

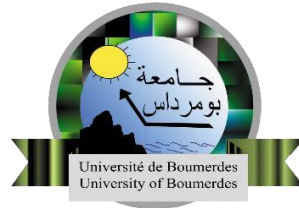
**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**

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**The Politics of Gender in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019): Exploring  
the Self and the Other in a Feminist Context**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Master's Degree in Anglophone Literatures and Civilizations**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my own investigation, wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

ARAB Bouchra Lina

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my parents, my family, my friends, and everyone who has been the source of my strength and weakness.

### **Acknowledgment**

My most sincere thanks and appreciation go to my supervisor, Dr. KHERIF Sonia for believing in me and guiding me throughout this journey with long patience, and great suggestions. I could never ask for a better supervisor.

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## Abstract

This dissertation analyses the theme of the Self and the other from a feminist perspective in Isabella Hammad's novel *the Parisian* (2019), using the theoretical frameworks of *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, Nawal El Saadawi's theory of Arab feminism *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), and Gayatri Spivak's theory of *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). The study, employing Said's theory, examines the pejorative image the westerns have created about the 'Orient' and 'Orientals' demonstrated by Hammad, through the discrimination Midhat encounters during his life in France, and the representation of the belly dancers. Furthermore, El Saadawi's theory of Arab feminism analyses the patriarchal agenda against women in the Third World countries that degrade their position within society to men's 'other'. The novel's female characters with a focus on Fatima, are portrayed to challenge traditional gender roles. Spivak's theory of the Subaltern is applied in *The Parisian* (2019) to examine how the discriminatory laws against women in the region are used as a pretext for the Western discourse of liberation to secure the imperial presence; resulting in a further othering of women. The study concludes through the depiction of the October 1919 revolution in the literary piece scrutinized, that Arab women are able to deconstruct the traditional gender roles and create their own discourse of liberation without the need for Western intervention. The findings of the dissertation provide insights into contemporary discussions of feminism, Orientalism, and postcolonialism, and suggest avenues for future research.

**Key words:** Blind pussycat, Feminism, Orient, Other, Self, Subaltern.

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## General Introduction

Palestinian literature written after 1948 mainly discusses the national causes of exile and identity. Mahmoud Darwish, Ghassan Kanafani, Emile Habiby and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, are among the leading figures of Palestinian literature, who portrayed the existential sense of loss, pain and exilic life that the Palestinian people experienced in their homeland or in diaspora through poetry, short stories, novels and plays such as “A Lover from Palestine” (1966), *Men in the Sun* (1962), *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist* (1974), *Hunters in a Narrow Street* (1960), and many other works where the previously mentioned authors attempted to recreate Palestine with literature of exile that was published in different Arab countries (Saleh para. 2-4).

Moreover, it is also fundamental to refer to the post-nakba Palestinian women writers and acknowledge their contribution to the Palestinian literature through their works in different literary styles; including Fadwa Tuqan’s poem “The Night and The Horsemen” (1969), and Sahar Khalifeh’s novel *Wild Thorns* (1976). Additionally, to defend the Palestinian cause in their novels that narrate displacement, exile and the Palestinian identity, some Palestinian writers who were born in exile use English language in the process; namely, Ghada Karmi’s *In Search of Fatima* (2002), Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* (2006), Hala Aylan’s *The Twenty-Ninth Year* (2019), and Isabella Hammad with *the Parisian* (2019). This study will demonstrate how *The Parisian* (2019) showcases the theme of the Self and the Other, by providing it with a feminist reading; examining the life of women in the Middle East under male dominance, and is not included in the western feminist discourse; degrading her position to the other and double other.

Pre-nakba Palestine had a large, deeply rooted, ancient Arab society composed of multiple religious backgrounds, Muslims, Christians, and Jewish (Ibish para 1). Later, this society



vanished in a matter of months and Palestine became the Jewish state of Israel as a result of several conflicts between the Muslim and Jewish communities along with the British authorities throughout the 1930s and 40s over the land, notably the Arab Revolt from 1936 to 1939 (Ibish para. 1). Palestinian literature prior to nakba witnessed “a small-scale local *nahda* in the form of *adab maqalat* (periodical literature)” where authors, including Khalil al-Sakakini and Iskandar al-Khuri al-Baytjali, wrote in magazines namely *Al-Nafa'is Al-Asriyya*, founded by pioneer writer Khalil Baidas. As well as *Zahrat al-jamil* created by Jamil al-Bahari (Abdou and Abu-Remaileh 23-43). However, these magazines along with many others were cancelled and interrupted by the British mandatory government (Abdou and Abu-Remaileh 23-43). Until the entire literary *nahda* was fully interrupted by the 1948 nakba and remains disconnected from Palestinian literary history today (Abdou & Abu-Remaileh 23-43).

Isabella Hammad, author of *The Parisian* (2019), is a British-Palestinian writer, who is born in exile and writes about Palestine in English language. However, through her narrative, Hammad takes a different path in portraying Palestine and the Palestinian people. The setting and events of the novel take place during pre-nakba Palestine, where the reader is introduced to Midhat Kamal, a young Palestinian man who shows little interest in the political and social radical changes in his country that led to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. His major concerns are mainly about his personal life, his business, his pleasures, and his old love.

This dissertation provides a feminist analysis of Isabella Hammad's novel *The Parisian* (2019), using the theoretical frameworks of Orientalism, Arab feminism, and the subaltern to explore the theme of the Self and the Other. Through an examination of the novel's portrayal of women in the Middle East under male dominance, the study argues that the novel offers a unique perspective on Palestinian identity and resistance that is often excluded from Western feminist discourse.

The choice of the topic as the research subject is of a paramount significance, through the analysis of Hammad's novel, this study highlights the oppression that Arab women have been facing up to this day by their patriarchal societies that impose oppressive traditions on them. In addition to the Western feminist movement using the Arab women's case as a pretext to attempt to impose the European values of freedom; resulting a further degradation in women's status. Furthermore, this study asserts the ability of Arab women to deconstruct the traditional gender, apart from the western discourse. Overall, this topic has been chosen in order to give the Arab woman justice.

The theme of the Self and the Other in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019), takes central stage. While various articles explore this theme from different perspectives through the life of Midhat as an Arab in France being treated as an inferior for his cultural background, this review aims to contribute a feminist approach to the examination of the Self and the Other in the novel.

Dr Robyn Creswell in his article "A Free Man in Nablus" (2019), discusses otherness as one of the themes dealt with in analysing *The Parisian*. The critic describes the characters Molineu and Antoine as two examples of the pejorative, discriminatory view of the West towards the East as the Other by studying the latter out of "genuine curiosity", the critic argues: "... Docteur Molineu, who speaks no Arabic, regards his guest as the possessor of a "primitive brain" which might yet be civilized by learning French" (9). According to Creswell, Molineu makes Midhat's brain a subject of his studies to examine how a Muslim, Arab man's brain functions (9). As for Père Antoine, the French priest who studies the city of Nablus out of curiosity to get to know the other and works as a spy for the British authorities neglects Nablus and describes it as a city separate from "the great movement of the world." (9) Thus, Creswell claims that, they, Dr Molineu and Père Antoine, exclude Arabs and Muslims from history, the idea Hammad's novel opposes by suggesting that Arabs were always historical, and did not

enter history in the early twentieth century (14). Although the scholar provides interesting insight in his article, he failed to showcase how Arab women are also overlooked and ostracized in this orientalist dogmatism; a matter that is thoroughly discussed in this study.

Accordingly, in her paper, “The Western Self and the Arab Other in Isabella Hammad’s *The Parisian* (2021)”, Fatima Zahra Chadi investigates the complexities of the postcolonial world, through the question of identity and belonging along with the impact of the cultural conflicts between the west and the east. More particularly, Chadi analyses the psychological effects left on Midhat as a result of the discrimination and otherness he faced in France (10). According to the critic, Midhat uses denial as a defence mechanism to refuse accepting the reality of the Molineus despite his awareness of it (22). In addition to the protagonist’s attempt to escape his experience with humiliation for his Arab background and identifying as a French, more particularly, a Parisian (23). Moreover, Chadi supposes that Midhat’s reaction of abandoning medicine to study history after his experience with the Molineus, can be taken in as the Freudian term of *Regression*, that the protagonist uses as a coping mechanism to reinforce his sense of pride of his formerly dominant culture, by studying Muslim scientists such as; Ibn-Sienna and Ibn-Rushd (24). In her analysis, Chadi uses the postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories as two tools related to one another in order to discuss the effects of the Self and the other on Hammad’s protagonist Midhat Kamal as a result of the discrimination he witnessed in Europe. However, the critic failed to include the feminist criticism discussed in this paper.

Furthermore, Fadwa Kamal Abdel Rahman studies the dialogue between geographical terrains and their cultural and ideological manifestations by employing geocritical mapping and analysis in her essay “Mapping Spaces, Identities and Ideologies in *The Parisian*” (2019). She argues that the “merits” of the novel are best represented through the ‘spatial networks’, that bring together the personal and social aspects within the political basis and global negotiations and transgressions of the crossed worlds and characters: “Nablus, Cairo, Constantinople,

Montpellier, Paris, Jerusalem, and Damascus are represented as socially constructed spaces implicated in racial, religious, ethnic, and gender-related constrictions.”(107). Abdel Rahman explains that the use of these cities in the novel goes beyond settings or background of the plot, rather, they are crucial elements that help uncover the hidden meaning of the text (100). Furthermore, the critic includes the hybridity of cultures that came as a result of the mix of different religions in Nablus; she mentions the Muslims visits to the Samaritan priests to set the evil eye on someone, prophesy or to make a charm for love, even though it is not allowed in Islam to deal with magic (113). Along with bringing the western culture through ‘Nouvautés Ghada’ the women’s fashion shop that he opened with Eli the Samaritan, and work with Butrus the Christian tailor (113). The critic studies different cultural and religious backgrounds in different and similar milieus. However, she missed examining the novel from the feminist perspective employed as the essence of this study.

The Self and the Other is one of the main themes that Isabella Hammad sheds light on in *The Parisian* (2019), a novel that takes place in 1914 pre-nakba Palestine and describes the journey of Midhat Kamal a young, Arab, Palestinian, Muslim from Nablus to France. During his life among the westerns, he is regarded as an inferior for his ‘Oriental’ background. Several articles have studied this literary work examining the theme of the Self and the other from different perspectives. This paper, however, contributes the theme with a feminist approach.

This study employs a number of theories, literary works and articles to analyse *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad. Edward Said’s main argument in *Orientalism* (1978) is the misrepresentation of the east by western writers which created stereotypes and a pejorative view of the west towards the Orient and its women, as a way to maintain the West’s dominance and sense of superiority over the east. Said argues that Arabs are represented as camel riders, terrorists, with hooked noses who do not deserve their wealth and their women as brainless sexual objects, unlike the virtuous westerns, represented as “true human being[s]” that have a

mission of civilization and enlightenment which gives them the right to own and expend the majority of world resources despite belonging to minority (24-108).

Gayatri Spivak in *Can The Subaltern Speak?* (1988) claims that western feminism does not serve the feminist cause in the third world countries; rather than allowing them to make their own decisions and changes, the western liberation discourse aims to secure its presence in the third world by imposing its values (311). According to Spivak, the western discourse marginalizes the 'subaltern' even further, and rejects the tools used in this process by the British authorities in India in the name of 'civilizing mission' with mentioning the ban of 'sati' tradition Spivak suggests "it should have been read with martyrdom" (302).

In her other work entitled *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), Nawal El Saadawi treats women's position in the Arab world, and how she is exposed to the social double standards, to live a "life of a woman" (164) as a virgin pure 'blind pussycat' by being weak, ignorant, and obedient (93). While a male child is raised with more freedom to become strong and responsible (93). El Saadawi critiques the contradictions of Islamic countries that force women to cover up their bodies but at the same time use woman's body in cinema and literature (159). She also adds that by men's misinterpretation and manipulation of religious texts throughout history religion becomes patriarchal (257). Finally, El Saadawi argues that the situation of women in the Arab countries can be changeable by them, without the need to the Western discourse by mentioning the women martyrs of October 1919 revolution in Egypt (358).

The above theories are applied to analyse the Arab woman's status as the Other of men, and double Other of imperialism in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019). In addition, to the Arab women's potential to make this situation changeable for the better, independently from the western discourse and its ideology.

The current study is divided into an introduction, the historical and theoretical chapter that is divided into two parts, the first one includes the historical background that Hammad

relied on in writing her literary work. The second part contains a detailed explanation of the theories applied in the study of the novel, chapter two is analytical, and a general conclusion. The second chapter entitled “Negotiating Identities: The Interplay of Self and Other in Isabella Hammad’s *The Parisian* (2019)” is divided into three parts, the first part discusses the ‘Other’ as one of the consequences of the colonial pejorative view held by the West towards the East and its women, that led to the pretext of imposing the ‘superior’ European Self, Western traditions and values in term of ‘la mission civilisatrice’ to justify their presence in the territory. The second part analyses the double standards made by the Arab society between men and women depicted in the novel, in addition to the contradictions of Muslim societies that claim to be following the Islamic instructions but do the opposite especially when it concerns women. Additionally, it deals with the manipulation and misinterpretation of religion in order to justify the otherness of women in the Arab society narrated in *The Parisian* (2019). Moreover, the study analyses the Subaltern in the third part; highlighting the further degradation of women’s position by the Western liberating discourse, that uses the discrimination of women to secure its presence in the third world. This study suggests that the feminist movement in the Third world women possess the potential of being liberated from the patriarchal system of their society and the imperial presence without depending on the western discourse.

The general conclusion sums up the findings of this study by highlighting the main ideas discussed in each chapter. It shortly tackles the use of the historical background and theories employed in the analysis of the novel in chapter one. In addition to applying the theories on the characters and events in Hammad’s novel.

## **Chapter One:**

### **The Historical and Theoretical Background**

#### **Introduction:**

This chapter will provide the study with the historical background that influenced Isabella Hammad's writing of her novel *The Parisian* (2019), including the transitive political events that shaped the current situation in the world in general, and the Middle East in particular mainly, Palestine. The second section of this chapter is provided with a detailed explanation of the theories used in the study and analysis of the novel entitled *the Parisian* (2019) by Isabella Hammad; including Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* (1977), Gayatri Spivak's theory of the Subaltern (1988), and finally Nawal El Saadawi's feminist theory of *the Hidden Face of Eve* (1980).

#### **I- The Historical Background**

Throughout the period between the declining Ottoman rule and the establishment of British mandate in the twentieth century, Palestine had undergone transformative socio-political changes that characterized that era; shaping the Palestinian historical issues which its effects remain. Notably, the Palestinian war that resulted in the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 (Rogan and Shlaim 1). From the rise of the Nationalist movements in the Arab world, leading to the Arab Revolt in 1916 against the Ottoman authority, to the British mandatory's announcement of the Belfour declaration in 1917, the Palestinian territory had become the centre of historical and socio-political conflicts, that explain the Palestinian question in the modern day (Khalidi 10). Moreover, the emergence of the intellectual and cultural movements both globally and within Palestine during that period, with Europe as the centre of the scientific developments, attracted the Arab students to join its universities. This exposure to the Western

education and ideologies formed new Arab elite has created tension between identity, traditions and modernity, notably regarding women rights.

The Arab Nationalist movements that led to the collapse of the Ottoman rule over the Arab countries, including Palestine after the 1916 revolution, “brought new dynamics and challenges for the Palestinian society” under the British authority (Khalidi 10). Notably, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, that aimed to support the establishment of a national homeland in Palestine for the Jewish immigrants from Europe, signified a milestone moment in the history of the territory, resulting in Arab protests and rebellion (Pappé 8). Additionally, the declaration created further implications characterised by long lasting conflicts between the Arab and the Jewish communities (Masalha 5). The conflict remains relevant today with the Israeli occupation in Palestine since the former’s establishment in 1948, causing ethnical cleansing of the Palestinians, resulting thousands of refugees (Pappe 20), also known as Nakba.

Additionally, the world witnessed the rise of intellectual and cultural movements, including the Middle East, where the intellectual movement known as Nahda left a remarkable influence on the Arab society during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (Hanssen and Weiss 1). With figures such as Najib Azouri and Gibran Khalil Gibran, the Arab renaissance aimed to “search for identity and modernity in the face of Western domination and colonialism” (Elmarsafy 1). Notably, after the Arab Elite’s exposure to the Western ideology, a conflict was created between preserving the Arab identity and embracing the Eurocentric values encountered through receiving education in the European universities. The Arab elite faced a challenge of balancing the Islamic identity and the demands of modernization, more particularly in the context of women rights and gender roles (Mernissi 10).

Moreover, the position of the Arab women during that period of time, mainly in Pre-Nakba Palestine was complex between the patriarchal norms, that dominated the social structure where women roles were primarily centred around the domestic sphere, and the



intellectual movement that introduced the Arab world to new, modern concepts. In other words, while women were expected to marry and bear children, some others had begun to enter the workforce and be a part of the political life (Jad 43). However, women's involvement in the Palestinian national movement was initially confined to their gender roles as mothers and daughters. Thus, this prevailing was challenged by the call for a more expanded active participation (Jad 46).

Investigating the historical background is essential for a better understanding of *The Parisian* (2019) by Isabella Hammad, where the author narrates the life of young Midhat Kamal in the middle of the transitive circumstances previously mentioned in the world and the Arab countries, focusing on Palestine.

## **II- The Theoretical Background**

Orientalism is a result of the imperial presence in the east; allowing the West to gain a wide knowledge of the 'subject's culture in order to be able to manipulate it, control it, and play with it (Said48). For instance, when the imperial state wills to rule, it requires information and wide knowledge about the 'Orient'. However, this knowledge derives from getting to know the 'Orient' and the 'oriental', to the rule and control over them, and to divide them into separate entities (Prakash 160-166). The Orientalists wrote about the east in a pejorative way giving the 'Orientals' the image of irrational, childish, violent camel-riding terrorists who do not deserve their wealth, and embrace a religion formed by an imposter who, they claim to be their messiah. Hence, Muslims or Orientals know nothing about liberty (Said 108). On the other hand, the Europeans are given the image of the rational and virtuous ones who came to liberate the Other (Said 108). This orientalist imagination reinforced the western's superiority, by creating this binary opposition between the rational, civilized Europe and the primitive, backward Orient, in which the imposition of the western values on the East is, justified (Irwin 11-16). Furthermore,

the orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the orient from something into something else (Said 40-109).

More particularly, in the orientalist writings about the East, the 'oriental' woman is highly sexualized and objectified, she is often portrayed as a sex symbol, or a brainless prostitute (102). Many Western researchers and authors use *A Thousand and One Nights* as a source to study the Arab culture. The depiction of Arab women in the Western cinema as twisting and turning dancers, with naked bellies and quivering hips seducing men, is a picture drawn from the palaces of *A Thousand and One Nights* and the women slaves of the Caliph, Haroun El Rachid ( El Saadawi 270-272). As a result, the oriental woman's body in the western art, served as a projection screen for the anxieties about sexuality, gender, and race, to allow the viewers to explore taboo desires and fears in a socially acceptable way (Milam 387). These images and portrayals serve the West by giving it the upper hand that justifies their authority over the Eastern part of the world in general and Eastern women in particular. Hans Bretens in his essay *Literary Theory-The Basis* states: "The western discourse about the Orient has always served to legitimize and perpetuate the interests of the Western imperialism" (204).

"Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) by Indian scholar Gayatri Spivak further demonstrates the vision of the third world women from the Western perspective. According to the author, the representation of the eastern woman as the discriminated subaltern who needs to be rescued by the Eurocentric values, aims to secure the colonial authority over the colonized land (311). Allison Mader (2017) writes: "The narrative of 'Muslim woman' is not a new one. It has been taken off the nineteenth century imperial shelf, dusted, polished, and put to new use, especially by the officials of the US government of George W. Bush. In order to justify their invasion of Afghanistan justified by women's liberation" (89). The imposition of the western dogma does not liberate women from the position of the Other. It marginalizes them even

further to become the double Other. Robert Young in his essay “Postcolonialism” (2003), writes:

For women, the problem centred on the fact that the conditions against which they were campaigning were the product of two kinds of oppression which put the antagonists of the nationalist struggle in the same camp: patriarchal systems of exploitation were common in both colonial regimes and indigenous societies. Women therefore had to fight the double colonization of patriarchal domination in its local as well as its imperial forms. (379)

Hence, third world women are excluded from the discourse that claims to serve their need of liberation, it is only a colonial strategy to secure its presence on the occupied land. Because of the belief of the Western Self that it is the duty of the latter to speak for those who not have reason, in other words, it is the superior west’s job to defend the inferior Other. That is, ethnocentric value judgments have no place within a truly diverse multicultural and multiracial feminist inquiry (Lionnet 2). Moreover, enlightenment claims about selfhood and individuality were underwritten by the simultaneous othering of those who had to be spoken for because they were said not to possess reason including women, such “others” could not freely exercise the same rights as “the man of reason” – the only standard by which universality was to be measured and defined (Lionnet 5).

Widely regarded as a leading pioneer in the field of Arab feminism studies, Nawal El Saadawi investigates the reasons behind the degrading statue of the Arab women in their society throughout her writings. In her book *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), the author suggests that the exaggerated obsession of society over virginity is the main cause behind the practices against women (90). According to the author, the Arab parents encourages the ignorance of daughters by promoting the social concept of the ‘blind pussycat’ because for the Arab society, a woman’s ignorance is a sign of purity (91). Thus, as a little girl, she is raised to become

passive; surrendering to male dominance, while her brother is taught to become strong and independent. (El Saadawi 93). Unlike men, a woman's virginity is her chief value in Arab societies; it is important for a man to know that the woman he is marrying had never slept with other men before. (Johnson 571). Thus, a woman's virginity becomes of primary importance to her family (Johnson 571). Nevertheless, women encounter a parallel contradictory educational process other than the usual orthodox one, that aims to make a sex instrument desirable by men, despite her ignorance due to her conservative upbringing (El Saadawi 93). El Saadawi claims that from a very young age, a girl is trained to be preoccupied about her body image at the expense of her mind and thoughts (94). Thus, only seeks to please her husband.

Furthermore, while making women remain modest by wearing the veil and stay indoors out of men sight. Arab men praise the models and actresses who appear in dresses with half of their bodies uncovered (El Saadawi 96). The author argues that all the social morals are swept away easily with commercial values; she adds that in the commercial race, woman's body is the source of 'super profits' (98). Hence, women are crushed in the contradiction between the traditional morals and the invasion of economic interests that aim to profit at any cost, in the shortest time possible (100). The impact of this contradiction between traditions and the process of globalization in the developing countries have pushed women to a further marginalized position (Hasan 26).

El Saadawi affirms that love is a constant theme in Arab songs and films that leave a deep impression on girl's mental and emotional make-up (96). At the same time, the latter is exposed to a completely traditional and religious system that puts her reputation at a stake and her name is bandied around scandalously for falling in love with a young man (96). The narratives about romantic love in the Arab world is contradictory; it is limited due to cultural reasons, yet the Arab literature is rich in love stories, music and poetry (Oghia 1-7). Although

the limitation is general, it affects the Arab women in particular due to the traditions that impose heavier chains on them.

According to El Saadawi, the source of polygamy in Islam is a consequence of the wars that Muslims fought before establishing their state (275). It is supposed that it came by cause of women outnumbering men after the battle of Uhud (Johnson 566). The author adds that because of the dependence of women on men, the Shari'ah does not tolerate any woman seeking refuge under a man's roof unless she is married to him (566). Thus, allowing a man to marry multiple wives seems to be the only reasonable solution to meet women's needs of protection and care (567). Nevertheless, despite the lack of these circumstances, polygamy in Islam has been manipulated in favour of men; it became a purely sexual act that reduces women's statue into a sex object (Johnson 569). In the modern day, polygamy supporters make men's wide sexual appetite the main reason behind the validity of polygamous marriages today (Johnson 569). If the first wife is unable to perform sexually due to illness, the husband satisfies his needs by taking a second wife; making women, serve as passive receptacles of men's sexual pleasure (Johnson 569).

Moreover, El Saadawi asserts that women who lived during the life of prophet Mahomet had an active social life. Such as, Nassiba Bint Kaab (255-256). Early Islamic history is marked with prominent figures of female Mujahidaat, including women from the prophet's family and new reverts (Qazi 13). Another prominent female figure in Islam is Khadija, the first wife of the prophet, who was known for her business in trade that granted her the right to choose her husband (257). Early biographical sources show that Khadija was a powerful, respected businesswoman who was married twice previously, impressed by her employee's personality, Khadija approached Muhammed and proposed marriage (Rahemtulla and Ababneh 95). The author adds that Aisha, the prophet's second wife, had wide knowledge and was able to discuss any subject (El Saadawi 269). In Sunni traditions, many of the hadith narrations can be traced

back to Aisha, especially on private female matters (Shah 141-146). Thus, women in the early times of Islam occupied a high rank and rights in society (El Saadawi 167). However, Islam today is used as a mask to cover the discriminatory actions against women in different parts of the world (Rangkuti 73).

However, despite mistreating women in the Middle East, and the western allegations about the 'Orientals' lack of awareness in regards of liberty. El Saadawi asserts in her critic that the Arab world have known a number of leading pioneer figures who fought for the liberation of their countries and women such as May Ziada, as well as the women martyrs of the Egyptian 1919 revolution, in addition to the Palestinian women fighters who, joined and are still joining the resistance against the Israeli occupation (345-360). Palestinian women have played a key role in organizing movements against the Israeli occupation, such as the protests against the separation wall against the West Bank (Shuttleworth para. 10). As a result, unlike the westerners claim, the third world countries women are capable of creating their own liberation movements beyond the Eurocentric ideology and values.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, Said's theory is applied to demonstrate the derogatory representation of the 'Orient' and the 'Orientals', both generally and particularly concerning women in the western discourse; creating the 'Self' and the 'Other'. As for Spivak's theory, it is used to represent the excuse of the oppressed woman image by the western discourse in order to secure its presence in the third world; putting them in a further marginalized status. Finally, El Saadawi's theory treats the oppressed status of the Arab women in the patriarchal society that imposes discriminating laws that create gender inequality between the men and women; giving the upper hand to the former, the author argues that Arab women do not need the western discourse to rescue them, contrarily; the author believes they are capable of finding solutions

concerning the issue according to the third world liberation discourse. Thus, employing the above mentioned theories provide the novel with a brand new feminist reading.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Negotiating Identities: The Interplay of Self and Other in Isabella**

#### **Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019)**

##### **Introduction:**

This chapter tackles the portrayal of the 'Other' by the orientalist writers through the theory of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978). The literary work by Isabella Hammad *The Parisian* (2019) illustrates the theme of the 'Other', through the experiences of the protagonist, Midhat.

The chapter further examines the social double standards and contradictions made to oppress women in Arab countries, depicted by Nawal El Saadawi's criticism (1980). Moreover, Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) is included as well in the analysis of the novel to demonstrate the West's view of the oriental woman as the oppressed Subaltern who needs to be liberated and saved by the western discourse values. Finally, this chapter suggests that the liberation of women in the Arab world does not need to follow the western discourse of liberty; on the contrary, the Arab liberating figures are the best example of the case. These theories are applied to analyse the discriminatory practices against women in the Arab world, as well as the pejorative view of west highlighted in Isabella Hammad's novel *the Parisian* (2019), through the female characters, mainly Fatima.

##### **I-The Western Self versus the Oriental Other:**

The notion of the 'other' is the product of colonialism that has been propagated by the western discourse that, created pejorative stereotypes regarding the East; legitimizing the imperial presence in the region.



## **1. Civilising mission**

### **1.1 Sylvain Leclair:**

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) examines the pejorative view the Westerns have developed about the 'Orient', as a consequence of the stereotypes made by the orientalists that define the Arabs as irrational, violent, terrorists who, embrace a false religion formed by an imposter whom they believe is their messiah, and are clueless about liberty (40-72). Furthermore, the Europeans portray themselves as rational, enlightened, and moral beings whose purpose is to liberate the Other and bring progress and civilization. The orientalists' job in this mission is to convert the orient from something into something else, as a strategy to legitimize the colonial presence and domination (40-109). In Isabella Hammad's novel *The Parisian* (2019), the author demonstrates Said's theory through the protagonist's experience with the Europeans, who regard him as an uncivilised 'Other' for his non-western origins: "The man by the ticket booth was definitely staring, but rather too intently, and Midhat avoided his eyes" (9). The strange stares of the French that Midhat encounters at his arrival to Montpellier represent the unacceptance of the uncivilized, inferior Other in their civilized superior country.

In the following passage Hammad narrates the first direct encounter the Self with the Other: "‘how did you come to know the Molineus?’ said Luc Dimon. ‘My father contacted the university, and Docteur Molineu kindly offered himself as a host.’ ‘The sacrifices,’ said Sylvain. ‘Tell us some things. We’d like to know all about your way of life.’ Midhat could not tell if Sylvain was mocking him. ‘Excuse me?’" (27-28). Sylvain's reaction represents the consequences of the stereotypes created in the western discourse to define the Other as an uncivilized, and violent being, discussed by Said in his pioneer critical work *Orientalism* (1978). Sylvain Leclair is among the prominent characters in the novel portrayed by Hammad to serve as an example of the discriminatory, pejorative view the Westerns hold against the East and its habitants. The previous passage illustrates the derogatory stereotypical clichés that the

western self has about the Arab other as a savage inhuman creature that leads an uncivilised type of life that Said mentions in his theory. From Sylvain's perspective, to host someone with such characteristics by Docteur Molineu is a sacrifice, for it could be dangerous. In addition, according to Said's theory, the behaviour of the guests at wedding with Midhat, as their inferior for being a non-western is an attempt to maintain the superior position while dealing with the Other.

## **1.2 The Scientific Project:**

According to Said, the wide knowledge the Europeans have gained about the East, as well as the portrayal of the 'Orientals' as barbaric, unhuman, beings, serves not only to dominate, but also to manipulate the Other (48). In Hammad's novel, the character of Docteur Molineu embodies the attempt of getting to know the Other in order to dominate and manipulate it in the following passage: "'No, let me speak. On the contrary, I am attempting in my research- a humble attempt, Midhat! A preliminary monograph, only! I have been, was attempting, on the contrary, attempting to humanise you!' 'To humanise me?' said Midhat, after a breath. 'I am- really, I am amazed. Monsieur, I am a person'" (Hammad132). The scientific research that Docteur Molineu conducts regarding his 'oriental' guest, represents the aim of the West to procure an extensive cognition of the East, with a view to dominate it, thus, manipulate it, as it is claimed by Said. The dehumanised representation of the 'Orientals' in the Western discourse leads the West into justifying that the inferior East is in need of European intervention to become 'civilized' and 'humanised', by imposing the European culture and values, that goes hand in hand with denying the values and agency of eastern culture, in terms of the 'civilising mission'. Following Said's approach in his study of *Orientalism*, through the treatment of Midhat's case, Molineu is attempting to 'humanise' the Mohammadan, unhuman, barbaric guest by teaching him the European values, in order to impose the European discourse on the 'Other', disregarding the factors that shape the Arab identity. The reliance on representation to

construct the 'Other' by the West is an effective tool of reaching cultural and political objectives (Mellor 29). To put it differently, it facilitates the process of domination and manipulation of the inferior 'Other'.

A similar point tackled in Said's criticism of manipulating the 'Other' studying the 'orient' is further employed to analyse the following passage from the novel: "“between these mountains it is all jealousy and scandal.’ ‘That is always the case, scandals are everywhere.’ [Antoine] hummed. ‘No, I don’t think so. It is different here. It fascinates me, I must say. Something strong in the air.’” (Hammad 278). The previous dialogue demonstrates the interest of Antoine in Nablus as his academic research subject, in which his insistence of portraying the oriental city and its habitants with a negative, derogatory description is read between the lines of the text. Said argues that turning something into something else is an orientalist's work (72) in order to legitimize the purpose of the Western imperialism (Bretens 204). The actions by Molineu and Antoine are two further examples of the way the Arabs are perceived by the Westerns who attempt to legalise their imperial policy by picturing the Orient as an uncivilised area. Molineu and Père Antoine are two men who are curious about the Arab culture. However, in their eagerness to learn about the 'Other', and make it the object of their scientific study, they exclude Arabs and Muslims from the 'actual history'. To Antoine, Nablus is a city that is far from the 'great movement of the world'. As for Molineu, his study of Arabs and Islam through Midhat is an attempt to civilize him by teaching him French (Cresswell 4-5). The imposition of a specific culture can lead to cultural hegemony that, leads to the dominance of one culture and suppressing others, ceasing creativity and innovation (Aksoy and Bayram 113). As a result, the west attempts through the 'civilising mission' to omit the Arab identity by being well aware of it, to impose the western discourse, thus, enforce its domination and manipulation over the 'Other'.

According to Said, the Orientalists go further in portraying the Orient by creating a specific imagery of the oriental woman as a sexualized, passive creature. The author argues that the portrayal of the east as a place for forbidden pleasure and sexual deviance, while keeping the West as the place of virtue and morality; is a result of the orientalist discourse, that has been used to justify the marginalization of the 'orientals' and the imperial dominance over them (102-187). Said emphasizes the use of gender and sexuality as two significant factors to distinguish the difference between the West and the East, that Hammad represents in the next passage:

The oil lamps dimmed and a woman walked downstage. Her eyes were lined with black, and her hairpiece and bodice were draped with coins that twisted strings and glinted. The flesh of her midriff hung out from under the bodice; she churned it around her hips. [...] They twirled and arched their backs behind her [...] Midhat glanced around the room. Some of the audience were certainly European-the blonds were probably Englishmen, others could be Greek or perhaps Italian [...] The dancer teased them, stroking the air. Midhat watched her catching the eyes of particular men, inspiring expressions of envy from the other men at their tables, or claps on the back, hollers and whistles. Midhat craved to be one of those chosen. He kept very still and stares as the dancer turned away from the audience and displayed two beautiful dimples in the flesh of her lower back. (Hammad189)

The belly dancers in the novel symbolize the sexualized, seductive portrayal of the East by the orientalist writers, which indeed represents a part of the life in the Middle East. However, its portrayal by the Western authors in an exaggerating manner, generalizes the objectifying and sexualising image of the Arab women. In addition, Said argues in his analysis that this representative turns the Orient into a land of vice and sin, contrarily to the conservative, religious societal norms of the population. In fact, sexual norms are formed by the religious beliefs, cultural practices and social customs (Al-Issa and Al-Fifi 2).

Furthermore, the author narrates the main character's sexual experiences in the following separate passages: "His first sexual experience was with another student at the Sorbonne, named Claire" (Hammad 153). In addition to: "Two whores he visited" (Hammad 155). The portrayal of the French prostitutes and different European women with whom Midhat experiences intimacy, demonstrates that despite the prostitution and free sex life in Europe, some western researchers often use romanticized and fetishized features to portray the East as erotic and sexual, as one of the methods to keep the non-western societies in the inferior other position. Thus, preserve the superior, virtuous persona to the Western societies that justifies the imperial authority over the East using gender and sexuality as active elements in distinguishing the two sides. Robert Aldrich in his article entitled 'Sexualising Colonialism: The Orientalist Construction of Gender, Race and Sexuality' (2002), examines the ways gender, and sexuality have been used, to justify the colonial rule over the 'orient': "Sexualizing colonialism was not an accidental by-product of the colonial process, but an essential part of its construction, a discourse that actively constructed gender and racial difference, creating, in the process, an Orientalism that still persists in contemporary Western culture" (125). As a result, colonial desire does not take power and political, economic, and ideological domination as the only approaches to impose the imperial authority over the colonized, but it also depends on the representation of a particular image of the subject (Bhabha 21).

## **II- Man the Self versus the Woman Other:**

### **1. Muslim Women in History Vs *The Parisian*:**

During the life of the prophet Mohamed, women occupied high ranks as businesswomen, scholars, and warriors; namely, Khadija, Aisha, and Nuseyba Bint Kaab (El Saadawi 255-256). Before the Middle Ages, Muslim women continued to have the right to choose a husband and occupy a high rank in society (El Saadawi 263). However, Islam became the justification of

the violence against women in the modern day, as a result of the manipulation and misinterpretation of the religious texts (El Saadawi 167).

### **1.1 public Life:**

El Saadawi's criticism of the societal treatment of women is applied in the analysis of *the Parisian* (2019) through the social concept of the 'blind pussycat', that signifies an ignorant dependent female; symbolizing virtue and purity in order to be suitable for marriage, as a good, obedient, submissive wife (90). The character that should be primarily analysed is Fatima. There are remarkable oppressive acts in the novel where this character is considered as one of the cases that El Saadawi addresses in her critique:

Fatima was sixteen. She had stopped attending school two years ago, and was now apprenticed in the art of running a household. In the mornings she packed away the bedding, rolled up each mattress and tied it with string, folded the sheets and slotted them into the cupboard. Even though they had a maid who did most of the laundry, her mother was emphatic that Fatima master everything. (Hammad 148)

The previous passage by Hammad reflects El Saadawi's claims through Fatima; being forced to quit school, and remain within the domestic sphere, is a representation of the process to produce a naïve 'blind pussycat'. Promoting women's ignorance about life outside the closed doors along with the needs and functions of the body by the parents aims to preserve woman's virginity, that is considered as a pass that will help her secure a respectable match in the future. In other words, the social measurement of woman's worth is connected to her sexual purity and her ability to respond to the social norms and expectations. In addition, virginity and its preservation is not only essential to woman's worth, but it is also tied with the family's honour "that is grounded in her sexuality" (Malti-Douglas 1).

The defensive reaction of Fatima against the idea of a man approaching her on the wedding night with Midhat: "don't come near me" (Hammad 348), to the Arab society, can be

interpreted as a manifestation of virtue and purity that, a woman obtains from being separate and uninformed about life outside the domestic sphere designed for her. As it is discussed in El Saadawi's writing. Hala is another female character who appears in the novel who is also considered one of the cases analysed in El Saadawi's book, as an Arab girl who is made to don the veil, and is separated from the opposite sex at the age of eleven (Hammad 88). The exceptional element in the narration of Hala's case is that despite being Christian, she is obliged to stick to the Muslim women dress code; as a sign of the coexistence of the people of Arab society who, despite having different religious background, they follow the same traditions (Kamal108). Hammad includes these practices in her narrative in order to deny the full responsibility of religion; rather, the social laws are guided by culture. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between Islamic teachings and traditions, to identify and address the roots of gender inequality in Muslim societies (Huq 54).

Moreover, El Saadawi's representation of the virgin, virtuous 'blind pussycat' remains present in the analysis of the novel with Fatima's dream of leaving the domestic sphere, and join the public realm she has been prevented from as a part of the Arab tradition, that regards a woman being indoors a sign of purity: "Fatima dreamed of the Nebi Rubin festival" (Hammad 149). "Fatima's mind was sticky with anxiety. Although Nuzha would certainly keep her word, Burhan might tell their father, who would, of course tell their mother." (Hammad 292)

Fatima's festival experience in the novel exposes the reality of Arab women's oppression by society, where women are expected to be separated from the public life. According to El Saadawi, the character's attempt to break free from the social chains, can be defined as an adventure, that risks putting women in a circle other than the one they are destined to be, in order to be accepted by the Arab society as a virtuous, submissive young woman. In conclusion, the oppressive practices that Hammad narrates in the novel put women in the discriminated category that defines them as the Other of men who, on the contrary, are portrayed as characters

with a plenty amount of liberty to learn and experience various subjects within the public realm, in order to grow with strength, maturity, and dominance. To mark one of the social injustices and double standards between men and women depicted by El Saadawi. In addition, women who grow out of the traditional gender roles and expectations of society are marginalized and are subjected to violence and honour killing (El-Issawi 108). The novel challenges these practices by highlighting the struggles of women who seek to break from the social discriminatory traditions through the character Fatima.

Isabella Hammad in her literary work further demonstrates the social double standards between men and women through this passage:

Midhat would usually deposit the children with his grandmother and travel by taxi down to Jerusalem to spend a night with his friend the journalist Qais Karak and the dancing girls at the Ma'arif Café. [...] he did sometimes persuade Adel Jawhari to join, and the three men motored to the seaside and swaggered along hotel balconies overlooking the water. [...] and within an hour Adel was kissing a black-haired Russian girl named Polinka. Midhat saw them from the corner where he sat with one of the dancers on his knee. (Hammad 189-190)

The author portrays the Ma'arif Café and Polinka in the narrative to represent the results of the double standard of teaching the sons in an Arab household to become strong, dominant and independent beings by enjoying life within the public life. Contrarily to the daughters, who encounter limitations imposed on them to remain dependent and submissive to male dominance, analysed in El Saadawi's criticism. Women are judged more than men concerning sexuality in Arab societies, which remains relevant through the virginity tests that are still conducted as a compulsory cultural practice in some countries (Basarudin 64). The café and Polinka symbolize the freedom granted to men, that gives them the upper hand in the Arab society; narrated by the author through the protagonist Midhat and the male characters. This



example of double standards demonstrates gender inequality that strengthen male dominance and sense of superiority in the Arab society, as a cultural norm that remains present in the current times.

## **1.2 Body:**

In many Muslim societies, the wearing of the veil is a compulsory dress code, yet contradictory products that do not correspond to it whatsoever are widely promoted (El Saadawi 98). Thus, the commercial capitalist values are capable of eliminating the traditional social ones (98) as the novel illustrates: “At the same time, he was certain her fibs boosted the popularity of Nouveautés Ghada among the Nabulsiyyat, and for that he was grateful. [...] If Fatima told a few choice persons that the Cairene suits her husband sold were the height of fashion, then they quickly became so” (Hammad 414-415). Nouveautés Ghada fashion shop symbolizes the contradictions of the Muslim society that imposes a specific dress code on women yet, boosts items for sale that are contradictory to those traditionally promoted. Thus, it makes women stuck between the traditional values that charge them to follow specific morals, and modern fashion that regards woman body as a source of ‘super profits’, according to El Saadawi (98). Midhat promotes modern fashion in Nablus, where most of women are veiled including his wife. Fatima, despite being a veiled woman, beautifies the items her husband sells in order to “profit at any cost, in the shortest time possible” (El Saadawi 100). As a result, the female body is used by men for their own gain, making the former the source of promotion; degrading women’s position in society even further. Fatima in this case is used as an instrument of her husband’s advantage, along with the rest of the women in town whose bodies are designed to be the source of profits by buying those products. El Saadawi concludes: “The Arab women are sacrificed on the altars of God and Money from the moment of birth to the hour of death” (100). In other words, women’s status is lost between the patriarchal system instructions that impose discriminatory laws, and the global capitalism that weakens social traditions (Moghadam 256).

In conclusion, the portrayal of *Nouveautés Ghada* by Hammad aims to examine the exploitation of the Arab female body by the parallel system of tradition and the capitalist values.

### **1.3 Love:**

El Saadawi further examines the contradictory image of love in the Middle Eastern society that appreciates love songs and poetry as a part of the Arab culture, yet considers love as a sin specifically concerning women (96), that Hammad demonstrates in the novel through the following passage: “‘You’ve seen [Midhat]?’ ‘Burhan showed me,’ she said quickly, ‘through the window’” (Hammad 303). Seeing Midhat before marriage in this narrative reflects the Arab society’s contradictions concerning love, that occupies a huge share of Arab culture, yet is forbidden and sinful by the social patriarchal laws. Being in love is perceived as a sin in general. However, society imposes heavier consequences on a woman; her name becomes a representation of shame for her and her family (El Saadawi 96), which decodes Haj Nimr’s concerns, and suspicions of his daughter possibly being in love, or being involved in a love affair with Midhat out of wedlock; threatening her reputation as a ‘blind pussycat’, and the family’s honour. To conclude, regardless of covering a huge part of the Arab literature and culture, the Arab society perceives love as a taboo (Oghia 1-7).

Hammad demonstrates in the conversation between Midhat and Teta Um Taher concerning the matter of his marriage one of the social norms that degrade women’s position in the modern day society: “‘I’m not going to be here forever, and then who will look after you? Who will make sure your house is clean, feed you, help when you are sick? You think a ghost makes your bed? You think a ghost makes sure your clothes are clean?’” (261). The previous quotation from the novel describes the idea of a wife’s role in marriage according to the Arab, and Muslim society’s belief. Unlike the Muslim women in the early age of Islam who had an important position, the Muslim women in the novel who live in the early twentieth century are brought up to become passive and submissive to the husbands they do not have the

right to choose by staying indoors, serving, cooking and cleaning. This practice remains present even in the modern times; reducing women's mission in life to a performer of domestic chores, that are perceived as the key factor to women's subordination in the Arab society (Moghadam 23).

Furthermore, marriage in the Arab Society of the novel is a matter of men that a woman does not have a word to say about, Hammad writes: "‘I would like to ask for your daughter to marry me.’ Nimr's expression did not change. Gradually, the eyebrows went up. ‘Ah. Unfortunately, the answer is no’" (237). In another social contradiction spotted by Hammad, Midhat's first proposal to marry Fatima; inconsiderate about his daughter's opinion, Haj Nimr refuses the proposal. Despite the fact that Islam grants women the right to decide whom to marry, the Arab society finds it shameful that their daughters prioritize their opinions above that of her father's or any other man of the family. Because she is perceived as weak, emotional, and irrational, the Arab woman is not given the chance to prove otherwise (Sadiqi 223). Thus, she is prevented from her divine right to choose a partner; putting the social patriarchal norms above of early Islamic teachings demonstrated through Hammad's characters.

The origin of polygamy in Islam is a consequence of the battles the Muslims fought in order to establish the state, leaving a much higher number of women (El Saadawi 257), widows more specifically who could not seek protection under a man's roof unless she was married to him (Johnson 566). However, due to the misinterpretation of the case, polygamous marriage became a strictly sexual practice that serves man's needs and reduced woman's position to a sex object (Johnson 567). As it is narrated in the novel under study, through Hammad's character Haj Hassan and his multiple marriages on his journey to visit his first wife in hometown Zawata:

They decided he would marry the eldest daughter of the family, a plump girl named Rasha with wide-set eyes [...] But as the months accumulated he began to miss his

first wife and children [...] Before the year was out, he had decided to make a return visit. [...] Hassan offered what little gold he had with him in exchange for one of his daughters in marriage; the deal was struck, and Hassan had his first home secured on his way to Nablus [...] The second home was established by another marriage, [...] The third, by marrying the daughter of his cousin's friend in Jenin. (143-144)

Hammad demonstrates in the passage, the other approach adopted in polygamous marriage in Islam as a result of the misinterpretation of the religious texts, that made it a sexual act and degraded women's status to a sex object for men needs. Haj Hassan as a wanted figure is obliged to travel from one place to another. Thus, his need to have secured homes to stay during his travels is necessary. However, another need that has to be fulfilled is the sexual one. Taking wives in the multiple villages he stops by, with offering gold to their fathers as an 'exchange' without the bride's consent, represents the degraded position the Muslim women occupies in the modern day as voiceless, passive, sex instruments whose duty is to respond to the husband's sexual needs and desire. Using religion as a mask to justify this act is a strategy to hold back women's refusal to this kind of discrimination (El Saadawi 96).

### **III- "The White Man's Burden" in *The Parisian*:**

Gayatri Spivak's theory of the Subaltern (1988) highlights the stereotypical portrayal of the third world women by the colonial discourse as oppressed, discriminated civilians, that need to be liberated according to the western discourse of liberation, with no regard to their cultural background. Thus, the aim is not to serve the feminist case in the third world; rather, its main objective is to secure their presence in the occupied land (311). (replaced, suggested by Ms. TERKI)

## **1. The Brown Man:**

This issue of “the white man’s burden” is examined through Hammad’s narrative: “‘I’m sure it must seem odd to you, how we treat women here.’ ‘In some respects. There is more freedom’” (Hammad 35). The discourse is present in the previous passage in a conversation between Midhat and his French friend Laurent, it symbolizes the view the west holds of the oriental women as oppressed and voiceless within society, in need to be liberated by the white man from the brown man. Midhat’s agreement with the stereotypical image by the Europeans by responding that women in France have more freedom, confirms the former’s presumption on the issue of women in the third world. Moreover, Julie V. Gottlieb in her article “The ‘Mission’ to ‘Liberate’ Women: Imperialism, Feminism, and British Fascism” (2002) argues: “while feminist campaigners were concerned with promoting women's rights in a global context, the British Fascists and others sought to manipulate women's issues in the service of national and imperial identities” (162). Thus, the western feminist discourse uses women’s liberation as a pretext by imposing its Eurocentric values on the colonized subjects, in order to secure the colonial presence in the Third World as depicted in Hammad’s narration.

## **2. Fashion:**

As the imperial discourse claims to save the ‘Oriental’ woman from being oppressed by the brown man, it puts her in a further marginalized position during the process; denying her from having her own voice in matters concerning her own issue. Thus, secures the colonial presence in the third world; making women suffer from both the local patriarchal social practices, along with the western discourse used to justify the domination over the colonized subject. The theory of the subaltern will be further applied in the analysis of the novel: “‘you are changing your Fashion, my dear’” (Hammad 459). The joke of change of fashion that Midhat makes, is a symbol of the Arab women being deprived from the right to make a choice regarding the veil

wearing, as one of the consequences of the patriarchal system in the Arab society that turned it into a mandatory practice, and the western imperial discourse that root against it. As a result, of the previous events, the Arab women find themselves not only oppressed by the men of their society but also by the colonizer that marginalizes them even further instead of liberating them, and adjusting their position in society. Furthermore, Frances Raday (2008) suggests: "the very law that intends to liberate Muslim women from wearing the veil may actually serve to trap them into it." (22). Women are in the position of both the Other and the double Other, and are required to fight the patriarchal domination and the imperial forms, beyond the western discourse that does not consider the third world liberation ideology as one belonging to the universal discourse of liberty and modernisation.

### **3. October 1919:**

El Saadawi's criticism defends the ability of the Arab women to create solutions concerning the issue of gender inequality encountered within the Middle Eastern patriarchal society, without the need of the western liberation discourse values that further degrade women's position as Spivak argues. El Saadawi mentions the women martyrs of the 1919 Egyptian revolution to assert on Arab women's capacity of breaking traditional gender roles and be in the position of a decision maker, and a part of political and historical radical changes in society. Hammad narrates the October 1919 movement in her novel: "In October 1919, the unrest in Egypt was still simmering. Britain had denied her independence at the Peace Conference, and when the leaders of resistance were exiled to Malta the women of Cairo marched in protest. But the general strike had at last been called off and the trade was returning to healthy levels between Egypt and the Levant" (174). The portrayal of this remarkable movement serves to represent the Arab women's strength to fight the oppressive patriarchal systems of both the society and the European imperialism. Breaking the social norms that regard men as the only possessors of the ability to decide and make historical reformations. Moreover, the October

1919 revolution is one of the most notable events in the history of the Middle East and North Africa, where over seventy women lost their lives (Carr para. 11); namely Safia Zaghloul, wife of the nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul (Carr para. 3). As well as the fifteen year old Bahia Hassan (Carr para. 2). The examples mentioned above by El Saadawi, Spivak, and the narration of the 1919 revolution by Hammad in her novel, serve as an inspiration for the Arab young women of our time to pursue their objectives (Vince 6) and make their own decisions concerning their lives and their bodies, while keeping their identity.

### **Conclusion:**

To sum up the findings, the representative of all what is non-western as the inferior, unvirtuous, irrational ‘Other’, has been widely used by the western discourse, serving to maintain the superior, virtuous, rational self-representation to the imperial west. Thus, gives the stereotypical image to the east in general, and eastern women in particular with an objectified portrayal in the western writings, providing the west with a further representation of the East to rely on as one of the several justifications of the colonial presence in the ‘Orient’. As a result of these pretexts, the imperial presence in the region is legitimized, as the saviour of the ‘Orientalists’ that need the European values to be liberated within the ‘civilising mission’, in order to bring civilisation and modernity to the region, disregarding the local values. Thus, achieve the manipulation and dominance of the East. According to such claims of supremacy, Fatima Zahra Chadi (2021) states: “non-Westerns were excluded from being human and were put into the line of objects – they were objectified and that what was remarkable about the cases of the Western intervention in the East – colonialism and orientation” (36). Robert Irwin (2006) adds that the construction of a fictitious Orient by the west with stereotypes and fantasies enabled the west to validate their imperial ambitions, as it has been argued by Said (3). By examining Isabella Hammad’s novel *the Parisian* (2019), the first part has demonstrated the means the western discourse used in the process of creating pejorative stereotypes in reference

to the East and its women, using them as a reason to legalize the imperial presence in the territory.

By using El Saadawi's theory, the second part of chapter two has analysed the position of women in the Arab countries, resulting from the social discriminatory, double standard practices that put them in the inferior 'Other' position of men who, on the contrary have the upper hand within society demonstrated in Isabella Hammad's *the Parisian* (2019). Through female characters; focusing on Fatima Hammad, to apply this critic. Furthermore, the analysis has included the contradictions of the Muslim society and misinterpretation of the Islamic texts that made religion a tool to justify the oppression and otherness of women in the Arab world, depicted in the novel through Fatima and the multiple wives of Haj Hassan. Moreover, Spivak's theory of the Subaltern in the third part of the chapter was present to examine the use of the woman issue in the third world by the western discourse of liberation, as a strategy to secure the imperial presence in the region through the narrative. Ultimately, the study asserts on the mastery of the Arab women to be liberated from the patriarchy of both society and imperialism, in addition to decide what is best for them with preserving their identity, beyond the western discourse of liberation. This argument has been used in the analysis of the October 1919 movement illustrated in Hammad's novel, in order to demonstrate the strength that Arab women can have to resist gender-based expectations. Overall, by treating the issue of violence and discrimination of women that is still present today in the Middle East and North Africa, the aim of this study is to contribute with an innovative reading to Hammad's literary work *The Parisian* (2019), throughout the narration and portrayal of its events and characters.



## General Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the theme of the Self and the Other from a feminist perspective in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019). It has also suggested the ability of the Arab women to break the gender roles and change their situation independently; through the author's portrayal of the female characters, mainly Fatima, along with her representation of the October 1919 revolution in her text selected for this study. In her narrative, Hammad denounces the pejorative stereotypes about the East in the western discourse; especially those regarding women. In addition, she treats the oppression of women by both the Arab society, and the western imperial discourse. Furthermore, the author demonstrates the Arab women's strive for freedom, apart from the western discourse of liberation. This study has analysed the above mentioned themes; providing the literary text scrutinized with an innovative reading.

The first chapter is both historical and theoretical, it has been provided with the historical background that Hammad relied on in writing her novel, and a detailed explanation of the theoretical frameworks employed in this thesis; the notion of the Self and the Other according to Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* (1978), as well as examining the very same theme, and the women's potential to break free from the discriminative otherness, through Nawal El Saadawi's Arab feminism theory *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), in addition to Gayatri Spivak's *the Subaltern* (1988). This chapter has imparted the study with a general view of how the frameworks will be applied in the analysis of the novel.

The first part of chapter two has applied Said's theory in the study of the Self and the Other through the protagonist Midhat, and the belly dancers. To demonstrate the pejorative portrayal of the 'Orient' in the western writings, and the pejorative view that, legitimizes the imperial dominance in the area. Through the narrative, Hammad has responded to these allegations by portraying Midhat's encounter of a discriminative behaviour by the French, as a result of the derogatory view of the West towards the East; granting the former the superior

position that permits its authority over the 'Other'. Additionally, the author has portrayed the belly dancers, along with the prostitutes and Midhat's classmates with whom he experiences sexual intimacy, in order to showcase that the Orientalists' exaggerating eroticization of the East aims to disguise the reality of the queerness and open sex life in the West; giving the latter the virtuous image that justifies its dominance over the 'Orient'. This chapter has demonstrated the falsification of the reality of the East in the western writings to legalize the imperial domination.

The second and third part of chapter two have applied Nawal El Saadawi's feminist theory and Gayatri Spivak's the Subaltern to analyse the discriminatory otherness of women in the third world countries; giving men the superior Self resulted from the double standards, contradictions and the misinterpretation of the religious teachings. In addition to the use of the issue by the West to liberate women, as a pretext to secure its presence in the region; leaving women in a further marginalized position known as the double Other. In response of these claims, this study suggests the potential of Arab women to be liberated apart from the foreign discourse, to be able to make a change and decide for themselves; according to El Saadawi's theory. Hammad in her novel, has highlighted the double standards, contradictions, and the misinterpretation of religion that justify the oppression of women within society that regard them as the Other of men, through women characters focusing on Fatima. Furthermore, Hammad has demonstrated through the constant change of fashion, the double otherness of third world women by the western discourse of liberation that uses their case and position in order to secure its presence in the East rather than liberating them. Finally, the author has portrayed the October 1919 movement in order to reveal women's capacity to make their own decisions and be liberated from the patriarchal systems of society and imperialism; denying the western discourse. This chapter has examined the position of women in the Arab world and

their ability to make a change while preserving their identity, beyond the Eurocentric ideological values.

To conclude, this thesis has attempted to sum up the main themes that Hammad has appropriated in the response to the western misrepresentation of the East and its women, along with demonstrating the issue of women in the Arab world, its use by the west to dominate the region, and finally, the women's capacity of making a change without the need of the western liberating discourse. Overall, Hammad's writing of the novel goes beyond the different narration of the Palestinians as revolutionary figures, through Midhat's major interest in his personal life; rather, it aims to give Arab women justice.

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## Resumé

L'objectif de cette thèse sert à analyser la notion de Soi et l'autre dans l'œuvre d'Isabella Hammad *Le Parisien* (2019) d'une perspective féministe. En appliquant la théorie d'Edward Said *L'orientalisme* (1978) à fin d'apporter à cette étude la représentation désobligeante de l'orient et les orientaux, notamment les femmes, dans les récits occidentaux à propos de la région. A travers la discrimination que Midhat rencontre durant sa vie en France, et la représentation des danseuses orientales, Hammad démontre les conséquences de l'image péjorative que les occidentaux ont créée au sujet de l'orient dans le but de préserver leur position supérieure. En outre, la théorie féministe arabe *the hidden face of eve* (1980) et *le subalterne* (1988) de Gayatri Spivak sont utilisées en cours de cette recherche dans l'analyse de l'agenda patriarcale contre les femmes des pays du tiers monde qui dégrade leur position dans la société à l'autre de l'homme. Le roman souligne cette problématique à travers les personnages féminins, notamment Fatima. Selon la théorie de Spivak, les lois discriminatives contre les femmes du tiers monde au cœur de récit, sont utilisées autant que prétextes par le discours occidental de libération à fin de sécuriser la présence impériale ; cela, cause une altérité plus profonde concernant les femmes. Par conséquent, l'étude suggère la capacité des femmes arabes à créer leur propre discours de libération et de déconstruire les rôles liés aux genres, sans l'aide de l'Occident pour les libérer, cela est illustré par la révolution d'Octobre 1919 dans la pièce littéraire sélectionnée. Les conclusions de la thèse donnent un aperçu des discussions contemporaines sur le féminisme, l'orientalisme et le postcolonialisme, et suggèrent des voies de recherche future.

**Mots clés :** Minou aveugle, Féminisme, Orient, Autre, Soi, Subalterne.

## ملخص

إنّ الهدف من هذه الأطروحة هو تحليل مفهوم الذات و الآخر في رواية الباريسي (19) لإيزابيلا حماد من المنظور النسوي. من خلال تطبيق نظرية الاستشراق (1978) لإدوارد سعيد من أجل التقديم لهذه الدراسة التصوير المهيمن للشرق و الشرقيين، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالنساء في الكتابات الغربية عن المنطقة. تقوم حماد بعرض نتائج الصورة المسيئة التي خلقها الغربيون عن الشرق للحفاظ على المكانة العليا التي يتمتعون بها من خلال تجسيد التمييز الذي يمر به مدحت بالإضافة إلى تقديم شخصيات الراقصات الشرقيات. علاوة على ذلك، توظيف نظريتنا النسوية العربية لنوال السعداوي الوجه العاري للمرأة العربية (1977) و نظرية هل يستطيع التابع أن يتكلم؟ (1988) لغايات تري سبيفاك في هذا البحث هو لتحليل الأجندة الأبوية ضد نساء العالم الثالث التي جعلت مرتبتهن تنحدر إلى "تابع" للرجال. الأمر الذي تسلط عليه الرواية الضوء من خلال الشخصيات النسائية، بالتركيز على فاطمة. حسب نظرية سبيفاك، فإن القوانين التمييزية المذكورة في الرواية ضد نساء العالم الثالث، تستخدم كذريعة من طرف الخطاب التحرري الغربي لتأمين الوجود الإمبريالي في المنطقة، و ينتج عن ذلك تمييزا أكبر للنساء. وعليه، تقترح هذه الدراسة من خلال تجسيد ثورة أكتوبر 1919 في القطعة الأدبية المختارة، أن المرأة العربية قادرة على تفكيك الأدوار التقليدية للجنسين و خلق خطاب التحرر الخاص بها دون الحاجة إلى الغرب للتدخل لإنقاذها. تقدم نتائج الأطروحة نظرة ثاقبة للمناقشات المعاصرة حول النسوية والاستشراق وما بعد الاستعمار ، وتقترح سبلا للبحث في المستقبل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** القطعة المغمضة، النسوية، الشرق، الآخر، التابع.