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The Franco-Algerian War: Narrating the Failure of the French Imperialist Project in Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* (1960)

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Abstract

This article examines the political attitude towards representing French colonialism to Algeria during the Franco-Algerian war (1954-1962) in *Darkness Visible* (1960) by the Welsh-British Norman Lewis. It probes how Lewis's novel portrays French colonial project, which was intended to bring civilization to Algerians, as a failure through raising an anti- colonial thought. In the novel, the Mission does not only fail to achieve the goals of its agenda, but also fails in the sense that it exposes more negative consequences of exploitation, oppression, and cultural destruction of the colonized people. The paper also scrutinizes Lewis's use of immediacy of the narrative and Manicheanism in characterization as literary device to critique French colonial practices against the natives; while, in parallel, Lewis highlights the aspect of nationalist mobilization to unearth the legitimacy of the Algerians fighting for liberty. Therefore, this article ventures thematically into *Darkness Visible* within anti- colonial discourse parameters.

Keywords: *Darkness Visible*, Franco-Algerian war, immediacy and Manicheanism, nationalist mobilization, Norman Lewis.

Introduction

The relation between literature and other factors like ideology, politics, history and culture are more apparent in literary texts. In the context of the Franco- Algerian war, the emergence of the F.L.N in Algeria was a response to the rising antagonism between French colonialism and the Algerian revolution. The Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) was a major international political event that a number of English literary works used it as their main background (Benchérif 1997, 229). In the twentieth-century English literature, the attention drawn about Algeria was primarily confined to a small group of experts and as a result, had minimal impact among the general public (xiii). In fact, Lewis's *Darkness Visible* is one of these literary texts that examines the fate of French colonialism in Algeria during the conflict between French colonizers and the FLN revolutionaries. The FLN-ers are the nationalists, but in the French terminology are called the fellaghas "highwaymen" or Algerian guerrillas (Zervoudakis 2002, 55). Thus, this article argues that *Darkness Visible* narrates the failure and collapse of the French civilization-

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building promises in Algeria. It departs from Osman Benchérif's argument that Lewis "is committed to no ideology but to the right of all to a life of decency, dignity and self-determination" (Benchérif 1997, 237). It also argues that Lewis through Steve Lavers, the main protagonist, does sympathize with the natives because he sees them as the victims of the war. This claim stems from Lavers when he declares, "*I'm not really interested in politics. I like the French, perhaps less at the moment than usual. I like the Arabs too. In so far as they're the victims of the present situation I'm on their side*" (Lewis 1960, 42, italics added). Benchérif's claim and the Lavers's confessed position suggest that sympathy towards the natives is to be achieved through two acknowledging elements: the recognition of the suffering of the Algerians during the war, and aspire to provide them with the justice and dignity they deserve. In more critical terms, Lewis through Lavers, is apolitically engaged in the politics of the Franco-Algerian war in *Darkness Visible*.

In light of the previous argument, this article posits that Norman Lewis, through Lavers, uses literary devices of immediacy of the narrative and Manicheism in characterization. These devices, the article argues, are implemented to critique French colonial practices against the natives, and to comment on the failure of the claimed civilizing mission in Algeria. Furthermore, Lewis merges fiction with realism to convey the historical moment as his protagonist experiences it. With that sense of realism, Lewis translates his position apolitically to sympathize with the Muslim Algerians through devoting a good narrative space to expose the silenced voice of the colonized who, eventually, decide to fight for liberty, as the FLN is the main political force of the Algerian resistance movement, and the main driving force behind the struggle for independence. Moreover, by focusing the narrative gaze on the hard conditions of the natives, Lewis introduces the national aspect and mobilization in his novel to voice their position and expose the reasons behind their resistance. This new aspect helps the reader to sense the legitimacy of the Algerian War and support the natives' right to liberate themselves. To elaborate this argument, this article uses an anti-colonial discourse as the theoretical background in the subsequent discussion.

Theoretical Framework

This article incorporates an anti-colonial discourse as a theoretical background to analyze Lewis's *Darkness Visible*. It was not until the nineteenth century that anti-colonialism began to be expressed in specific political, cultural, and theoretical positions (Young 2016, 164). One key aspect of this history is the use of cultural activism as a means of countering the negative ideas and feelings of inferiority imposed by colonizers (164). Ideologically, these forms of resistance can be divided into those that drew on traditional indigenous culture and "those that identified with forms – colonial or western – of modernity" (164). By the twentieth century, these ideologies had become interrelated, with most resistance movements using a combination of the two; they remained distinct, however (164). Then, the second form of resistance may also seek to promote the ideals of Western modernity, such as democracy, human rights, and equality. Although the second form has a different ideology, yet it can be used as a strategy to resist colonialism as Norman Lewis in *Darkness Visible* exemplifies.

Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) espouses the clear cause of the Algerian War with the colonial world. He explains, the colonial world is the primary cause of decolonization because it is characterized by a system of division (Fanon 1963, 37). In relation to this system, racist methods are created and practiced by enforcing the superiority of the colonizer, and further strengthening the inferiority of the colonized (37). This context, again, is a world "divided into compartments" which distinguishes two different settings (37-38). The first is the setting where the Europeans occupy, and thus exercises power over the natives who occupy a different setting (39). The natives occupy the native town "that is hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light" and this town "is a world without spaciousness" (39).

This article implements the concept of Manicheanism. It is connected with the Manichean world. Its system of compartments, which Fanon discusses, further develops the colonial context to be "Manichean world" that enhances the lives of the colonizer and the settlers but not the lives of the natives (Fanon 1963, 41). Furthermore, the native stands as "enemy of values" and opposes "white values" and civilization as well (41-43). Furthermore, this concept is related with the other concept of violence in the context of decolonization. He posits that colonialism is inherently violent, taking on either overt or covert forms of aggression; and, ironically, the native discovers the reality of this colonial system and, thus, uses its same weapon that is violence "to plan for freedom" (58-9).

Elsewhere in "Discourse on Colonialism" (2000), Aimé Césaire adumbrates the spirit of revolution; and demystifies colonialism as well as its civilizing mission to the non-civilized countries, which plays a pivotal and prevailing pretext to justify the Western presence in any foreign land. According to his theory, this civilization is a "decadent," "stricken," and "dying" because it does not offer a solution or an alternative to the problems it creates (Césaire 2000, 31). In addition to that, the colonized people are aware of the brutality and the illegal practices of the colonizer (31). These brutal practices prove to be a sign of the masters becoming weak, and decivilized (35). Thus, the civilizing mission does not only fail to civilize the barbarians, the uncivilized, but extends its failure to decivilize the master. Therefore, the distance between colonization and civilization, Césaire claims, is "infinite distance" because that colonial practices, laws, and memos have not produced any positive values for humanity (34).

Regarding the context of decolonization, Adria Lawrence's concept of nationalist mobilization is crucial to this article. She discusses nationalist mobilization as an active process. It involves active engagement in political or social movements and "is explicitly concerned with human action" (Lawrence 2013, 10). During the Second World War, various resistance movements in French colonies and territories disrupted French rule; these global changes had made nationalist response "natural" (2-3). Such resistance occurred in Algeria which is an important and valuable colony to France (29). By considering the factors that contextualize nationalist mobilization, the increase of nationalistic movements in the French empire during the mid-twentieth century internationally caused a significant change in which the "norms about the legitimacy of empire" changed too (30-31). The international arena, norms about the legitimacy of empire changed over the course of the twentieth century in the way the empire was viewed

by the international community. This change can be seen in literature of that specific time of French colonial rule.

Discussion

Norman Lewis (1908-2003) was one of the influential twentieth century Welsh-British prolific writers. Among his novels are *Samara* (1949), *A Single Pilgrim* (1953), *Darkness Visible* (1949), and *The Cuban Passage* (1982), *A Small Made to Order* (1966), The *March of Long Shadows* (1987). He has different books of travel writing and autobiographies narrating his experience with the British Army serving during the Second World War. In *Jackdaw Cake* (1987), his biography, he mentions that on the fifth of December 1941 he "reached Algiers" (Lewis, 1987, 139) after he was enrolled into the Intelligence Corps group (134). During the war, it is clear that he had gone to Algeria, diligently writing down his experience and conversing with the people featured in his novel (Benchérif 1997, 234). This experience influences the content of his novel to politically engage the theme of the war in his plot.

Darkness Visible is a novel that has received limited attention in modern literary scholarship. Dilnoza' s "Literary Analysis" views it as "a document against colonialism" (Dilnoza 2020, 656). Benchérif's "The Literature of the Algerian War of Independence" highlights its political impact but argues Lewis "is not concerned with the political issues" (Benchérif 1997, 235). However, this article argues that Lewis provides insightful commentary on the political climate and exposes readers to the political nuances of the war. It also argues that Lewis infuses realism to show the failure of the French civilizing mission in Algeria, thereby demonstrating his sympathetic position towards the natives. It promises to be a valuable addition to the existing scholarship on the novel.

Darkness Visible is about the Algerian War of independence and the brutality of French colonialism in Algeria. Its main protagonist, Steve Lavers who is an American geological engineer in Western Petroleum, that is a foreign European company specialized in oil exploration at El Milia, narrates his experience of the war. He begins as a skeptic, but witnessing the illegal practices and suffering of the natives lead him to question the legitimacy of the French colonial presence. The novel portrays a realistic and terrible picture of the war through highlighting its brutalities, yet, anti-colonialist sentiments are also infused into the narrative. Lewis draws a vivid and disturbing portrayal of the colonialists, accurately capturing the realities of their presence and their massacres against the defenseless natives. Also, he draws another about the natives through narrating their suffering with a sense of sympathy. This novel does not transmit only the anti-colonial attitude, but rather it shows the transition in representation of French colonialism to Algeria that highlights the theme of the war.

Immediacy and Manicheanism: anti- colonial perspectives on consciousness-raising

Through literary devices of immediacy of narrative and Manichaeism in characterization, Lewis critiques French colonialism and exhibits sympathy for the Algerians in his novel. These devices create a unique image of the conflict and establish the protagonist, Lavers, as an autonomous and vulnerable character. The open narrative form, through the use of first-person narrator, allows for a strong

connection between the reader and protagonist. This narrative situation allows Lewis to establish his main character, Lavers, autonomous, as the narration emphasizes his agency; and it eliminates the influence of a distant narrator and allows for the creation of a more spontaneous and vulnerable protagonist.

The immediacy of the narrative process which captures the happenings and events is remarkable throughout the novel. By narrating events as they happen, Lewis creates a sense of reality that reveals the intricate nature of the truth. For example, when Lavers reaches Libreville to look for Malem Hocine, the oil company's missing worker, he finds the Arab patients in inhuman condition in the hospital wherein he vividly describes the scenes his eyes capture:

> The stench hung like a curtain over the threshold. About eighty to a hundred Arabs were lying, fully dressed, on blankets on the concrete floor. Others were propped up, heads fallen on chests, along the walls. In a far corner a man squatted, supported by another on a plank resting on a raw of buckets. the vast room was full of snoring and gargling, and of rattlings in the throat […] just inside the door, lay a man who by the colour of his flesh I would have supposed to be not only dead but in the early stages of decay. (Lewis 1960, 36)

The use of diction such as "stench" and "fully dressed on blankets on the concrete floor" suggests that the natives are being hospitalized in squalor, without basic necessities. The description of the man in the corner being supported by another on a plank resting on a row of buckets and another being described as "dead" and in "early stages of decay" indicates a lack of medical care, possibly neglect, and the consequences of the war on the natives. The French doctor then comments on the scene by saying that these native "either get better or die. They get it over with one way or another" (37). The portrayal evokes a tragic image of French oppression against natives, fostering pity and compassion. It also critiques colonial practices, particularly the neglect of basic needs and the treatment of colonized peoples as inferior.

Continuing with the missing laborer, Malem Hocine, Lavers describes his physical condition. He reports:

> He stuck out his arms and raised himself on his elbows to a sitting position, moved jerkily like an old-fashioned clockwork doll. He blew out his lips and sucked them in, breathing in a kind of snore. The disturbed air came up, sharp with the stench of urine, and […] I noticed that the bodies of all the men lying on the concrete floor were lapped with a continuous yellow stream. (37)

The language, again, is descriptive and evocative, creating a clear image of the scene in the reader's mind. Lavers finds Hocine as "jerkily like an old-fashioned clockwork doll", which creates an image of a mechanical, inhuman movement. The stench of urine is used to create a sense of disgust and filth. The mention of the "yellow stream" on the floor and on the bodies of the men creates a visual image of an unsanitary environment. The passage also implies a lack of comfort or care for the men being held in this place. Overall, the immediate narrative appears clearly through this imagery. The latter creates a visceral,

tragic and unpleasant image which emphasizes the poor hospitalization conditions and, again, the inhumane treatment of the natives.

Although Lavers knows that Hocine has been tortured as it is clear, yet the doctor denies that and instead says: "It could be typhoid" (38). Lying is associated with the doctor who denies that Hocine has been tortured by French soldiers. When the doctor understands that Lavers does not believe his claim, he continues, "My friend, I can see you've formed a poor opinion of me. And you're right […] I don't even think of them as human beings any longer" (38). The doctor has lost his humanity towards the natives, and he is no longer capable of feeling empathy or compassion towards them. Further, the doctor forgets the affiliation to his job when he compares himself to a priest who is "going to the scaffold with a condemned man" (39). Here, the doctor claims his positive role as a guide or helper to these natives, but also recognizes that their fate is ultimately negative. This act of lying, as Césaire argues, is the root of other issues like hypocrisy and violence. The hypocrisy of the colonists is entirely self-centered and based on economic exploitation in the pursuit of profit and power, rather than spreading Christianity or enhancing the life conditions of the colonized (Césaire 2000, 32-33).

The hypocrisy, again, is explicit through Lewis's introduction of the media as a force acting violently against the Algerians through reporting the death of Joseph Del Giudice, who is a Sicilian settler running a big business in El Milia and has a brothel there. Indeed, the event of "the famous night," is the most critical incident in the novel, with serious implications for the natives (Lewis 1960, 211). Lavers's neutral tone while reporting the event dramatizes the real situation of the natives who are subject to accusations and allegations by the French, and by the press as well. Whatever violent, or criminal behaviors are to be detected, the native finds himself incriminated which explains that fabricating facts "is the source of all the others" (Césaire 2000, 32). Although Del Giudice's murder is mysterious, yet the Arabs are charged with it. Lavers reads the beginning of the article "Horrible Massacre" of the *Eclaireur*. This newspaper writes,

> a band of fellaghas carried out an attack on the farm of Monsieur Joseph Del Giudice, a well-known personality of that town. In spite of a courageous resistance offered to the assailants by Monsieur Del Giudice, he, his wife Madame Renée Del Giudice, as well as a guest, Mademoiselle Maria Divina Gonzalez, were butchered in cold blood by the cowardly assassins. We are informed that a fourth person, Mademoiselle Dolores Mayol […] was abducted by the assailants. (Lewis 1960, 111)

The *Eclaireur* depicts the fellaghas as murderers. They are, as Fanon puts it, supposed guilty and they are seen as inferior although they do not accept the imposed inferiority (Fanon 1963, 53). Joseph was one of the well- known people in El Milia, therefore, reporting his death will have significance, especially since he is a European. The power of the press is expressed here, through the *Eclaireur* being clearly biased to the European side with an unsubstantiated report.

Commenting on Joseph's death, Lavers tells J. G., "But you have seen the *Eclaireur*–that bit about the natural indignation of the populace? *La Voix* is even worse," and adds, "It's the newspaper that

manufacture the natural indignation" (Lewis 1960, 115). This is a clear example to catch the Lavers's conscious that he knows the *Eclaireur,* as *La Voix*, promotes hate and incites indignation. Newspaper, according to his claim, has the tendency to "manufacture" or manipulate the public opinion against the natives. Thus, it can be a powerful deliberate tool for manipulation and deception. Referencing Said, journalism should be about the realization of a "metamorphosed" opinion, formed by the reporter after gathering information and processing it (Said 1981, 107). In other words, the reporters' role is to present the facts objectively, without expressing personal bias or perspective. On account of that, the *Eclaireur*'s opinion is of "the colon who owns" this newspaper, who is Jean Jacques Blachon, that is clearly biased (Lewis 1960, 115).

Lavers in *Darkness Visible* is investigating reality. He does not believe what the *Eclaireur* claims. He meets the only surviving witness that is Dolores Mayol, a Spanish immigrant who was living in Joseph's house and works in his brothel. He, from his deep inside, knows this act is not carried out by the fellaghas, but he needs to confirm his feeling from someone who has experienced that night, and has the key to uncover its mysteries. That is why he does not show surprise when Dolores reports the facts to him. He asks her, for the sake of confirmation, "They weren't Arabs, were they?" (213). Dolores shows him surprise and nods as a sign to indicate agreement. After all, if the Arabs are the murderers, she would not hide herself in the Casbah, the Arab quarter in Libreville, because, he says, it was her only place to "be safe from Europeans" (213). She informs him about "the organization" that gives orders to Joseph, and because of it he died (214).

Knowing that *Darkness Visible* is about the last years of the Algerian War of Independence, the reader can guess that the organization which Dolores tells Lavers about is the O. A. S., (or Secret Armed Organization). It was active during the war where it "unleashed hit squads that roamed the streets, targeting Muslims, liberals willing to compromise, settlers preparing to leave Algeria, and even units of the French army" (Wagner 2012, 89). Its cause was to keep Algeria French, and one of its famous slogans was, "Vive l'Algérie Française" (Horne 2006, 302). There are several references that confirm that it is the OAS as its French members like Michel Vicente and Jacques Blachon, and its slogan, "Algérie Française" (Lewis 1960, 143). The potential behind not calling the organization by its name is clarified by the narrator, Lavers, when he says that the organization "stood for the ancient cynical law of southern Europe" that settlers had imported to Algeria, a force that always remained hidden (217). It wielded immense power because it was founded on the unyielding, bitter realities of human dark nature rather than the idealistic notions of absolute justice, democracy, and equality for all people. Lavers's reference to the "ancient cynical law" refers to a long-standing tradition of exploitation, with disregard for idealistic principles. Therefore, by mentioning the FLN and disregarding to mention the OAS by its name can suggest here that Lewis politically views the latter as the illegal group in the war. In a broader sense, the presence-absence dichotomy makes difference between a legitimate and illegitimate revolution, that is the difference between the FLN and the OAS.

During that night, Dolores sees "the Europeans" killing Joseph due to his refusal to stop the Arabs from gathering which would unite them. She continues telling Lavers the facts, particularly when Michel

came to Joseph with the task to "finish off a European family living on one of the farms, and make it look like an Arab job," which Joseph refused (215-216). Consequently, the organization decided to dispatch him and charge the Arabs with it. They, Lavers concludes, "had killed two birds with one stone. It had eliminated a weak and rebellious member" and "had provided the victims whose sacrifice would blow to pieces the odious peace of accommodation that looked like smothering its influence in Algeria" (217). This quotation indicates the socio-political factors of the struggle between the French, and the Algerians. It is discernible in the use of the previous metaphor to express the verbal, and cultural oppression against the natives that is another unacceptable outcome of French colonial actions in Algeria.

The news continues to write about Joseph's murder. This time, the *Eclaireur* states that the attackers did not spare anyone, regardless of age or gender, "thus leaving it to suppose that the children had been included in the massacre," which, further, suggests that even the native children are attacked by the media (114). However, in a general sense, the war often involves blaming and accusing certain people leading to further division and hostility. The use of media to describe such events can have a significant impact on public perception and the way that the native people are viewed. Lewis, through introducing the media as a part participating in the war is addressing the importance of being aware of the potential biases and perspectives in time of war and to approach such news with a critical eye as his protagonist, Lavers.

Another anti-colonial aspect of the novel that illustrates the thesis that the French colonial presence is neither just, nor innocent is through implementing the Manicheism literary device in characterization. By appropriating this term, Fanon's concept of Manicheanism can be linked to the characters' behaviors in *Darkness Visible* which the narrator uses to convey two categories of people in the colonial world. Lavers serves as a lens through which the reader can determine what is right and wrong, ethical or not, and whose lives are more fulfilling. For instance, the doctor at the hospital "prodded the man gently with his foot, and he rolled over, leaving a patch of vomit on the flour" (37). This scene may speak to the reader's mind to judge the doctor's action. When he treats Hocine callously. His behavior can be associated with Aimé Césaire's term of *thingification* or objectification of the oppressed; in which the colonizer sees the native "as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal" (Césaire 2000, 41-42). Even in the hospital which is supposed to be spirited with humanity, the native is treated with inferiority and inhumanity.

The French army's brutality and violence are narrated by Lavers. Such violence: when he hears the sound of a bombardment, he realizes that the army's response to the bazooka attack will be somewhere; a village is being destroyed, causing people to suffer instant annihilation or excruciating injuries. The incident makes him feel, he says "often in the war, of being linked in some way to this tragedy" (Lewis 1960, 68-69). The bazooka attack is an act of violence that is carried out by the native. Yet, Lavers focuses on the French army's violence and brutal reaction. Whether sympathizing or not with the victims, the natives are ostracized by the French colonial practices. Lavers, indirectly, criticizes the practices of the French army through his realistic language. Furthermore, Lewis after this instance uses a flashback technique to recall another tragic scene, which takes place a few hours before, when Lavers says: "We found three children with multiple wounds still alive. One of them was blind. Most of the dead had been

partly eaten by dogs" (69). His portrayal of reality actualizes the brutality of the war and of the French army, in particular, who are relinquishing their civilizing mission, and are instead committing more crimes and spreading much violence.

Colonel Latour's, a complex French character, shows his hidden motives when visiting the villagers, to convince them to be helpful and let French authorities open roads to the Saharan cities. He believes thinking as a merchant is the best way to deal with stubborn natives. When he is on his way to Taginit to convince them to build a bridge, he says, "It's only the problem of any merchant. We have to find out what they want and then supply that want. *It's a question of finding some way of making our presence necessary"*, thus, to make their presence needed, they look for the natives' wants as medication or fertilizer. (95, italics added). By understanding the wants and needs of the locals, Latour makes himself and his forces more appealing to them to earn their cooperation. Essentially, he is trying to win their trust and establish his presence as indispensable. Then, he adds, "we usually put the idea into their heads" to reach the desired result (95). As a result, different hypocritic strategies target the natives. However, the natives' thinking is portrayed to be free from all of these attempts as Bastien, the agronomist who works with the army, confesses, "It's the same everywhere you go" that they want the army "to go away and leave them alone" (98-99).

Manichean world as Fanon defines it is clearly exhibited in *Darkness Visible*. Through walking into El Milia's streets, Lavers identifies a Manichean setting that distinguishes between the lives of the Europeans and the natives. While he is sitting in the main street, he feels as if he is in a seedy Parisian Street, surrounded by hard-up Algerians, as he sits in El Milia's only wealthy street, which cuts through the whitewashed slums of the Arab town. Yet, he narrates "The moment you left this completely European main street you plunged into what was probably the most impoverished town in North Africa (70). The description appears to reflect a critique of colonialism, with a negative portrayal of the Algerians as "hard-up" and living in "whitewashed slums" (70). It also implies a stark division between the European influence represented by the main street and the poverty of the Arab town. This perpetuates the idea of a power imbalance and explains the colonial world's impact.

Another Manichean practice of French colonialism is the attempt to destroy the natives' culture. To fight Islam, for instance, the colonizer implements different strategies. Lewis introduces the character of the missionary of El Milia Mr. Fulton, taking the task to convert the natives to Christianity. Supported by his wife, Fulton succeeds in converting just three of the natives, and he changes their names to "Luke, Mark and John," who "seemed to have been deracialized" along with their looks that appear to be westernized (144-45). Yet, as Césaire points out, the missionaries are not interested in the spiritual value of conversion, but rather in preventing the colonized from unity and solidarity. Attempting to change natives' original names is attacking both their unity and identity in order to weaken their cultural and social structure.

In addition to opposing the Algerians' religion, the French also hinder the education and ability of the natives to achieve a decent standard of living. Accordingly, illiteracy and poverty are what characterize the natives in the novel. To say it differently, illiteracy and poverty among the Algerian

population are what guarantee the French maintaining power and superiority in Algeria. Turning schools into garages is one colonist strategy to maintain cultural superiority like "the law school which had become a garage" (193). The dissatisfaction with the lived present is revealed symbolically in the passage where Lavers admits that "El Milia's poverty had been masked and gilded by the sun" (70-71). Poverty is a recurring motif in the novel, consistently associated with Arabs and their towns and streets. This emphasizes the cultural and economic factors driving the natives to rebel against the invading colonizers, echoing Fanon's view of the world divided by the colonial context.

The colonial world is about hegemony that further characterizes the relationship between the natives and the settlers in El Milia. Hegemony, in social and political theory, refers to the dominance of one group over others, often through the spread of its beliefs and values (Gramsci 1978, 12). It exceeds its cultural and ideological realization to involve not only the exercise of power, but also the widespread acceptance and internalization of cultural norms and values by the dominated group (Williams 1992, 108-110). Lavers through his narrative instances posits the French (and European) settlers as the dominant group. For instance, when Terence notices the movement of the storks because the Arab town is burning, Lavers believes that it is a tragedy and "Absolutely indescribable" (Lewis 1690, 155). With a sense of horror, he asks "Who? What," Terence replies, "The French, of course" (155). His sense of compassion towards the episode of burning the town increases with sadness when he knows about the victims like the local idiot and the Hajji. Then, the French settlers are practicing hegemony over the natives who are already living in that Manichean colonial world, marginalized.

The violence against natives reaches beyond just them, putting anyone who helps them in danger. The Western Petroleum company becomes a target, with a warning to J.G. Hartney of a potential attack. The situation is tense as the police struggle to control the situation. During the attack, Lavers experiences chaos and confusion, especially with the oil men's actions left to interpretation. He narrates, "while I registered these facts, unable for a second to relate them to a cause, more wind-tattered scarecrow figures were toppling" (188). He paints a chaotic image and confusing scene, with being momentarily overwhelmed by the events unfolding around. The "scarecrow figures" toppling in the wind metaphorically refers to the instability and lack of control, contributing to the overall sense of disarray. They seem to fight to protect both their business and the Arab laborers they employ. Thus, the company does not let the Arabs fight alone. This brave stand is not the only one, there are other situations in which the company helps the natives. To mention examples, the company offers an electric amplifier to the natives' mosque and promises them to rebuild their minaret, which was destroyed from the first day the French invaded their place.

This colonial context cannot escape racism. Racism, while having some emotional and personal aspects, is primarily a socially constructed cultural phenomenon (Memmi 2000, 112). In the novel, it is associated with French settlers, perpetuated by wider cultural attitudes. In a scene at Café Sport, Lavers witnesses two Frenchmen exhibit their racial attitudes towards a local Arab imbecile who performs a humiliating act for money. The French sports-dealer comments, "They're disgusting", and continues, "He's a native. That's the kind of thing they go in for [...] It shows us up in a bad light" to foreigners

(Lewis 1960, 139). As the dominant group, the European colonists, need to legitimize their authority and dominance, they embrace racist ideas; which allowed them to persist in their role as colonists and "continue to live as colonists" (Memmi 2000, 31). With a racist attitude, the sport-dealer says, "We civilized them! You can see for yourself" lying his hand on Laver's who knows the potential of his gesture by stating he "invited my sympathy" (Lewis 1960, 140). The cultural practice of racism is about the culture of the dominant group, as here the settlers. Cultural generalizations can be powerful; however, they can be problematic because they oversimplify and reduce the complexity of cultural phenomena as they are "easily recognized" (Sen 2006, 103-04). Furthermore, the other French guy, after repeating the story of Joseph's murder, says, the natives are "Butchers, all of them. Men, women and children, it's all the same. It's the knife they like to use" (140). Yet, Lavers knows their purpose that is clear on the sports-dealer's face that, he says, "the French call a sympathetic one" (140). Racism is maintained through both the words used to describe them and their intended impact; as it is a form of discourse that one group develops to target the opposing group (Memmi 2000, 113).

To reach farther Saharan points, as Colonel Latour explains to Lavers, colonial authorities clear entire villages and burn their huts to build roads for colonial projects, as seen in the example of the nameless village on the way to Taginit. Lavers notices the village's history and civilization, which is estimated to be a thousand years old, and is destroyed due to the clearing colonial project. The nameless village had gone. Its life was a fragment in a historically long-established tradition, which had ended three weeks ago. Lavers reflects, as the remains indicate, "There was a good primitive system of irrigation too" this system of irrigation in the village also confirms the loss of infrastructure and basic necessities of the villagers' life during the war (Lewis 1960, 101). The nameless village had its own civilization which was rooted in history, yet, with the clearing colonial project this village lost its civilization and even its history as in the present, left with no name.

Continuing with the nameless village, Lavers is attracted to "the carcass of a goat" he encounters (101). At that scene, Latour illustrates "that in these operations, which were quick and dangerous, the animals had to be left behind" (101). Lavers chooses to remain silent, but he nonetheless shares with the reader the reality he experiences. The remains of the goat serve as a symbol of the violence inflicted on the native population and their animals by colonialism. Furthermore, in that cleared village, a significant number of animals such as goats and sheep had perished, as evidenced by the swarms of flies and the overpowering odor. The fact that animals also suffered underscores the far-reaching effects of the conflict and the pain and hardship it inflicted on both human and non-human beings.

Immediacy and Manichean aspects of *Darkness Visible* can hardly be separated as they are interconnected. When they meet, they both reflect Laver's political attitude towards the Franco-Algerian war. At first, he shows a little conservative political opinion towards the war with a hopeful vision of reaching peace. Although he admits directly that he is with the natives for the present time when he says to Terence, "In so far as they're victims of the present situation I'm on their side", he still believes in peaceful solutions especially with the hope being laid on Latour's expedition (42). Then, from the beginning he knows that the natives are the victims. This view develops more to not just an explicit

political view of the community around him, that is the oil company, but into a more open attitude with actions and statements. As the novel progresses, Lavers is increasingly drawn to the side of the native, and his attitude towards the French becomes increasingly strained after he discovers their hypocrisy and complex.

The reader can notice the change in Lavers's political attitude. It is apparent when he meets Colonel Latour after witnessing different events and incidents throughout the course of the novel. This becomes clear when he meets him, he confesses, "*Going into Latour's old bus had been like slipping back into a past from which I was separated by a gulf of time and incident*" (221, italics added). This means that entering Latour's old bus is a different experience now, or a melancholic one, in a sense that it leads Lavers back to a time in the past, which is near. But now he feels himself separated from that time because of the realities he has discovered. The reference to a "gulf of time and incident" highlights the idea that Lavers feels disconnected from his earlier belief and trust in the French authority, and that the present with all the witnessed incidents and the violations against the natives has changed his attitude.

One of the incidents that have affected Lavers's opinion remarkably is the burning of the Arab town, or the medina, at El Milia. When he enters with Kobtan to that Arab territory, his emotions are clearly exposed. For instance, Kobtan invites Lavers to look what the people of the medina have lost and what are their new sufferings. He says, "You see", because they had lost their valuable possessions, they have become unreasonable and "wild animals" because they were tied to their possessions and property, but now all of those things are gone (195). Vividly, by looking at disgraceful and grieving behavior of the natives crawling on the ground in the mud, who have become mentally feeble due to their intense sorrow over possessions that would be considered worthless by Europeans, fills Lavers with a sense of embarrassment and degradation. With that intense feeling of "shame and humiliation", he asks Kobtan, *"What can be done for them?*" (195, italics added). While Lavers is frustrated at the Arab town scene, he remembers another scene narrating another suffering. He recalls a memory that is stuck in his mind at Libreville. He feels overwhelming guilt as he thinks about the children with deep sadness; those confused faces trapped behind barbed wire in Libreville. He had not gone to help them, and instead tried to forget about their existence, excusing himself from any responsibility. Despite this, he knows deep down that he has been accountable and should have done something to assist them. Significantly, the two encounters raise questions about the ethics of aid and relief efforts, and the impact that colonialism and other forms of domination can have on the natives during war-time. Also, they reflect Lavers's will to help the natives because he sees them as the oppressed.

Lavers, after that, becomes more engaged in politics of the war. He sympathizes with the natives and confronts Colonel Latour about their wages in the middle of a dialogue about Blachon, who is supposed to be the boss of the organization. Latour tells Lavers about Blachon's intention to establish a thoroughly managed slave state and view the country as a scientific farm, with Arabs as the livestock. Blachon believes, Latour recounts, the best for the natives is to let them as they, claiming that they are inherently peasants and modern living only brings out their negative behaviors. This is why he opposes the oil men's policy towards the native labourers. Then, Latour with an accusatory tone, says to Lavers: **"**You're

spoiling perfectly good peasants. Putting ideas into their heads," yet Lavers does not deny his words and bravely replies: "And paying them twice the wages the colons pay" (223). The tension between the two grows higher when Latour tells him that Blachon is supplying the FLN with arms, Lavers, again, disagrees with him, "No" (226). His reply with certainty that Blachon would not help the FLN goes further to uncover the visible reality, and he adds, "I can quite imagine he wouldn't. Forgive me, though, but it all sounds rather unlikely. At least to someone new to this kind of thing" (226). This response makes Latour nervous as he fumbles with his hands, searching for items on his desk; while Lavers feels uncomfortable to be seated in the middle of this tension.

Lavers does not only report realities of the war, but also calls the reader to be critical of the incidents. Towards the end of the novel, he invites the reader to critically think about the reality and mystery around Colonel Latour, the representative of the French authority in the novel. As facts reveal, the same gun that is used to kill Joseph is the same that killed Blachon, the boss of the organization that is responsible for much of the violences against the natives. This surprising fact makes Lavers feel a sense of mystery around Colonel Latour. He says:

> when I went to say goodbye. The colonel's only reference to Blachon during the few minutes we spent together was remarkably lacking in excitement. "In a way. I suppose", he said, "we've been saved a good deal of trouble. But I can't tell you how much I'd looked forward to seeing that villain in the dock. (247)

This quote suggests that Latour is involved in Blachon's death. With the fact that Joseph and Blachon were killed by the same person, Latour has a hand. Lavers asks and answers himself, "Did he know any more than I did, or he'd read in the newspapers, about Blachon's end? There was nothing in his manner or his voice that gave the slightest suggestion of it" (247). In the light of this, the reader may ask with skepticism: who is the real boss of the organization? Critically, Lavers leads the reader to think that the French army is also involved with the organization that, further, questions the values of European civilization, and of the French in particular.

For anti-colonial ends: legitimacy of the Revolutionary War and nationalist feelings and mobilization of the natives

This article exposes a new aspect of the Algerians' nationalist mobilization and feelings because it is neglected by literary criticism in *Darkness Visible*, which is further disregarded by critics and researchers. Indeed, nationalism is one of the many forces that leads to independence (Lawrence 2013, 9). The novel, thus, shows the nationalist feelings of the natives, who both refuse the French to be on their land, and help the F.L.N., to emancipate themselves. Lewis, in the novel, emphasizes the nationalistic aspirations of the Algerians. Through contacting the natives, he shows their rebellious spirit that strives for freedom.

Early in the novel, Lavers states a historical fact about the peasants who had worked for the French settlers in their farms. In August, during an afternoon, he narrates:

> after a Roman peace that had lasted a hundred years, the Arab field-labourers had risen and slaughtered their white masters. The Arabs had taken up their pitchforks,

> their sickles and their ancient shotguns and they had killed in one afternoon every European they could lay their hands upon, slaughtered their animals and burned down their houses […] They had risen like the slaves of Spartacus to annihilate and be annihilated. (Lewis 1960, 29-30)

This incident had happened during the 1930s, and here Lavers is referring exactly to what had occurred in 1939. In fact, the years 1936 and 1937 are considered the golden period for the revolting Algerian farmers and laborers in all the country, particularly in Sidi Bel Abbés, Tlemcen, Ain Timouchent, Mostaganem, Metidja, Batna and Jijel [1](Tikran 2018, 122-23).

By recalling Fanon here, decolonization is not achieved within a short period of time, but it is rather "a historical process" between two opposing powers (Fanon 1963, 36). That means the Algerians' will to fight the oppressor was determined before the actual break of the Algerian War of independence of November, 1954. Lewis, by interfering in this historical incident, is reflecting on the transitional time in both French colonialism and Algerian's long emancipation struggle. Put differently, the dichotomies: French civilization-Algerian revolution, and the beginning of French's project failure-the beginning of Algerian's liberation thought are put forward using political, economic and historical terms.

Lewis chooses El Milia which is situated in the East, specifically Jijel, to narrate the incident. He focuses on a specific place in order to demonstrate that it is indifferent from other places in Algeria. Therefore, the article argues that the previous passage intertextualizes with Mohammed Dib's *L'incendie*- The Fire- (1954), which was written few months before the outbreak of the Algerian Revolution and who chooses his setting to be in the West. Lewis employs topicality of incident to create a sense of relevance and timeliness of the historical incident, which is a part of the overall struggle. This literary technique puts emphasis on both the connection between his story and the real-world Algerian event, and the economic and ideological interpretation of peasantry uprisings. In *L'incendie*, Dib portrays a critical situation in the Algerian colonial history, specifically at the dawn of the Second World War, in which the tension between the French settlers and the Algerian people continues to intensify, and Dib chooses to focus his intellectual eye on the rural environment, where farmers or fellahs clash with the settlers and farm owners.

In fact, Dib's decision is a part of his project to show the political and social evolution of Algeria, "The strike of the fellahs had just broken out. Torn from itself, from its inertia, and pulled very slowly at first, emerging from a long and heavy sleep, the country moved forward in life"[2](Dib 1954, 31). The revolt of the farmers was planned because of their misery and exploitation caused by the French settlers, which had empowered them to become an impetus for standing against oppression. *L'incendie*, evokes both the event that marked the summer of 1939 in Bni Boublene (in Tlemcen), and the progress of revolt that began to develop in the minds of Algerian farmers. Dib parallels the rise of the colonial power of the French after the Second World War from one point, and the rise of the revolutionary activity of the colonized Algerians from the other (Desplanques and Geesey 1992, 71). By exposing the rural and economic aspect of the beginning of the Algerian revolution, and drawing on this particular historical

incident, Lewis is aware of its history, legitimacy and rightfulness which later embraces the political aspect of this long- struggle to demand independence.

Looking closely at the passage about the peasants' violence towards the European settlers, Lewis, through Lavers, does not look at their violent practice negatively. He symbolically compares the revolts of the farmers with that of the Roman rebel Spartacus, who with his followers had risen against the Roman authorities. This Roman figure "has been elevated into a conscious revolutionary leader of oppressed slaves and free proletariat, a leader with definite ideals and a definite social program" and he became an inspiring source for novels and films in modern time (Baldwin 1967, 289). Lewis, through comparing the peasants' uprising with that of Spartacus, clearly reflects his sympathetic position towards the Algerian revolutionaries who are rising like Spartacus to subvert the established French authority and re-establish a new nation. Additionally, Lewis's symbolism is caught up as a prop for the portrayal of the Algerian dramatic relation with the French colonizer to the reader who may not know the long-established reasons behind the war. His comparison which links Algerian's revolt with mythical symbol for revolution is having a mechanistic relationship.

Another aspect that highlights anti-colonial sentiments is the manifestation of the nationalist sentiments among the natives through drawing on the kind of relationship between the French and the Algerians, besides what each side thinks of the other. For instance, Colonel Latour undermines the power of the peasantry because he believes that "They think with their stomachs" and does not expect the natives to have reason (Lewis 1960, 67). Here, the French ignore or hide the fact about the role of the Algerian peasantry historically and politically who have been characterized as a revolutionary force. Furthermore, through Latour's claim the Algerian people's interest is just to feed themselves and are lacking ideological and moral thinking, which is proved to be wrong. Nevertheless, Lavers shows the paradox of the French policy and thinking through Latour's having contradictory beliefs when Umm el Abid villagers refuse to listen to Latour and are against his project to build the bridge across their village. That means, the villagers do think with their reason, as Latour may believe. They resist and refuse the colonial expansion of the French power over their land. Moreover, these normal people when taking from them their own possessions, "they become dangerous. It is then that they begin to have thoughts of liberty" that Latour's "experiment has failed" (192-96).

Discussing the nationalist sentiments of the natives includes the role of Algerian women during the war. Lewis's *Darkness Visible* portrays women not as a merely violated gender, and helpless creatures whose veils indicate their submissiveness to the system of patriarchy but as powerful and different. Lavers portrays another story of them. He meets, at the beginning of the novel, Berber women and takes them along his way by his car. The 'fatmas' are not passive here, rather they are apparently participating in the Revolutionary War through helping the F.L.N. fighters. They, he narrates, "had been taking food to the fellaghas" (28). Another example, Kobtan's wife is the main reason behind her husband's joining the revolutionaries at the mountains. J.G. tells Lavers that "it was she who got him to join the nationalist movement […] *she was a very emancipated woman*" (253-54, italics added). This is a new representation to the Algerian women by the West for the clear reason that native women had their weighty position in

the Revolution and the FLN and their integration of into the Algerian War had to align with preserving the revolutionary character of the conflict; that they were expected to demonstrate the same level of sacrifice and selflessness as the male revolutionaries (Fanon 1967, 48).

Kobtan is almost the only Algerian character who had been given narrative space to speak for his nation. He works as a small-scale administrator at the local tax bureau. Over the past two years, he had been providing Arabic lessons sporadically to Lavers which led to a prolonged exchange of compliments. Through having conversation with Lavers, Kobtan narrates the nation's pains which drift them to revolution and war. For Kobtan, Lavers means the outside world that is ignorant of many of the facts about the situation in Algeria. Thus, Lavers is establishing facts through his spirit of understanding and inquiring. Kobtan is an example of the Algerian nationalist mobilization. He has a job with the F. L. N., and it is revealed to be the one who takes money to the F.L.N from the oil company as J. G. reveals to Lavers towards the end of the novel.

Paying off the F. L. N., or the fellaghas is a point that Lewis rises to. At El-Milia, the Western oil company has no choice but to pay off for one reason that "everyone in this area pays off" (Lewis 1960, 21). This act has two interpretations. The first is that the fellaghas collect taxes as a form of enforcement to acknowledge their existence as a legitimate political or military force that denies the legitimacy of the French government rule. In this sense, paying off to them is not only a form of financial compensation, but it is also a form of political recognition. Second, Lewis focuses on the FLN's economic activities to reflect on a broader theme, that is nationalist mobilization. This concept is central to the decolonization process. Accordingly, nationalist mobilization is about the actions and "in the colonial world is usually analyzed for its effects rather than its causes" (Lawrence 2013, 9-10). Then, the revolutionaries are aware of their task to assert their national identity and their desire to work and benefit from their resources like oil. Another example of the natives' nationalist mobilization is when Kobtan assists Lavers in recruiting workers from Taginit village through sending a letter to the headman who, in return, agrees to send them to the company. This type of action can signify a pushback against colonial authorities and policies, with a call for increased independence and autonomy.

Kobtan explains to Lavers why Algerians fight for their liberty. He says, commenting on the burning of the Arab town, "our losses have united us" (Lewis 1960, 191). In this sense, Kobtan feels the belonging to one nation, and one cause. What creates revolution and opposition to the government policy is hopelessness, Kobtan demonstrates. Lavers is aware that the project has failed and the solution cannot be offered by the West. He reveals, "In fact it had always been unreasonable to me to suppose that all the solutions to the human predicament had been invented in the West" (197). Indeed, these words are directly pointed against the Western ideology, or more plainly, indicate the loss of the moral code through imperialism, capitalism and colonialism. Lewis translates the failure of both the French project which is part of the Western agenda by uncovering that the French cause more issues; therefore, he is aware of the repercussions of the French's policies and actions against the Algerians, and thus takes the task to narrate them in his novel.

Perversely, at the end of the novel, Kobtan sends a letter to Lavers to tell him, "I am sorry that you only have known our country in the days of its despair" and when peace comes, "you and all our friends will return to help us with our great labour of raising it up from its ruins" (254). He is painfully aware of his people's economic situation to be slaves on their own land and to see their country's resources exploited and controlled by the colonists. Interestingly, Kobtan's meandering letter is enlivened with hope and resilience for Algeria to have a brighter future for Algeria. Kobtan speaks for the nation and he is aware of the power of collectivity and solidarity to fight the French. Certainly, nationalist resistance against colonial rule is intriguing because it involved a joint effort against a powerful and authoritarian state; such collective action was not an easy task, given the strength and control that the colonial power had, making the nationalist opposition a unique and fascinating aspect of history (Lawrence 2013, 5).

More interesting still is the symbolism of Kobtan, as a proper name. In Lawrence's sense, Kobtan contributes to intensifying the nationalist mobilization in the novel, and his name, this article argues, reflects that as well. Kobtan's name means "the captain" who is "the commander of the ship or the civil aircraft" or a leader of a crew (Rashid 2012, 81)). And the leader of the ship in Arabic is "قبطان" (Breslin et al. 2007,184). He assumes the role of a leader, as he knows that the labor sector is also important to help the country to rise up again. The leader of the ship is responsible for guiding and directing the crew to reach their destination safely. In this context, Kobtan is the leader of his nation, recognizing the significance of economy in the revival of the country; and Lewis selects this particular name for the Arab native, whom he gives a good space in the narrative, cannot be without potential in the novel.

Conclusion

Norman Lewis's *Darkness Visible* is one of the modern English novels that narrates the theme of the Franco-Algerian war, particularly in its last years. Based on an anti-colonial discourse, this article concludes that Lewis, through his realistic tone, portrays the failure of the French imperialist project which is intended normally to civilize the Algerians. This failure reveals three points. The first, the French policies have not ameliorated the economic conditions for the natives because they still live in a Manichean colonial world, in poverty occupying the margins of the cities, unlike the European settlers who live comfortably and run their own business in the main cities of El Milia and Libreville. The second, the French project fails to enhance the socio-cultural aspect of the natives' life because their cultural values are targeted through delicate strategies. The third, the most critical, the French authorities fail politically to end the violences against the natives practiced by the settlers and the local press. Significantly, Lewis does not only narrate the failure of the French colonial project, but also exhibits the nationalist characteristics of the natives. He, through Lavers, transfers the feeling that he is artistically and morally entitled to sympathize with them. By narrating their daily struggles and oppressions along with their sense of sacrifice, and solidarity action for seeing themselves independent, Lewis clearly expresses his political stance in support of the natives who are marginalized and unprivileged in the novel.

الحرب الفرنسيّة - الجزائريّة: سرد فشل المهمة الحضاريّة للمشروع الإمبرياليّ الفرنسيّ في رواية لنورمان لويس*(الظلام الظاهر)* (1960)

كريمة عيسات

قسم اللغة الانجليزيّة وآدابها، الجامعة الأردنية، الأردن

الملخص

تبحث هذه المقالة في الوضع السياسي لتمثيل الاستعمار الفرنسيّ للجزائر خلال الحرب الفرنسيّة الجزائريّة (1954-1962) في *(الظلام الظاهر)* (1960) للمؤلف البريطاني الويلزي نورمان لويس. وتجسد الرواية كيفية تصيير المشروع الاستعماريّ الفرنسيّ، الذي كان هدفه يتمثل في الحضارة للجزائريين، كفشل عن طريق إثارة الفكر المعارض للاستعمار، وفي محتوى الرواية، لم تفشل البعثة في تحقيق أهداف أجندتها فحسب، بل يتجسد الفشل أيضًا في فضح الأحداث السلبيّة الأخرى للاستغلال والاضطهاد وتدمير الثقافة للشعوب المحتلة. كما تدرس المقالة استخدام لويس للحداثيّة في الحوار وتشخيص الشخصيات باستخدام الأدوات الأدبيّة للنقد لممارسات الاستعمار الفرنسيّ ضد الأصليين؛ في الوقت نفسه، يؤشر لويس إلى الموجة القوميّة للإثبات من صلاحيّة الجزائريين الذين يجنحون للحرية. لذلك، تختبر هذه المقالة على الصعيد الموضوعيّ "الظلام الظاهر" ضمن معايير الحديث المعارض للاستعمار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الظلام الظاهر، الحرب الفرنسيّة – الجزائريّة، الحداثيّة، المانيشان، الموجة القوميّة، الحديث المناهض للاستعمار، نورمان لويس.

Endotes

[1] The following quote has been adapted and rephrased from its original Arabic source.

[2] This quote is originally in French : "La gréve des fellahs venait d'éclater. Arraché á soi, á son inertie, et enchaîné tout d'abord trés lentement, au sortir d'un long et lourd sommeil, le pays avança dans la vie" (31).

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