MINISTERE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHESCIENTIFIQUE

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master in English

Field: Foreign Languages

Option: Literature and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Title

The Representation of Gender and Religion in Robert Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904): An Orientalist Study

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Academic year: 2024/2025

Acknowledgements

We, first and foremost, thank Allah for granting us the strength and determination to complete this research paper. We express our sincere thanks and gratitude to our supervisor Dr. Aissat Karima for her supervision of this work, for her encouragement, support, advice, and availability at every moment.

Our Gratitude also goes to the board of examiners: Dr. LACEB Rafik and Mrs. DJELLOUT Mekioussa. We are so grateful to them for having agreed to read, examine and assess our work

To

My beloved parents,

My sisters and brothers,

All my friends and relatives.

HANANE

To

My beloved mother,

My brothers Yanis and Lyes,

My grandparents,

And all my family and my friends.

LITICIA

Abstract

This research explores the British literary representation of Algeria under French rule during the early 1900's. This dissertation critically analyses Robert Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904) through Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, with a particular focus on the novel's construction of gender and religion in colonial Algeria. Borrowing key 'Orientalist' concepts such as "The Orient," stereotyping, binary opposition and hegemony, the research paper argues that British literary narratives, particularly *The Garden of Allah*, project cultural superiority and moral authority onto the colonized Algerians by misrepresenting their gender and religious identities on the one hand and positively representing the West from the other. It explores the representation of Algerian men and women, along with the Western characters, arguing that Algerian gender stereotyped and Orientalized, to reinforce French colonial and patriarchal ideologies, and the Western in broad terms. Moreover, the present work analyses the representation of religious discourses in the novel and puts emphasis on the fact that Christianity is portrayed as a civilizing force while Islam is marginalized and exoticized. Through a close and textual reading of Hichens's novel and implementation of postcolonial theories, the dissertation concluded that *The Garden of Allah* contributes as a colonial text in the imperialist propaganda that supports colonialism and calls for a civilizing mission and settlement project.

Key words: Gender, religion, Orientalist discourse, Robert Hichens, *The Garden of Allah*

I. General Introduction

French colonialism in Algeria (1830–1962) stands as one of the most controversial and violent colonial experiences in modern history. Unlike other French colonies such as Tunisia (1881–1956) and Madagascar (1897–1960), Algeria was not treated merely as a colony but as an extension of France itself. This unique status created a long-lasting and brutal struggle over land, identity, and governance that shaped both French and Algerian histories. The colonization brought immense suffering to Algerians, leaving behind deep social and psychological wounds that continued to influence the nation's identity even after independence.

France invaded Algeria in 1830, meeting fierce resistance from local populations. The ensuing conflict, marked by massacres and dispossession, lasted decades. By 1847, after suppressing multiple uprisings—including the resistance led by Emir Abdelkader—France imposed full control and began integrating Algeria as a French territory (Wagner, 2012, pp. 8–9). The French administration encouraged European settlement, particularly from Spain, Malta, and Corsica, forming the pied-noirs community. These settlers took vast lands from Algerians, reinforcing French dominance not only economically but also culturally. Colonialism in Algeria was thus more than a political or economic project—it was a civilizing mission rooted in the belief of European superiority. France sought to "modernize" Algerians by erasing their culture and replacing it with French values, language, and religion.

Land ownership policies further deepened inequality. From 1844 onward, Algerians who lacked formal property documents were stripped of their lands, which were then granted to settlers or private companies for agricultural exploitation (Beaud, 2015, p. 10). This system divided Algeria into two unequal societies: the native Muslim majority, denied citizenship, education, and

political rights, and the European minority, who enjoyed wealth and privilege. Although Algeria was officially part of France, its native inhabitants remained outsiders in their own country.

Resistance to French rule, however, never ceased. Emir Abdelkader's jihad (1832–1847) symbolized the early organized struggle against colonization (Horne, 2006, p. 45). Even after his defeat, revolts such as the Mokrani Uprising of 1871 and repeated insurrections in Kabylia demonstrated enduring opposition (Stora, 2001, p. 78). During the 20th century, resistance evolved into political and nationalist movements. Strikes, protests, and the rise of the National Liberation Front (FLN) led to the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), ending more than 130 years of colonial domination (Horne, 2006, p. 213).

The long colonial encounter and its cultural clashes drew the attention of many English writers in the early twentieth century. Algeria's landscape and the tensions of French rule inspired authors such as Robert Hichens, who used the country as a backdrop to explore Europe's encounter with North Africa. Their literary works often reflected fascination with Algeria's "exotic" setting while simultaneously reproducing Orientalist stereotypes. As Patricia Lorcin (1999) argues, colonial myths—such as the Kabyle myth, the nomadic Arab, and the Latino-Mediterranean race—served to justify French domination by constructing racial hierarchies. Similarly, Edward Said's Orientalism (1979) explains how the West's depiction of the "Orient" as static and inferior legitimized colonial control and cultural superiority.

Building on these frameworks, this dissertation examines how Robert Hichens's The Garden of Allah (1904) reproduces colonial and Orientalist discourse. The novel presents Algeria as both mystical and subordinate—a space where European characters seek self-discovery while native Algerians remain voiceless. Through its protagonist Domini Enfilden, the narrative reinforces Western civilizational hegemony, portraying Algerian culture and Islam as mysterious, irrational, and spiritually useful only for European transformation. Hichens's

depiction of Beni-Mora—a fictionalized Biskra—erases the region's real history of resistance, reducing it to a picturesque stage for Western imagination.

This study argues that The Garden of Allah functions as a colonial text that perpetuates myths of the "mystical Orient." Through its themes, language, and characterizations, it contributes to the depersonalization of Algerians and the justification of colonial presence. As Lorcin (1999) and Said (1979) note, such myths sustained systems of power and racial discrimination. Hichens's work thus illustrates how literature can serve as a tool of ideology—reinforcing colonial hierarchies and shaping perceptions of Algeria through distorted gender, religious, and cultural representations.

II. Review of the Related Literature:

Although Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904) was widely popular at the time of its publication, critical engagement with the novel has been notably absent in contemporary scholarship. Most of the archived materials concerning the book are limited to periodicals and book reviews from the early 20th century, such as *Book News* and *The Spectator Book Man*. These reviews mostly capture the book's early popularity but do not offer deeper critical insights. While the story was later adapted into a film by David Selznick in 1936—not 1970 as sometimes cited—this version also received minimal academic interest. Bob Thomas notes that Selznick's choice to update the script with playwright Lynn Riggs and to film in real desert settings was noteworthy (Thomas, pp. 103–104).

However, a clear gap exists in the scholarly conversation surrounding Hichens's novel, particularly regarding its Orientalist themes, gender representation and characterisation, and religious representations. Despite its wide appeal and cultural significance during the colonial era, *The Garden of Allah* has not been studied closely in relation to its Orientalist themes, gender roles, or religious portrayals. This research aims to fill that gap by examining how the novel promotes colonial ideologies through racial and cultural stereotypes common in British and French narratives. By analysing these elements, the study seeks to

show how Hichens's novel supported colonial thinking and contributed to the larger imperial discourse of the time.

III. Issue and Working Hypotheses

The narrative is orientalising the Algerian people and culture to propagate for a French civilizing mission; the narrative through its main character misrepresents Algeria as a 'dark' place with ignorant people that cannot govern themselves. Indeed, a paratextual analysis of the title *The Garden of Allah* reveals that it functions as a symbolic extension of imperialist ideology, propagating the continued legitimization of the French colonial project and settlement in Algeria. The issue is that *The Garden of Allah* portrays the Algerian desert as a place where Europeans, particularly the French, feel a sense of natural belonging by transforming it into a spiritual and physical environment. Thus, the hypothesis is the desert is transformed from a barren landscape into something significant that Western characters feel they can relate to and comprehend better than the natives. Domini's statement that "*we belong to the garden of Allah as they do, perhaps even more than they*" (Hichens, 1904, p. 470, italics added) makes this point very evident. The colonial notion that Europeans had a right, even a duty, to claim and develop

places like Algeria is reflected in her remarks. Additionally, the novel suggests that Algeria ought to accept Europeans such as the English, Italians, and Russians. This perspective supports the notion that Algeria was open.

IV. Methodology Outline

This research paper follows the IMRAD method. It begins with a General Introduction that is about the historical, cultural, and theoretical context of *The Garden of Allah* (1904). Chapter One, "The Representation of gender in *The Garden of Allah"*, analyses the portrayal of gender in the text, with a focus on the representation of Algerian and Western characters. This chapter examines how the novel uses stereotypes to portray Algerian gender roles, often depicting the Orient as exotic, passive, and in need of Western guidance. Chapter Two, titled "The Representation of Religion: Christianity and Islam in

Conflict", examines the novel's depiction of Christianity and Islam, emphasizing the contrast between Christian values and Muslim practices. The General Conclusion synthesizes the findings and suggests some topics for further research.

V. Methods and Materials

V.A. Methods

This research draws on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as a key theoretical framework to examine the representation of gender and religion in *The Garden of Allah*(1904). Said's analysis of how Western portrayals of the East function as tools of colonial power and cultural dominance will serve as a foundation for this study. Core concepts such as Orientalism, stereotyping, hegemony, the construction of the Orient, and the figure of the 'Other' are essential for understanding how the novel reflects and reinforces colonial ideologies. However, Chapters One and Two will also engage with additional theorists alongside Said to offer a broader and more balanced analytical perspective. This approach aims to enrich the discussion by incorporating diverse viewpoints and enhancing the clarity and depth of the overall analysis.

1. Orientalism: Edward Said defines Orientalism through three key perspectives that shape Western discourse about the non-Western world. These perspectives reveal how knowledge production about the "Orient" is embedded in power relations and colonial ideology. Said first defines Orientalism as a scholarly field in which Western academics, writers, and researchers construct knowledge about the East. He states, *"Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient... is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism"* (Said, 1978, p. 2). This understanding emphasizes that the academic study of the Orient is not neutral but is shaped by historical and political power structures. The second definition of Orientalism refers to a system of thought based on a fundamental distinction between the "Orient" and the "Occident." Said explains this as a *"fundamental ontological and epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident'"* (Said, 1978, p. 2). This binary opposition constructs the East as irrational, backward, and static, while positioning the West as rational, progressive, and dynamic—reinforcing a sense of Western

superiority. Finally, Said describes Orientalism as a political and institutional tool used by the West to dominate and manage the East. He writes, *"Orientalism is a Western institution for dealing with the Orient by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it"* (Said, 1978, p. 3). This definition reveals how knowledge production is tied to imperial authority and the justification of colonial domination.

2. Stereotyping: Stereotyping, within Orientalism, is not neutral misrepresentation but a strategic ideological tool that reinforces power structures. Said argues that "The Orient was almost a European invention... a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes" (Said, 1978, p. 1), demonstrating how stereotypes simplify and exoticize the East, framing it as a realm of mystery and fantasy for the Western imagination. These stereotypes, as Said further asserts, are part of a broader colonial project: "*The Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action*" (Said, 1978, p. 3), indicating that the representation of the Orient is shaped and controlled by the West to maintain dominance. Said's emphasis on the power dynamics behind Orientalist stereotypes aligns with the view that, "knowledge of the Orient, because it is generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world" (Said, 1978, p. 40). This statement reveals how colonial powers construct and control the identity of the Orient, reducing it to a passive object for the West to define and exploit. Many researchers support Said's view on stereotyping that include Homi K. Bhabha who explains that stereotypes are not just simple labels, but a way of repeating fixed ideas that create a sense of familiarity and control. He writes that stereotype is "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (Bhabha,1994, p. 96). Henri Tajfel a Polish, social sees stereotypes as shareddeas about groups that help people sort others into categories. He defines a stereotype as "a shared belief about a person or social group that leads to categorization in terms of easily identifiable but often exaggerated traits" (*Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 1981, p. 78).

Susan Fiske & Shelley Taylor add that stereotypes help people make quick judgments. They describe them as mental shortcuts that save time but often lead to oversimplified and inaccurate views of reality.

They argue that stereotypes are "energy-saving devices that allow people to make quick judgments but at the cost of oversimplifying reality" (*Social Cognition*, 1991, p. 116).

Said's application of Foucauldian discourse theory highlights the deep interconnection between knowledge and power in the construction of the Orient. Drawing on Michel Foucault's argument that knowledge is not detached or neutral but produced within systems of power, Said maintains that Western representations of the East function as tools of imperial authority. He writes, *"The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony"* (Said, 1978, p. 5). This power is enacted and reinforced through discourse—a network of texts, images, and institutional practices—that systematically constructs the Orient as inferior, irrational, and static in contrast to a rational, superior, and dynamic West (pp. 40–42).

Said emphasizes that Orientalism is not merely a body of knowledge but *"a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts"* (p. 12). These discourses create enduring stereotypes—such as the despotic ruler, the sensual yet submissive Eastern woman, or the fanatical Muslim—that serve political purposes by legitimizing Western intervention and domination (pp. 108–110). Furthermore, Said notes that *"no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in a specific historical and social situation"* (p. 10), reinforcing that Orientalist knowledge is inseparable from the imperial context in which it is produced.

3. Hegemony: In *Orientalism*, Edward Said draws on Antonio Gramsci's concept of *hegemony*, which refers to the dominance of one group over others through cultural, ideological, and political means rather than through overt coercion (Said, Edward W Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.7). Said employs this idea to explain how theWest maintains control over the East not only through military and economic force but also through cultural dominance. As Said explains, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said,

1978, p. 5). This hegemony is exercised through the production and circulation of knowledge that presents Western values, beliefs, and interpretations as universal and authoritative. Said

further elaborates that this cultural and intellectual dominance functions through institutions such as universities, colonial administrations, literature, and the media, which collectively construct and disseminate stereotypical images of the Orient (pp. 2–3, 20–21). These representations contribute to a "regime of truth" that naturalizes Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. By shaping how the East is seen, studied, and governed, Orientalist discourse sustains a form of ideological control that renders the West as the legitimate authority on all matters related to the Orient. Through the lens of Gramscian hegemony, Said demonstrates how cultural production and intellectual authority work together to perpetuate imperial domination (pp. 25, 94–95). In *The Garden of Allah*(1904), these cultural representations of the Orient, as "mystical," "uncharted," and "otherworldly," contribute to reinforcing Western superiority and justifying colonial intervention and settlement.

4. The 'Orient': Said asserts that the Orient is not an objective geographical or cultural entity, but a constructed idea shaped by Western imagination and imperial interests. He famously writes, "The Orient was almost *a European invention*" (Said, 1978, p. 1), underscoring that the Orient is a product of Western discourse rather than a reflection of historical or cultural reality. According to Said, the Orient is "not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies... and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, 1978, pp. 1–2). This framing reveals how the Orient functions as a mirror in which the West defines itself in contrast to what it imagines as its opposite. Throughout the text, Said emphasizes that this binary opposition—rational vs.

irrational, active vs. passive, masculine vs. feminine—is not merely descriptive, but ideological (pp. 6–7, 58–59, 206). It underpins the justification for political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural superiority. By portraying the East as backward, mysterious, and inferior, the West legitimizes its civilizing mission and affirms its own identity as modern, enlightened, and authoritative. Thus, the Orient becomes not a real place with real people, but a constructed space of difference designed to reinforce Western

hegemony (pp. 40, 108, 166). Through this lens, Orientalism emerges as a discourse that sustains colonial power by imagining and reproducing the East as the essential "Other."

5. Binary Opposition and Power: Said argues that the West constructs its identity in direct opposition to the 'Orient', relying on a binary framework that defines the self through the negation of the 'Other'. He states, *"The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience"* (Said, 1978, pp. 1–2). This contrast is foundational to Western self-perception: Europe becomes rational, moral, and progressive by imagining the East as irrational, decadent, and regressive. The binary opposition is not neutral; it is a mechanism of power that enables the West to assert cultural and political dominance over the East. Said explains that this dualistic structure reinforces the West's sense of superiority, serving as an ideological tool that justifies colonization, economic exploitation, and political control (pp. 6–7, 46, 166). Through repeated representation in literature, scholarship, and visual arts, the Orient is portrayed as passive, mystical, and static, while the West is depicted as active, scientific, and historically dynamic (pp. 71, 205–207). These constructed oppositions naturalize inequality by turning cultural stereotypes into supposed truths, thereby legitimizing Western authority. As a discourse, Orientalism depends on this binary logic to produce a consistent narrative in which the West is always the civilizing subject and the East the object of intervention. By embedding these oppositions in language and knowledge systems, the West maintains not only intellectual hegemony but also the moral grounds for imperial dominance.

V.B. Materials:

1. Biography of the author:

Robert Hichens (1864-1950) was an English novelist, journalist, music critic, and composer, known for exploring themes of exoticism, colonialism, and psychological drama. He is best remembered for *The Garden of Allah* (1904), a novel set in North Africa that examines religion, colonialism, and personal identity. Other notable works include *The Coastguards' Secret* (1886), *An Imaginative Man* (1895), *The*

Londoners (1898), and *The Spell of Egypt* (1910). In addition to his novels, Hichens contributed extensively as a journalist and music critic, writing for periodicals such as *The Spectator* and *The Pall Mall Gazette*. His interest in the Orient and North Africa, influenced by his travels, permeated his works, especially *The Garden of Allah*, which reflects the British fascination with and domination over the "exotic" East. Although his works were popular during his lifetime, Hichens' reputation declined in the 20th century. However, contemporary scholars have begun to reassess his portrayal of the Orient through the lens of postcolonial theory and Orientalism. Despite fading into obscurity, his works provide valuable insights into British imperial attitudes toward the East.

2. Synopsis of the novel:

In *The Garden of Allah* (1904), the protagonist, Domini Enfilden, leaves behind the familiar, civilized world of England to embark on an exploration of the "mysterious and dark country" of Algeria and its vast Sahara. Her journey to Beni-Mora serves as a confirmation of the common Western stereotypes about Algerians, depicting the Arabs and Kabyles as "uncivilized and strange" (Hichens,1904, p.54). Through Domini's perspective, the village and its inhabitants are misrepresented, reflecting the colonial mindset of the time. Her journey begins aboard the French vessel, Le Général Bertrand, alongside French recruits, marking the beginning of her encounter with Algeria as unfamiliar country. While the initial impressions of Africa bring with them a sense of mystery and foreboding, the narrative tone fluctuates between despair and hope. At times, there are moments that hint at the possibility of a bright future in Algeria, especially in the setting of Beni-Mora. The contrast of Algeria's stark darkness, combined with the paradox of its mystique, highlights a land where both devotion and indifference coexist. This is vividly seen in the spiritual encounter of Islam and Christianity in the region. Father Roubier, a French missionary, emerges as a symbol of Christian mission, striving to spread the faith and provide a civilizing influence on the local population. In his garden, he reflects on his work, stating, "I am here to try to do God's work, and sometimes it is better to act for a human being, perhaps even than to pray for him" (p.251), reinforcing the mission of the Church to "save" the Algerians, whom he describes as "shrouded in burnouses" (p.111),

“wild creatures” (p.131), and “filthy nomads” (p.275). Through characters like Father Roubier, the novel underscores the colonial mission to civilize and transform what is seen as a “barbaric” land into a place of European influence and order.

VI. Results

This study looked at how Robert Hichens’s *The Garden of Allah* uses Orientalist concepts to show Algeria and its people during the French colonial period, particularly in 1900’s. Using Edward Said’s theory of *Orientalism*, the analysis found three main results: how gender is shown, how religion is used, and how resistance is ignored. All these elements work together to support the idea that French colonial rule was natural and justified and calls for Western wave of settlement. *The Garden of Allah* shows a clear difference between how Algerian and Western men/women are represented. Algerian men like Batouch or Larbi are passive characters, lazy and irrational. women like Irena are described as exotic, emotional, and mysterious. They seem dangerous and are not given real personalities or voices. They act more like symbols of an imagined Algeria that is ruled by feelings and desires. On the other hand, Western men like Father Roubier and Count Antoni are active characters whose deeds in Beni Mora are tangible. Additionally, Western women, typically represented through Domini Enfilden, the Western woman, are shown as calm, wise, and morally strong. Her time in Algeria is presented as a spiritual journey that helps her grow. These differences in how women are shown support the colonial idea that Western people, especially women, are more developed and should lead or guide others. The novel uses these images to suggest that Algerians and by extension, Algerian societies, need Western help and control. Religion in the novel also reflects colonial thinking and the church is used an archetype. Christianity is shown as a positive force that brings change, hope, and order. Characters like Cardinal Lavigerie and Father Roubier are not just religious figures; they also represent the colonial mission to ‘improve’ Algeria. Their faith is tied to the belief that they have a duty to shape Algerian identity and culture. In contrast, Islam is described as emotional, outdated, and confusing. The novel does not try to show it fairly or in detail. Instead, it presents Islam as something strange and in need of reform. This unfair comparison supports the idea that

the West has a right to interfere and change Algerian society through religion. It turns Christian missionaries into heroes while making Muslim practices, such as prayers, seem backward. One of the most surprising findings is that the novel completely ignores Algerian resistance although the General Introduction shows that Algerians resisted French colonial forces from the start. By ignoring this important aspect, it creates an image of Algeria as a quiet and empty place, open for the French to take over. There is no mention of any local people standing up to colonial rule. The Algerians in the story are either quiet figures in the background or interesting characters who exist to support the European characters' personal journeys. For example, in the middle and near the end of the novel, a young boy sings a Touggourt song, but the moment is treated antithetically: like a beautiful scene, and as dangerous thought of resistance. By leaving out real stories of struggle and resistance, the novel supports the false idea that colonialism was welcome and peaceful.

In short, *The Garden of Allah* is more than just a novel, it is a story shaped by the values and beliefs of colonial times. It uses characters, religion, and silence to tell a one-sided version of history. By doing so, it helps explain how literature can quietly support colonial power, even when it seems only to describe personal or spiritual journeys. The novel reflects the way many Western people saw Algeria at the time: as a mysterious, undeveloped place in need of guidance. This view still shapes how people think about colonialism today. *Therefore, the novel is a typical example of colonist texts that supports French colonialism in Algeria.*

VII. Discussion: The following two chapters explore key aspects of colonial discourse in Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904) through the themes of gender and religion. Chapter One examines the representation of gender, analyzing how Algerian male and female characters are positioned against European ones within colonial power structures and how gendered stereotypes reinforce Western hegemony to justify the French colonial presence. Chapter Two shifts its focus to religion. It examines how the novel presents religion, particularly Islam and Christianity, and how this portrayal reflects Orientalist ideologies that associate Algeria with spiritual otherness and cultural inferiority.

Chapter One: The Representation of Gender in Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904)

I. Introduction:

Robert Hichens' *The Garden of Allah* is an interesting example of colonialist literature that reflects and reinforces the imperial ideologies of its time. Set in Algerian Sahara, particularly, the novel constructs a romanticized and exotic vision of Algerians. Simultaneously, it marginalizes and distorts the realities of

the colonized people who are suffering under the French regime. Through highly stylized and often dehumanizing portrayals of Arabs and Kabyles, Domini as opposed to that about the Western characters, Enfilden advances a hegemonic narrative about French colonialism in Algeria. This narrative justifies Western superiority and French imperial dominance, while misrepresenting its native population. Moreover, they are given only a small narrative space that is not enough for voicing their thoughts and ideologies. The novel portrays Algeria as a space for Western to discover themselves and seeking for spiritual changes inside, not as a county.

In *The Garden of Allah*, the Algerian desert is more than just a setting. It becomes a symbolic place shaped by Western imagination. Rather than portraying it as a real, lived environment for Algerians, Hichens constructs the desert as a mysterious and emotionally charged space, filtered through European fears, ideals, and fantasies. It is not a place where people live and act, but rather a backdrop for the inner journeys of European characters. As Edward Said notes, the 'Orient' in Western writing is rarely shown in its reality; instead, it becomes a "vision of reality" invented through colonial discourse (Said, 1978, pp. 3, 205). This imagined desert leads to a reduction of Algerian people and culture into fixed and simplistic images. Individuals, in Lorcin's terms and Said's terms, are not seen as natural or varied, but as either noble or wild, civilized or backward, harmless or threatening. These polarities remove any sense of real identity or social context. Said points out that such representations in Orientalist literature often turn real people into symbols used to support colonial authority (Said, 1978, p. 71). In this way, Hichens's narrative reinforces the idea that the West is superior, rational, and entitled to rule over the East, which is shown as lacking in order and meaning. The desert of Beni Mora is also a space of personal change but only for Europeans. Domini, for example, finds spiritual clarity and emotional strength in this foreign land. Her experiences are central to the story, while Algerians remain largely invisible, voiceless, or positioned as background figures. Their function is not to live out their own stories but to help shape the Western characters' emotional growth. This structure reflects a colonial mindset in which the colonized world exists to serve the psychological and moral needs of the colonizer. Overall, *The Garden of Allah* does not present Algeria

as a real place with its own culture and history. Instead, it offers a stylized version of the country that fits European narratives of control and transformation. The silence of Algerian voices and the focus on Western self-discovery serve to reinforce colonial ideology. The novel thus participates in a broader literary tradition that masks domination behind exotic images and imagined people, reducing a normal society to a romantic stage set for European fantasies.

Thus, Chapter One argues that *The Garden of Allah* reinforces colonial ideology through Orientalist and gendered stereotypes. Algerian Arabs and Kabyles are depicted as exotic, irrational, and morally inferior characteristics central to Edward Said's concept of the 'Orient' as a Western invention used to justify domination (Said, 1978, pp. 206–207, 244). In contrast, Western characters embody rationality and agency, reinforcing a civilizing binary. Broadly, the novel also uses gender to legitimize colonial power. Algerian women are portrayed as oppressed and in need of rescue, casting colonial intervention as a must. Through these reductive images, the text participates in the imperial project of cultural misrepresentation and control.

II. Algerian Arabs: Between Exoticism and Misrepresentation

From the colonial era, in many Western novels, the Arab characters and cultures are represented through a limited knowledge and culture expressed by colonial imagination. *The Garden of Allah* (1904) in one example where the Arabs are shown as mysterious and a danger for the others. Further illustrating this misrepresentation, the narrator through the voice of Domini, describes from the beginning: Suddenly two Arabs, in dirty white burnouses and turbans bound with cords of camel's hair, came running along the wharf. The siren hooted again. The Arabs bounded over the gangway with grave faces. All the recruits turned to examine them with a mixture of superiority and deference, such as a schoolboy might display when observing the agilities of a tiger. (Hichens, 1904, p.3).

Here, the Arabs are reduced to demeaning stereotypes, their poverty and 'dirtiness' emphasized to highlight a supposed lack of civilization. The focus on their worn clothing and exotic accessories serves

not just as a description but as a tool to reinforce their perceived inferiority when measured against Western standards. The 'Orient' is a Western invention, in Said's terms (1978), associated with romance, exoticism. Accordingly, such depictions dehumanize Arab Algerian people, portraying them as irrational, dangerous, and permanently locked in a state of cultural stagnation, especially as they are linked to the images of grave and tiger that may refer to death and peril. It served not only to justify Western dominance and control, but also to create a binary opposition between a rational, progressive West and a regressive, inferior Algerians.

Domini views the Arab men as fleeting images within the exotic tableau of colonial Algeria. Her gaze remains fixed on the superficial—their worn garments and solemn expressions; which, in her perception, reinforce colonial stereotypes of the Arab as impoverished, primitive, and emotionally opaque. As Alloula (1986) argues, colonial discourse frequently relied on external markers such as dress to construct the native as backward and justify the French civilizing mission (p. 15). The descriptor "dirty" is not an innocent observation; it reflects a deeper bias, a learned belief that to be Arab and colonized is to be lesser, existing outside the realm of Western civility and refinement. Yet, beneath this surface-level reading lies a more human reality that Domini fails to acknowledge. The burnouses and turbans are not simply marks of exoticism but practical garments, perfectly suited to the harsh desert climate and representative of cultural identity. The cords of camel's hair, described with an air of condescension, are traditional and utilitarian, woven from the materials available in their environment; evidence of a resourcefulness born from generations of living in harmony with the land. Continually, these are men likely burdened by economic hardship, displaced by the policies of a foreign power that has disrupted their way of life and reduced them to marginalized figures in their own homeland. Their hurried movements across the gangway are not moments staged for Domini's curiosity but the hurried motions of men navigating the urgent demands of a life made precarious by systemic injustice. In describing only what she sees, and not what lies beneath, Domini's perception echoes the broader colonial failure to recognize the shared humanity of the colonized. She captures their presence, but never their personhood. Had she looked closer, with understanding rather than distance, she might have seen not faceless figures of the colonial imagination, but men of resilience,

dignity, and quiet defiance in the face of a world determined to render them invisible. This misunderstanding reveals a common way that people neglect the real lives, and oppression faces by marginalized people, particularly during colonial domination. Observing the men just through stereotypes eliminates their individuality and humanity. Yet, their power and dignity symbolize a strong form of resistance. Despite silence, their existence contests dominant views and reveals how easily people ignored and distorted when seen from an external perspective.

In Edward Said's *Orientalism*, he clarifies how the Western created a distorted image about the Orient in where it described it as weak, savage and inferior. These misrepresentations make people appear less important than the Westerns. Said (1979) writes: "If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction." (p.42). He explains that Orientalism creates a strong division between Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. The representation of Algerian Arab people repeatedly falls into patterns of exoticization and dehumanization. In one striking scene, the narrator describes, From the Negro village emerged a ragged procession of thick-lipped men, and singing, capering women tricked out in scarlet and yellow shawls, headed by a male dancer clad inthe of jackals, and decorated with mirrors, camels' skulls and chains of animals' teethskins. He shouted and leaped, rolled his bulging eyes, and protruded a fluttering tongue. The dust curled up round his stamping, naked feet. (Hichens, 1904, p.97) .In this portrayal, the people of Beni-Mora are depicted in a way that strips them of humanity, casting them as wild and unsettling. The narrator focuses on exaggerated physical traits and erratic behaviours, rather than exploring the depth of their thoughts or cultural richness. Descriptions of them as having exaggerated features or acting in a strange manner serve to present them as peculiar and alien to Western eyes. Rather than acknowledging the villagers as individuals with emotions and traditions, the narrative reduces them to an exotic spectacle, created to either fascinate or disturb the Western observer. This reflects an imperialist mindset, where the lives of the colonized are simplified and distorted for the consumption of the colonizers. The villagers are

stripped of their autonomy and presented not as individuals with their own perspectives but as mysterious, uncivilized figures to be observed from a distance.

The depiction in the previous scene reinforces stereotypes and preserves colonial hierarchies, where the West is observed as rational and civilized and the colonized as barbaric, uncivilized or strange. In this regard, the narrative fails to recognize the villagers' lived realities and rather uses their representation to reinforce a Western-centered worldview. Yet behind this grotesque image lies a reality Domini refuses to see these are communities clinging to their heritage, expressing their identity through music, dance, and ritual, even as colonial forces strip away their autonomy. As Edward Said (1978) argues the West prefers these simplified, theatrical images because they reaffirm their own sense of superiority also these representations help the West to compare themselves to the East, by feeling stronger and more cultured. Theses depictions used support the West to have the position of power and dominance. They also reinforce the idea that the West possesses the right to rule, dominate and "civilize" the other uncivilized individuals means that East, or the colonized people. Edward Said clarifies how Orientalism serves to shape an image about the 'Orient' than assists Western dominance and creates a power imbalance that looks necessary.

Later in the novel, Domini reflects, "In England there are many strong women. But I shall grow stronger here. I shall become a real Arab. This air gives me life."(48) Here, Domini believes she will develop greater strength in the Sahara since it gives her a sense of inner transformation. As opposed to England, which is orderly and constrained, the desert feels untamed, immense and profoundly liberating. She connects the desert and Arab identity with courage, strength, independence, and a form of authenticity that she feels is lacking in her past experience. The desert becomes a romanticized space of personal rebirth, a place where Domini imagines herself shedding the constraints of European society and finding a new, liberated identity. But this transformation is built on a fantasy. The idea of "becoming a real Arab" is not about understanding or respecting Arab culture. It is about projecting her desires onto an idealized, exotic image of the East. Frantz Fanon (1961) argues that the colonizer is driven by more than material control; he seeks affirmation of his identity through domination. The colonized is not merely a subject but a symbolic space

onto which the colonizer projects his desire for power and meaning. Thus, colonization becomes a performative act through which the colonizer asserts and constructs his sense of self, reducing the colonized world to a backdrop for this self-affirming narrative (Fanon, 1961, p.36). This tendency to treat colonized spaces as backdrops for Western self-realization erases the harsh realities faced by the people who live there every day under colonial rule. Another representation of Algerian men is the Touareg. The portrayal of the Touareg[1]as inherently violent reflects a recurring colonial trope that frames indigenous populations as threats to justify European control. When Batouch warns her about their dangerous character in the desert, "But very likely we should be killed by the Touaregs. They are fierce and they hate strangers" (Hichens,1904, p. 54), the narrative echoes the colonial discourse of the "hostilenative." This depiction reduces a complex ethnic group to a dangerous stereotype, erasing their sociopolitical realities. Such ethnographic clarity contrasts sharply with the novel's sensationalized representation. The Touaregs, a proud nomadic Berber people known for their rich cultural traditions and history, are dismissed here as violent and inhospitable. Such a portrayal ignores their role as skilled traders and protectors of their desert lands, instead reducing them to a simplistic and threatening stereotype. As Said (1978) notes, the colonial imagination prefers to see resistance as irrational hatred rather than as a justified response to occupation and exploitation. Importantly, the Arab character Batouch, Domini's guide, is reduced to a lifeless symbol when the Domini observes, "Batouch began to look like an idol on whose large face the artificer had carved an expression of savage ferocity" (104). Batouch is no longer a man with thoughts and emotions but a static, menacing figure embodying colonial fears of the 'savage', reinforcing the idea that Arabs are dangerous, uncivilized, and in need of Western control. Batouch's self-description to Domini illustrates how colonial narratives construct the "exceptional native"; one who stands apart from the supposed ignorance of the broader population. He emphasizes that he is "instructed," "not like other Arabs," and associated with French culture through his stay in Paris and friendship with a French poet who "adored the East" (Hichens,1904, p. 31). His mention of composing poetry while others "wasted their time" indulging in stereotypical vices—hashish, absinthe, gambling—reinforces a binary opposition between

the refined and the debased Arab. This passage plays into Orientalist tropes, where even the exceptional native is framed through exoticism and vice, validating Western fascination and superiority under the guise of admiration. As Said (1978) notes, the Orient is often represented not in its own terms but as a reflection of Western fantasies and anxieties (pp. 67–69). As Said argues: "*The* Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen) childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal"(Said, 1978, p.40, italics added). Batouch employs these depictions to exclude himself from the irrational and illiterates of the East, showing himself as deep thinker and intellect. The Orient was often portrayed in stereotypical images as inferior, irrational and savage, whereas the West was described as rational, superior. He defies the Orientalist stereotype and reveals that men from the Orient are not all corresponding to this misrepresentation. It demonstrates how Orientalism affects not only how the East is observed by the rest, but also how the Orient can observe itself. Another Algerian character whose portrayal is distorted is Larbi, who works as a gardener for Count Anteoni. His musical talent, playing the flute, is portrayed in the novel as a form of escape from labor. Like Larbi, who struggles to fulfill his duties as a gardener, Domini observes him from a distance and describes him as "a huge and very ugly Arab, with an almost black skin, squatting on his heels, with a long yellow and red flute between his thick lips" (Hichens, 1904, p.71). Although Larbi is a lazy worker, the Count continues to pay him because he holds a romanticized view of Arabs. He believes that they are "idle, absurdly amorous, and quick to shed blood, gay as children, whimsical as — well" (p.72). This reflects a European perception of the natives as difficult to civilize, especially when it comes to work. Even when given a job, natives like Larbi "scarcely ever work" (p.206), reinforcing the stereotype of their laziness. Hichens's novel is rich in narrative potential, drawing on connections to other literary works that subtly reveal what it means to be a native. In one scene, Domini and Batouch pass through gardens where the stillness is only broken by the soft murmurs of Arabs sitting idly. Many of them "said nothing, but rested like lotus-eaters in graceful attitudes with hanging hands, and eyes, soft as the eyes of gazelles, that regarded the shadowy paths and creeping waters with a grave serenity born of the inmost spirit of idleness" (Hichens, 1904, p. 34). This image echoes Homer's *Odyssey*, where

some of Odysseus's men, in the Land of the Lotus Eaters, consume a fruit that "contained a potent soporific which made the sailors forget who they were and what they were doing" (*The Odyssey*, 9.91-92). By incorporating this Greek myth, Hichens creates an intriguing parallel, casting the natives as akin to the lotus-eaters—lost in time, wandering in the desert, much like the mythical land itself. The question that arises is: who will rescue these natives from the hypnotic influence of the desert's lotus? Just as Odysseus is the only one able to force his crew to return to their ships, so too does the European desire for change position itself as the force that could save these idle men, offering them a chance at a more active, prosperous, and meaningful existence. This section of the chapter, therefore, reflects a vision of European intervention as the path to salvation for the natives. The 'thank-offering' from Count Anteoni, which he shares with Domini and Androvsky in his garden, stands as an extreme form of misrepresentation. The scene itself is deeply humiliating and misrepresents the natives. As Memmi notes, this event is "first of all a lived experience, it is also a social experience" (Memmi, 2000, 30, italics original). The narrator, whose perspective aligns with the other European characters, describes the moment when the garden gate opens: Instantly a crowd of dark faces and turbaned heads were thrust through the tall aperture, a multitude of dusky hands fluttered frantically, and the cry of eager voices, saluting, begging, calling down blessings, relating troubles, shrieking wants, proclaiming virtues and necessities, rose into an almost deafening uproar. But not a foot was lifted over the intel to press the sunlit sand. The Count's pensioners might be clamorous, but they knew what they might not do. (Hichens, 1904, p.213-214) .This image is charged with European language, which explodes across various levels: syntax, semantics, script, and, more importantly, symbolism. Fanon suggests that to have a space to speak is "to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (Fanon, 1952, 8). The dominant European gaze reflects a structuralist dynamic that fosters a master-slave relationship. This relationship is inherently racist, with the landowner under the settler's control; control that aims to impose shame, humiliation, and degradation upon the native.

According to Memmi, this "racist discourse never seems to lack for repetition or representation" (Memmi, 2000, 3). In this scene, repetition in various forms reinforces the negative image of the native. For instance, when Anteoni tosses copper coins onto the sand, "The mouths opened wider, the hands waved more frantically, and all the dark eyes gleamed with the light of greed" (Hichens, 1904, p.214). Such descriptions not only perpetuate racist views but also characterize *The Garden of Allah*(1904) as a colonial and propagandist text. Additionally, the use of acoustic imagery—particularly in the description of the crowd—further underscores the savagery of the natives. When the mob gathers at the gate, Androvsky, disturbed by "the clamour of their voices," feels a rising discomfort, "evidently roused within him something akin to fear. He looked at them with distaste" (Hichens,1904, p. 214).

Even Algerian women are not spared from these damaging portrayals. The character of Aishoush is introduced with the ominous line, "There is a girl there who wishes to kill him. Her name is Aishoush..." *(p40)*. Here, Aishoush is depicted not as a complex character with understandable motives, but as a symbol of dangerous female irrationality who wants to kill Hadj, another Arab character of Ouled Nail tribe. Her name itself is presented as exotic and mysterious, further separating her from Western ideals of womanhood. Rather than exploring her personal struggles or the cultural forces that might explain her desire for revenge, she is simply labeled as savage and vengeful, feeding into the broader colonial narrative that Arab women are driven by unchecked emotion and hostility. The narrative also imposes this exotic and dehumanizing lens on Algerian women. Observing a dancer, the narrator describes, "Women of the South, with all the enigma of the distant desert in her kohl-tinted eyes, dances it with the sultry gloom of a half-awakened sphinx..." (p.109). Here, in this quote, the narrator uses symbolism to describe women as captivating and complex, "with all the enigma of the distant desert.", he employs the desert as a symbol to show that women are mysterious, like the desert, that hold secrets that are hard to comprehend . The dancer's performance is not recognized as art or cultural expression but is framed as something sensual, mysterious, and ultimately uncivilized. Her identity becomes inseparable from the Western fantasy of the 'mysterious East,' a place of dark beauty and dangerous allure. As MeydaYegenoglu (1998) explains in

Colonial Fantasies, "The very depiction of the Orient and its women, like the unveiling of an enigma makes visible what is hidden" (Yegenoglo, 1998, p.39), such depictions ensure that Eastern women remain forever objectified, their voices silenced under the weight of Western desire. In a vivid scene, Women are described:

Once Domini saw two women, in thin, floating white dresses and spangled veils, hurrying by like ghosts in the dark. Heavy silver ornaments jangled on their ankles, above their black slippers splashed with mud. Their sombre eyes stared out from circles of Kohl, and, with stained, claret-coloured hands, whose nails were bright red, they clasped their light and bridal raiment to their prominent breasts They were

escorted by a gigantic man, almost black, with a zigzag scar across the left side of his face, who wore a shining brown burnous over a grey woollen jacket. He pushed the two women into the train as if he were pushing bales, and got in after them, showing enormous bare legs, with calves that stuck out like lumps of iron. (P.14)

In Domini's journey to Beni-Mora, she described the women in her journey as mysterious and exotic. Their physical appearance (was reduced to other them and reinforcing stereotype about the Arab women. The women are compared to objects, when she was pushed into the train "*as if he were pushing the boles*", here the narrator reinforces their powerlessness and dependence. He showed the contrast between exotic beauty of women and oppressive control of men, which reflects the themes of power dynamics and gender inequality in Eastern society. The Arab Man was also described as "gigantic", "almost black" and scarred that arouses fear and otherness. To dehumanize them by comparing them with animals to reinforce the Western's superiority . They are shown as dominant, to strengthen colonial stereotype of the non-Western men as uncivilized and savage. Aligning with Said's theory of *Orientalism*: the East is portrayed as inferior, irrational comparing to the West . By representing the Algerians in this manner, Imperialist ideology justifies the idea that the Occident is more logical, civilized and objective. These stereotypes about the 'Orient' are not only regarding people, but they are a part of a hegemonic system that legitimizes imperial force by depicting the Orient as mysterious and in need of Western dominance.. As in Said's

work, he writes: "There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter*"* (p. 7).He argues that these misrepresentations of the inferior men from the East are used to preserve Western superiority.

III. The Algerian Kabyle Representation: Strength and Stereotypes

In *The Garden of Allah (1904)* ,Kabyle characters are frequently presented through a lens of exoticism and cultural distortion, reflecting the deep-seated biases of colonial literature. One vivid example is found in the description, "On the wharf stood a Zouave, in tremendous red trousers and a fez, among great heaps of dull brown woollen rugs" (Hichens, 1904, p.2). The Zouave, originally from the Berber Zouaoua tribe, served in the French colonial army, becoming a living symbol of France's imperial dominance in North Africa. Though they wore French military uniforms, their appearance retained distinct Algerian elements—bright red trousers, a short open jacket, and a fez—which marked them as visually different and, therefore, 'exotic' in the eyes of Europeans (Oxford Reference, 2023). This blending of identities positioned the Zouaves in a liminal space: celebrated as part of the French military machine yet perpetually viewed as outsiders. Their existence illustrates what Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* (1978)—the colonized are both included and excluded, valued for their utility yet marginalized by their difference.

The representation of Kabyle people, specifically women, reveals both the colonial fascination with and distortion of indigenous identities. Through comparisons to the Western ideal, the Kabyle people are portrayed as figures of both exotic beauty and noble resilience, but also as subjects trapped between tradition and Western ideals. They are often presented in a way that show them mysterious, which indicates a romantic view in colonial writing. Concurrently, their culture is critiqued by Western norms, which illustrated them as more traditional and less developed. This forms a complex picture: they are esteemed for their strength and nobility but also considered as people who seek support or change. Thus, the West classified in a position of power, as the one who described what is valuable or civilized, while the Kabyles

stay among space-admired, but not entirely accepted and comprehended. The Kabyles are considered in a way that reflects the Western perspective of the East as strange and different, instead of being shown as people with their own value and culture.

When Domini first sees Kabyle characters like Irena, a young and beautiful Kabyle woman, she expresses her antagonistic attitude towards them. First, she observes, "Many Kabyles, fairer than she was" (15). Here, the Kabyle women are described as possessing a beauty that surpasses even that of the European protagonist, Domini. This attitude is striking not only for the praise it offers but also because it challenges the common colonial notion that European beauty standards are the pinnacle of attractiveness. Admitting that Kabyle people are fairer is particularly significant here, as it draws attention to the idea of lighter skin, a quality often associated with higher status in colonial discourse. Silverstein, Paul A. (2004). Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation writes: The French colonial authorities promoted the idea that Kabyles were essentially different from Arabs, portraying them as industrious, rational, and more often to assimilation. This discourse-known as the Kabyles Myth-was used to justify preferential treatment and to fragment Algerian national identity. (p.54). This unexpected beauty transcends European aesthetic standards and calls into question the colonial practice of categorizing indigenous populations as inferior based on physical traits. As *Orientalism* (1978) discusses, the gaze of the colonizer often imposed a "fixity" on the people of the East and Africa, reducing them to rigid categories of superiority or inferiority. By presenting the Kabyles as surpassing Europeans in beauty, Hichens introduces a nuance that complicates this binary. According to Edward Said, Orientalist Discourse, frequently, employs in a clear division; the Occident is viewed as superior and civilized, while the Orient is seen as inferior and irrational. This binary creates two contrasting identities; one (the West) strong and superior, the other (the East) weak an powerless. Nevertheless, in *the Garden of Allah (1904)* .Hichens portrays positively the Kabyles by describing them to be more beautiful than the Europeans. This division was promoted by special offices that gather information about Algerian Ethnicities and culture. Indeed, "The Arab Bureaux, created in the aftermath of the French conquest, served as the institutional foundation for colonial knowledge production.

These offices were central to the French policy of indirect rule, as they relied on anthropological and ethnographic studies of Algerian society to administer the population more effectively"(Lorcin,1995, p.80). In doing so, colonial authorities positioned themselves as agents of emancipation, especially through their interest in the visibility and regulation of Muslim women. The Arab Bureaux thus not only reinforced existing tribal and social divisions but also imposed a gendered narrative that aligned with broader colonial goals. The management of gender relations became part of the administrative toolkit, reflecting how deeply colonial power was invested in controlling not just territories, but bodies and cultural symbols. Through Irena's experiences, Domini illustrates the struggles and resilience of Kabyle women in the Djurdjura Mountains: Irena was not an Ouled Nail. She was a Kabyle woman born in the mountains of djurdjura, not far from the village of Tamouda. As a child she had lived in one of those chimneyless characteristic a feature of la Grande Kabylie. She had climbed barefoot the savage hills, or descended into the gorges yellow with the broom plant and dipped her brown toes in the waters of the Sebaou. How had she drifted so far from the sharp spurs of her native hills and from the ruddy-haired, blue-eyed people of her tribe?

Possibly she had sinned, as the Kabyle women often sin, and fled from the wrath that she would understand, and that all her fiercebravery could not hope to conquer.(Hichens, 1904, p.116) conquer.(Hichens, 1904, p.116)

This description of Irena reflects Edward Said's idea in *Orientalism* that the East is often represented through Western stereotypes. Although Irena is a Kabyle woman with a specific background, thenarrator explains her life in a way that makes her seem mysterious, sinful, and emotionally weak. Instead of showing her as a real person with her own story, she is turned into a symbol of something exotic and different. This kind of portrayal fits the Orientalist pattern, where people from the East are shown not as individuals but as part of a Western idea of the "Other." Domini further adds:

Or perhaps with her Kabyle blood, itself a brew composed of various strains, Greek, Roman, as well as Berber, were mingling some drops drawn from desert sources, which had manifested themselves

physically in her dark hair, mentally in a nomadic instinct which had forbidden her to rest among the beauties of AïtOuaguennoun, whose legendary charm she did not possess. There was the look of an exile in her face, a weariness that dreamed, perhaps, of distant things. But now that she danced that fled, and the gleam of flame-lit steel was in her eyes. (p.116) .Irena is introduced not only as beautiful but also as strong, independent, and torn between tradition and change. The narrator highlights her physical surroundings—climbing hills barefoot, dipping her toes in the Sebaou waters—and attributes these qualities to her Kabyle heritage, implying a connection to primal strength and purity. As Heggoy (1986) notes, "The Kabyles are Berber-speaking natives of Algeria who have historically inhabited the mountainous region of Kabylia. As part of the larger Amazigh (Berber) population, they represent a pre-Arab, indigenous group whose identity has persisted through Roman, Arab, and French rule" (p. 28).

Moreover, in *The Garden of Allah (1905)*, Irena, the representative of Kabyle women, is portrayed with ambivalence, which means she is shown in mixed image, attraction and fear, admiration and judgment. Irena is exoticized by the occidental perspective as savage and dangerous. This dual representation illustrates what Homi Bhabha refers in regards to ambivalence: "Almost the same, but not quite"(Bhabha, 1994, p.86), which means the colonized subject is not seen clearly or completely, but as both desirable and threatening at once. The Kabyle people were often seen by French colonizers as being closer to Europeans in their appearance and customs compared to other Arab populations, which reinforced their perceived "nobility" and suitability for integration into colonial society. This stereotype reflected colonial hierarchies, where Kabyles were positioned as more "civilized" than Arabs. In this portrayal, however, Irena is reduced to a romanticized figure: a "noble savage" caught between her heritage and the pressures of modernity. As Hom iBhabha (1994) argues in *The Location of Culture*, the Western fascination with the "noble savage" both idealizes and objectifies the colonized subject, stripping away their complexity and reducing them to stereotypes of purity and freedom.(p. 4)

The beauty of Kabyle people that gives them a distinguished trait is met again with Western hegemony. Particularly, Irena's strength and independence are seen not as virtues of her own, but as qualities shaped

by her exotic background, reinforcing the Orientalist discourse that associates non-Western cultures with a blend of admiration and fear. This reveals what Edward Said explains in Orientalism: a Western inclination to describe non-Western people through a mix of fascination and fear, representing them as both respectable and radically different. As a result, Irena becomes a symbol not of personal autonomy but of a cultural stereotype formed by imperial imagination. For instance, Domini goes further in depicting Irena's exceptional beauty and strength, describing her as *"*a genius*"* that represents the Kabyle woman (Hichens, 1904, p.119), with Domini recognizing the connection between her beauty and strength. Irena is compared to Aphrodite, "*And genius, under whatever form, shows to the world at moments the face of Aphrodite.*" (p.119, italics added) ,which means the Greek goddess of love, beauty, and desire—an idealized vision of femininity that blends physical beauty with emotional and spiritual depth. Irena, the Kabyle dancer from Ouled Naïl in Beni-Mora, is framed through a colonial and Orientalist lens that portrays native women as seductive and dangerous. The narrator observes: Tangled and vital impressions came to Domini as she watched. Now she saw *Jaël* and the tent, and the nails driven into the temples of the sleeping warrior. Now she saw *Medea* in the moment before she tore to pieces her brother and threw the bloody fragments in Aetes's path; *Clytemnestra*'s face while Agamemnon was passing to the bath, *Delilah*'s when Samson lay sleeping on her knee. But all these imagined faces of named women fled like sand grains on a desert wind as the dance went on and the

recurrent melody came back and back and back with a savage and glorious persistence.(Hichens, 1904, pp. 116–117). Here, Irena is associated with Western mythological and biblical female figures known for their violence, betrayal, and manipulation: Jael, who assassinated Sisera (Judges 4:21); Medea, who murdered her brother and children (Euripides, *Medea*); Clytemnestra, who killed her husband Agamemnon (*Aeschylus, Agamemnon*); and Delilah, who betrayed Samson (Judges 16). These figures embody the archetype of the dangerous woman who uses her allure and cunning to destroy men.

Through this lens, the text aligns with what MeydaYeğenoğlu (1998) calls the gendered Orientalist fantasy; where Eastern women are hypersexualized and portrayed as a threat to Western order and

morality. Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (1978, pp. 206–208) further explains how such representations are employed to reinforce colonial authority by constructing the colonized as morally and culturally inferior. By linking Irena to these *ambivalent figures*, the novel embeds her within *a discourse that both exoticizes and demonizes indigenous women*, reinforcing the stereotype of the native woman as simultaneously alluring and lethal. Irena's beauty, compared to Aphrodite, because of her beauty only "*And genius, under whatever form, shows to the world at moments the face of Aphrodite*"(Hichens,1904,p.119, italics added), both elevates her and reduces her, turning her into a symbol of Eastern allure and mystery while denying her complexity and autonomy. The Kabyle woman, in this instance, is both revered and objectified—a common theme in colonial literature. Irena is praised for her beauty, but also turned into an idealized figure that fits Western ideas. This comparison removes her personal story and instead presents her as a myth-like image. It reflects how colonial writing often respects the surface of the colonized subject while ignoring their real experiences or voices. Additionally, the comparison to Aphrodite is particularly telling, as it emphasizes the dual nature of Irena's beauty: it is not just physical but also emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. Aphrodite in Greek mythology symbolizes both romantic attraction and creative inspiration, ideals that are projected onto Irena's character. However, this comparison also reinforces the idea that Eastern and indigenous women are objects of desire, reduced to archetypes of beauty rather than fully realized individuals. This reflects what Said (1978) critiques in *Orientalism*, where the East, and by extension its people, is consistently framed in terms of how they serve or challenge the Western self. When Irena is compared to Aphrodite, she is not seen as a real Kabyle woman, but as a symbol of beauty that fits Western imagination. This shows how the novel turns her into a fantasy figure, which is a common feature in Orientalist writing. Instead of giving her depth or a personal voice, the description turns her into something distant and idealized.

In a moment of disappointment, Domini reflects on Irena: "For some unknown reason she had expected the woman who wishes to kill Hadj, and who obviously inspired him with fear, to be a magnificent and glowing desert beauty... She looked weary, anomic, and as if she wished to go to bed..."(p.113). The

reaction of Domini about Irena exposes her imagined ideals and the truths of real life. While Irena dance, Domini envisioned strong and dangerous woman from myths as Medea, Delilah, Clytemnestra and Jael, who employed violence and betrayal to dominate others. These strange figures are shown as savage, mysterious and wild. Therefore, Domini expected Irena who menaced Hadj and instilled fear in him, to be an impressive and powerful person. Rather this, Irena seems exhausted, powerless and ordinary. This act shocked Domini and made her understand that the individuals living in the desert do not always matchthe images she had of them. It shows her that people from the desert are not always the intense or exotic characters she imagined. Instead, they are real individuals, not just symbols of mystery or danger. By juxtaposing, again, Domini's fantasies with Irena's reality, Hichens highlights the deep disconnect between the Western gaze and the actual lived experiences of the colonized, underscoring the reductive nature of colonial stereotypes. The scene shows Edward Said describes between how the West portrays the Orient and how the Eastern really lives. Domini describes Irena as a "magnificent and glowing desert beauty." (P.113), which shows an usual Western habit of reducing Eastern people in dangerous and savage figures. This depiction is not about comprehending the individual, but it is also to portray people from the East as strange and different according to the Western interests. But when Irena shows her true self to beas tired, weak and sensitive, Domini turns into a distant and harsh person in her judgments. This transformation indicates how their admiration for the 'Orient' is conditional on its confronting to their imagined ideals. Once the fantasy is revealed as false, their perception of superiority become obvious. According to Edward Said, this is a crucial part of Orientalism which means that the 'Orient' is not considered as true and same, but as something controlled by the West.

IV. Western Characters as Instruments of Civilization: The Power of Strength and Change in Algeria.

Through Domini's narrative, Western representations are deeply embedded in the ideals and anxieties of colonial and gendered representation. The portrayal of Western characters, men and women (mainly Domini Enfilden, Count Anteoni, and Father Roubier) is often linked to concepts of protection, moral

guidance, strength and the ability to transform reflecting both their role in Western society and the cultural expectations placed upon them when placed in colonial settings. Western men, like Boris Androvsky, are illustrated as a faithless, in need of the dessert to face their internal conflict. While Western women, as Domini Enfilden, are portrayed as ethically strong and resilient, leading others by conviction and beliefs.

The narrator reflects on Domini's journey to Algeria by describing it as "A woman's petition, perhaps, against the temptations that beset men shifting for themselves in far-off and dangerous countries; a woman's cry to another woman to watch over all those who wander." (Hichens, 1904, p.4) .This shows the emotional and protective role Western women were believed to have during the colonial period. It suggests a fear for the moral and physical safety of men who traveled to distant and unfamiliar places like Africa. The reference to "another woman," likely the Virgin Mary, connects this concern to Christian values. It highlights how religion used to justify the idea that women should act as moral supporters of colonial efforts, especially by praying for and guiding those involved in imperial missions. In contrast, Domini Enfilden, the protagonist, is described as an idealized figure of Western strength and independence. The narrator states, *"She was a strong and active woman, with long limbs and well-knit muscles, a clever fencer, a tireless swimmer, a fine horse-woman"*(5).This presents Domini not as the passive like Algerian characters, but as an independent, autonomous, physically capable individual who embodies an ideal of female strength and independence. In *The Garden of Allah (1904)*, Domini's strength is highlighted as a marker of her individuality, intelligence, and physical ability. She is shown making her own decisions, traveling alone, and facing the challenges of the desert without relying on others. Her confidence and self-control set her apart from the local women, who are often silent or hidden in the background. Through Domini, the novel presents a Western ideal of womanhood that combines moral strength with physical and emotional independence. This representation contrasts sharply with the stereotypical images of women in colonial literature, where women were often relegated to passive or ornamental roles. Instead, Domini is an active participant in her own story, asserting her independence in a way that reflects the evolving social expectations of women during this time. Yet, it is important to note

that this idealized strength is also embedded in the colonial framework. Domini's physicality is not just a personal trait; it also serves to reinforce the cultural supremacy of the West. Through her strength, she becomes a symbol of Western superiority; capable, rational, and in control, while the colonized spaces she inhabits are characterized as chaotic, ungoverned, and in need of Western intervention. Father Roubier adores his small church in Beni-Mora. He looks at it not only as a building, but as something very special and unique. He represents a Western religious figure in a North African setting. He described the church as a friend, a confessor, also a child. He spends much more time inside the church, praying, thinking about his thoughts and acts. He gave to Beni-Mora a powerful spiritual influence. Also his church was always accessible to individuals who wanted a place to pray or to feel tranquility. Father Roubier supports Domini by accepting to marry Androvsky, as a monk. Although he feels unconvinced about Boris and senses that he is concealing something, he continues and keep going the marriage ceremony because Father Roubier respects Domini's choice and encourage her decision. That indicates that the Father is a generous and understanding priest. He is shown as a religious man who has strong faith and is deeply committed to his work as a priest**.** In the following quote, Domini talked about Count Anteoni, a Western character who once lived in the desert and planted the garden that gives the novel its name. He is remembered for holding a Thanksgiving celebration with both locals and foreigners, showing his attempt to build peaceful and respectful connections between cultures. She notices "She mentioned the fact of Count Anteoni's having made the garden, and spoke of him, sketching lightly whimsicality his affection for the Arabs, his love of solitude, and of African life." (p.167).Inthis passage, the narrator describes how Domini talks about Count Anteoni, by mentioning that he was built a garden in the middle of the Sahara, and is fond of the Arabs, symbolizing a kind of admiration of the native people. In Orientalist discourse, gardens generally express the imposition of European order on the "savage" East the Western individuals modified and dominated the Eastern space, enhancing its beauty or transformed into something meaningful by his influence.

Even though *The Garden of Allah* does not offer an obvious space for resistance, no dramatic revolts or fiery speeches, it does suggest it quietly, almost in passing. One striking example is the "Song of the Freed

Negroes of Touggourt." On the surface, it seems unimportant. Androvsky finds it ugly and not worth noticing. However, Count Anteoni, more perceptive and perhaps more cautious, calls it a "dangerous lesson" (p.197). Why dangerous? Perhaps because the song's message is not loud . It is whispered, hidden in its refrain: *"No one but God and I Knows what is in my heart"* (p.195). That line carries significant weight. It speaks to something the colonizer cannot touch: the inner world of the colonized Algerian, their private thoughts, their spiritual dignity. The heart, in this context, becomes a place of silent resistance, a space where no empire, no matter how powerful, can intrude. Also, Count Anteoni seems to understand that. He sees the potential behind the quiet words. While others might hear the song and dismiss it, he senses the undercurrent; the idea that people may appear submissive, but within, they are thinking, remembering, waiting. And that, for a colonizer, is deeply unsettling.

The ending of the novel leaves us with a sense of quiet tension. Domini inherits Count Anteoni's garden after he writes to tell her he is leaving to "civilize" and help Algerians elsewhere, perhaps to plant a new garden, to grow new roots in places like Beni Mora. But just as she stands in that space he left behind, she hears a young boy singing *"The Song of the Freed Negroes"* (p.482). It is a small moment, easy to miss, but it carries thoughts of resistance. Even though the novel does not show any clear act of rebellion, scenes like this remind us that resistance does not always come with a clash. Sometimes, it hums in the background, it passes through a melody, it stays alive in the things people carry quietly. That song with its refrain about the heart known only to God, becomes more than just music. It is a quiet reminder of resistance. In nutshell, through Domini's character, Hichens reflects the paradox of Western colonial ideals: the glorification of personal empowerment within a framework that also seeks to control and subjugate the lands and peoples it encounters. Domini's inner strength and personal growth reflect the idea that Western people bring progress and improvement to other parts of the world. Hichens shows Domini, and other Western characters, as good and noble, highlighting their kind actions, deep emotions, and sense of cultural pride. By portraying them ina such a way, the novel makes it seem like colonialism in Algeria

is not about taking control or exploiting others but about helping and improving both the people and the land.

V. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Robert Hichens's *The Garden of Allah (1904)* reproduces Orientalist discourse by contrasting Algerian and Western characters. Drawing on Edward Said's concepts of *The Orient* and *stereotyping*, the analysis demonstrates how Algerian men and women are depicted through exoticized and reductive images—emotional, irrational, and culturally inferior; while Western characters are framed as rational, moral, and dominant. These representations are not merely cultural but deeply gendered, with native women portrayed as either passive or dangerously seductive, reinforcing colonial fantasies of control and rescue. In contrast, Western women like Domini are granted moral agency and spiritual depth. By highlighting these binary oppositions, the chapter argues that Hichens's novel reinforces colonial hierarchies and legitimizes Western dominance through the gendered lens of Orientalist ideology.

Chapter Two: The Representation of Religion in Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904)

I. Introduction

In The *Garden of Allah* by Robert Hichens, religion is an important part of the story. Set in the deserts of North Africa, the novel explores how different faiths shape people's lives and identities. The main characters, such as Domini, a strong Christian, and Boris, a former monk, show how Christianity can offer both guidance and inner conflict. At the same time, the Islamic culture of the local people is shown through the setting and background, adding to the novel's spiritual atmosphere. Chapter One argues that Robert Hichens's *The Garden of Allah*reproduces colonial power structures through its religious representations, which can be critically understood using Edward Said's concepts of *hegemony* and *binary opposition*. The novel constructs Christianity and Islam not as equal systems of belief, but as cultural markers within an ideological hierarchy. Christianity, associated with the European characters, is depicted as active,

productive, redemptive, and morally authoritative; qualities associated with the colonial self-image of the West. In contrast, Islam is rendered as a silent backdrop, exotic and spiritually opaque, reinforcing its role as the 'Other'.

This dichotomy aligns with Said's concept of *binary opposition,* where the West defines itself in contrast to an inferior East. By establishing Christianity as rational and superior, and Islam as irrational and subordinate, Hichens participates in what Said describes as the cultural *hegemony* of Orientalism: a system that normalizes Western dominance by shaping how the East is imagined and understood. Thus, the novel's religious discourse is not neutral but serves to legitimize colonial power through symbolic cultural superiority as well as the peaceful and powerful desert landscape, to explore deep questions about faith, love, and the human soul. In the novel, religion is portrayed as a powerful force that demands sacrifice and complete commitment, Hichens argues that true faith may require giving up personal desires, as shown by Count Anteoni's inner conflict after leaving his monastic vows for love. The desert symbolizes spiritual clarity, suggesting that solitude brings one closer to God. The narrator also raises the idea that earthly love and religious duty often clash, and lasting peace can only be found through a return to faith.

II. The Catholic church and Christians

Hichens narrates from the beginning the purpose of Domini's journey into Algeria, Domini, looking towards the land with the vague and yet inquiring glance of those who are going out to sea, noticed the church of Notre dame de la Garde, perched on its high hill, and dominating the noisy city, the harbour, the cold, grey squadrons of the rocks and Monte Cristo's dungeon. At the time she hardly knew it, but now, as she lay in bed in the silent inn, she remembered that, keeping her eyes upon the church, she had murmured a confused prayer to the Blessed Virgin for the recruits. What was the prayer? She could scarcely recall it. A woman's petition, perhaps, against the temptations that beset men shifting for themselves in far-off and dangerous countries; a woman's cry to a woman to watch over all those who wander (Hichens, 1904, p. 4)

In this context, the church of Marseille, or Notre Dame de la Garde, is used as a symbol of spiritual protection and moral guidance for those embarking on journeys to Africa. The Virgin Mary, often viewed as a guardian of the vulnerable, represents this protective role. This aligns with the Western belief that women are responsible for providing emotional support and moral direction. In the colonial context, it suggests that women's role is to uphold cultural and religious values, while men are tasked with the physical work and expansion of the empire in distant lands.

Similarly, Hichens illustrates the theme of love and belief's transformative power through Domini's father, Lord Rens. In his deep love for Domini's mother, he undergoes a profound transformation, converting to Catholicism: "He fell madly in love with her and, in order to marry her, became a Catholic, and even a very devout one, aiding his wife's Church by every means in his power, giving large sums to Catholic charities, and working, with almost fiery zeal, for the spread of Catholicism in England" (p. 6), this quote reveals how Lord Rens's passion led him not only to convert to Catholicism but to become fervently committed to its cause. This transformation underscores one of the novel's central themes: the powerful, sometimes consuming influence of love and belief, and how both can profoundly alter a person's identity and life path.

The positive influence of Christianity, particularly Catholicism, on non-Christians is asserted from the very beginning of the novel. Domini's father, Lord Rens, serves as the first example of this transformation. Initially not a Catholic, he undergoes a profound personal change driven by his love for Domini's mother. As the narrator recounts, " He fell madly in love with her and, in order to marry her, became a Catholic, and even a very devout one, aiding his wife's Church by every means in his power, giving large sums to Catholic charities, and working, with almost fiery zeal, for the spread of Catholicism in England. (Hichens, 1904, p. 6)

Then, Lord Rens's emotional devotion leads to a spiritual conversion because of a higher moral and religious purpose. His transformation is presented not as mere adaptation, but as elevation; suggesting that Catholicism has the capacity to redeem, civilize, and spiritually ennoble those who come under its

influence. Thus, from the outset, Hichens frames Christianity as a civilizing and redemptive force with the power to positively reshape identity and moral purpose.

Domini mentions her twin brother with whom she had a close link, and who was different in character comparing to her. "I had a twin brother to whom I was devoted and who was devoted to me. But he took after my father. Religious things, ceremonies, church music, processions- even the outside attractions ofthe Catholic Church, which please and stimulate emotional people who have little faith- never meant much to him" (P 403). Here, Domini felt a strong connection to faith and religious practices, the brother, more like their father, was unmoved by the emotional and ceremonial aspects of Catholicism. This highlights a contrast in how individuals experience or value religion, even within the same family.

Domini's relationship with religion in *The Garden of Allah* is deeply emotional and profoundly shaped by personal trauma. While in a distant and foreign landscape, she is suddenly reminded of her spiritual past: The bell of the church near by chimed softly, and the familiar sound fell strangely upon Domini's ears out here in Africa, reminding her of many sorrows. Her religion was linked with terrible memories, with cruel struggles, with hateful scenes of violence. (p.36). This duality of Domini's faith, as both a source of comfort and a painful reminder of past suffering, forms the emotional and spiritual core of her character. More than a theological commitment, Domini's Christianity is marked by a history of loss, emotional scars, and moral confrontation caused by her parents. Africa, specifically Beni Mora in Algeria, emerges as the space where Domini seeks to reunite with this fractured faith. However, her spiritual renewal unfolds within a colonial framework that romanticizes and distorts the local Islamic culture.

The novel positions Islam as a passive backdrop to Domini's Christian transformation, reinforcing colonial binaries of spiritual superiority and cultural inferiority. Later in the novel, Domini begins to experience a more profound spiritual awakening that merges her religious convictions with an aesthetic and emotional response to the natural world. As she reflects, "In her religion only she had felt in rare moments something of love. And now here, in this tremendous and conquering land, she felt a divine stirring in her love for Nature" (Hichens, p. 37). This shift in Domini's spiritual consciousness evokes a sacred emotional

resonance, arguably more intense than her earlier religious experiences. However, this spiritual awakening is not ideologically neutral. It is filtered through a colonial lens that renders the land as empty, mysterious, andspiritually available for European transformation.

Her sense of divine presence in the Algerian landscape reflects not just personal discovery but also a hegemonic framework in which Western religious sentiment includes the colonized space. The natural world is aestheticized and appropriated to serve Domini's establishment of the logic of colonial dominance overwritten by European ideals. Prior to her arrival in Algeria, Domini appeals to God for renewal, repeating, "O, God renew me. O God renew me. Give me power to feel keenly, fiercely, even though I suffer. Let me wake. Let me feel. Let me be a living thing once more. O God renew me, renew me" (Hichens, 1904, p. 43). Her appeal reflects a desire not only for spiritual rebirth but also for a reawakening of emotional and moral vitality. However, this inner transformation is not imagined in isolation. Domini's spiritual renewal is projected onto Beni Mora, a colonized space perceived through a Eurocentric and Orientalist gaze. The land is constructed as both passive and spiritually charged. As Edward Said argues, the Orient is frequently rendered a site of "vision"—a space the West defines and controls to serve its own ideological needs (*Orientalism*, 1978, pp. 1–3). This act of seeing is not neutral; it participates in a hegemonic discourse that reaffirms Western superiority by reducing the non-West to an instrument of Western self-fulfillment. In this context, Domini's prayer for renewal reinforces the colonial binary: her spiritual awakening depends on the symbolic subjugation and aestheticization of Algeria. The narrative shows Domini's fear that her intense, emotional prayer may have been disrespectful to God. **"**Her first real, passionate prayer in Beni-Mora had been almost like a command to God. Was not such a fierce prayer perhaps a blasphemy?" (P. 43) which means that Domini's first strong prayer in Beni-Mora almost sounds like she is giving God a command instead of asking. This makes us wonder if speaking to God in such forceful way could be seen as disrespectful. Her words are full of deep emotion and desperation; she wants to change so badly that she cries out with power not quiet faith. Some might think this is wrong or too

bold, but it can also be seen as a true and honest prayer. She is not pretending or holding back; she is showing how much she needs help and wants to feel alive again.

Hichens illustrates Domini's emotional attachment to her Catholic identity by emphasizing how deeply she is affected upon seeing a Christian symbol amid a predominantly Islamic environment: "There was something touching to her as a Catholic, in this symbol of her faith set thus far out in the midst of Islamism" (Hichens, 1904, p. 44).This scene reflects more than individual piety; it operates within the framework of *Orientalist discourse*, wherein Western religion is presented as a noble, civilizing force in an exoticized and spiritually inferior environment. As Edward Said argues, Orientalism constructs the East not as an autonomous reality but as a "contrasting image" designed to reinforce European superiority (Said, 1978, pp. 1–2).

By depicting Christian symbols as emotionally resonant and spiritually redemptive in the Islamic landscape, Hichens mirrors the colonial civilizing mission, which framed European intervention as morally justified. The Catholic presence in Beni-Mora becomes a metaphor for moral and spiritual enlightenment imposed upon a supposedly stagnant and passive Orient. Said elaborates that such representations "authorize views" and "describe" the 'Orient' in ways that rationalize Western cultural hegemony (Said, 1978, p. 3). Domini's perception, shaped through the Western gaze, thereby transforms Algeria into a space not only of spiritual renewal for herself but also of implicit cultural conquest. This interpretation aligns with postcolonial critiques of travel literature and colonial fiction, which often depict religious and moral superiority as intrinsic to European identity. As Reina Lewis notes, the colonial woman's role in such texts frequently centres on representing "the ethical and spiritual authority of the West" (Lewis, 1996, p. 114), a role Domini embodies to reinforce both the binary opposition and the hegemonic project of colonial domination through representing positively the little church, the good deeds of the Catholics in Beni-Mora, Algeria.

The "little church" in *The Garden of Allah* is depicted as a humble yet determined colonial institution tasked with enlightening the indigenous population, particularly children. It is described as a "bold, little,

humble church!" whose influence extends through education despite limited resources (Hichens,1904, p. 49). This mission is symbolically embodied in "a painted figure of Christ holding a book" placed "in a round niche" (pp.48–49). This image operates as a metonym for the Church's civilizing mission: the Christ, the divine teacher, and the book—likely representing the Bible—serve as icons of religious and cultural instruction.

Father Roubier's devotion to this mission is expressed through *his "affection for his little church of Beni-Mora. So long and ardently had he prayed and taught in it"* (pp. 297–298, italics added). The church, though small, becomes a vessel of colonial hegemony, advancing a system of values and knowledge that seeks to displace native traditions. Its modest size is not a limitation but a symbol of France's ideological penetration into the so-called "barbaric" spaces of North Africa. Domini's admiration for this church reflects her desire for its voice to echo across the wider Sahara, reinforcing the role of religious institutions as tools of soft power within colonial Orientalist frameworks.

Again, Hichens presents Christianity as a symbol of moral resilience within a predominantly Islamic setting. As Domini reflects, *"The mosques of Islam echoed these words, and surely this little church that bravely stood among them"* (Hichens, 1904, p. 230, italics added). This statement positions the church not simply as a religious structure, but as a representation of Western moral presence; enduring and courageous amidst a non-Christian environment. The imagery aligns with the orientalist trope of the West as spiritually enlightened and morally steadfast, contrasted with a surrounding culture portrayed as alien or spiritually lacking. As Edward Said explains in *Orientalism*, such narratives construct the Orient as the passive "Other," thereby legitimizing Western cultural and religious superiority (Said, 1978, pp. 1–3, 40). The church, then, becomes more than architecture, it is a colonial symbol, quietly affirming the righteousness of Western faith within a land framed as spiritually inferior.

This symbolic positioning of the church in *The Garden of Allah* not only reinforces the presence of Western faith in an Islamic land but also prepares the ground for exploring the personal dimensions of religious commitment among European characters. One such figure is Father Roubier, whose emotional

attachment to his church in Beni-Mora reveals the depth of his religious identity. "Father Roubier had an almost passionate affection for his little church of Beni-Mora" (Hichens, 1904, p. 275). His connection to the church is not merely clerical but profoundly personal, highlighting how faith becomes a core part of colonial presence. Yet, this connection also introduces moral tension. Father Roubier faces a spiritual crisis when expected to recite prayers that no longer align with his inner convictions. He reflects: He thought of the wonderful grace and beauty of the prayers of benediction, and it seemed to him that to pronounce them with his lips, while his nature revolted against his own utterance was to perform a shameful act, was to offer an insult to this little church he loved. (p. 276). These words reveal the inner conflict between religious ritual and personal authenticity. It underscores a deeper critique within the colonial setting: even those representing Western spiritual authority struggle with the performance of belief in a space where religion intersects with empire, power, and moral ambiguity.

Father Roubier, the priest of Beni-Mora, kind, patient figure who restores peace, security and supports those in need. The narrator describes; Father Roubier had an almost passionate affection for his little church of Beni-Mora. So long and ardently had he prayed and taught in it, so often had he passed the twilight hours in it alone wrapped in religious reveries, or searching his conscience for the shadows of sinful thoughts, that it had become to him as a friend, and more than a friend. He thought of it sometimes as his confessor and sometimes as his child. (p.257). The significance of the church in Beni-Mora reaches its fullest expression through Domini's transformation. Her journey toward inner renewal culminates in what may be regarded as a spiritual rebirth; one that exceeds even her physical birth. As Hichens, through his narrator, writes, "In the church of Beni-Mora the life of Domini had begun more really than when her mother strove in the pains of child birth…" (Hichens, 1904, p. 287). This declaration marks the pivotal moment when Domini's religious and emotional sense of identity is truly awakened located not in the imposition of colonial structures but in the act of spiritual self-realization. Furthermore, it perpetuates the Orientalist pattern described by Edward Said: the East is not acknowledged as an autonomous space but rather used to stage Western moral or spiritual transformation (Said, 1978, pp. 45, 120, 192).

Consequently, Domini's resurrection through Christianity in a predominantly Muslim setting reinforces the cultural hegemony of Western religion.

The activities of the monks who transform a barren desert into a flourishing Eden symbolize the redemptive power of faith, labor, and spiritual devotion. These monks, likely inspired by real Trappist communities in North Africa, are portrayed as living in silence and prayer, devoting themselves not only to spiritual contemplation but also to the tireless cultivation of the land around their remote monastery. Through years of disciplined work, they irrigate the arid soil, plant orchards and gardens, and create a lush oasis amid the desolation of the Sahara, turning a place of spiritual testing into one of serene beauty and divine order. Their transformation of the desert into a fruitful haven serves as both literal accomplishment and a powerful metaphor for spiritual renewal, the triumph of human perseverance and divine grace over emptiness and chaos. The Edenic vision stands in stark contrast to the harsh, indifferent wilderness surrounding it, and deeply moves Domini Enfilden, the novel's protagonist, as she seeks meaning and redemption in her own life. The monk's peaceful, ordered existence and their miraculous reclamation of the desert become an emblem of the possibility of inner salvation, offering a model of harmony between soul, labor, and nature in a world otherwise marked by struggle and spiritual desolation. Domini's Catholic faith functions not merely as a personal belief system but as the framework through which she interprets suffering, fate, and identity. Her spiritual crisis reaches a peak when she reflects: "God had blinded her in order that she might fall, had brought Androvsky to her in order that her religion, her Catholic faith, might be made hideous to her forever" (Hichens, 1904, pp. 437–438). Here, Domini attributes her emotional and spiritual collapse to divine will, suggesting that her suffering is not random but orchestrated to test or even dismantle her religious convictions. This moment of anguish signals a rupture in her idealized vision of Catholicism, portraying it as a source of both illumination and devastation.

Notably, the novel frequently references Cardinal Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie, the first Archbishop of Algiers, who viewed Algeria as *"the open port of entry to a barbaric continent"* (Neil,1966, p. 348). Lavigerie is portrayed as a central figure in the French Catholic mission to reshape indigenous

culture through religious intervention. Father Roubier, the French priest in Beni-Mora, proudly tells Domini, *"We are not a rich community in Beni-Mora, but we have been fortunate in bygone years. Our great Cardinal, the Father of Africa, loved this place and cherished his children here"* (Hichens,1904, p. 50, italics added). He adds, *"His house is now a native hospital […] His statue faces the beginning of the great desert road. But we remember him and his spirit is still there"* (p.50, italics added).These references frame the Church's role in colonial Algeria as a civilizing force, portraying Lavigerie's initiatives—such as converting his residence into a hospital—as benevolent acts of development. However, this narrative reinforces a colonial logic that casts the local population as backward and in need of salvation. By highlighting Lavigerie's legacy, the novel affirms the hegemonic vision of the French Church, positioning Catholic intervention as both morally superior and necessary for transforming the so-called "primitive" nature of places like Beni-Mora.

The Catholic Church is not only a symbol of European spiritual superiority but also an instrument of cultural hegemony deployed in a foreign land. Domini's crisis, therefore, is not simply personal; it dramatizes the contradictions of Western religious authority operating within an Islamic landscape that it seeks to civilize and dominate. The failure of her faith coincides with the failure of the colonial project to provide moral clarity or stability. As Said observes, Orientalism constructs the East as a backdrop for Western self-realization while simultaneously affirming Western dominance through religious and moral codes (Said, 1978, pp. 94, 201). In this way, Domini's loss of faith underscores not only the fragility of spiritual certainty but also the failure of Orientalist narratives to sustain their claims of ethical and religious superiority.

III. The Representation of Islamic Prayer :

The recurring expression "It is the will of God" functions as a narrative device that reflects the cultural and religious mindset associated with Islamic fatalism. This phrase, often echoed by Arab characters or local inhabitants, mirrors the Arabic expression *Inshallah* ("God willing"), which signifies a deep-rooted belief in divine sovereignty over human affairs. Within the novel's desert setting, the invocation of God's will

convey both spiritual resignation and cultural identity, illustrating how individuals respond to the unpredictability and harshness of their environment. More than a mere phrase, it encapsulates a worldview shaped by submission to a transcendent authority, reinforcing the novel's broader engagement with themes of faith, destiny, and cultural difference.

The characters in the narrative are feeling especially close to God when Domini said "I never felt the presence of God in His world so kneely as I feel it to-night" (Hichens, 1904, p. 305), in that moment, the presence of God feels stronger than ever before. This shows a deep spiritual experience, possibly influenced by the quiet and beauty of the desert. It reflects a moment of peace, awe, or personal clarity. The desert of Beni Mora is portrayed as a spiritually uplifting and divinely inspired landscape. Domini expresses, "Out here one was in the hands of a God who surely sang as He created and had not created fear" (p. 137), suggesting that the natural world, particularly the desert, is a manifestation of divine benevolence rather than punishment. For Domini, this environment evokes not fear, but serenity and spiritual clarity.

The desert becomes a sacred space, inspiring awe and a sense of divine presence that contrasts with more institutional or fear-driven depictions of religion. Through this portrayal, Hichens aligns the natural world with a compassionate form of divinity, subtly reinforcing Orientalist tropes of the East as a site of mystical revelation and spiritual awakening.Like the Christian faith represented through the Catholicchurch and the deeds of the Catholics, Islam is represented through prayers and ethics of its believers. Islamic prayers are frequently represented as deeply emotional and spiritually evocative acts. These prayers, often marked by repetition and vocal intensity, serve not only as expressions of faith but also as moments that reveal the novel's Orientalist perspective. Rather than portraying Islamic worship with theological accuracy, Hichens emphasizes its aesthetic and emotional qualities, framing it through a Western gaze that exoticizes Muslim devotion. Later in the novel, the narrator describes a moment of profound spiritual intensity: "Allah! Allah! Allah!... Surely God must be near, bending to such an everlasting cry" (p 151).This repeated invocation

signifies more than religious observance; it becomes a dramatic expression of longing and divine proximity.

Although the question of religion is treated with sensitivity, Islam is subtly defamed in a way that reflects the irony embedded in the narrative tone and aligns with Cardinal Lavigerie's colonial program. One of the celebrated achievements of the Catholic Church under Lavigerie's influence, as Neil (1959) asserts, was "the establishment of religious liberty for Algeria. If Algeria was ever to become a Christian country, the Christian forces must have the fullest possible liberty of action"(p. 348). However, the text paradoxically criticizes Islamic rituals—particularly public prayer—which it presents as suspicious or alien. This contradiction is most evident when Domini, guided by Mustapha, visits a mosque. There, she experiences a sense of estrangement and hostility: she "fancied that there was enmity in their eyes" (Hichens, pp. 163–164). This perception is not based on any articulated offense or conflict, but rather on Domini's internal projection, underscoring Edward Said's argument in *Orientalism* that "the Orient was almost a European invention" and that Orientals are "not so much a fact of nature as a fact of interpretation" (Said, 1978, pp. 1, 92). Her perception, again, reinforces binary oppositions that position the West as rational and spiritually superior, and the East as hostile and obscure.

Thus, what is framed as "religious liberty" for Christian institutions simultaneously becomes a discourse that marginalizes Islamic practice, revealing the hegemony of colonial narratives that redefine liberty as the dominance of one faith over another. This dualism reflects Said's broader critique of Orientalist discourse, which operates through asymmetrical representations of East and West to justify cultural and political subjugation (Said, 1978, pp. 5–6, 94). Domini presents a vivid scene of Islamic prayer, focusing on the worshippers' deep sense of devotion: "Some prayed alone, removed in shady corners, with faces turned to the wall, others were gathered into knots… But gleamed as if their belief were a thing of flame and bronze" (pp. 151–152) . While the passage suggests reverence, its language also reflects an Orientalist gaze; rendering Muslim worship as picturesque and exotic rather than spiritually or theologically understood.

As Domini stands with Androvsky and their guide Mustapha before the worshippers in the mosque, she offers detailed observations of Algerians engaged in Islamic prayer, including those reciting the Qur'an in the Qur'anic court. She describes the scene as follows: "Arabs were sitting silently… gathered, kneeling, bowing their heads to the ground, and muttering ceaseless words in deep, almost growling voices" (Hichens, 1904, p. 151). This descriptive gaze reflects what Edward Said identifies as a core feature of Orientalist discourse—the Western subject's authority to observe, classify , and interpret the non-Western world. By recording such intimate religious practices, Domini adopts the position of the Western observer who renders indigenous spiritual life intelligible through an exoticizing lens. According to Said, Orientalism operates through "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1978, p. 5), whereby representations of the Orient serve not merely to describe but to reinforce Western superiority. Domini's narration transforms the sacred into spectacle, positioning the Algerian worshippers as subjects of aesthetic and ethnographic curiosity. The spiritual depth and communal devotion of the worshippers are thus reframed to affirm the binary distinction between a rational, observing West and a mystical, observed East (Said, 1978, pp. 6, 94).

When Domini observes men bowing and murmuring prayers with solemn intensity, she interprets their actions not as expressions of autonomous faith but as markers of an exotic and mystical spirituality. In this way, the scene does not merely reflect curiosity but participates in the broader colonial practice ofobjectifying indigenous identity through visual and textual representation. The sacred becomes framed through exoticism, transforming religious acts into symbolic affirmations of difference. Thus reinforcing the binary opposition between the "rational West" and the "spiritual, mystical East." Following her earlier observations of Muslim devotion, Domini's experience inside the mosque takes a more emotionally charged turn. While she had previously watched worshippers with a mixture of reverence and aesthetic detachment, the behavior of one old man unsettles her deeply. His loud, erratic movements during prayer disturb the solemn atmosphere and challenge her understanding of sacred expression. She remarks, "It's as if he were cursing God" (p. 154). For Domini, the old man's outburst feels like a violation of the sanctity

she had come to associate with the mosque. His cries seem to overpower the silent devotion of others, leaving her with a sense that one person's anguish or rage can overshadow collective faith. This moment not only humanizes the spiritual struggle but also complicates her earlier, simplified view of Islamic worship, moving her from distant observer to emotionally involved witness.

The point of the association between the French colonialism and other white men like the Italian settlers is, again, a good example of the French colonial policy in Algeria. The image of the good white man is apparent in several instances. The chief representative of the white settlers is Count Anteoni who considers himself to be the oldest European with the longest continuous residence in Beni-Mora. His most significant achievement is the garden, Domini knows everyone who visits Beni-Mora comes to admire Anteoni's garden. He confesses to Androvsky and Domini in his garden, "I have some fellows here. After déjeuner you must let me show them to you. I spent years in collecting my children and teaching them to live rightly in the desert" (P.188). Being the oldest settler, planting a garden and having followers are both outcomes of colonialism and causes for the process of planting roots for the white men. In settler postcolonial theory, these examples have a task "to act out the suppression or effacement of the indigene; it is also concerned to perform the concomitant indigenization of the settler" (Johnston and Lawson, 2000, p.369).

The figure of Count Anteoni serves not only as a European settler but also as a symbol of the broader Christian civilizing mission in colonial Algeria. He tells her: "I spent years in collecting my children and teaching them to live rightly in the desert" (Hichens, 1904, p. 188), his work then mirrors the work of Christian missionaries who viewed Algeria as a moral and spiritual frontier. Like figures such as Cardinal Lavigerie and Father Roubier, Anteoni assumes a guiding role, grounded in Christian ethics. He claims authority over the lives of the indigenous people, justifying his actions as part of a noble endeavor to elevate them morally and culturally.

This echoes the colonial narrative that framed European settlers and missionaries as agents of salvation, tasked with rescuing the "primitive" natives from their supposed backwardness. Anteoni's perspective, however, reveals a deeper contradiction within the colonial enterprise. While he positions himself as a

benevolent figure working for the betterment of the indigenous population, his actions are rooted in a fundamental inequality—an inherent belief in the superiority of European culture. This paternalism, disguised as care and guidance, reflects the larger imperial agenda of dominance under the guise of moral and religious upliftment. By claiming authority over the lives of the natives, Anteoni not only seeks to impose European values but also to reshape indigenous culture, all while reinforcing the very power structures that maintain colonial control.In this light, Anteoni becomes emblematic of the colonial mindset that blends missionary zeal with settler colonialism, positioning the indigenous population as both a subject for salvation and a means to justify European supremacy in Algeria.

The last idea is about the Catholic Church, along with its various members: priests, monks, and Trappists from other Catholic orders. These members were intended to support the Mission's goals. In a different part of North Africa, near Tunis in El-Largani, Androvsky observes the remarkable changes brought about by the monks. He tells Domini that, once a barren desert, El-Largani has been transformed into something much more productive. According to Androvsky, the monks have turned it "into a rich garden" by planting vineyards, cornfields, orchards, and "almost every fruit-tree flourishes there" (Hichens, 1904, p. 437). This highlights the monks' role in reshaping the land, turning a harsh desert into a thriving landscape full of life. In this way, their mission goes beyond spreading Christianity—they are also tasked with making the land more hospitable and fruitful, contributing a positive influence in an otherwise unforgiving environment. Moreover, the monks' efforts extend to overseeing the work of Spanish laborers in a nearby village, where they manage the fields and tend to the land. As Androvsky observes, "the Trappist life is not a life of prayer, but a life of diligent labour" (p.437) . The monks' role here is not just spiritual but deeply intertwined with the physical labor of cultivating and nurturing the land. However, within the colonial context, the monks' activities may carry an additional layer of meaning. Their ability to transform barren land into a flourishing garden aligns with colonial objectives. These objectives tend to maximizing economic output and extracting value from the colony's natural resources. In this way, the monks' work mirrors the colonial mindset, where the goal is to demonstrate control over the land and to establish a sense

of permanence. Symbolically, the fruit trees they plant could be seen as a metaphor for the colonial mission itself, with each tree representing the roots being firmly planted in foreign soil. Trees have long been symbols of renewal, growth, and new beginnings—representing a transformative force capable of reshaping the world (Ronnberg and Martin, 2010, p. 140).

Therefore, this civilizing impulse reflects the French colonial Church's broader program, which aimed to "transform" native populations through education, charity, and religious conversion, deeds that were celebrated by colonial authorities as acts of benevolence yet functioned to reinforce domination. As Edward Said notes, Orientalist discourse often masked imperial control under the guise of moral responsibility (Said, 1978, pp. 94–95). Anteoni's garden and his 'children' thus become part of a symbolic landscape of Christian settlement and soft power, where the settler not only occupies the land but claims to reform its people in alignment with Western, and specifically Christian values.

IV. Conclusion:

In *The Garden of Allah*, religion plays a key role, shaping both the characters' journeys and the colonial narrative. Christianity—especially Catholicism—guides the spiritual paths of Domini and Boris, while Islam is depicted through the eyes of Western characters, often reduced to a mix of exotic fascination, misunderstanding, and sometimes condescending admiration. ThroughDomini's perspective, Catholicism becomes a source of emotional healing, moral clarity, and civilizational advancement, often set in contrast to Islam, which is depicted as mysterious, stagnant, or in need of reform.

The novel romanticizes Islam but also simplifies it, treating it as a visual spectacle or an emotional experience, which is a hallmark of the Orientalist gaze that Edward Said describes (Said, 1978, pp. 5–6, 94). Characters like Father Roubier and Count Anteoni personify the French colonial mission, which aimed not just to control land but also to reshape the religious and cultural identity of the people. Through

their eyes, the Algerian Muslims and their sacred spaces are presented in a way that reinforces the sharp divide between the rational, redemptive West and the spiritual, subordinate East.

In this context, *The Garden of Allah (1904)* functions as a colonial narrative that upholds the ideals of empire. It supports the broader French colonial agenda by positioning Christianity as morally superior and Islam as a symbol of the colonized "other." The novel, rather than exploring religious differences neutrally, embeds these differences within a structure of cultural hierarchy, supporting the colonial mission of conversion and domination. This portrayal of religious difference is complemented by a similar approach to gender, which, as discussed in Chapter One, is even more critical.

VIII. General Conclusion

The spread of colonial power was shadowed by the remarkable growth of the various intercultural and literary productions about the Eastern world, in the present study Algeria, as being captured in the writings of Western writers, visitors, and travelers. Those visitors, especially writers who had experienced living in occupied regions, had to define their position in connection to the various existing ideologies and practices to imperialism and colonialism through their texts. Precisely, the French colonialism of Algeria (1830-1962) has also its representational space in their fictional terrain.

This dissertation has explored how Robert Hichens's *The Garden of Allah* (1904) functions as a colonial novel, shaping Algeria and its people through an Orientalist lens. By examining the religious and gender representations within the text, it becomes clear that the novel upholds imperial ideologies, portraying the West as both morally and culturally superior. Hichens constructs a framework that justifies the power of the Church and the military, depicting the natives as incapable of self-governance. This portrayal sheds light on how English writers of the time could use their fiction to support the French colonial project in Algeria. More than supporting French colonial project, calling for settlement project.

Through an analysis of religion and gender in the novel through an Orientalist discourse, it is evident that Hichens presents Western culture as spiritually and morally superior. Characters such as Father Roubierand Domini serve as symbols of this perceived superiority, while native characters like Smain and Larbi are shown as needing Western control and guidance. Domini becomes a central figure reinforcing these colonial stereotypes, positioning her as the embodiment of Western values and authority. Ultimately,

The Garden of Allah uses its narrative to support colonial rule, presenting Algeria as a land in need of Western intervention and moral direction.

Chapter One, on the one hand, it shows that Christian characters and beliefs are seen as good, strong, and important, while Islamic beliefs are described as strange, unclear, or less important. The story gives more value to Christianity, especially through characters like Father Roubier and Domini, who are shown as wise and moral. On the other hand, Islam is often shown as mysterious or even dangerous, which makes it seem less true or less civilized. This difference between the two religions helps the novel suggest that Western ways are better and that the native people need guidance. In this way, religion is used to support colonial rule and make it seem right.

The second chapter on the other hand, focused on gender and showed how the novel presents men and women using common stereotypes. Eastern characters are often described as mysterious or exotic, while Western characters are more developed and active. This shows how ideas about gender connect with cultural and colonial views. These stereotypes help build a simple and often unfair image of the East, which fits with the Orientalist ideas Edward Said discusses. Using Edward Said's ideas of the "Orient," stereotypes, binary oppositions, and hegemony along with the work of scholars like Meyda Yeğenoğluand Frantz Fanon, this analysis, shows how the novel supports colonial beliefs and influences how non-Westernsocieties are viewed. The story creates a clear divide between the West and the East, where the West is shown as logical, advanced, and moral, while the East is described as emotional, backward, and in need of control. Said's theory explains how these images are not neutral but are used to support colonial power. Fanon's ideas help us see how such stories can harm the identity and self-worth of colonized people by presenting them as weak or less human. Yeğenoğlu's work adds that gender plays a key role too—Western women in the novel, like Domini, are shown as symbols of order and goodness, which helps make the colonial mission seem necessary and just. Together, these theories help explain how *The Garden of Allah* works not just as a novel, but as a way to support and spread imperialist ideas. Future research could expand on the ideas presented in this dissertation by comparing *The Garden of Allah*(1904) with

other colonial-era novels to examine how similar Orientalist themes appear across a variety of texts. Such a comparison could provide a deeper understanding of how pervasive these patterns were in justifying colonial rule and shaping Western perceptions of the East. Another fruitful avenue for exploration would be to investigate how gendered

Orientalism continues to influence modern literature and film. This would involve examining whether contemporary works still portray Eastern cultures in stereotypical ways or if they challenge and deconstruct these outdated views.

In addition to these directions, a valuable line of inquiry could be the study of 19th-century poetry and literature related to the Algerian colonial era, particularly works that reflect on or were shaped by the tumult of colonial encounters and wars. This could offer rich insights into the literary responses to colonialism, especially as seen through the lens of poetry, which often provides more nuanced emotional and cultural reflections than prose. Finally, examining how Algerian writers have responded to Western representations like *The Garden of Allah (1904)*would be an important step. Their works may offer alternative narratives that resist, critique, or correct the portrayal of their culture and people in colonial literature. These areas of research can enrich our understanding of how Orientalism has evolved and how it is both questioned and rejected in both past and present works. By studying these diverse responses, we can gain a more complete picture of the ongoing conversation between Western and Algerian literary traditions, particularly in relation to colonialism.

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