

The thesis concludes with recommendations for future research. It is highly recommended to explore works written after Algeria's independence, particularly in English literature, poetry, and drama. These texts often capture the shifting perspectives and complexities of post-colonial identity. Through poetry and drama, readers can gain valuable insights into the experiences of

the Algerian people and their struggle against French colonial rule. Additionally, exploring French literature from the same period offers a contrasting viewpoint, shedding light on the French perspective of the conflict and its lasting impact. These works provide an enriching exploration of the historical, social, and cultural dimensions of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), helping to understand its profound effects on both Algerian and French societies.

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