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Echahid Chiekh Larbi Tebessi University -Tébessa

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of Letters and English Language

The Construction of Narratives Around Postcolonial Algerian Identity: Examining Imane Khelif Journey During Paris Olympic Games 2024

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Candidate:

Safinaz Brik

Supervisor :

Dr. Aissa HAMZAOUI

Board of Examiners

President: Dr. Karima TAYAA	Chahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi, Tebessa University
Supervisor: Dr. Aissa HAMZAOUI	Chahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi, Tebessa University
Examiner : Dr. Ghazouane ARSLANE	Chahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi, Tebessa University

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List of Abbreviations

A Attitude (in Values Coding methodology)

B Belief (in Values Coding methodology)

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

CAS Court of Arbitration for Sport

FLN Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front, Algeria)

IBA International Boxing Association

IOC International Olympic Committee

PPA Parti du Peuple Algérien (Algerian People's Party)

V Value (in Values Coding methodology)

Abstract

This study explores the narratives surrounding the Algerian postcolonial identity through examining the Algerian boxer "Imane KHELIF" journey during Paris (2024) Olympic games. To this end, a qualitative research design that combines narrative and semiotic analysis is followed to answer the research questions. These two methods are used to analyse a purposive stratified sample that includes 19 captions of posts of worldly influential figures on Tweeter, Instagram and Facebook. While narrative analysis is applied to analyse the language of the whole sample, the semiotic analysis is projected upon only six images that are deemed to yield findings that complement the narrative analysis. Interpreting the findings within postcolonial theory, the study has revealed that many tensions related to the Algerian identity continue to exist between the Western world and the modern decolonised Algeria. To site but the main ones, Imane KHELIF is represented differently, proponents framed her as a symbol of resistance and national pride while opponents portrayed her as a threat to women's sports to impose Eurocentric standards of femininity. The findings also indicate that the same images of Khelif were used to convey opposing ideological messages**,** highlighting the polysemic nature of media signs.

Keywords: Imane KHELIF, semiotic analysis, narrative analysis, postcolonial theory, decolonized Algeria, Eurocentric standards

General Introduction

1.Background of the Study

Postcolonialism, as a critical theoretical framework, interrogates the cultural, political, and epistemic legacies of colonialism that persist in modern societies and international institutions. Despite the end of colonization formal era, its ideologies and imperial perspectives continuously influence global power relations specially in the contexts like identity, gender and knowledge production. Post colonial theorists such as Edward Said (1978), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Gayatri Spivak (1988) highlighted how colonial narratives contribute to shape perceptions. They also demonstrated how non Western subjects are treated and represented in media and politics. These colonial ideologies are justified through appeals to universal principals like fairness which includes claims of protecting order and equality, yet they reflect subjective exclusion and global domination.

In the context of international sports, athletes from the global South are still marginalized and exposed to Eurocentric norms of inclusion and exclusion through both media representation and institutional regulations. This is exemplified through cases from the Global South such as Caster Semenya (South Africa), Dutee Chand **(**India), and Annet Negesa (Uganda), all of whom were biologically female yet subjected to invasive testing, disqualification, or forced medical intervention due to their strong performance. Conversely, Fallon Fox the American transgender athlete who was assigned male at birth, medically transitioned to female, has been allowed to compete and did not face any official ban. This contradiction proves postcolonial bias where athletes from postcolonial nations are marginalized or imposed by western standards of femininity to question their identities and challenge their rights.

In this regard, the case of the Algerian boxer Imane Khelif who was assigned, identified and competed as a female became a site of international gender controversy and disqualified

from competing in international sports events offers a chance for critical analysis. Despite passing previous gender verification tests for different competitions, media representations and institutional regulations accused and framed her as transgender to exclude her form participating in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. These reactions reflect colonial ideologies that impose western domination and apply Eurocentric standards of femininity on non western bodies to justify exclusion and illegitimacy.

The motivation for conducting this research came from the need of critical examination of how the representation of Global south athlete reveals a continuous imposition of colonial ideologies in global sports institutions. Through analysing the narrative and visual representations of Imane Khelif by both supporters and critics, this research aims to decode symbolic violence and resistance embedded in these representations. The persistent discrimination of such athletes suggests wider ideological conflicts over who gets the right to define femininity and participate in the global events.

2. Statement of the Problem

In an ideal situation, media representation and institutional regulations would treat all athletes equally based on performance and universal norms of inclusion. Media portrayals would echo objectivity, accuracy, and cultural sensitivity. Sports institutions also would permit athletes from any race, nationality and background to participate in global events. Their inclusion would not be affected by western standards and colonial ideologies, but rather by their performance, skills, and achievements.

However, the current situation is far from these expectations. Non Western athletes are portrayed in a dehumanized way, they are subjected to marginalization and subjective pattern of gender identification. The exclusion of Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand, and Annet Negesa and questioning Imane's gender identity, while accepting and improving Fallon Fox

demonstrate how colonial ideologies persist to shape media representation and institutional inclusion patterns that define femininity based on Eurocentric standards.

This research, therefore, seeks to examine how such athletes are framed in media and how postcolonial tensions are reflected. Through a semiotic analysis of visual representation of Imane khelif and a narrative analysis of both supportive and opposing discourse and situating the Algerian female boxer within postcolonial framework, our study contributes in criticizing colonial ideologies in international sports.

3. Research Question

The present research attempts to answer the following question:

- How do media representations of Imane Khelif reflect postcolonial tensions surrounding her legitimacy to participate in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games?

This question will be answered by answering the following subquestions:

1 How is Imane khelif portrayed through narratives by both Western and Global South media?

2 How she is visually represented by local and global media?

3 How do these portrayals and representations challenge normative understandings of national identity in postcolonial Algeria?

4. Objectives of the Study

- Analyze the visual and narrative representations of Imane Khelif in both Western and Global South media outlets and social media platforms.
- Analyze how these representations construct or challenge normative understandings of femininity, and national identity.
- Identify the ways in which these discourses reflect the lingering impact of colonial ideologies, particularly in terms of who is eligible in international sports

- Compare Khelif's case to other female athletes such as Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand, Annet Negesa, and Fallon Fox to identify patterns of exclusion, stereotyping, and injustice.
- Offer a postcolonial semiotic and narrative analysis that contributes to our understanding of the intersection between gender, race, and power in media and sport.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies on its role in raising awareness of the structural biases that consistently shape visibility and legitimacy in international sports. In addition, it contributes to interdisciplinary discussions across postcolonial studies, media studies, and gender studies by offering a novel methodological approach that combines semiotic and narrative analysis to interrogate contemporary sporting controversies. This research also has a cultural and social relevance that it provides a reflection of how non western athletes are represented and evaluated trough Eurocentric norms. Academically, our study adds a novel methodological approach that integrate semiotic and narrative analysis with postcolonial interpretation to examine sports controversies. Finally, the findings call for real application of fairness in sports.

6.Research Methodology

This study has employed a qualitative research design because the researcher is concerned with examining social meanings and representations that cannot be quantified. The study adopted a critical postcolonial framework to demonstrate how media representations reflect colonial ideologies. The data was analysed through the combination of two methods. The first one is narrative analysis that allows the researcher to construct a narrative from the discourses produced by both supporters and critics of Imane. The second one is semiotic analysis which is used to analyse the visual representation of Imane.

We opted for a combined purposive and stratified sampling strategy that is commensurate with the study. The purposive sampling was used to select 19 posts that include narratives

which are used in the construction of the narrative surrounding Imane khelif journey during Paris Olympic games. Then, out of these posts, 6 images were selected through a stratified sample is selected on the bases of specific criteria that are: first, we selected images that include language along with visual signs to see how the images carry the same meaning conveyed by linguistic signs, yet focusing on both types of the proponents and opponents of Imane candidacy for the competition. In the next step, we selected images that are used by both sides to convey different meanings, prioritizing images that received high interactions due to their role in influencing and shaping perceptions.

7.Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is theoretical and focuses on literature review, while the second chapter is concerned more with data analysis and discussion. The first chapter is composed of two sections, the first one delves into the definition of colonialism and imperialism followed by a depth discussion of postcolonialism including its definition and key concepts such as orientalism, decolonization, worlding, hybridity, othering, and nationalism. In addition, it includes the Algerian colonial experience mentioning its historical context, methods of control, cultural imperialism, resistance and postcolonial legacies. However, the second section represents the definition of semiotics with its related concepts such as anchorage and relay, denotation and connotation, and message and code followed by an explanation of media representations. The second chapter devoted to the methodology, data analysis and discussion. It consists of three sections, the first one represents the research design and sampling strategy, a background of the case study Imane Khelif, and data collection and analysis procedures. The second section is concerned with the narrative and semiotic analysis followed by the discussion. The final section represents the limitations experienced during the research, and subsequent recommendations.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review and theoretical foundation of this study. It is composed of two sections, the first one delves into the definition of colonialism and imperialism followed by a depth discussion of postcolonialism including its definition and key concepts such as orientalism, decolonization, worlding, hybridity, othering, and nationalism. In addition, it includes the Algerian colonial experience mentioning its historical context, methods of control, cultural imperialism, resistance and postcolonial legacies. However, the second section represents the definition of semiotics with its related concepts such as anchorage and relay, denotation and connotation, and message and code followed by an explanation of media representations.

Section one: Postcolonial Theory

1. Colonialism

Colonialism is a system of political and economic control in which one country exerts domination over another territory and its people. It is the creation of settler colonies, exploiting local resources, and enforcing cultural, legal, and ideological structures of the colonizing power. Loomba (2015) claimed that the conquest and the control of the foreign power were justified by civilizing missions and ideologies of racial superiority. This idea is often produced by other key figures of Post colonialism such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said.

Historically, colonialism emerged in tandem with European expansion from the 15th century onward, culminating in the formal imperial projects of the 19th and 20th centuries. During this period, European powers such as Britain, France, and Spain were trying to naturalize their control and domination through civilizational discourses that reinforced the idea of the colonized inferiority, primitivity, and its need for guidance and discipline (Said, 1978; Fanon, 1963). To prevent the colonized resistance they included and embedded their

narratives in different fields such as education, religion, and legal systems .

Colonialism went beyond politics and economics it became an epistemological project. It involved the imposition of Eurocentric ways of knowing and being while systematically devaluing and erasing indigenous knowledge and cosmologies. As Mignolo (2007) argues, the colonial matrix of power extended beyond territorial conquest to encompass knowledge production and identity formation.

2. Colonialism As Imperialism

While colonialism is defined as the direct military and political dominance and establishment of settlements, different scholars use the term imperialism interchangeably. According to Loomba (2015), imperialism is an ideological concept that stands for justifying colonial expansion. These ideologies are historically implemented through colonialism, this view is further reinforced by Said (1993) and Young (2001) who both argue that colonialism is the concrete representation of imperialism. In this sense we cannot separate this two concepts due to their overlapping

One key distinction between the two terms is that even after the formal end of the colonial era and the local liberation of the colonized nations, imperialist ideologies persist and continue to shape people's lives and beliefs. This reflects the true aim of colonialism which is deeper than controlling the land, but also reshaping identities, minds, and cultures.

3.Postcolonialism

The concept of Us versus Other was derived from the division made by colonization, by saying colonization two major concepts would appear in our minds unconsciously which are the colonizer and the colonized. Over time absolute power was represented by the western societies through the word we while they use the word other to represent the powerless side that needs to be governed as they claim. The dominance of powerful nations over the weaker

ones escalated into conflicts of national supremacy that led to imperialism and then gave rise to postcolonialism up to today.

3.1.Defenition of Postcolonialism

The term post was associated with colonialism since the 1970s, and gradually shifted to political ideology rather than time expressing term. Beyond the historical period that follows the formal end of colonial rule, postcolonialism refers to a critical theoretical framework that interrogates colonialism and imperialism impacts, it focuses on how cultural, political, and social legacies continue to shape power structures, identities, and narratives in formally colonized nations (Mishra & Hodge, 2005). While political independence of many former colonies was gained during the 20th century, poscolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Frantz Fanon argue that colonialism ideologies persist in various forms, including discursive practices, cultural imperialism, and racial hierarchies (Parry, 1997; Young, 2001).

One key concern of postcolonialism is the deconstruction of dominant Western narratives that have historically justified imperial control. These discourses continue to construct the other by marginalizing subaltern voices and hybrid identities. This idea is further explained by Mishra and Hodge (2005) who note that postcolonial theorists analyze how colonial powers introduce binary oppositions such as civilized/savage, and modern/traditional to legitimize their domination. Postcolonialism should not be just seen as the end of a historical era, but rather as an ongoing process of resistance and critique against imperial ideologies. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007), postcolonial theory "seeks to intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity which legitimize and perpetuate the structures of domination inherited from colonialism" (p. 168).

As discussed above, this conceptual framework is concerned not only with the historical record of colonization but also with the continuous ways of deconstructing inclusion and

exclusion discourses imposed by colonial ideologies. This perspective is worthy when analyzing narratives related to identity and cultural legitimacy. In the context of our thesis postcolonialism would be the most appropriate critical framework to be applied to the Imane Khelif case study because it helps to deconstruct the discursive mechanisms through which bodies from formally colonized nations are subjected, scrutinized, and marginalized and also to reveal how institutional sports and media continue to enforce Eurocentric standards.

3.2. Key Concepts of Postcolonialism

Postcolonial studies can be characterized by interdisciplinarity due to its diverse theoretical approaches which are united by their emphasis on colonial impacts and their contemporary manifestations. Postcolonial theorists such as Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994) focus on analyzing colonial discourses, while others like Bhambra (2009) and Swadener & Mutua (2008) emphasize the impacts of neo-colonial systems including economic, political, and cultural inequalities. What links these approaches is a shared mission that foregrounds Eurocentric control and dominant narratives.

3.2.1. Orientalism

Edward Said's book Orientalism (1978) is a central point in postcolonial studies. This work exposed the construction of the Orient by Western ideologies. The term Orient refers to the East as inferior, exotic, irrational, and needs to be governed by the superior West. According to Said (1978), Orientalism refers to both a system of power and discourse that justified and naturalized European imperial rule. This binary opposition between the superior and civilized West and the exotic and backward Orient was embedded in art, literature, culture, politics, and academic texts, and it succeeded in creating dehumanized and marginalized Other.

Later many scholars have built upon Said's influential framework, they expanded his critique to trace how Orientalist stereotypes continue to shape perceptions in media discourses and governmental policies. Mishra and Hodge (2005) highlight that the

constructions established by Orientalism must be addressed by postcolonial theory to show how its binaries persist to reinforce power relations. In addition, postcolonial literatures construct counter-discourse, subverting Orientalist representations through alternative narratives (Tiffin, 1995). These theoretical interventions reveal Orientalism as a dynamic system of knowledge production rather than a fixed colonial relic.

3.2.2. Hybridity

Another central concept in postcolonial theory is hybridity, it is a cultural term that refers to the process of blending cultures, identities, and languages through the contact between multiple groups. Hybridity is theorized by the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha.

Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity (1994) is one of the most influential theories in postcolonial studies. Its major purpose is to question fixed notions and cultural identity. Bhabha introduced a symbolic conceptualization of third space which refers to the symbolic space of cultural transformation and identity formation that emerge due to cultural interactions. He argues that this space challenges colonial authority by exposing the impurity and instability of fixed identities.

Scholars have built upon Bhabha's framework to analyze different cultural and historical contexts. Boehmer (2009) adopted the concept of hybridity in his examination of gender and nationalism. The analysis highlights how anticolonial themes were mixed with feminist perspectives by postcolonial female writers. In addition, the interaction between Indigenous Australians and settler colonial narratives creates a hybrid Australian identity that resists monologic nationalism (Gibson, 1992).

3.2.3. Decolonization

The traditional meaning of decolonization is the process of achieving formal political independence from European powers. However, postcolonial theorists such as Fanon (1963) and Mignolo (2011) argue that decolonization is deeper than the end of colonial rule but it

refers also to the dismantling of colonial ideologies, structures, and epistemologies. “Decolonization is truly the creation of new men... a complete calling into question of the colonial situation.”(Fanon, 1963, p. 2). In this context, decolonization must also challenge the Eurocentric gender norms imposed through colonial modernity, reclaiming the legitimacy of bodies like Imane Khelif’s that have been othered and excluded by colonial logics disguised as universal sporting standards.

Frantz Fanon's revolutionary works established decolonization as both a political process and psychological liberation. Fanon (1961) argue that liberation is not just about flag independence and changing governments but it requires foredoom from colonial ideologies and rebuilding entire cultural and epistemological systems.

Building on Fanon's insights, scholars criticize how academic knowledge is produced. Contemporary scholars have expanded Fanon's insights to critique academic knowledge production. Bhambra (2009) deconstructs Eurocentric historiography, showing how standard narratives of European modernity erase colonial exploitation. Similarly, Swadener and Mutua (2008) call for decolonizing research methodologies that center indigenous epistemologies rather than imposing Western frameworks.

3.2.4.Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism is an ideological and epistemological framework that centers Europe—and by extension, the West as the universal standard for knowledge, culture, history, and progress, while positioning non-European societies as backward, irrational, or underdeveloped. As Said (1978) argues in Orientalism, Eurocentrism operates through cultural representations that create a binary opposition between the rational West and the exotic or inferior non-West. Eurocentrism not only marginalizes alternative worldviews but also naturalizes Western dominance in fields such as education, media, science, and international politics (Mignolo, 2000).

Eurocentrism represents one of the most pervasive and enduring legacies of colonialism, referring to the systematic privileging of European knowledge systems, values, and historical narratives as universal standards. Postcolonial scholars have rigorously critiqued this paradigm for its role in sustaining global inequalities. Bhambra's (2009) seminal work deconstructs Eurocentric historiography by demonstrating how mainstream narratives of European modernity deliberately obscure colonial exploitation. She argues that the Enlightenment's claims to universal reason and progress were fundamentally constructed through colonial encounters, yet these interactions remain conspicuously absent from dominant historical accounts. This selective amnesia serves to naturalize Europe's position as the sole originator of modernity while rendering colonial violence as peripheral to the historical record.

During's (1987) critique of postmodernism further illuminates how even ostensibly radical Western theoretical frameworks often fail to address their Eurocentric underpinnings. His analysis reveals how postmodern critiques of grand narratives frequently stop short of confronting the colonial conditions that made European modernity possible. This theoretical blind spot underscores what Mishra and Hodge (2005) term the "incomplete narrative" of postcolonial critique - the ongoing need to expose how Eurocentrism operates not just in historical accounts but in contemporary knowledge production across disciplines.

Gikandi's (2004) literary analysis provides crucial insights into how Eurocentrism manifests in cultural spheres. He demonstrates how the Western literary canon systematically excludes or appropriates non-European narratives while positioning European aesthetic forms as universally valid. His work traces how postcolonial writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o have strategically appropriated and subverted European literary genres to challenge these exclusionary practices. This theoretical foundation establishes Eurocentrism not as a neutral

epistemological stance but as an active mechanism of cultural domination that requires continuous interrogation.

3.2.5. Nationalism

Nationalism, as demonstrated in the discourse surrounding Imane Khelif, is a political and cultural strategy of collective identity formation that mobilizes shared history, symbols, and resistance against perceived external threats (Boehmer, 2009). Postcolonial nationalism presents a complex theoretical terrain marked by tensions between anti-colonial resistance and the reproduction of exclusionary state practices. Boehmer's (2009) gendered analysis provides a foundational framework for understanding these contradictions. Her work traces how nationalist movements across Africa and Asia frequently constructed women as symbolic bearers of cultural authenticity while denying them substantive political agency. This theoretical intervention reveals the patriarchal underpinnings of what she terms heroic nationalism the tendency to frame independence struggles through masculinist narratives of military and political leadership.

Gibson's (1992) study of Australian settler nationalism offers another crucial theoretical perspective by exposing how postcolonial states often replicate colonial patterns of indigenous erasure. His concept of settler memory describes the selective memorialization practices through which settler societies construct national identities that simultaneously celebrate their anti-colonial origins while suppressing native claims to land and sovereignty. This theoretical framework has proven particularly valuable for analyzing other settler-colonial contexts like Canada and the United States.

During's (1987) critique of nationalist narrative-mythic constructs provides important theoretical tools for understanding how postcolonial states manufacture historical legitimacy. His analysis of cultural production in newly independent nations demonstrates how literature, art and official historiography often construct idealized pre-colonial pasts that serve

contemporary political needs while eliding internal social divisions. This work anticipates more recent critiques of how nationalist narratives can become tools for elite consolidation rather than genuine decolonization.

3.2.6. Othering

The concept of Othering occupies a central place in postcolonial theory as a framework for understanding the discursive construction of colonial hierarchies. It is a process by which dominant groups define, label, and construct subordinate groups as fundamentally different, inferior, or alien in order to reinforce power hierarchies and justify exclusion, domination, or control. Rooted in colonial discourse, Othering involves turning people from colonized or marginalized groups into “the Other” against which the colonizer or dominant group defines itself as superior, rational, and civilized (Said, 1978). This binary distinction between Self and Other is not merely descriptive but ideological, it shapes perceptions, policies, and practices across cultural, racial, gendered, and geopolitical lines. As Spivak (1985) and Bhabha (1994) show, Othering also functions through ambivalence and repetition, where the Other is simultaneously feared and desired, degraded and exoticized.

Tiffin's (1995) analysis of colonial literature provides foundational insights into how European texts systematically constructed colonized peoples as fundamentally different and inferior. Her close readings of adventure novels and administrative documents reveal consistent patterns of animalistic imagery, infantilization and feminization deployed to justify colonial domination. This work established important methodological precedents for analyzing Othering as a textual practice with real political consequences.

Said's (1978) Orientalism remains the most comprehensive theoretical account of Othering as a system of knowledge production. His meticulous archival work demonstrates how European scholarship about the Orient created a self-reinforcing system of representations that bore little relation to actual Eastern societies but served crucial political functions. Said's

concept of imaginative geography has proven particularly influential for showing how Othering operates through spatial metaphors that naturalize cultural hierarchies.

Bhabha's (1994) theory of ambivalence introduced crucial complications to theories of Othering by demonstrating how colonial discourse is never monolithic or complete. His analysis of mimicry and hybridity reveals how the colonized Other inevitably disrupts and destabilizes colonial authority through subtle acts of repetition with difference. This theoretical intervention opened new avenues for understanding resistance within systems of Othering rather than just outside them.

3.2.7.Subalternity

Subalternity refers to the condition of populations that exist outside the dominant structures of power, voice, and representation, particularly within colonial and postcolonial contexts. Introduced into postcolonial theory by the Subaltern Studies collective and popularized by Spivak (1988), the term designates those often women or marginalized racial groups who are structurally excluded from speaking or being heard within hegemonic discourse. As Spivak famously argues, the subaltern cannot simply speak because their voice is filtered, erased, or co-opted by elite knowledge systems (Spivak, 1988).

The concept of subalternity has evolved significantly since Gramsci's initial formulation, becoming a cornerstone of postcolonial critique. The Subaltern Studies Collective, particularly through Guha's (1983) work, revolutionized historical methodology by demonstrating how Indian peasant revolts were systematically erased from colonial archives or misrepresented as criminal activity rather than political resistance. This theoretical intervention created new paradigms for recovering marginalized voices, showing how colonial administration relied on epistemic violence to maintain control. Spivak's (1988) famous interrogation of whether the subaltern can speak exposed deeper complexities in representation, arguing that Western academic frameworks often appropriate subaltern

experiences even in attempts to document them. Her analysis of the suicide of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri revealed how both colonial and nationalist discourses failed to comprehend the specific gendered oppression underlying this act, instead fitting it into predetermined narratives.

3.2.8.Worlding

Worlding is a postcolonial concept introduced by Spivak (1985) to describe how colonial powers constructed non-Western regions as inferior, knowable, and governable through discourse and representation. It involves producing a version of the world that aligns with imperial interests, thereby legitimizing domination and erasing local agency and complexity. The idea builds on Said's (1978) critique of Orientalist discourse and is complemented by Bhabha's (1994) analysis of how colonial narratives fix the identity of the colonized subject.

The concept of worlding has provided crucial tools for analyzing how space and knowledge are politically constituted through colonial and postcolonial processes. Spivak's (1985) adaptation of Heidegger's term revealed how British colonial mapping practices in India didn't merely describe territory but actively produced it as a governable space, creating cadastral categories that overwrote indigenous spatial understandings. This theoretical approach has been productively applied to contemporary urban studies, particularly in Roy's (2011) analysis of Dubai's rapid development, which shows how neoliberal city planning replicates colonial worlding by constructing global cities through migrant labor exploitation and environmental destruction, while erasing Bedouin histories of the landscape. Contrasting cases emerge from African urban studies, where Simone's (2004) research on Lagos demonstrates how residents create alternative worldings through informal transportation networks, cross-border trade systems, and adaptive architecture that responds to frequent practices that redefine urban space from below.

3.2.9. Resistance

Resistance in postcolonial theory refers to the diverse strategies discursive, cultural, political, and physical through which colonized or marginalized peoples challenge domination, reclaim agency, and subvert colonial or neocolonial power structures. While resistance can take the form of armed struggle or organized political movements, it also includes everyday acts of defiance, cultural survival, and counter-narratives that disrupt hegemonic discourse (Fanon, 1963). Postcolonial scholars emphasize that resistance is not always overt or revolutionary; it may be subtle, symbolic, or embedded in language, identity, or representation (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). Resistance is often shaped by the same discourses it seeks to oppose, making it complex and ambivalent rather than purely liberatory.

4.Related Studies

Empirical research in media studies, gender theory, and postcolonial discourse provides a critical foundation for analyzing the controversy surrounding Imane Khelif. These studies reveal how colonial tropes, gendered binaries, and racialized assumptions continue to shape representations of non-Western individuals in contemporary global contexts, particularly in sport and media.

4.1.Media Representation and Orientalist Framing

Chandran and Vengadasamy (2018) conducted a discourse analysis of Western travel writing about Borneo, revealing persistent colonial imagery that frames the region through lenses such as the "noble savage" or the "untamed wilderness." Such representations function to exoticize and diminish the agency of the colonized subject, a framework that parallels how Khelif's Algerian identity has been treated in segments of the Western press depicted as foreign, unruly, or anomalous in the context of women's boxing.

Similarly, Kinnvall (2016) examined how European border security narratives deploy Orientalist rhetoric by portraying migrants as existential threats or invasion that endangers Western stability. This metaphor of threat can be seen in how Khelif's physical appearance

and performance were constructed in the media as a challenge to normative femininity and fairness in women's sports.

4.2.Gender, Race, and Athlete Exclusion

Research into postcolonial memory and identity formation also illuminates how athletic bodies like Khelif's become sites of cultural conflict. Parkinson et al. (2015), in their study of Irish conservation policies, observed how colonial-era sites are repurposed through contesting narratives of national identity and historical memory. This dynamic echoes the semiotic struggle over Khelif's image in Algerian media, where her representation is reclaimed as a symbol of national pride and anti-colonial endurance.

Jamjoom (2020) interviewed Saudi women leaders and highlighted how they negotiate hybrid identities balancing traditional gender norms with aspirations for modern leadership. This notion of identity hybridity is relevant to Khelif's case, as her embodiment of strength and athleticism places her at odds with Eurocentric norms of femininity, while still resonating with culturally embedded ideals of honor and resilience in her home country.

Hall's (2011) study of Jamaican managers similarly found that leadership styles merged local values with Western managerial expectations, producing unique hybrid practices. In Khelif's case, her nonconformity to Western femininity is pathologized, yet within Algerian narratives, her strength is normalized and valorized, further illustrating the ideological tension between local and global discourses.

4.3.Resistance and Decolonial Praxis

Finally, empirical studies on resistance and decolonial knowledge practices provide valuable insights into the counter-narratives surrounding Khelif's image. Endres (2008) explored Vietnamese spirit medium practices as acts of spiritual resistance against state secularism and Western rationality. Analogously, the supportive framing of Khelif by

Algerian journalists and commentators functions as a cultural resistance to Western norms of gender and athletic legitimacy.

Doecke et al. (2017) analyzed how incorporating Aboriginal storytelling into Australian literacy programs served as a decolonial intervention in educational discourse. This finding resonates with the IOC's defense of Khelif, which implicitly challenges the Eurocentric dominance in international sports governance, pushing for recognition of bodily diversity that reflects global realities rather than colonial norms.

5. The Algerian Colonial Experience

One of the most violent occupations and cultural erasure was the French colonization of Algeria that lasted 130 years (1830- 1962) . It was described by many scholars as genocide. This colonialism characterized by all types of violence and dominance including military conquest , cultural and ideological assimilation and economic exploitation. The anti colonial theorist Frantz Fanon who involved deeply in the Algerian liberation revolution described this aggressive colonialism as dehumanisation when he said "dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, turns him into an animal."(Fanon, 1963). Eurocentric lens were effectively applied during the French colonial rule where the Algerian identity was redefined.

5.1. Historical background and motivations for colonization

The colonizer's interest in Algeria was influenced by political, economic, and strategic motivations. The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 was justified by the diplomatic conflict that is called the fly-whisk incident, in which the Dey of Algiers reportedly struck the French consul with a fly-whisk. However, as Prochaska (1990) notes, this excuse was no more than a deeply strategic and economic endeavor. Due to the military failures and domestic political unrest, France decided to restore its national prestige, especially after the loss of colonies like Haiti. Additionally, the Algerian geostrategic location was a valuable issue for France. Its

Mediterranean location was an advantage that helped in trading and enhancing the French influence in North Africa and beyond.

Algeria could function as a military outpost and a settler colony due to its proximity to France, which may decrease the domestic socio-economic tensions and absorb surplus population (Sessions, 2011). Beyond strategic interests, there was also a desire to establish an agrarian economy controlled by Europeans. French elites viewed Algeria as a tabula rasa ready for European civilization. The colonizer justify the conquest by the ideology of civilizing missions (mission civilisatrice). This logic, however, concealed the violence inherent in colonial expansion and the profound disregard for the sovereignty of the Indigenous population(Locrin, 1995).

5.2.Methods of Colonialism and Imperial Control

The French conquest was more than a singular event in 1830. It was a prolonged process of military occupation, settler colonialism and systematic dispossession. This aggressive colonization was faced by tribes' resistance and organized movements which led France to take nearly 45 years to claim dominance over Algeria. Evans (2012) noted that this occupation was not swift and it was a series of decades marked by mass executions, forced relocation of entire communities and violent warfare to subdue man regions, especially in Kabylia and the south. During that 45 years which started in 1830 thousands of Algerians died due to disease, war and famine (Ageron, 1991). This was also confirmed by Branche (2004) who talked about one of the most severe massacres made by the colonizer and described it as one of the most infamous incidents Dahra caves massacre in 1845 in which forces suffocated more than 500 civilians by setting fire to the entrance of the cave where they had taken refuge.

Settler colonialism which refers to a form of colonization that goes beyond exploitation and includes demographic replacement, was implemented once military dominance was established. Large stretches of fertile land were expropriated from Algerians and given to the

settlers who were known as colons or peids- noir . According to Stora (2001), by the early 20th century, over 2.5 million hectares had been confiscated and redistributed. In 1881, inequality was permitted through law where the Code de l'indigénat was introduced. Indigenous Algerians were subjected to forced labor and collective punishment. This system denied them political representation and treated them as subjects, not citizens (Shepard, 2006). Whereas, settlers had access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure and enjoyed all types of civil rights.

5.3.Cultural Imperialism and Identity Erasure

Cultural and ideological domination was asserted by the French colonialism in Algeria. The Algerian identity was considered inferior and incompatible with the universal French values. One of the key tools of assimilation was education, and to promote the French language and cultivate its historical and cultural values the French authorities built schools with limited access. According to Locrin (1995) by the 1930s, less than 10% of Muslim children had access to formal education, while the vast majority of European children attended free, state-supported schools. This system aimed to marginalize Arabic and Berber languages and produce subsumed Algerians who could speak French and conform to French norms but were still inferior (Prochaska, 1990). This cultural strategy was not only limited to education, religious institutions were converted into churches aiming at a total erasure of the Algerian identity. The constructed image of uncivilized Algerian and in need of French tutelage by the colonizer under the orientalise ideologies was a justification of imperial rule

5.4. Resistance and the Struggle for Independence

Resistance to French imperialism in Algeria began almost immediately after the initial invasion. The most prominent early figure was Emir Abdelkader, who led a sustained military and spiritual resistance from 1832 to 1847. Abdelkader organized a proto-state with taxation, law enforcement, and diplomatic networks. His resistance was both nationalist and

religious in nature. As Clancy-Smith (1994) argues, Abdelkader's movement was not a chaotic tribal rebellion but a sophisticated political response to imperial occupation, grounded in Islamic reformism and a desire for autonomy. Despite ultimately surrendering in 1847, Abdelkader's legacy endured as a symbol of anti-colonial struggle.

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Algerians engaged in numerous localized revolts, most notably the Kabyle revolt of 1871. These uprisings were crushed with extreme violence and followed by more land confiscations. However, Algerian resistance evolved beyond military revolt into cultural and political activism. The early 20th century saw the rise of reformist Islamic movements (like the Association of Algerian Ulama), labor unions, and nationalist parties such as the Étoile Nord-Africaine and later the Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA), led by Messali Hadj.

The tipping point came on May 8, 1945, the day Nazi Germany surrendered. Thousands of Algerians marched in Sétif and Guelma demanding independence and the release of nationalist leaders. What began as a peaceful demonstration escalated into violence when shots were fired and settlers were killed. In response, the French army and settler militias launched a massive and indiscriminate crackdown, killing between 15,000 and 45,000 Algerians, depending on the source (Evans, 2012). This massacre radicalized a generation of Algerians, many of whom concluded that independence could only be achieved through armed struggle.

The National Liberation Front (FLN) was founded in 1954 with the goal of ending colonial rule through revolution. On November 1, 1954, it launched coordinated attacks across the country, marking the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence. Over the next eight years, the FLN waged a brutal guerrilla war against French forces, while also targeting collaborators. The French military responded with overwhelming force, employing forced resettlement and systematic torture.

Branche (2004) documents the widespread use of torture in urban centers like Algiers, where suspects were electrocuted, waterboarded, or beaten during interrogations. The Battle of Algiers (1956–57) became emblematic of the war's brutality: the FLN used bombings and assassinations, while French paratroopers under General Massu employed mass arrests and torture. Despite the violence, the FLN gained increasing international support, especially after exposing France's atrocities at the United Nations. By 1961, even segments of French society began to turn against the war. Charles de Gaulle, who initially sought to maintain Algeria as part of France, eventually opened negotiations. The Evian Accords were signed in 1962, granting Algeria full independence.

The human cost of the war was staggering: over 1 million Algerians died, 2 million were displaced, and vast areas were economically devastated (Evans, 2012). The departure of nearly a million European settlers and Algerian Jews in 1962 marked a dramatic rupture in the demographic and political fabric of the country.

5.5. Legacy and Postcolonial Impact

The impact of French imperialism did not end with Algerian independence in 1962. The social, psychological, and economic legacies of colonization continue to shape postcolonial Algeria and France. Frantz Fanon argued that decolonization was not simply a matter of changing flags or constitutions, but a "violent restructuring of the world" (Fanon, 1963, p. 36). The colonial system had not only dispossessed Algerians economically but had instilled a profound sense of inferiority and cultural disorientation.

Algeria faced enormous challenges after independence. The FLN, now a ruling party, sought to reconstruct the country along socialist and nationalist lines, focusing on education, industrialization, and Arabization. However, the deep scars of colonization—illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and internal divisions—made state-building immensely difficult. Moreover,

the military remained powerful and repressive, often invoking the legacy of the liberation war to silence dissent.

On the cultural level, postcolonial Algeria struggled to reconcile its Arab-Islamic identity with the lingering influence of the French language and institutions. Although Arabic was promoted as the national language, French remained dominant in education, science, and media a tension that continues to spark debate today. The psychological and symbolic weight of the French presence remains embedded in urban architecture, legal codes, and even daily speech.

In France, the legacy of Algeria is equally contentious. For decades, the French state refused to recognize the colonial nature of its rule or the atrocities committed during the war. Veterans and settlers were portrayed as victims, while Algerian immigrants and their descendants were often marginalized. It wasn't until the 1990s that French historians, journalists, and former soldiers began to publicly address the use of torture and repression (Shepard, 2006).

Today, France's Algerian legacy plays a central role in debates over national identity, race, secularism, and immigration. As Shepard (2006) observes, the Algerian war and colonial experience remain an open wound in the French national memory.

Section Two: Semiotics and Related Concepts

1. Definition of Semiotics

Semiotics is a complex and multifaceted field of study that examines the nature of signs, symbols, and their role in communication and meaning-making. According to Charles Sanders Peirce (2011), semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their interpretation. In other terms, semiotics is the study of how meaning is created and communicated through language and other symbolic systems. This includes the study of language, visual symbols, sounds, and even body language. Eco (1976) clarified that semiotics is not concerned only

with the linguistic signs that appear in daily speech, but also with the visual signs that stand for something else such as images, people's behavior, and objects. This means that semiotics is concerned with how signs are used as tools of interaction and communication to create meanings and to convey messages, semiotics is concerned with the processes of communication and signification.

2. Code and Message

Messages cannot be understood and interpreted without codes. A code represents a set of conventions that has to be adequate to a specific society or culture in order to appropriately interpret the meaning of the message. According to Barthes (1977) there is a static and standard rule which must be followed to convey and interpret the message. This means that there is no message without a code. Codes are essential to the establishment of culture as they are the device to conventionalise meaning. The rule emphasizes the importance of codes in any form of messages whether photographic images, waving hands, or other different forms.

3. Denotation and Connotation

denotation and connotation are key concepts in Barthes' and Hjelmslev's theories of signs. Denotation is the common literal meaning shared among individuals, in other words, it is the first order, self evident and stable meaning, whereas connotation is the second order and atypical meaning that created by a social entity (Perusset,2022). This meaning is less stable and can be found in both images and texts and shaped culturally.

Hjelmslev's semiotic model explains how an expression plane which is the word or the image as a denotation can participate to generate multiple content planes which we refer as connotations, in other words the same signifier can signify different meanings based on the context and the intention of the interpretation

4.Anchorage and Relay

To explain the association between visual discourse and the linguistic one in conveying meaning within cultural texts Barthes introduced this relationship in two different modes:

Anchorage: Van Leeuwen (2005) said that "the text directs the reader through the signified of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others, and remote- controles him towards the meaning chosen in advance" (p.229). In other words, anchorage refers to the way in which text can guide or anchor the interpretation of an image and directing the viewer's attention to specific meaning.

Relay: It involves a more complex relationship between text and image. the text and image together contribute to create layers of meaning. They complete each other, with the text adding additional information or expanding upon the visual message conveyed by the image.

5. Media Representation

Media in postcolonial studies are not considered as neutral platforms to share information, but rather as a powerful tools that contribute in the construction of social realities. The representation of individuals, bodies, and identities in media is inherently ideological. According to Hall (1997) representation refers to the production of meaning through language in all its forms including narratives, images or symbols that encode cultural and political assumptions. Media texts and visual representations play a big role in shaping perceptions and lead to misreading and misunderstandings.

From a semiotic point of view, media function through sign systems that carry both denotative and connotative meanings (Barthes, 1972). The denotative meaning is what does the text or the media image directly convey, while the connotative meaning includes the ideological and cultural codes related to that text or image. These connotations are not stable but they are culturally shaped. In the context of postcolonialism, Western media representations depend on stereotypes that reflect colonial legacies aiming at linking non Western bodies to aggression, illegitimacy, and exclusion (Said, 1978).

Furthermore, media representation is bound to systems of power, discourse expands its simple role of expressing information, it become a powerful mechanism that defines who has the right to speak and participate and decides who must be silenced and excluded. In this regard media function as sites of power dynamics, athletes like Imane Khelif are depicted in ways that demonstrate masculine traits, these representations reflect postcolonial tensions.

This research therefore engages with media representation as a site of struggle, where semiotic signs and narrative constructions are analyzed to uncover how Western discourse and visual representation reflect colonial ideologies and Eurocentric norms that compete with media that assert nationalism and resistance

Conclusion

This chapter has laid the theoretical groundwork for understanding the enduring legacies of colonialism and imperialism through the lens of postcolonial critique. By examining key concepts such as Orientalism, hybridity, and decolonization, it has highlighted how power, representation, and identity continue to be contested in formerly colonized societies. The Algerian case study further illustrates the violent mechanisms of colonial domination and the resilience of anti-colonial resistance. Besides, it provided a brief explanation of semiotic and media representation. These insights set the stage for analyzing the media discourse surrounding Imane Khelif, revealing how postcolonial tensions persist in contemporary debates over gender, race, and belonging in global sports.

Chapter Two: Methodology, Data Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an overall representation of the main procedures discussed in the research methodology, data analysis, discussion, results, the limitations and the main recommendations for future researches. Hence, these points are scattered through the chapter which is divided into three sections .The first section is devoted to discusse the major steps of the research methodology mainly the research design we followed. The second section represents data analysis and discussion. While the third one is concerned with the limitations we encountered along the study, and the recommendations.

Section One: Research Methodology

This section represents the overall description of the research methodology chosen to analyze our data. It begins with the research design used for investigation, then a description of the population and sampling strategy, moving to provide a background of our case study Imane Khelif. Finally we stated the data collection and analysis procedures

1. **Research Design**

Organizing a research requires a plan or strategy, which we refer to as research design. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) defined design as the overall strategy the researcher may choose to logically integrate the different components of the research in a coherent way. Accordingly , the contextual conditions like social, cultural and environmental conditions that are acknowledged by qualitative research strongly influence human experiences (Yin, 2016). Since we are concerned with participants` views on a part of Imene Khelif life, we have chosen the qualitative approach because capturing their views and perspectives may be a major purpose of qualitative research.

2.Population and Sampling Strategy:

Selecting a sample is one of the most important steps in the research process. As suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), researchers must make sampling decisions early in the research planning process, including whether to study a sample or the

entire population. A sample in a study refers to the group on which the data is gained (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Defining the population of interest is the first thing the researcher should do to select his sample. Population on the other hand refers to the large group of interest of the researcher. The population of our study is all the posts and publications of Imane KHELIF during and after the controversy surround her gender identity.

We opted for a combined purposive and stratified sampling strategy that is commensurate with our research which is based on narrative and semiotic analysis. Due to the nature of our research randomization cannot be the appropriate strategy for selecting our sample because we are not concerned with generalizability, but rather we need specific criteria to be investigated. For the narrative analysis, we opted for the purposive sampling strategy, through which the researcher does not simply study what is available but focuses on particular issues and cases to be investigated. We selected posts by different figures in the world including famous ones such as Donald Trump, Elon Musk, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and British writer J.K. Rowling. We selected these posts because they reached millions of views in one day (01/08/2024). In addition, they include narratives against Imen Khelif that reflects postcolonial tensions which is our concerns. The sample also includes items that support her like:

- The International Olympic Committee that published a statement which aimed to protect Imen Khelif from the accusations saying that Imane is a victim of a sudden and arbitrary decision by the IBA (see Appendix M).
- A video of the IOC President Thomas Bach who defended the participation of Khelif saying that how can somebody being born, raised competed and having passport as a woman can not be considered a woman (see Appendix P).
- The American professional mixed martial artist who said in a tweet " Imane Khelif wins the Gold Medal . A lot of propaganda and lies. Born a female, born with lady parts. Lies about

the IBA tests that were not disclosed . Not a transgender . That's not allowed in her country" (see Figure 05).

- Hfid Derradji post that includes : "Iman Khalif, the daughter of the people" is the title of the Washington Post newspaper for an article in which it tells her story (see Appendix O)

For the semiotic analysis, we opted for the stratified sample to select the images to be analyzed to ensure balanced representativeness across specific criteria. We selected them based on three criteria: the first one is focusing on images with language to see how the images carry the same meaning conveyed by linguistic signs. The second one is focusing on both sides supporters and critics and the third one is selecting image that used by both sides to convey deferent meanings. The fourth one is prioritizing the images that received high interactions.

3.Background of the Case Study Imane Khelif

This section represents a description of our case study, it provides a contextual background that would direct the analysis of the data. It includes Imane khelif's profile, her career and achievements, the International Boxing Association disqualification and finally her journey to the Olympic gold medal.

3.1.Imane Khelif Profile and Achievements

Imane Khelif is an Algerian professional boxer. She was born on 2 May 1999 in Laghouat.. She has loved sports since she was six years old. She originally played football before switching to boxing. In her early years, she had to commute to Tiaret to attend training sessions because she lived in a village far from the city. She won the gold medal in the women's 66 kg (welterweight) boxing event at the 2024 Summer Olympics.

3.2.Her Career and Achievements:

Imane khelif went through a rich compelling and inspiring journey. she joined the national

team and participated in the 2018 World Championship at the age of 19. Her victories started in 2019.

- **African championships:** She is a key figure in women's boxing due to her notable success on the African continent.

- Tokyo Olympics participation: She represented Algeria in the women's lightweight boxing event at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, where she was defeated in the quarterfinals. She was the first female boxer to represent Algeria at the Olympics.

- World boxing championships:

In March 2021, she won a gold medal at the Istanbul Bosphorus International Boxing Tournament, defeating Anastasia Belyakova in the final of the women's lightweight event. In February 2022, Khelif won a gold medal at the Strandja Memorial Tournament after defeating Nataliya Sychugova in the final of the women's 63 kg event. In 2022, she competed at the International Boxing Association (IBA) Women's World Championships in Istanbul, where she earned a silver medal in the light welterweight category (63 kg). This accomplishment made her the first Algerian female boxer to reach the finals and medal at this world championship level.

- Pan Arab games and Mediterranean games: Khelif has also represented Algeria in regional competitions such as the Mediterranean Games and Pan Arab Games, where she secured gold medals, adding to her international reputation.

3.3.IBA Championships Disqualification

In March 2023, Imane Khelif was disqualified from competing at the Women's World Boxing Championships in New Delhi, India. This disqualification happened three days after Khelif defeated Azalia Amineva, when she was competing for the gold medal in the finals. The International Boxing Association (IBA) ruled her ineligible to compete, citing "gender eligibility rules" as the reason for her disqualification (BBC Sport,2024). The IBA did not

provide full transparency regarding the exact nature of her ineligibility. This lack of detail led to widespread speculation about the criteria used in her case, as no further explanation was given regarding whether the decision was based on hormone levels, physical attributes, or other biological factors often associated with gender eligibility. The Washington Post stated, "It remains unclear what standards Khelif failed in 2023 to lead to the disqualifications", [...] there never has been evidence that [...] Khelif [...] had XY chromosomes or elevated levels of testosterone." (The Washington Post, 2023). The IBA did not reveal the testing methodology, stating the "specifics remain confidential"(BBC Sport,2024). She initially appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, but the appeal was terminated since Khelif couldn't pay the procedural costs. Imane Khelif became the target of online abuse and bullying, including the false claim that she is a man, which was promoted by many influential figures. Her case highlights how colonial ideologies are reflected.

3.4.The journey to the Olympic gold medal

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) allowed Imane Khelif to compete in Paris, confirming that she complied with all necessary eligibility and medical regulations for the event. This official decision has been announced on 01/08/224 through the IOC statement (see Appendix M).

On 1 August, she defeated the Italian boxer Angela Carini 46 seconds after the match commenced and qualified for the quarter-final. Carini reportedly exclaimed, "It's not fair!" after a punch from Khelif. The next day, Carini apologized to Khelif stating, "All this controversy makes me sad [...] I'm sorry for my opponent, too. If the IOC said she can fight, I respect that decision"(BBC Sport,2024). After the competition, many influential figures around the world Angela like Donald Trump, Elon Musk, the Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni, and the British writer J.K. Rowling**,** accused her as a man competing woman, and they supported Angela**.** Their posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook reached millions of

viewers during one day (01/08/2024), and almost all the comments were in favour of the Italian boxer. The posts included narratives that directly attacked Imane. To list but few as examples " only the weakest of males want to physically compete with women...Only the weakest of Intellect celebrate them" (Trump,2024) (see Appendix A). Also, J.K.Rowling stated in a tweet that reached 123 million views, " Could any picture sum up our new men's rights movement better? The smirk of a male who knows he's protected by a misogynist sporting establishment enjoying the distress of a woman he's just punched in the head, and whose life's ambition he's just shattered"(Rowling,2024) (see Appendix B). After all that propaganda, Imane stated that Angela Carini knows her very well and they used to train together in Italy during multiple training camps, and all that has been said is due to a big conspiracy.

On the same day, the International Olympic Committee published a statement that aimed to protect Imen Khelif from the accusations (see Appendix M), saying that Imane is a victim of a sudden and arbitrary decision by the IBA (ICO, 2024). Towards the end of the IBA World Championship in 2023, she was suddenly disqualified without any due process. Additionally, at a news conference on 3 August 2024, the IOC President Thomas Bach defended the participation of Khelif, saying that how cannot somebody born, raised, competed, and having a passport as a woman be considered a woman (BBC Sport, 2024). Bach invited the ones who questioned her eligibility to come up with a scientific basis, and he added that they would not take part in a sometimes politically motivated, cultural war. Imane was also defended by the Algerian Olympic Committee, which stated that Khelif had been the victim of unethical targeting and baseless propaganda, and that they had taken all necessary measures to protect Khelif and her right to compete.

Although all that has been done by the ICO to protect Imane, the media campaign against her did not stop. On 02 August, the Hungarian boxer Luca Harmori (Imam’s competitor in the

quarter final) shared a story on her Instagram account showing that she will face a man (see Appendix N). That conspiracy lasted till the end of the competition on 09/08/2024, and many are still attacking her. One of them is the American President Donald Trump, who included her picture in his video after his success in the presidential election, and the subtitle under the picture was "men can defeat women"(Trump,2024) (see Figure 04). On the other hand, there were western supporters who talked about her without bias. Derk Brunson, the American professional mixed martial artist, said in a tweet, " Imane Khelif wins the Gold Medal. A lot of propaganda and lies. Born a female, born with lady parts. Lies about the IBA tests that were not disclosed. Not a transgender. That's not allowed in her country"(Brunson,2024) (see Figure 05). "Iman Khalif, the daughter of the people" is the title of the Washington Post newspaper for an article in which it tells her story (Washington Post,2024).

Despite being officially eligible, Imene Khelif became the target of media campaign rooted in cultural bias and colonial ideologies. This background sets the ground for a critical analysis that reflects how postcolonial legacies are imposed through media discourse.

4.Data Collection:

We collected the data from different sources and platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. We started the collection of narratives and images of Imane Khelif by searching in the previous platforms using her name as a keyword. The data collected includes posts published both during and after the competition. This is due to the fact that even after The International Olympic Committee statement that protected and allowed Iman to participate, the conspiracy did not end and it lasted even after her victory on 09/08/2024.

We found many negative publications and writings about her that reinforce the idea of a man competing with women. That publications started on 1 August, when she defeated the Italian boxer Angela Carini 46 seconds after the match commenced and qualified for the quarter final. The narratives were linked to Imane’s pictures in which she looks like a man.

We stopped the collection of posts after selecting 19 ones that covered both western ideologies and perspectives toward Imane and also defenders and resisters perspectives. Since these 19 posts include repeated images we selected them based on specific criteria: the first one, we focus on images with language to see how the images carry the same meaning conveyed by linguistic signs. We did not focus on one side – proponents and opponents, we rather selected images posted by both of them prioritizing images that received high interactions due to their role in influencing and shaping perceptions, and we selected images that used by both sides to convey the same meaning. After the information has been obtained. We categorised and coded the data for the analysis.

5.Data Analysis Procedures

After collecting the data we create a field note in which we link each post with its caption, date, and number of views, likes and comments. In order to organize and prepare the data for the analysis, we adopted two types of coding descriptive coding (see Table 2) and values coding (see Table 3). Descriptive codes are needed to identify what is said or written in qualitative data. Leavy (2014) and Saldaña (2013) both defined them as nouns or short phrases that summarise the content of qualitative data. These codes help to categorize and index the data for analysis. However, Values coding is a method used to identify the participant's values, attitudes and beliefs to represent their perspectives and worldviews Leavy (2014). Saldaña (2013) defined these three elements, a value (V) is what an individual consider important, weather it is a person, thing or an idea. An attitude (A) is how we think about ourselves, others, things or ideas. A belief (B) refers to what we hold to be true or necessary, shaped by our "personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretive perceptions of the social world" (Saldaña, 2009, pp. 89-90). This coding method is useful for studies that explore cultural constructs, identity and ideology. After the data were coded, themes were developed through a recursive process of identifying patterns

that align with postcolonial perspectives. We organized the codes that appeared frequently in thematic clusters based on their relevance to postcolonial theory. For instance, the codes that refer to questioning gender identity were grouped under the first theme which is gender ideology, while expressions of Algerian solidarity and systematic criticism formed the theme number four which is national pride and resistance. Following the same way we developed six themes (see table 04) that are not only inductive but also guided by a critical postcolonial lens. This method aligns with constructed narrative analysis explained by Cohen (2018), he distinguished it from the traditional narrative analysis that concerned with storytelling and individuals life experiences, he defined the constructed narrative analysis as a production of a narrative from data, events, happenings, and information from different sources to form a plot and develop thematic focus.

Table 01

Field note

POSTER	DATE	CAPTION	VIEWS	LIKES	COMMENTS
Shunya	01/08/2024	Today, Angela Carini had her Olympics dreams shattered by Imane Khelif, a male boxer. It is suspected that he BROKE HER NOSE. Don't let this pass quietly. MEN SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BEAT WOMEN FOR SPORT. SAVE WOMEN'S SPORTS.	1,1 M	8,9 K	672
Elon Musk	01/08/2024	She trained her whole life just to have her dreams ripped away by gender ideology. It's quite sad.	2,9 M	29 K	1,4 K

Tullymox (Replay to Elon Musk post)	02/08/2024	No, she had her dreams ripped away by being an inferior boxer. The woman who beat her lost in the Bronze medal bout at the Tokyo Olympics - to an Irish woman. Imane Khelif is not trans and the BA has been discredited for corruption. The IOC cleared her to participate.	99 K	2,9 K	82
TRUMP ARMY (Replay to Elon Musk)	01/08/2024	Biological men should not be allowed to compete in women's sports!! Only the weakest of males want to physically compete with women. Only the weakest of intellect celebrate them.	940 k	8,4 k	304
Bere Aguilar	01/08/2024	Well, no, Imane Khelif is not a woman and maybe she will be. Both on ADN and on physics they explain it. Even if you wake up and look beyond normality, this is gender violence. In 47 seconds they came up with the dreams of a real woman for a man who has trencitas and eases his penis. Aberrant!	642 k	4,8 k	1000
Katy Kray	04/11/2024	Imane Khelif is a man and he hid this fact with the help of the Olympics committee. His medal needs to be returned, title removed and a permanent ban. We watched a man beat up a woman, utterly disgusting.	13 k	751	59
Dr Poormina	06/11/2024	Imane Khelif proven to be a male. Ya Ola. Is this not haram in your religion	21 K	2,6 K	143
Karim Gahin	05/11/2024	medical report confirmed what we all knew - that Imane Khelif is a man, with 46XY chromosomes	7,6M	9,1 K	1,2 K

		and normal testosterone level. You and the Algerian state must apologize not only to those girls whose dreams and futures you have destroyed but also for wasting years of their training, hard work, and effort , but also to all the women of the world. You are a vile coward A coward for running away from competing against men, And vile for deceiving the entire world.			
Eduardo Menoni	4/11/2024	It has been confirmed that Imane Khelif is a man. Imane won a gold medal in women's boxing at the 2024 Olympic Games and was medically found to have a penis and the hormone testosterone. Do you agree that men should be removed from women's sports?	1,7 M	35 K	2,4 K
J.K. Rowling	01/08/2024	Could any picture sum up our new men's rights movement better? The smirk of a male who's knows he's protected by a misogynist sporting establishment enjoying the distress of a woman he's just punched in the head, and whose life's ambition he's just shattered.	124 M	434K	46 K
Genevieve Gluck	13/08/2024	Imane Khelif is so obviously male that it takes a conscious effort to distrust one's own eyes in order to believe otherwise. This is what years of psychological abuse by trans activists has done.	141 K	2,9 K	96

Oli London	05/11/2024	French medical records have revealed Imane Khelif is in fact a MAN. Should he be allowed to keep his Olympic Gold medal he got from beating up female athletes?	169 k	6,3 k	1,2 k
Derek Brunson	09/08/2024	Imane Khelif wins the Gold Medal . A lot of propaganda and lies. Born a female, born with lady parts . Lies about the IBA tests that were not disclosed . Not a transgender. That's not allowed in her country. HI HATERS.	731k	26K	1.5K
Katherine Deves Morgan	30/07/2024	We have never been more aware as a society of male violence against women Why are the #Olympics allowing this male to enter the boxing ring with a woman?	11,7 M	42,6 K	6,8K
Hafid DARRADJI	08/08/2024 01/08/2024	1) Iman Khalif, the daughter of the people" It is the title of the Washington Post newspaper for an article in which it tells the story of the Algerian boxing Iman Khalif (the inspiration), with whom the Algerian people stood and described her as the daughter of the people. 2) Supporting Iman is the duty of all Algerians	Istagram does not show number of views	28,9 k	990
Maia Poet	05/11/2024	Many thought that because Algeria is a Muslim country, there's no way Khelif could've been a male with a 'gender affirming' female passport. Pictures of Imane as a child	65k	6,3k	1,2k

		were widely circulated as evidence that he was born a girl.			
VEDIO	**DATE**	**TRANSCRIPT**	**VIEWS**	**LIKES**	**COMMENTS**
Thomas Bach	08/2024	how can somebody being born, raised competed and having passport as a woman can not be considered a woman.	25 k	225	504
Donald Trump	08/2024	He is a transgender , he is a good male boxer	70 k	645	450
Donald Trump	03/11/2024	Men can beat up women (INCLUDING IMAN KHELIF PICTURE)	11 M	222k	11k

Tabele 02

Descriptive Coding

Post	**Descriptive Code**
Shunya	Misgendering, Violence Allegation, Sports Fairness
Elon Musk	Gender Ideology, Unfairness, Sympathy for Opponent
Tullymox	Debunking Misinformation, Fair Competition, Institutional Support
TRUMP ARMY	Gender Exclusion, Biological Superiority, Aggression
Bere Aguilar	Misgendering, Gender Violence Accusation, Dehumanization
Katy Kray	Cheating Allegation, Institutional Corruption
Dr Poormina	Religious Judgment, Gender Identity Questioning
Karim Gahin	Medical Report Claim, Apology Demand, Deception Narrative
Eduardo Menoni	Medical Claims, Unfair Advantage, Sports Integrity
J.K. Rowling	Accusation of sexism, Institutional Bias, Athlete's Expression
Genevieve Gluck	Psychological Manipulation, Trans Activism Critique

Oli London	Medical Claim, Fairness in Competition
Derek Brunson	Propaganda accusation, Gender Authenticity
Katherine Deves Morgan	Male Violence, Safety in Women's Sports, Sports Policy Critique
Hafid Darradji	National Pride, Athlete Support, Inspirational Narrative
Thomas Bach	Institutional Stance, Gender Recognition, Legal Framework
Donald Trump (08/2024)	Transgender Labeling, Male Boxer Claim
Donald Trump (03/11/2024)	Gendered Violence, Misrepresentation
Maia Poet	Religious and cultural perceptions

Table 02 summarizes the content of each post by representing each caption in few words to categorize and index the data for the analysis.

Table 03

Values coding

Participant	**Value**	**Attitude**	**Belief**
Shunya (P1)	Protecting women's sports	Outrage at Imane's participation	Carini was injured by a male who should be banned
Elon Musk (P2)	Demanding fair competition	Sympathy for Carini Criticism for gender ideology	Considering Imane's victory as an unfair result of gender policies
Tullymox (P3)	Objective evaluation of Imen's performance (skill and capability over identity debates)	Refusing gender based arguments	Imane is not a transgender Corruption claims are false
TRUMP ARMY (P4)	Opposing male participation in women's sports	Anger at men competing against women	Only week men want compete against women
Bere Aguilar (P5)	Biological determinism	Outrage , calling Imen's participation violence	Iman is a man based on DNA and physical traits
Katy kray (P6)	Integrity in sports competition	Strong disapproval of Imen's participation	Imen deceived the system and should and

			banned
Dr. Poormina (P7)	Religious and cultural norms	Condemnation based on religious principals	Transgender is not allowed in Islam
Karim Gahin (P8)	Justice	Anger at Imane and the Algerian state	Algeria have to apologize for supporting Imane
Eduardo Menoni (P9)	Fairness in women's sport	Condemnation of her gold medal	Medical proofs confirm that she is male
J.K. Rowling (P10)	Protection of women's right in sports	Frustration with sports organization	The Olympic games allows male participation in women's competition
Genevieve Gluck (P11)	Physical traits are a reliable evidence	Frustration with ideological gender influences	Denying the fact of Imen's male identity which is obvious
Oli London (P12)	Demand for fairness in the Olympic games	Anger toward gender identity policies	Iman is a male confirmed by French medical records
Derek Brunson (P13)	Truth and fairness	Defending Imene's participation	Iman born a female
Katherine Deves Morgan (P14)	Male violence is forbidden in women's sports	Strong disagreement over Imene's participation	Allowing male athletes in female categories
Hafid Darradji (P15)	National pride and solidarity	Supporting Imane	Algeria should stand behind Imane
Tomas Bach (P16)	Legitimacy of athlete participation	Defending the right of Imen's participation	Legal recognization of gender identity
Donald Trump 08/2024 (P17)	Opposition to gender ideology	Sarcasm	Iman is a transgender
Donald Trump 03/11/2024	Opposition to gender ideology	Exaggeration in expressing his view	Men are allowed to beat women
Maia Poet (P18)	Questioning Imen's participation	Scepticism: how did Algeria allow transgender	Transgender is allowed in a Muslim country

Table 03 represents the values, beliefs and attitudes of each participant.

Table 04

Themes categorization

Theme	**Number of participants**
Gender ideology	06

Example

P2	She trained her whole life just to have her dreams ripped away by gender . . . . ideology

P10	The smirk of a male who knows he's protected by a misogynist sporting . establishment
P11	It takes a conscious effort to distrust one's own eyes in order to believe . otherwise.
P4	Only the weakest of males want to physically compete with women."
P14	We have never been more aware as a society of male violence against women.
P17	He is a transgender; he is a good male boxer.
Iman should be banned	05
Example	
P06	"His medal needs to be returned, title removed, and a permanent ban
P9	Do you agree that men should be removed from women's sports?
P8	The Algerian state must apologize… for destroying women's dreams
P1	MEN SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BEAT WOMEN FOR SPORT.
P17	Men can beat up women
Iman is a transgender	05
Example	
P5	Imane Khelif is not a woman and maybe she will be
P7	Imane Khelif proven to be a male. Is this not haram in your religion?
P8	Medical report confirmed what we all knew Imane Khelif is a man
P12	French medical records have revealed Imane is in fact a MAN.
P17	He is a transgender
Algerian national pride and resistance	01
Example	
P15	Imane Khelif, the daughter of the people
Legitimacy of Imane's Participation	04
Example	
P3	Imane Khelif is not trans… The IOC cleared her to participate.
P13	Not a transgender, born female
P15	Supporting Iman is the duty of all Algerians

P16	How can somebody born, raised, and having a passport as a woman not . . . be considered a woman?
Religious and cultural perceptions	02
Example	
P07	Is this not haram in your religion
P18	Many thought that because Algeria is a Muslim country, there's no way . . . Khelif could've been a male with a 'gender affirming' female passport.

Table 04 represents the themes developed for the analysis with the number of posts that represent each them and examples from the narratives.

Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

1. Constructed Narrative Analysis:

Imane's participation in the Olympic Games was marked by deeper ideological, political, and postcolonial tensions. Different parts of society including political figures, artists, journalists, and sports activists claim that she is a man and should be banned from women's sports. Our data is divided into two stances, those who framed Imane as an illegitimate competitor and those who defended her right to participate. Participants, like Elon Musk, J.K. Rowling, and Karim Gahin, constructed discourses to criticize her participation based on gender essentialism, biological determinism, and sports integrity. They described her participation as a threat to women's sports, demanding fair competition and women's protection. Their choice of words like "men should not be allowed to beat women," "Imane is a biological male," and "Olympic corruption enabled this fraud, reinforced the themes of gender ideology, Imane should be banned and she is a transgender. Their statements reveal an ideological investment to shape the audience's perception of Imane's gender.

The encoded values from the discourses of the participants against Imane including women's protection, outrage, and biological determinism do not just represent an opposition to her participation but also they constructed a moral crisis, where her inclusion is framed as

a catastrophic betrayal of women's rights. this is evident by their choice of words like "beat," "violence," "unfairness", "ripped away ", "smirk", "gender ideology "and " vile coward ". They did not use neutral language purposefully. First, to make their discourse persuasive, then to turn Imane Khelif from a female athlete to a symbol of a global threat to women's rights and sports.

Conversely, themes of national pride and the legitimacy of Imane's participation were represented in the discourses of the other stance of our participants Hafid Derradji, Thomas Bach, and Derek Brunson, they relied on the IOC's approval, Imane's legal recognition as a woman, and Algeria's national solidarity. This example "Imane is the daughter of the people " does not only assert her belonging; it represents a collective resistance and Algerian national pride and reminds us of the long history of fighting against Western-imposed narratives and regulations, which is perceived as a manifestation of postcolonial scrutiny. Another example "duty of all Algerians to support her" shows that Iman is not just an athlete but is a symbol of Algeria's defiance against Western dominance. Discrediting the IOC validation of Imane's gender directly challenges the credibility of her exclusion and highlights the role of media bias which is described as misinformation and propaganda. Challenging her legitimacy is not about fairness but about deeper biases and political and ideological agendas reinforcing the exclusion of the post colonial nations and the continued dominance of western inference.

Another dimension that should be considered in this conspiracy is the religious and cultural perceptions. Participants like Dr. Poormina and Maia Poet did not take Imane's case as a sports issue but as a moral and cultural question, particularly in relation to Islamic beliefs and Algerian identity. The question asked by Dr. Poormina "Is this not haram in your religion " does not just express skepticism about her gender but it is a kind of declaration that our religious beliefs contradict. Maia Poet's discourse highlights that transgender identity is

incompatible with Algerian culture and Islamic norms. This represents the Western media's accusations clash with Algeria's socio-religious context, making the controversy not just a sports issue but a cultural and national one. However, these arguments may introduce a contradiction: if a Muslim country does not allow gender transition, how could Imane be accused of being a transgender. This contradiction may weaken the credibility of the arguments that state that she is a male and should be banned.

Shaping public perception is a crucial role of media and social platforms. (millions of views, likes, and comments) on the opposing posts of the Algerian boxer represent Western dominance in global sports regulations and highlight how post-colonial nations are treated in global events, where the ability to define, categorize, and exclude is not neutral but deeply tied to historical, political, and cultural forces.

2.Discussion

The controversy surrounding Imane Khelif's participation in the Paris Olympic Games exposes how postcolonial legacies persist in media representation and sports institutions. It reveals how athletes from the global south are still marginalized and exposed to Eurocentric norms of inclusion and exclusion. Questioning Imane's gender identity and framing her as a transgender exemplifies Said's (1978) orientalism, where Western media and perspectives are considered as arbiters for true womanhood, while requiring Imane to undergo disciplinary interventions and asking for her exclusion from the competition. Eurocentrism is also demonstrated by figures like Elon Musk and Rowling, where Imane Khelif's body that does not conform to Western femininity standards became a source of danger and anxiety. Their purposive use of language emphasizes post-colonial tensions that seek to categorize, exclude, and control non-Western bodies (Mbembe, 2001).

Imane as a colonized subject is rendered visible within Eurocentric epistemologies not as equals, but as a problem to be solved. This is called the process of worlding theorized by

Spivak (1999), Western media unworlded her not only by devaluing her identity and denying her legitimate participation but also by positioning her as a subaltern who is spoken about, judged and dehumanized but cannot speak which mirrors Spivak's concept of subalternity, she claimed colonial ideologies silence marginalized groups and denied their voices in social and, cultural, and political settings. This marginalization reflects Fanon's (1952/2008) analysis of how the black man is forced to see himself in the eyes of the white colonizer, being alienated from himself and constructed as a problem. Similarly, because of being an African athlete, Imane khelif is alienated through the sports institutional regulations that judge her gender identity through Eurocentric standards of femininity instead of herself identification. As Fanon (1952/2008) mentioned the black man is not just a black; he must be black in relation to the white man. In the same vein, Imane is only a women in relation to Western standards of femininity, against which she is devalued and excluded.

Furthermore, narratives produced by figures like J.K. Rowling "the smirk of a male" and Karim Gahin "vile coward" exemplify the process of othering where non western subjects are framed as inappropriate other. Their discourses positioned Imane as an existential threat that align with Bhabha's (1994) concept of colonial stereotypes that refers to the fixed colonial dehumanized representation and construction of the colonized to reinforce colonial dominance and determine who has the right to speak, include and define womanhood.

Western media does not only judge Imane's gender identity but also questions our Islamic values. In addition to cultural disrespect, figures like Dr Poormina, who said, " is this not haram in your religion" engage in a strategic appropriation of Islamic standards, their accusation expands her legitimate participation to reinforce postcolonial identification of religious orientalism, where Islam is used as a tool to undermine postcolonial subjects. In the same way, Maia Poet relied on Islamic norms to confirm Western claims by asking if Algeria

as a Muslim country forbids transgender individuals, then Imane Khelif must be a man. This narratives are used to justify her exclusion.

The colonial power is resisted through the Algerian media and supporters who represent nationalism. Nationalist resistance emerges through hybrid narratives that blend institutional pragmatism with anti-colonial defiance. Phrases like Imane is the daughter of people, and should be supported by all Algerians are not just reclamation discourses but rather are forms of decolonisation and resistance against Eurocentric dominance. Decolonisation entails defending subaltern voices and dehumanized subjects whose exclusion reinforced colonial ideologies, this was also confirmed by Boehmer (2009) who notes that global South women must be disciplined by Western institutions.

3.Semiotic Analysis

In this section we are going to deal with semiotics just as tool for analysis not as whole framework because our focus is put on interpreting the results based on postcolonial lens. We developed our analysis by looking at how certain meaning are created through the use of codes: examining how relevant properties of two semiotic systems are brought together to create pre-established connotations.

3.1.Description Of Images

Eduardo Menoni ✓ Follow
@eduardomenoni

🚨 | BREAKING: It has been confirmed that Imane Khelif is a man. Imane won a gold medal in women's boxing at the 2024 Olympics and was medically diagnosed with a penis and the hormone testosterone. ⚠️ Do you agree with banning men from women's sports?

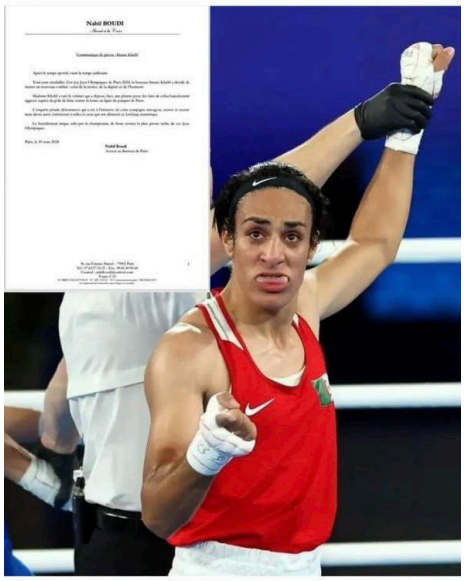
Translate post



15:08 · 4/11/2024 · **1,7M** Views

2,3K 6,9K 34K 853

hafidderradji ✓ ···



52K 871 1.441

Liked by **e.n.t.r.e_n.o.u.s_** and **others**

hafidderradji After being crowned gold at the Paris 2024 Olympics, Algerian boxer Iman Khalif has filed a lawsuit against her abusers, who have been bullied and... more

August 10, 2024 · **See original**

hafidderradji ✓ ···



17,1K 280 66

hafidderradji Supporting boxing Iman Khalif is a duty of every Algerian, free and gentleman, and not a bigotry, although bigotry is for the country and honor, is a... more

August 7, 2024 · **See original**

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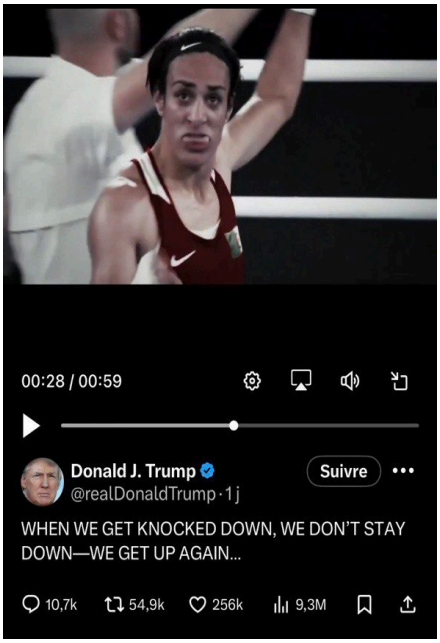
Derek Brunson ✓ @DerekBru... · 9/8/2024 ···

Imane Khelif wins the Gold Medal 🥇 . **A** lot of propaganda and lies . Born **a** female , born with lady parts . Lies about the IBA tests that were **not** disclosed . **Not a transgender** . That's **not** allowed in her country . HI HATERS #SHEisHER #IMANEKHELIF 😂😂😂



1,5K 3K 26K 731K





In addition to the linguistic signs that directly marginalized Imane khelif, visual discourses also play a role to decide exclusion. These are the pictures selected from the posts during Paris Olympic Games 2024. They portray her journey during the controversy, and also reflect themes of resistance, nationalism and gender ideology. The opponents of Imane participation chose images in which Imane looks like men to reinforce their perspectives and to shape perceptions, as,visual representation has historically been a tool of domination (Said, 1978). We notice also that the same pictures can be used for different purposes, Donald Trump as one of the biggest opponents of Imane shared the same picture that was posted by the Algerian supporter Hafid Darradji. That picture with strong features that culturally coded as masculine intended to convey massage of exclusion by Trump, whereas used as a source of pride and resistance by Hafid Darradji.

3.2.Data Analysis

Image Number one

Figure 01

Imane khelif should be banned



Note. From Twitter.com

https://x.com/eduardomenoni/status/1853439219210825796?s=46

Through this image , Eduardo Menoni denotatively evoked the themes of Imane should be banned and Imane is transgender, anchoring that she is viewed as a monster when combating against Angela Carini. Thus, he did not only represent Imane as a man but as a monster compared to Angela. He attributed Imane a new meaning drawing on two semiotic systems: that of monsters and that of human being, particularly the psychological and physical properties of both. On the psychological level, he draws on three semiotic systems related to human being system networks, which are body expression, mouth expressions and eye expressions. In doing so, the aggressive mouth openness in moments of anger, which is usually characteristic to man is attributed to Imane. He goes further representing Imane screaming not even like a man, but rather as a monster. The image did not capture a soft eyes expression as expected from a female, rather it represented them wide and fierce resembling aggression and force. Besides, her way of standing with squared shoulders, engaged arms, and expanded chest further reinforce the claim of masculinity. These visual composition and

sign systems combination make an association not only with masculinity but also with monstrosity as a form of dehumanization. These representation exemplifies the process of othering (Said, 1978), where dominant groups dehumanize and marginalize individuals from posrcolonial nations to justify exclusion. Thus, anchoring the text with the image and drawing on three sign systems, Eduardo Menoni created a connotation that it is unfair for Angela Carini to combat with someone who is not only man, but a man with the qualities of a monster.

Image Number Two

Figure 02

Imane khelif is a transgender



Note. From Twitter.com

This picture represented Imane holed by her coach celebrating her victory. This visual discourse interpreted by western ideologies not as a sign of happiness and celebration of the coach and Imane khelif, but rather as sign of cultural inappropriateness. The poster took a property from man sign system particularly way of celebration and attributed to Imane Khelif

which is supposed to be a female sign system that celebrated their victory in a soft and feminine way. This spontaneous gesture goes beyond victory celebration, it conveys what is carried in the written language that attacks our cultural and religious norms. Therefore, drawing on combining two sign systems and the principals of anchorage and relay that the text and the image work together to convey the same message reflect the themes of Imane should be banned and cultural and religious perceptions.

Image Number Three

Figure 03

Algerian national pride and resistance



Note. From Instagram.com

https://www.instagram.com/p/C-YX1YWM0B0/?igsh=MXJwZ3FlNXYxcjN3dQ==

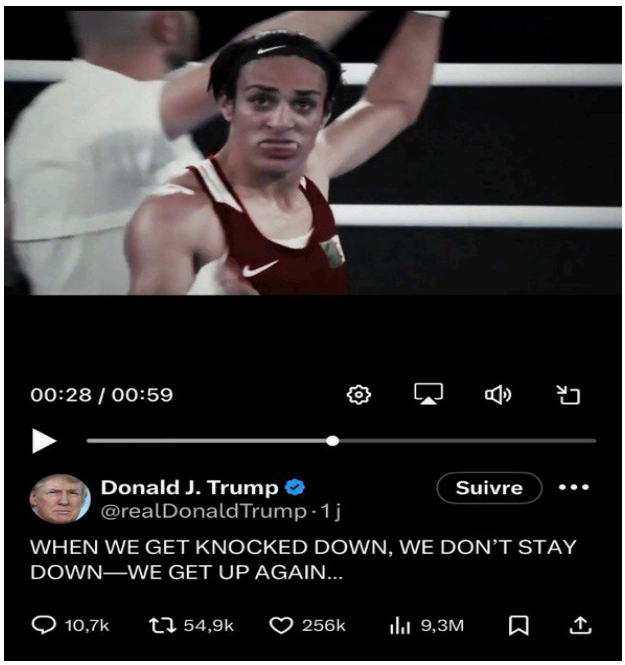
Although this picture does not represent signs of softness, but Hafid Draddji used it as a sign of resistance and nationalism. Building on resistance sign system that includes properties such as force, intensity and perseverance that are attributed to the Algerian female athlete

who consistently resist false claims, Hafid shows his national pride through those properties that supposed to be present in every athlete not just mails. The association between resistance sign system and athletic properties such as physical force, control, and presence contributed in conveying a connotative meaning that is Imane's physical traits should not be coded as masculine rather as a symbol of resistance and a source of pride. Thereby, this connotative meaning reflects themes of national pride and resistance in addition to legitimacy of Imane's participation. Also the image reminds us of the Algerian Mudjahidet whose physical intensity were necessary in anti-colonial struggle.

Image Number Four

Figure 04

a) *Posted by Donald Trump in his video of the American election and said that men can beat up women.*



Note. From Twitter.com

https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1852873888956567844?s=46

b) *Posted by Hafid Darradji*



Note. From Instagram.com

https://www.instagram.com/p/C-gKuO7Mfhi/?igsh=MTBlY2tmYTJlaTdrZA==

As we notice the same picture is shared by both the opponent and the supporter. Donald Trump as one of the most influential figures in the world included Imane khelif in his video of the biggest event which is the American election. Trump directly attacked her not by questioning her gender identity but by accusing her. The same image posted by Hafid Darradji to convey another meaning. This image functions as an expression plane which is the signifier that has two different content planes that are signifieds one of them interpreted as Imane is a male and the other content functive interpreted as a sign of pride and resistance. This deferent significations emerge due to the sender intention and the interpreter perspective. Trump intended to convey specific meaning that is Imane is transgender while Hafid intended to support Imane and defend her right to participate. We may conclude that this visual representation reflects polysemy in which Imane's physical traits become a signifier that participate in a semiotic war to create deferent connotations.

Image Number Five

Figure 05

Legitimacy of Imane's participation



Note. From Twitter.com

This is another polysemous picture, in contrast to those who attributed this way of celebration to the male sign system, Derek Brunson anchors the image within nationalist and defensive sign system where the Algerian flag symbolizes nationalism. Being lifted by her coach infers to another connotative meaning that is far away from the one interpreted by western societies, it conveys a sense of collective solidarity, nationalism, and resistance. This visual discourse aligns with the linguistic discourse that intended to support Imane Khelif and defend her right to participate. Therefore, the association between the visual image that includes resistance sign system like the Algerian flag and the defending discourse made by Derek Brunson contribute to create a connotative meaning that Imane is a women and her body must be decoded as a sign of pride and resistance not a sign of muscularity.

3.3.Discussion

Our study interrogates how media representation of the Algerian female boxer Imane khelif during Paris Olympic Games 2024 reflects postcolonial tensions surrounding her legitimate participation. A semiotic analysis of her visual portrayals unveils western ideologies and power dynamics that contribute to shape perceptions of her gender identity and inclusion.

The findings of the present study suggest that:

- Media representation of Imane Khelif is deeply divided, with supporters framing her as a symbol of national pride and resistance**,** while critics dehumanize and discriminate her, challenging her right to compete as a woman.
- The Western perspectives often impose Eurocentric standards of femininity, constructing Khelif's athletic appearance as unfeminine and therefore illegitimate.
- The same images of Khelif were used to convey opposing ideological messages**,** highlighting the polysemic nature of media signs.
- Cases like Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand, Annet Negesa, and Fallon Fox reveal a pattern of discrimination and exclusion that disproportionately affects women from the Global South, especially those who do not conform to white, Eurocentric ideals of femininity.

Opponents and supporters represented Imane Khelif through the same picture that its interpretation differs due to textual framing, this demonstrates how anchorage dictates receptions. Resistance sign system properties such as dropping the Algerian flag, standing confidentially, and celebrating victory were attributed to Imane by supportive figures like Hafid Darradji and Derek Brunson to represent her as a symbol of national pride and resistance. However, critics like Donald Trump and Eduardo Menoni portray her through images that emphasized masculinity with aggressive tone that either questioned her legitimacy of participation or directly accuses her as a transgender. The way they constructed

her public image contributed to spread western false claims concerning her gender identity. Their significations of her physical intensity highlights Eurocentric norms that are applied to exclude Global south athletes based on their standards of femininity. This contrast demonstrates the role of polysemy and the ideological work of anchorage and relay (Barthes, 1977).

The findings show that foregrounding Imane's success and strength reflects decolonization and resistance, visual representations of Imane by Algerian figures and international figures resist Western ideologies that dehumanized and marginalised her. The use of national symbols such as the Algerian flag and confident standing is a semiotic strategy that helps the subaltern subject to be heard within the dominant discourse. These semiotic choices are not accidental they highlight Algerian resistance and reclamation. In the other hand, western media depicted her using images that reinforce masculine traits such as aggressive facial and body expressions to position her within the lines of otherness.

The conflict over meanings and inclusion signs is central to postcolonial media politics. The visual discourses represented by supporters are a result of cultural resistance not only against sexist misreading but also against Eurocentrism as illustrated by Bhambra (2009) who notes that Western perspectives become the universal standard against which all bodies are measured. Othering also operates through western representations of Imane's body which aligns with Said's (1978) notion of Orientalism where non western subjects are constructed as inferior others. The controversy surround Imane Khelif does not simply concern sport or gender, it reflects deeper ideologies over who gets to participate, who has the right of speaking and legitimacy, and who is allowed to define womanhood.

The controversy surrounding Imane Khelif participation highlights the persisting postcolonial conflicts in global sports. Scrutinized her gender identity reflects patterns of discriminations against athletes from the Global South. Female athletes that belong to

postcolonial nations are still subjected to severe marginalization and discriminatory practices justified by maintaining fair competition and protecting women sports. The International Boxing Association's disqualification of Imane despite her consistent participation in women sports as she is identified and registered as a female reflects western bias that is dominant in international institutions and sports governance and demonstrates postcolonial legacies where Imane is silenced, her silence exemplifies Spivak 's (1988) fundamental question can the subaltern speak? She asserts that subaltern subjects remain absent from the discussion of their exclusion which aligns with Imane's case who considered as a threat to white femininity.

Her case parallels other cases such as Caster Semenya and Dutee Chand who were excluded and marginalised due to their physical traits. These cases reflect Western control over Global South athletes based on their Eurocentric standards of femininity framing their actions as objective, yet they consciously apply colonial ideologies and enforce their dominance.

This contrast becomes even more evident when we compare the exclusion of Imane Khelif with Fallon Fox, a transgender MMA athlete from the U.S., who was allowed to compete despite transitioning from male to female. Unlike Khelif, Fox has never been banned from completion and her inclusion was justified through a liberal discourse of gender rights and autonomy. Fox case prove the postcolonial bias and reinforce Eurocentric ideals of femininity because it contradicts strongly with Imane Khelif case who, despite being born and identified as a female but was excluded from competitions and still suffer from backlash. The debate thus becomes what Tiffin (1995) would recognize as a contact zone where power is both enforced and contested through competing claims to truth, identity and belonging.

Section Three: Limitations, and Recommendations

This section encapsulates presents the challenges faced during conducting the research and recommendations for farther studies.

1.Limitations

Along this research, we faced different difficulties stated as follows:

- Applying postcolonial theory was an interdisciplinary challenge as it is difficult for a language science student to engage deeply with its concepts and sub theories.
- During the process of values coding, distinguishing between values, attitudes, and beliefs was challenging due to their fluid and overlapping nature.
- While the integration of multiple analytical frameworks, namely narrative construction, semiotic analysis and postcolonial interpretation allowed for deeper exploration of the topic but it was tiring and time consuming, especially given the conceptual and methodological demands of each approach.

2.Recommendations

- While our research focuses on visual and narrative data, future research could include interviews and audience receptions.
- Examining similar cases across different geopolitical contexts would deepen our understanding of postcolonialism in sports discourse.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a thorough explanation of the research design of the this study, data analysis, discussion, and results. In this regard, the narrative construction and the semiotic analysis highlight how postcolonial tensions are reflected through media representations of Imane Khelif. Besides, the chapter includes the limitations of our study and recommendations for future research.

General Conclusion

This research examined the media representations of Algerian female boxer Imane Khelif and their reflection of postcolonial tensions surrounding her legitimacy and gender identity in international sports. Through the integration of analytical frameworks, semiotic analysis, narrative construction, and postcolonial theory, this interdisciplinary research has demonstrated how Imane's body became a conflicted meaning that interpreted differently, while supporters interpreted it as a symbol of national pride and resistance to colonial legacies her critics received it as a threat for women sports.

The findings highlight that Western ideologies and media representations especially those who question her gender identity are not objectively concerned with fairness and women protection, but rather accusing her based on their Eurocentric norms of femininity. These representations reflect colonial ideologies that define femininity based on whiteness and thinness, and any deviation from this standards is considered as a condition for exclusion and illegitimacy. This perspective discriminates athletes like Imane who do not conform to their expectations despite her consistent identification and registration as a biological female.

Conversely, supportive portrayals such as Algerian figures and some global southern defenders construct counter narratives that emphasize her strength, resistance, and nationalism. These representations reinforce a legitimate embodiment of athletic excellence and cultural pride instead of interpreted her body as a deviation from Western gender norms. Imane's mage is reclaimed within a context that values patriotism, collective pride and representation of the notion on the international stage. In this light, In this light, the semiotic conflict over Khelif's image is not simply about gender identification, but about competing narratives of identity, sovereignty, and global visibility where athletes from postcoloniam nations resists imposed definitions and reasserts control over their image and meaning.

By linking Imane Khelif's case with other cases of Caster Semenya, Dutee Chand, Annet Negesa, and Fallon Fox, these research situates the controversy in an international pattern of athletic governance that persist to marginalize and exclude non western bodies while subjectively legitimize others, including transgender women relying on cultural and political considerations that continuously reveal colonial hierarchies and neo-colonial double standards.

Ultimately, the case of Imane Khelif exemplifies how colonial ideologies persist in shaping the politics of gender and representation in the postcolonial present. It also reveals how the media reinforce these ideologies. As such, the media sphere remains a critical site for both the reproduction and deconstruction of power, making it essential for scholars to interrogate the representational mechanisms through which gendered and racialized bodies are rendered visible, legitimate or illegitimate on the global stage.

Despite its contributions, this research went though several challenges. The interdisciplinary nature of our study through the integration of multiple analytical frameworks: postcolonial theory, semiotic analysis, and constructed narrative analysis was a tiring process and time consuming. In addition, it was challenging for a researcher from a linguistic background to engage with postcolonial theory. Finally, future research could include interviews with subjected athletes and examine similar cases across different geopolitical contexts which would deepen our understanding of postcolonialism in sports discourse.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C



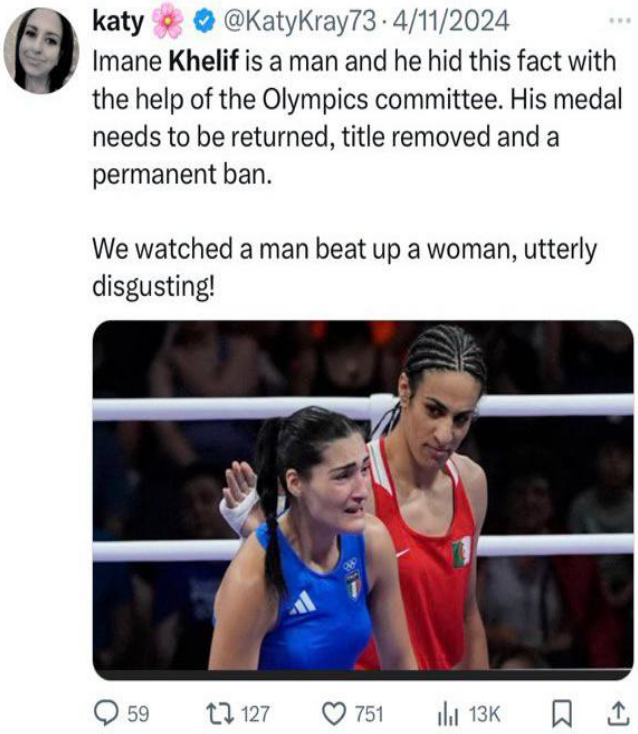
Appendix D



Appendix E



Appendix F



Appendix G



Appendix H



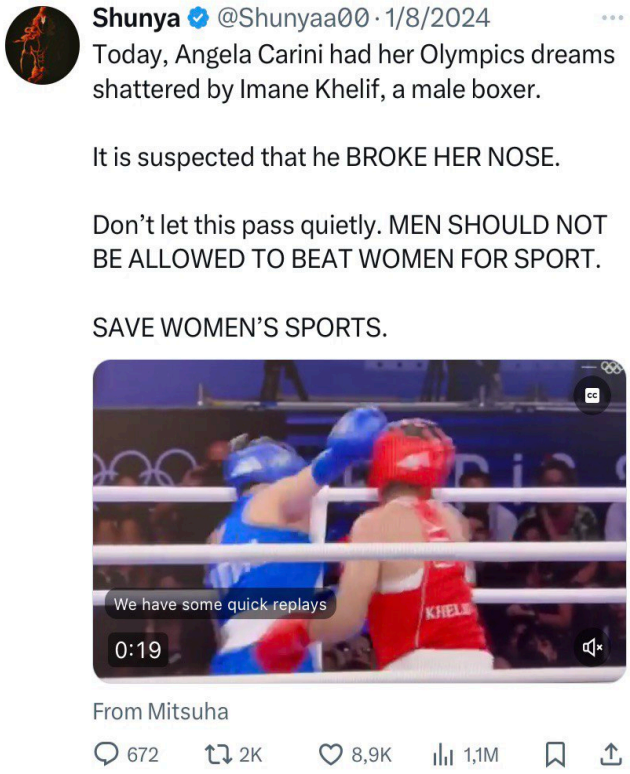
Appendix I



Appendix J



Appendix K



Appendix L



Appendix M



JOINT PARIS 2024 BOXING UNIT/IOC STATEMENT

"Every person has the right to practise sport without discrimination.

All athletes participating in the boxing tournament of the Olympic Games Paris 2024 comply with the competition's eligibility and entry regulations, as well as all applicable medical regulations set by the Paris 2024 Boxing Unit (PBU). As with previous Olympic boxing competitions, the gender and age of the athletes are based on their passport.

These rules also applied during the qualification period, including the boxing tournaments of the 2023 European Games, Asian Games, Pan American Games and Pacific Games, the ad hoc 2023 African qualifying tournament in Dakar (SEN) and two world qualifying tournaments held in Busto Arsizio (ITA) and Bangkok (THA) in 2024, which involved a total of 1,471 different boxers from 172 National Olympic Committees (NOCs), the Boxing Refugee Team and Individual Neutral Athletes, and featured over 2,000 qualification bouts. 1/4

International Olympic Committee

"The PBU used the Tokyo 2020 boxing rules as a baseline to develop its regulations for Paris 2024. This was to minimise the impact on athletes' preparations and guarantee consistency between Olympic Games. These Tokyo 2020 rules were based on the post-Rio 2016 rules, which were in place before the suspension of the boxing International Federation by the IOC in 2019 and the subsequent withdrawal of its recognition in 2023.

We have seen in reports misleading information about two female athletes competing at the Olympic Games Paris 2024. The two athletes have been competing in international boxing competitions for many years in the women's category, including the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, International Boxing Association (IBA) World Championships and IBA-sanctioned tournaments.

These two athletes were the victims of a sudden and arbitrary decision by the IBA. Towards the end of the IBA World Championships in 2023, they were suddenly disqualified without any due process.

International Olympic Committee

"According to the IBA minutes available on their website, this decision was initially taken solely by the IBA Secretary General and CEO. The IBA Board only ratified it afterwards and only subsequently requested that a procedure to follow in similar cases in the future be established and reflected in the IBA Regulations. The minutes also say that the IBA should "establish a clear procedure on gender testing".

The current aggression against these two athletes is based entirely on this arbitrary decision, which was taken without any proper procedure – especially considering that these athletes had been competing in top-level competition for many years.

Such an approach is contrary to good governance.

Eligibility rules should not be changed during ongoing competition, and any rule change must follow appropriate processes and should be based on scientific evidence.

International Olympic Committee

"The IOC is committed to protecting the human rights of all athletes participating in the Olympic Games as per the Olympic Charter, the IOC Code of Ethics and the IOC Strategic Framework on Human Rights. The IOC is saddened by the abuse that the two athletes are currently receiving.

The IBA's recognition was withdrawn by the IOC in 2023 following its suspension in 2019. The withdrawal of recognition was confirmed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). See the IOC's statement following the ruling.

The IOC has made it clear that it needs National Boxing Federations to reach a consensus around a new International Federation in order for boxing to be included on the sports programme of the Olympic Games LA28."

--ENDS--

Appendix N



Appendix O



Appendix P

Thomas Bach's video about Imane Khelif legitimacy

https://youtu.be/OpL3CN_ntUo?si=zf84OG22sdlp0Cn-

Résumé

Cette étude explore les récits entourant l'identité postcoloniale algérienne à travers l'analyse du parcours de la boxeuse algérienne Imane KHELIF lors des Jeux olympiques de Paris 2024. À cette fin, une méthodologie qualitative combinant l'analyse narrative et l'analyse sémiotique a été adoptée pour répondre aux questions de recherche. Ces deux méthodes ont été appliquées à un échantillon stratifié raisonné composé de 19 légendes de publications de figures influentes à l'échelle mondiale sur Twitter, Instagram et Facebook. Tandis que l'analyse narrative a été utilisée pour étudier le langage de l'ensemble de l'échantillon, l'analyse sémiotique s'est concentrée sur six images jugées susceptibles de produire des résultats complémentaires. En interprétant les résultats à la lumière de la théorie postcoloniale, l'étude a révélé que de nombreuses tensions liées à l'identité algérienne persistent entre le monde occidental et l'Algérie décolonisée moderne. À titre d'exemple, Imane KHELIF est représentée de manière contrastée : ses partisans la présentent comme un symbole de résistance et de fierté nationale, tandis que ses détracteurs la perçoivent comme une menace pour le sport féminin, cherchant à imposer des normes eurocentriques de féminité. Les résultats montrent également que les mêmes images de Khelif ont été utilisées pour transmettre des messages idéologiques opposés, soulignant la nature polysémique des signes médiatiques.

Mots-clés: Imane KHELIF, analyse sémiotique, analyse narrative, théorie postcoloniale, Algérie décolonisée, normes eurocentriques

ملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة السرديات المتعلقة بالهوية الجزائرية ما بعد الاستعمار من خلال دراسة مسار الملاكمة الجزائرية). ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اتباع تصميم بحثي نوعي يجمع بين 2024"إيمان خليف" خلال الألعاب الأولمبية في باريس (التحليل السردي والتحليل السيميائي للإجابة على أسئلة البحث. تم استخدام هاتين الطريقتين لتحليل عينة هادفة طبقية تعليقًا لمنشورات شخصيات ذات تأثير عالمي على تويتر وإنستغرام وفيسبوك. في حين تم تطبيق التحليل 19تتضمن السردي على لغة العينة بأكملها، اقتصر التحليل السيميائي على ست صور فقط تم اعتبارها قادرة على إنتاج نتائج تُكمل التحليل السردي. ومن خلال تفسير النتائج في إطار نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، كشفت الدراسة عن استمرار العديد من التوترات المتعلقة بالهوية الجزائرية بين العالم الغربي والجزائر الحديثة المتحررة من الاستعمار. وعلى سبيل المثال لا الحصر، تم تصوير إيمان خليف بشكل مختلف؛ إذ اعتبرها المؤيدون رمزًا للمقاومة والفخر الوطني، في حين صوّرها المعارضون على أنها تهديد لرياضة النساء بهدف فرض معايير أنوثة مركزية أوروبية. كما تشير النتائج إلى أن نفس .صور خليف استُخدمت لنقل رسائل أيديولوجية متناقضة، مما يبرز الطبيعة متعددة الدلالات للعلامات الإعلامية

الكلمات المفتاحية: إيمان خليف، التحليل السيميائي، التحليل السردي، نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، الجزائر المتحررة من الاستعمار، معايير الأنوثة الأوروبية المركزية