
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Re-Writing History in Assia Djébar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*

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| ABSTRACT

This study introduces a postcolonial feminist analysis of Assia Djébar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* focusing on portraying Algerian women's experiences during and post-French colonization. It explores the intertwining of gender and colonialism and how they collectively shape these women's lives. Central to this analysis is the role women played in resisting colonial oppression, examining their navigation and challenge of patriarchal structures within their societies under colonial rule. This research highlights the strategies Algerian women employ to assert their agency and preserve their cultural identity amidst the oppressive forces of colonization. Furthermore, the paper delves into the complexities of identity formation within a postcolonial context, examining the impact of colonialism on women's bodies and psyches. The study also critiques the subversion of traditional narrative structures in Djébar's autobiography, emphasizing the incorporation of alternative voices and perspectives that highlight the often marginalized experiences of Algerian women. Djébar's primary goal is to give voice and visibility to women's experiences, which have been largely overlooked in texts that explore the relationship between colonized people and their history. We try to uncover the intersection of gender and colonialism, presenting a nuanced view that embraces perspectives typically marginalized or overlooked.

| KEYWORDS

Autobiography, history, postcolonialism, feminism, identity, narrative subversion

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1. Introduction

Through a postcolonial feminist reading of *Fantasia*, this analysis examines how the text portrays the experiences of Algerian women during and after French colonization and highlights how gender and colonialism intertwine to shape their lives. One aspect of this reading is the exploration of the role of women in the resistance against colonial oppression. It delves into how Algerian women navigate and challenge patriarchal structures both within their communities and in the broader context of colonial domination. The text sheds light on the strategies employed by women to assert their agency and maintain their cultural identity amidst the oppressive forces of colonization.

Furthermore, a postcolonial feminist reading of *Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade* examines the complexities of identity formation within a postcolonial society. The analysis also considers the impact of colonialism on women's bodies and psyche, as well as how these aspects are negotiated and challenged. In addition, a postcolonial feminist reading pays attention to the subversion of traditional narrative structures and the incorporation of alternative voices and perspectives in the text. It critically examines how Djébar challenges dominant historical narratives and highlights the often marginalized experiences of women in Algerian society. Overall, this study seeks to uncover and amplify the voices and experiences of Algerian women while critically examining how gender, colonialism, and cultural identity intersect and influence their lives.

Individuals from various cultural backgrounds share a common historical background, but their perspectives and interpretations of that history may differ. Frequently, a single authoritative historical narrative prevails, sidelining alternative versions of the same historical events. As a result, marginalized groups are often misrepresented or excluded from the historical discourse, leading to an inaccurate portrayal of their experiences. The theoretical and academic discourse surrounding representations of otherness tends to oversimplify and generalize the experiences of marginalized individuals. The theoretical debate in postcolonial studies emphasizes the necessity to stress diversity of postcolonial subjects and host other categories, notably the category of women as the latter has been cast into the shadow of marginalization.

By relying primarily on accounts written by men, the narrative perpetuates a gendered perspective that emphasizes men's heroic and dominant roles in anti-colonial movements. This bias toward male-authored narratives can marginalize or overshadow the contributions and experiences of women who were also actively involved in resistance movements and colonial struggles. However, this idea has been challenged by literary critics and historiographers who have argued that women have never been absent in the fight against the colonial occupation. Similar methods are employed to marginalize women's history. More than that little is learned about women's lives and political participation based on the official historical accounts. Instead, these textbooks contain considerable information on men's arduous struggle in wars. Historical discourses frequently place man's history at their center. Women's history, on the other hand, remains disregarded in this context. as highlighted by Chandra Talpade Mohanty "exist outside of history" (Mohanty 2003:31). Likewise, women have been relegated to the margins of political involvement and limited to the domestic realm of household affairs.

As a result, they remained largely unnoticed in the written records documented by historians. However, this invisibility does not imply that women lacked a historical presence. Instead, it highlights that conventional historical methods, which typically concentrate on a singular perspective, are often filled with and influenced by biased opinions. Put differently, the conventional portrayal of resistance and struggle against colonialism does not adequately represent marginalized groups, among whom women were, and possibly still are a significant segment.

Women have been doubly colonized and victimized by both their fellow male and male and female colonizers during the colonial era. Kristen Peterson and Anna Rutherford, in their seminal work *A double colonization* explain that the term 'double colonization' describes the intersecting oppressions experienced by women in the context of colonialism. This term encompasses the idea that women in colonized societies face not only the oppressive forces of colonialism but also the patriarchal structures that exist within those societies. Colonial powers often depict and celebrate male figures as "mateship, the mounties, explorers, freedom fighters, bush-rangers, missionaries" (Peterson & Rutherford, 1986: 9), while women are portrayed in colonial discourses in ways that conform to and support patriarchal norms.

Interestingly enough, women's history in societies that underwent colonization faces a dual form of marginalization: in the history of women and the history of the colonized. This means that even in the postcolonial era, women's history often stays obscured in the course of producing and narrating the official history, which would rectify the historical discourses of the colonizers. In this context, the writings of female authors from postcolonial nations can be considered significant and reliable reservoirs of information, as they provide insightful perspectives on women's history. Within their works, women in postcolonial nations frequently experience marginalization, both as gendered individuals and as colonized subjects, leading to their history being concealed and their voices disregarded (Lutsyshyna,2006:72).

Despite women's significant contributions and active participation in the anti-colonial struggle, their presence and accomplishments are frequently underrepresented in official archives. Writers, therefore, have undertaken the task of recovering, uncovering, and discovering the leading role women had while shedding their sheer focus on those unrepresented women. Their contributions to the historiography project can be regarded as an acute critique of written history and hegemonic discourses that have rendered women's histories forbidden, forgotten and irrelevant. Among these novelists was Assia Djebar, the Algerian author, translator, and filmmaker who felt an urgent need to rewrite history through her semi-autobiography. Assia Djebar employs colonial language and a poetic style in her chosen narratives to confront and challenge the dominant discourses found in archival materials. She hopes to engage in a critical dialogue that questions the power dynamics and assumptions embedded in these archives. By doing so, she ultimately contributes to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of liberation struggles, in line with the key tenets of postcolonial gendered subaltern theory, as conceptualized by Gayatri Spivak. In other words, Assia Djebar enables readers to contemplate the intertwining of narratives surrounding war and gender.

2. *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* : A Piece of Historiography

In *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* Djebar takes on the task of exploring, or rather unearthing, history to foster a fresh connection with the past. The exploration of history becomes intricately linked with the writer's quest to establish a fresh territory in the world,

not only for herself but also for postcolonial writers in general. The writer juxtaposes the historical narratives of French colonizers with the oral testimonies of Algerian women to offer a genuine historical portrayal through the medium of autobiography. Therefore, Djébar blurs the distinction between historical records and fiction by incorporating a significant portion of *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* with sketches detailing the nineteenth-century colonization of Algeria, drawn from documents selected by the author from French archives and merged with her narrative fiction. Donadey underscores, "These reports and letters are not objective or factual accounts; they do not reflect a historical truth" (Donadey, 2001:45). By employing this material, Djébar reinterprets, depicts, and ultimately revises the history of colonial Algeria to construct a fresh cultural memory¹. Donadey also suggests that Djébar's appropriation of colonial texts is a complicated and intricate process:

Djébar's work does not purport to reverse the meaning of the previous (Colonial) texts. As Irigaray and others such as Derrida have suggested inversion would entail remaining within the logic of the master ('s) text. Djébar goes further, playing with that master ('s) text in order to make it collapse. Her purpose, like Derrida's is "to subvert [the master's text] by repeating it, dislocating it fractionally through...a mimicry that mocks the binary structure" (Donadey: 1993, 112)

Assia Djébar not only portrays the struggles and contributions of women in Algerian history but also provides a historical account of the French conquest of Algeria. By presenting an intricate analysis of the connection between the two countries, she challenges the prevailing discourse of nationalism and questions its dominance. Simultaneously, she shapes the contemporary history of Algeria by considering the viewpoint of those marginalized by the official ideology, unjustly relegating them to a subordinate position despite clear evidence: women.

Right after the release of *Fantasia*, in an interview featured in *Research in African Literatures*, Djébar outlined her project in the following manner:

L'amour, la fantasia étant la première d'une série Romanesque, l'histoire est utilisée dans ce roman comme quête de l'identité. Identité non seulement des femmes mais de tout le pays.

J'aborde le passé du dix-neuvième siècle écrite par des officiers français, et un rapport avec le récit oral des Algériennes traditionnelles d'aujourd'hui.

Deux passés alternent donc ; je pense que le plus important est de ramener le passé malgré ou à travers l'écriture, 'mon ' écriture de la langue française. Je tente d'ancrer cette langue française dans l'*oralité* des femmes traditionnelles. Je l'enracine ainsi (Mortimer, 1988:201).

In *Fantasia*, which serves as the first of a novelistic series, history plays a pivotal role as a pursuit of identity. This encompasses not only the identity of women but also that of the entire nation.

Our approach involves delving into the nineteenth-century past through my exploration of writing, mainly writing in the French language. This connects the historical accounts penned by French officers and the oral narratives shared by present-day traditional Algerian women.

Two distinct pasts alternate, and I believe that the most significant task is to revive the past, regardless of or by means of writing—specifically, "my" writing in French. I strive to firmly establish this French language within the oral traditions of traditional women, thus grounding it firmly in their experiences. I root it in this way (my own translation).

Djébar retells the events from the very beginning of the conquest, which occurred on June 14th, 1830, when a fleet of over 600 French ships arrived at Sidi Ferredj near Algiers with 37,000 soldiers. As a historian, Djébar delved into the French archives and

¹ Marita Sturken has defined cultural memory as the manner in which a collective with shared experiences, history, and cultural identity shapes their perceptions of themselves.

discovered 32 military documents including official reports and soldiers' letters sent home to their families. Djebar used these accounts to reconstruct the history of Algeria in a new way.

Moreover, Djebar produces an ambitious historiography that revives the lost voices of Algerian women. Her project stems from the fact that she considers that silence is imposed in certain circumstances and strives to attribute a sense of empowerment to those who remain silent. In this regard, Lazreg argues that "silence as the absence of public voice is not synonymous with absence of talk or action" (Lazreg, 1999:18). From another angle, Djebar problematizes stereotypes present in male literary depictions of women. Gracki argues that

Djebar is considered as a writer who is neither French nor male but an intellectual who claims the role of an intercessor who will plunge back into the subterranean cave of collective memory to reformulate Algerian history from a vantage point that is both feminist and postcolonial in its construction (Gracki, 1996:840).

Fantasia highlights the interactive relationship between gender and memory, marking the commencement of "feminist archaeology of traces" (Moore, 2008:63). Assia Djebar, through a feminist lens, has meticulously depicted the history of Algeria. Hence, she adds to feminist and postcolonial literature by challenging the dominant sexist and colonial perspectives of Algerian history. Assia Djebar's autobiography strives to give voice to women engaged in the Algerian resistance against colonialism those women who "need to find their past, to trace lineages that will empower them to live in the present, to rediscover the histories occluded by History" (Lionnet, 1989:25).

As for Elleke Boehmer's model for postcolonial women's literature, many female authors within the postcolonial context "retrieve suppressed oral traditions, half-forgotten histories, unrecorded private languages, moments of understated or unrecognized women's resistance" (Boehmer, 2005 :228). Indeed, utilizing official written histories, she highlights women's experiences and their opposition to the colonizer during the War of Independence. Traveling throughout the country, Djebar had the opportunity to gather oral testimonies from Algerian women. She employs travel as a potent tool in her efforts to recover and unveil the history of Algerian women.

Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman suggests that Assia's travels to gather and portray women's voices enable them to have a platform and influence discourse, as well as serve as catalysts for social and political transformation (Steadman, 2003: 174). These testimonies would not only contribute to her film projects but also inform her subsequent literary endeavors. H. Adlai Murdoch explains that Djebar's initial approach to the text involves questioning the act of writing itself. She seeks to problematize the "Official" narrative of the French colonial conquest of Algeria, which is essentially a revisionist account of historical events. Her objective is to reframe this altered narrative from the viewpoint of the colonized subject, offering a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse and shedding light on the experiences and perspectives of those who have been marginalized or silenced in the historical record (Murdoch, 1993:75).

Fantasia serves as a form of historiography that documents Algerian history from the French colonial invasion in 1830 to the War for Independence from 1954 to 1962. Djebar blends French historical records, such as officers' family letters, military correspondence, memoirs, and the diaries of colonial settlers and artists, with orally transmitted stories of resistance from Algerian women. This amalgamation creates a unique historiography of Algeria's colonial past.

Fantasia invites readers on a feminist exploration of Algerian women's history and ongoing struggles. The structure of the novel transitions from the distant past, notably the French colonial invasion of Algeria in the 1830s, to more recent events, including interviews with female resistance fighters during the Algerian War of Independence from 1954 to 1962, as well as Djebar's autobiographical reflections on her upbringing before and after Algeria's independence. The first and second sections of the book feature chapters that alternate between historical narratives of the 1830 French invasion of Algeria and personal anecdotes from Djebar's childhood and adolescence on the outskirts of the harem. In Djebar's work, juxtaposing the distant past and the present serves multiple purposes. It not only underscores Djebar's profound connection to her Algerian ancestors but also highlights historical precedents for Algerian women's involvement in revolution (Steadman, 2003: 175). Moreover, she evokes a female presence absent from historical records recounting the French invasion of Algeria. By introducing imagined "silent spectators who will live to tell the tale when the encounter is over" (Djebar: 23) during the invasion, she implies a challenge to the French colonial forces, extending beyond their soldiers on the battlefield to their accounts documented in historical manuscripts.

In this context, Djébar contests historical practices that consistently sideline women as active participants. Transitioning to more recent events, the third section of the narrative features narratives of female freedom fighters who engaged in the Algerian War of Independence, occurring more than a century subsequent to the French invasion.

The voices in the text no longer adhere to discrete chapters in the third section, but rather intertwine and relate to one another. Individual stories become less important as the collective narrative begins to take shape. Connections are formed among the women, highlighting a sense of shared identity and blurring the boundaries of individual identities.

The autobiography in *Fantasia* encompasses the narrator's childhood memories, adolescence, and recollections of the people who shaped her life, such as cousins and neighbors. It also delves into the period of adulthood, including her experiences with marriage and married life. The author, Djébar, sought to depict not only her personal life but also the history of her country. However, she encountered a complex challenge rooted in her hybrid identity. Being part of two distinct cultures—Arab-Muslim and European—the narrator finds herself torn between these contrasting worlds. While writing her memories in French, she gradually becomes increasingly compelled to write in her mother tongue. As she approaches the recollection of her marriage and life as a couple, she encounters difficulty in describing them; the words of love cannot be adequately expressed in French. This leads her to embark on a quest for traces of her original identity and her mother tongue.

3. Appropriating the Language of the Colonizer

By merging fiction and personal experience, blurring the lines between fictionality and language, and specifically associating writing (*écriture*) with male and orality (*kalaam*) with female (Mortimer, 97:104), Djébar establishes intricate and nuanced connections between the traditionally "feminine" realm of oral languages and the predominantly "male" domain of writing. Additionally, by interweaving "his-story" and "her-story" (Mortimer:104), combining written narratives by men with oral accounts by women, Djébar not only highlights the distinctions between the "male" and "female" perspectives but also dismantles the binary itself. By telling women's stories through the medium of men's writing, Djébar successfully constructs a feminine voice while concurrently dismantling it (or more precisely, dismantling the orality that initially defines this female voice) (Ghaussy, 1994:458).

Born into an Algerian family in Cherchell, Djébar was raised with Arabic as the predominant language spoken in her household. However, due to the colonial context, French became a significant language for her bilingual father in his professional and educational environments, serving as a paternal language.

As an Algerian writer who expresses herself in French, Assia Djébar refers to herself as "a woman novelist in the French language" (De Courtivron, 2003:19). Djébar who belongs to the post war liberation generation shares her journey of acquiring the French language. Despite the fact that the French language is loaded with colonial legacies and reminds postcolonial subjects of history of suffering and abuse, it is not rejected by postcolonial Francophone author. Instead, the French as a language of the colonizer was appropriated and used for specific purposes by francophone authors:

At first, it was not shared by everyone. It was for a long time the language of the oppressor...We *did conquer it, this French language*...We made the French language ours... We enriched the French language, its vocabulary as well as its syntax...In short, *we inhabited it... Our literature must bear witness this conquest*...It won't be a Creolized or reinvented French, nor a Frenchized or reinvented Creole, but our own finally recovered and decisive language...The antidote against the ancestral domination we are suffering from (Bernabé et al., 1990:900)

According to this quote, Francophone writers rely on the French language to subvert colonialism by writing back in its language. In this case, the French language plays an essential role in the process of writing. In this regard, Oksana Lutsyshyna argues, "language becomes a living space to a francophone writer, a "home" that was re-conquered from the colonizer. It is both the space of opportunities and of violence" (Lutsyshyna, 2006:66).

The language of the oppressor remains inherently contradictory, representing the loss of history, culture, land, and home. The oppressed, on the other hand, have the ability to reclaim and use that language to expose the true nature of the oppressor (Lekesizalin, 2017:213). She exposes the conflicts between dominant French culture and language and her native culture in the following passage:

A similar no-man's-land still exists between the French and the indigenous languages, between two national memories: the French tongue, with its body and voice, has established a proud *presidio* in me, while the mother-tongue, all oral tradition, all rags

and tatters, resists and attacks between two breathing spaces. In time to the rhythm of the *rebato*, I am alternately the besieged foreigner and the native swaggering off to die, so there is seemingly endless strife between the spoken and written word (Djebar :215)

The narrator identifies a comparable no man's land between the French language, which she refers to as her stepmother tongue (Djebar: 214), and the Arabo-Berber languages. French is transformed into a "presidio" for her. Drawing a parallel, she alludes to the Spanish invaders who, preceding the French in the 19th century, established "presidios" or fortified posts and employed the "rebato" strategy. This term denotes a space, a transitional zone, positioned between the indigenous populations and the aggressors. It served as a base from which the invaders launched their attacks and retreated during breaks in the fighting, seeking refuge or replenishing their provisions in this area (Erickson, 1998: 50). She characterizes the space to which writing in French confines her:

Speaking of oneself in a language other than that of the elders is indeed to unveil oneself, not only to emerge from childhood but to leave it, never to return. Such incidental unveiling is tantamount to stripping oneself naked, as the demotic Arabic dialect emphasizes. But this stripping naked, when expressed in the language of the former conqueror (who for more than a century could lay his hands on everything save women's bodies), this stripping naked takes us back oddly enough to the plundering of the preceding century. When the body is not embalmed by ritual lamentations, it is like a scarecrow decked in rags and tatters. The battle-cries of our ancestors, unhorsed in long-forgotten combats, re-echo across the years; accompanied by the dirges of the mourning-women who watched them die (Djebar: 215).

In *Fantasia*, Djebar adopts the language associated with conquest and death not for the purpose of destruction, but rather to resurrect the deceased and testify to their mortal struggle. Katherine Gracki argues that "By throwing herself into the battlefield and appropriating the colonizer's weapons, she is able to turn these same weapons against the adversary" (Gracki, 1996: 836).

Although she recognizes her French education as a gift from her father, Djebar simultaneously grieves over the disconnection it entails from her mother and other female relatives. She explains, "French is my 'stepmother' tongue. Which is my long-lost mothertongue that left me standing and disappeared? . . . Mother-tongue, either idealized or unloved, neglected and left to fairground barkers and jailers! . . ." (Djebar: 214).

Djebar extensively explores the theme of language through the lens of guilt. The term "step-mother" implies that the father has forsaken the mother for another woman. By leaving behind both the mother and the native language, the father continuously nurtures his connection with another woman and another language. Consequently, as the daughter learns this second language, she becomes implicated in her father's actions, becoming an accomplice in perpetuating this dynamic. She ponders whether she has fulfilled her duty or not "Isn't it my 'duty' to stay behind with my peers in the gynaeceum?" (Djebar: 213).

Djebar expresses her sorrow over this separation by drawing parallels to the Greek myth of Nessus. "...that language has adhered to me ever since like the tunic of Nessus: that gift from my father who, every morning, took me by the hand to accompany me to school. A little Arab girl, in a village of the Algerian Sahel " (Djebar: 217). In the myth, the centaur Nessus attempts to kidnap Deianeira, Hercules' new bride. Hercules shoots and kills Nessus with an arrow, and as he dies, he tells Deianeira that if she collects some of his blood and applies it to a garment, the wearer will love her forever. Deianeira gives Hercules the bloodstained garment in the hopes of rekindling his love with another woman years later. However, since Hercules killed Nessus with a poisoned arrow, the centaur's blood is also poisonous. When Hercules puts on the cloak, it adheres to his skin and causes him great pain. Unable to remove the garment that has become fused with his skin and unable to endure the agony, Hercules, being immortal, pleads the gods for death, which his father Zeus eventually grants. What stands out in this story, which Djebar uses to discuss, learning French in colonial Algeria, is that it begins as a gift motivated by love. Once accepted, however, it becomes inextricably linked to the recipient, merging with their identity and becoming inseparable from the self (Shneider, 2007: 44).

In the final pages of the book, a powerful symbol emerges, the mutilated hand of an unidentified Algerian woman discarded by Formentin during his conquest expeditions. This symbol reflects Djebar's altered connection with the language of conquest and death. The author envisions herself picking up this hand and offering it to the *qalam* (the pen) (Djebar: 226), allowing it to bear witness to its own mutilation and the historical violence it represents in *Fantasia*. This act represents Djebar's desire to reclaim the narrative and give voice to those who have been silenced or marginalized. She challenges the dominant discourse by bringing the mutilated hand to the forefront, which erases the suffering and experiences of Algerian women during the conquest, through the

act of writing and storytelling. Furthermore, this powerful imagery illustrates her determination to confront the brutal realities of the past and engage with the complexities of colonial violence, ultimately aiming to foster a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of history.

However, Djebbar's French education not only grants her the opportunity to break free from the same destiny as her fellow Algerian women, that of seclusion, but also empowers her to venture into the public realm, including the male-dominated and colonizer's sphere, equipping her with the ability to write in French (Ghaussy, 1994:458). Additionally, Djebbar's use of the French language serves as a means to reframe Algerian history within an intertextual narrative. Through her writing, she intertwines feminist and postcolonial textualities, creating a rich and layered exploration of the past. Nevertheless, French as the language of the colonizer locates Francophone writers in an ambivalent position, this denotes a state in which postcolonial writers feel free from cultural impediments, yet it also entails feelings of isolation and detachment inherent in the exile they might sense.

In her article "On Writing in the "Language of the Enemy" Assia Djebbar and the Buried Voices of Algerian History", Barbara Winckler investigates how Algerian female writers struggle with language and identity. This struggle is twofold, encompassing both gender-related and culture-related conflicts. It stems from the separation of the French language and their native tongue, each with distinct historical implications that shape perceptions of women, define spaces and social groups, and encompass diverse forms of expression, including oral and written modes. Djebbar attempts to shed light on this complex and contentious situation in her work, *Fantasia*, by closely examining her personal connection to language (Winckler, 2010:432)

According to the narrator in *Fantasia*, the French language distances her from the community of women who evoke memories of her Algerian heritage. She says:

I am only a wandering exile, in flight from other shores where women are white walking wraiths, shrouded figures buried upright, precisely to prevent what I am doing now, to prevent them uttering such a constant howl: such a wild, barbaric cry, macabre residue of a former century! ... Lower a little the volume of this deathgasp, turn it into some ill-timed chant. Incantation in an interminable exile (Djebbar: 115).

Similarly, the narrator deliberately adopts the French language, despite its association with the colonizer, with the purpose of reviving the deceased and providing testimony. She narrates, "Writing has brought me to the cries of the women silently rebelling in my youth, to my own true origins." (Djebbar: 204) French allows the narrator to develop symptoms of resistance and self defense mechanisms against the value systems of her roots, which have long deemed Algerian women's voice as unimportant. By appropriating the French language, she becomes able to show her stance, which may not go in accordance with cultural rules. Therefore, she can express her discordance without disrespecting her family. Thus, her language choice enables her to write in a domain free from regulation by Arabic and Islamic values. This also prompts her to challenge the idea that employing French is viewed as an act of liberation in this context.

From another perspective, the narrator maintains her mixed feelings towards French throughout the autobiography, viewing it as the language of the colonizer and as the catalyst for a cultural divide between herself and her lineage. Towards the end of *Fantasia*, she writes, "French language...French education provided a means for escape...delivered into the enemy camp by my father" (Djebbar: 213). Although the French language provided her with an avenue for liberation in certain respects, it also created a disconnection between her and her Arabic heritage by distancing her from her roots. Consequently, in *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, the narrator complicates the argument that French has served as a pathway to liberation and emancipation. She pays attention to the liberation aspect that the French language offers. In addition, she goes on to argue that French remains an entryway into self-expression. In fact, the act of writing in any given language is in itself considered as an agential mode of self-expression, in other words, it is an outlet through which writers account for social and political situations.

So wrap the nubile girl in veils. Make her invisible. Make her more unseeing than the sightless, destroy in her every memory of the world without. And what if she has learned to write? The jailer who guards a body that has no words – and written words can travel – may sleep in peace: it will suffice to brick up the windows, padlock the sole entrance door, and erect a blank wall rising to heaven. And what if the maiden does write? Her voice, albeit silenced, will circulate. A scrap of paper. A crumpled cloth. A servant-girl's hand in the dark. A child let into the secret. The jailer must keep watch day and night. The written word will take flight from the patio, will be tossed from a terrace. The blue of heaven is suddenly limitless. The precautions have all been in vain. (Djebbar: 3)

Djebar perceives the act of writing as a silent tool. For her the might of the pen resides in its ability to circulate and reach people; therefore, literacy breaks the ice and breaks silence by providing a platform for women to express themselves, even in environments where women's voices are heavily monitored and controlled. In the quoted passage, the narrator demonstrates how writing becomes a political act of resistance against the constraints of patriarchy, which seek to silence women and suppress their opinions. However, Arab women who write and share their writings face the greatest risks because, unlike the narrator, they lack French as an alternative or as a refuge.

In the same token, the narrator returns to the awakening of expression that writing provides in the section titled "The Onlookers" and how it has enabled her to become the writer and amanuensis for the collective voice of Algerian women, both present and past (Erickson, 1998:38). She pays particular attention to the "rebels" among her veiled Algerian sisters, who have voiced their dissent, she says:

Writing in a foreign language, not in either of the tongues of my native country... has brought me to the cries of the women...to my own true origins. Writing does not silence the voice, but awakens it, above all to resurrect so many vanished sisters (Djebar: 204).

This excerpt highlights the narrator's awareness of the political significance of writing and its everlasting impact. The act of writing Algerian women histories set Djebar on a bilingual, bicultural, and an ambiguous journey that helped her fill historical gaps and remove the camouflage that has long disguised the great achievement of the majority of her sisters. Also her position, which resides between oral testimonies and written histories, allows her to "counter the aphasia that for so long has rendered Algerian women silent " (Erickson, 1998:39). The narrator's painstaking portrayal of the writing space provides these women with the social, sexual, and historical realm they yearn for as their own.

Djebar explicitly expresses her concerns about the paradox of employing French, a language associated with oppression, to describe experiences expressed in Arabic. Djebar depicts the autobiographical experience as a painful process, comparing it to a painful wound that causes not only her own blood to flow but also the blood of others involved in her narrative. She asserts that

To attempt an autobiography using French words alone is to lend oneself to the vivisection's scalpel, revealing what lies beneath the skin. The flesh flakes off and with it, seemingly, the last shreds of the unwritten language of my childhood. Wounds are reopened, veins weep, one's own blood flows and that of others, which has never dried (Djebar: 156).

While reading this passage, a dark lexicon springs up, a lexicon referring to death (scalpel, flesh flakes, wounds, veins, blood, and flow). Djebar's reference to flowing blood represents the autobiographical process's profound impact. This Thanatos way of writing reveals Djebar's confession that writing in the colonizer's language causes her agony, as it serves as a painful reminder of the violence and suffering experienced by her ancestors.

Djebar emphasizes the emotional and psychological toll the autobiographical journey takes on herself. The wounds she exposes through her writing are not only her own, but also those of others who have faced similar struggles and hardships. Djebar's agony stems from her struggle to reconcile her personal voice and experiences with the language that has been associated with her culture's subjugation and erasure. Excavating personal memories and revealing intimate details can be a raw and vulnerable experience, evoking strong emotions and uncovering buried traumas.

Djebar remembers that it was thanks to her father's legacy that she had the opportunity to attend a French school and escape the destiny faced by many other women in her homeland. Indeed, this places her in a "bilingual, bicultural, and an ambiguous journey that freed her from the female enclosure but sent her into a form of exile away from the majority of her sisters" (Gale, 2002:527). For Djebar, to write "becomes to inscribe, to transcribe, to write from the depths ("en creux"), to bring back to the next, to the paper, to the manuscript, to the hand; to bring back at the same time the funeral chants and the buried bodies: yes to bring back the other (once considered the enemy, unable to assimilate) through language (De Courtivron :26).

The statement implies that Djebar's writing process entails more than just writing words on a page. It implies a deeper engagement with the act of writing, in which she seeks to inscribe and transcribe buried or overlooked experiences, histories, and voices. The use of the phrase "funeral chants and buried bodies" implies that Djebar's writing aims to resurrect and give voice to those who have been silenced or forgotten. She challenges dominant narratives and brings a sense of inclusivity through language by reintroducing the "other," who was once considered an enemy and unable to assimilate. Consequently, French is both a source of

liberation and alienation which Djebbar cannot do without in her literary text, because the colonizer's language remains the best option to tell the truth without any limitations or restrictions.

4. Narrating History, Violence and Resistance through Algerian Women's Body

Assia Djebbar's novel presents Cherifa, Zohra, and the bride of Mazuna as diverse representations of female subjectivity. These characters embody different forms of resilience and collectively convey a strong and impactful message through their unique voices, experiences, and body language.

To approach these issues, we need to probe a set of questions that delves into various aspects of writing an autobiography: Can writing one's own life story be therapeutic? Throughout the story, does the narrator interact with or attribute significance to bodies other than her own? Is the body fetishized through rituals and eroticism? (Smith & Watson, 175). The first question delves into the potential therapeutic value of autobiographical writing, implying that it may have a healing effect or provide the narrator with a sense of emotional release. The second question investigates the presence and significance of other bodies in the narrative, implying that the narrator's encounters with or perceptions of other people's bodies may influence the overall story. The final question investigates the possibility of fetishization of the body, raising the possibility of ritualized or eroticized portrayals with symbolic or symbolic meaning within the narrative.

In his book *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*, Paul John Eakin argues that our lives and bodies shape our sense of identity (Eakin: 1999: xi). One's identity is formed through dynamic interaction between personal experiences and physical embodiment. In fact, the body is a fundamental aspect of autobiographical understanding; our physical selves serve as a locus for the accumulation and embodiment of autobiographical knowledge. Memories are not merely mental constructs but are instead lived and experienced within the physicality of the autobiographer.

Throughout the novel, the narrator delves into history while paying close attention to body language that she interprets while watching interviewees tell and perform their historical accounts. In this respect, Fielders contends that the narrator's approach to historiography involves "strategy of recording history in such a way that it writes from the body instead of on it and creates a style of writing that does not kill the voice, but rather awakens it, especially to resuscitate so many lost sisters" (Fielder, 2000: 29). There is an overlap between voices and gestures, this means that the way women narrate their stories signifies how readers can understand them and the situations they went through. Thus, this thorough exploration of body language in Djebbar's literature as a physical indicator of women's agency may make readers more conscious of the militancy and tenacity of Algerian women.

Cherifa's oral account serves as a vivid illustration of the narrator's interpretive writing and interaction with the narratives conveyed through both spoken language and body language. Assia Djebbar allows Cherifa to recount her story, describing how she joined her brothers in the mountains and became a freedom fighter. Cherifa shares her firsthand experiences as a resistance fighter and captive, highlighting her journey and struggles. With mannerisms resembling those of a man, refusing to conform to traditional expectations. Cherifa, as a fighter, possessed fearlessness, strength, and unwavering loyalty to her cause. Her patriotic endeavors were just as courageous as those of a man were, if not more. Cherifa was free to live on her own terms, without being subjected to the societal norms imposed by men upon her and other women.

Djebbar focuses on Cherifa's spoken narrative and how she embodies her story. Djebbar writes:

Cherifa's voice embraces bygone days. Tracing the fear, the defiance, the intoxication in that forgotten place. Outbursts of a recalcitrant prisoner in the sunseared camp. The voice recounts: Scarcely that. It digs out the old revolt...Her body and her face are once more engulfed in shadow as she whispers her story – a butterfly displayed on a pin with the dust from its crusted wings staining one's fingertips (Djebbar:141).

Cherifa tells her history. This process gives her agency and freedom to explain her stance regarding the hectic political events of her time. Djebbar has provided her with enough space to express herself with a voice imbued with empowerment. The dominant form of "the metropolitan language" and the hierarchical power structures it represents are disrupted, giving rise to a new narrative told in a different language. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin contend in their Introduction that colonial discourses and patriarchal structures are resisted, paving the way for the emergence of a potent feminine post-colonial voice (Griffiths et al., 1998: 7).

In Cherifa, we witness the subaltern expressing her own voice, a woman who courageously confronted oppression:

'Why were you fighting?'

'For what I believe in, for my ideas! '

'And now, seeing you're a prisoner?'

'I'm a prisoner, so what!'

'What have you gained?'

'I've gained the respect of my compatriots and my own self-respect!

Did you arrest me for stealing or for murder? I never stole! My conscience is clear!' (Djebar: 140)

In addition, the narrator highlights female bodies in war settings that colonial and patriarchal Algerian narratives would consider as insignificant, therefore she deconstructs the patriarchal and colonial vision of the role women had in the fight at the beginning of Algeria's colonization, Djebar demonstrates the poor representation of women by both the French and the Algerian patriarchal accounts. For example:

Arab tribes are always accompanied by great numbers of women who had shown the greatest zeal in mutilating their victims. One of these women lay dead beside the corpse of a French soldier whose heart she had torn out! Another had been fleeing with a child in her arms when a shot wounded her; she seized a stone and crushed the infant's head, to prevent it falling alive into our hands... (Djebar :18)

In this excerpt, Djebar references Baron Barchou de Penhoën's description of the aftermath following the initial French invasion of Algeria. According to Barchou, the bodies of these women and their deaths are used merely as illustrations and evidence to reinforce his argument that Algerian women joined men in warfare. In his accounts, women are given no agency; instead, they are mere objects within the battle. He describes that "one of these women *lay dead*," emphasizing the lack of movement in her body. The other body "had been fleeing" indicating the other woman's unsuccessful effort to take action. For him, these women's bodies are not just elements in his narrative but are also portrayed as objects lacking agency. In a feminist reinterpretation, Djebar aims to reshape this scenario from a female-empowering perspective. In contrast to Barchou's portrayal of these women's bodies as passive in war, Djebar constructs a narrative highlighting women's active participation in the struggle :

These two Algerian women, the one in whom rigor mortis was already setting in, still holding in her bloody hands the heart of a dead Frenchman; the second, in a fit of desperate courage, splitting open the brain of her child... before dying with her mind at peace – these two heroines enter into recent history" (Djebar :18).

While Barchou presents these women's bodies as objects in his narrative, Djebar depicts them as active agents who exhibited extraordinary acts of dynamism, defiance and courage. The first woman, despite facing death as rigor mortis sets in, defiantly holds the heart of a deceased French soldier in her bloodied hands, symbolizing her resistance against colonial oppression. The second woman, displaying desperation and courage, opts to relieve her child's suffering by inflicting a fatal injury on the child before calmly accepting her own impending death. Accordingly, Djebar allocates a place for militant women in Algerian history by emphasizing the different situations and conditions they underwent.

In the same spirit, Djebar juxtaposes her discoveries with Captain Pierre Bosquet's written report detailing the consequences of a war in the Oran area in October 1840. She observes:

Among these febrile accounts, some passages stand out as a blot on the rest: for example, the description of a woman's foot that had been hacked off to appropriate the anklet of gold or silver. Bosquet mentions this 'detail' almost casually. Another example: is the description of the corpses of seven women (why did they choose to hurl insult when they are caught by surprise?) who become, in spite of the author, scrofulous excrescences on his elegant prose style (Djebar: 55).

In this excerpt, Djebar reflects on certain passages within Captain Pierre Bosquet's accounts of war. These passages highlight the gruesome and dehumanizing treatment of Algerian women by French colonial forces. The narrator expresses disgust and

condemnation for Bosquet's casual description of atrocities committed against Algerian women, such as the hacking off a woman's foot to steal her anklet. Additionally, the narrator criticizes Bosquet's portrayal of the corpses of seven women, which he dismisses as mere "insults" or nuisances in his otherwise elegant prose style. This excerpt underscores the devaluation and objectification of Algerian women in colonial narratives, revealing the brutality and disregard for human dignity inherent in colonial rule. However, Djébar's ultimate intention is to revise the portrayal of these female bodies, depicting them as indomitable and ever-present components of the narrative of the battle, thereby emphasizing the significant role of women in Algerian history.

Fantasia captivates its readers with yet another depiction of women - the bride of Mazuna. In the midst of the French conquest of Algeria, Cherif Bou Maza seizes Badra, the daughter of the Caid of Mazoune, on the eve of her wedding. This deliberate act is meant to provoke and demean her father, as it strikes at the core of his dignity and honor. Badra, on her wedding night, finds herself in the tent of her captor. However, the following morning, when the captors demand that the women surrender their jewelry as spoils, Badra courageously removes her weighty gold anklets and bracelet, tears streaming down her face, and exclaims: "she wrapped her arms around the frail adolescent, clothed only in her emerald gown, her hair streaming in the wind, her face raised to the sky, and repeating softly, 'I am naked! Praise be to God, I am naked! Praise...'"(Djébar: 99).

The Bride of Mazuna is a woman who possesses a strong sense of empowerment. Her courageous act of undressing herself carries a profound significance, serving as a powerful form of protest. This act is not only observed and acknowledged by others, but also elicits a range of reactions from those who witness it. The absence of verbal expression is inconsequential, as her provocative striptease has successfully prompted an active response from the people around her, effectively conveying her protest.

With an ample gesture, as if she were in her bridal chamber, she laid down her tiara, then her heavy earrings, then the four, five, six pearl necklaces, then the broaches - ten at least - then... 'Allah! Allah!' sighed the *chaouch* and asked for another casket. The scribe, his eyes dazzled as much by the splendour of the precious stones as by the beauty of the bride herself, forgot to write down the inventory. (Djébar 98)

Furthermore, Djébar has crafted a distinct representation of a marginalized female figure in the form of the Bride of Mazuna, contrasting Spivak's portrayal of the Bengali woman. Djébar directly challenges Spivak's assertions regarding the impossibility of expression for subaltern individuals (Khatoun: 36). Interestingly, while the Bengali woman's unsuccessful suicide attempt remains unnoticed, the bride's action of removing her tiara elicits a contrasting and responsive reaction.

Zohra's narrative centers on her sons and her personal defiance against the French military during the struggle for national liberation. In her interview with the author, she describes the direct impact of French violence and oppression on her family, including physical injuries, home fires, humiliations, and torture. She says:

"My farm was burnt down three times. Whenever they came back and found it in good repair again, they knew the Brothers had rebuilt the house for us! They brought roofing tiles they'd taken from the settlers' houses. Once again, the French soldiers destroyed everything "(Djébar: 149).

She adds, " They didn't leave us a thing: they took the cattle, everything put by in the silos, everything. They did not even leave us a goat! Not a thing . . . (Djébar: 148) . At first, I owned thirty-one head of cattle . . . In the end; I didn't have a single one left! The soldiers took them all! (Djébar: 149).

Her narrative represents the experiences shared by numerous "Musbilat", or civilian activists. Her involvement in the war was a complete dedication of herself, her family, and all her possessions. The duties she assumed primarily involved conventional female tasks such as: cooking and sewing for "the moujahidine" (freedom fighters):

All you could do was roll up your sleeves, knead the dough, prepare the stewpot, see to the cooking, and so on, the whole day; there were always little groups of them coming and going . . . They arranged for somebody to keep guard. I was just kept busy with the pots and pans all the time, I put the food down in front of them, then I went and sat outside and waited, ready for death (Djébar :147)

Furthermore, Zohra was actively involved in collecting and relating information about the movements of French troops. Because of her actions, she endured not only material losses but also suffered enduring physical and psychological scars as a form of punishment.

The house was on fire. Huge embers, as well as pieces of burning beams, were hurled into the air . . . We hid, but these burning missiles fell on us. Some of them fell on my head... I was half exposed. My hair caught fire...That's how I lost all my hair. I hurled myself into the water. But more burning embers fell on me. We couldn't leave the spot . . . I've still got these scars on my forehead and neck . . (Djebar: 161).

In one of the incidents where their house was set on fire, Zohra's hair accidentally caught fire, leaving permanent scars that acted as a constant reminder of that particular event. She recalls:

After all these misfortunes, I've got to the point where people shut the door!... It's true that after my hair all got burnt, I must have been ill for several months I must have had a blow on my head; even now there are times when I can't remember anything . . . treat me as if I'm mad. People started telling me I was mad. As a matter of fact, they were afraid. 'Here comes the mad woman, shut the door! (Djebar: 162).

Besides the emotional damage and physical scars that this tragedy inflicted upon her body, Zohra suffered from a post-traumatic brain injury that gained her the name of "mad woman". Sahraoui Zohra, who tragically lost her sons during the war, narrates harrowing accounts of French authorities invading her home and subjecting her to harassment. In a heroic effort to rescue a mattress from the flames, she endured insults and humiliation.

These testimonies powerfully illustrate how "the war encloses women and their acts in the nation's anticolonial struggle" (Ferma, 2017:211). She recounts

The second time the soldiers burnt my house down, the fire spread and the roof collapsed ... I went back into the fire, thinking, 'Even if I only save one mattress, I'll have that to sleep on!' So I got one mattress out; the fire caught one corner. I plunged it into the wadi and put the fire out. The soldiers laughed at me, saying, "Are you keeping that one for the *fellaheen*? They came back and set fire to the place again. They even took the clothes off our backs ... They took our clothes and left us like that, naked as the day we were born! (Djebar: 159)

Accompanied by the writer, Lila Zohra was guided through the mountains. Following a challenging two-hour trek along prickly trails, they eventually reached the sanctuary "Farm", commonly referred to as 'the refuge' in French. Despite the ruins surrounding it, the walls of the sanctuary remained intact. Djebar describes Lila Zohra's state once they got on scene:

There, your voice took up your tale. The sun was still high. You let your veil fall around your waist and sat down among the gorse bushes and spring flowers. Your face, a network of fine wrinkles, was austere; you were lost for a moment in your own memories - I took a photograph of you among the poppies . . . The sun gradually sank low in the sky. We returned in the evening silence (Djebar :165)

Even amidst physical suffering, violence, and profound wounds, Zohra discovers strength and seizes control over her pain, reclaiming authority from her oppressor and asserting it for herself. From this viewpoint, I argue that while the liberation achieved through the public sharing of personal memories is significant, it is not the sole crucial element. Equally important is the female self's reconciliation with history, whether embodied by the author or conveyed through various narrators with fragmented voices. This process is pivotal to their process of identity formation.

The scenery conjures up a different image of women, with Algeria personified as an unveiled bride, a woman whom a rapacious colonizer has invaded. The first depiction of the Algiers invasion uses metaphors that allude to women's oppression. The scene seeks to recast this pivotal moment in feminine language, reclaiming the forgotten suffering of a nation of women subjected to colonialism and patriarchy at the same time. This early presentation depicts Algeria as a woman, drawing parallels between nineteenth-century atrocities and men's silencing of women (Hiddleston, 2006:72).

The French chronicler is in a voyeuristic position from the very beginning of the novel, foreshadowing the impending violation: "The name of the lookout man is Amable Matterer. He keeps watch and that same day will write, 'I was the first to catch sight of the city of Algiers, a tiny triangle on a mountain slope'" (Djebar: 6). The chronicler's role as a lookout symbolizes a sense of intrusion

or surveillance, implying a forthcoming intrusion. This is evident in Matterer's observation of Algiers, described as a "tiny triangle on a mountain slope," which underscores the chronicler's voyeuristic position and sets the tone for the unfolding events.

In *Leur pesant de poudre : romancières francophones du Maghreb* Marta Segarra argues that the male gaze is associated with rape in Maghrebi culture : 'La moindre pénétration oculaire de l'espace sacré qui les [les femmes] entoure est signe précurseur d'une pénétration plus grave ' (Segarra, 1997 : 77).

As the majestic fleet rends the horizon, the Impregnable City sheds her veils and emerges, a wraith-like apparition, through the blue-grey haze. A distant triangle aslant, glinting in the last shreds of nocturnal mist and then settling softly, like a figure sprawling on a carpet of muted greens. The mountain shuts out the background, dark against the blue wash of the sky.

The first confrontation. The city, a vista of crenelated roofs and pastel hues, makes her first appearance in the role of 'Oriental Woman', motionless, mysterious. At first light, the French Armada starts its slow glide past, continuing its stately ballet until noon spills its spangled radiance over the scene... On this thirteenth day of June 1830, the confrontation continues for two, three hours, well into the glare of the afternoon. As if the invaders were coming as lovers! The vessels sail so slowly, so quietly westward, that they might well have been planted there above the glassy surface of the water, by the eyes of the Impregnable City, blinded by mutual love at first sight. (Djebar: 6)

Djebar adds, "Nothing stirs in the Barbary city. Not a quiver disturbs the milky dazzle of the terraced houses that can gradually be distinguished on the slopes of the mountain whose mass is now clearly silhouetted in a series of gentle emerald-green undulations "(Djebar: 7).

Through these passages, Djebar incorporates two spaces: the space of colonial invasion (including the French and the conquest of Algiers in 1830) and the space of sexual act (including the French as "lovers" and Algiers personified as a virgin). The colonial invasion is portrayed... 150 through (fleet, Armada, Mountain, city ,etc.) ,The 'Odalisque (shed ,veil,eyes, milky, wraith-like , Oriental Woman, motionless , carpet) , The painting (green hue , blue grey , glare ,dark , light , dazzle , emerald-green) , The sexual act and desire (imprenable , figure sprawling, silhouetted, undulations, slope etc). The integration of these different spaces merges into a single space: the invasion scene becomes a deflowering scene. The term "rend" (tears) belongs to both the domain of invasion and sexual act (referring to the loss of virginity) (Fernandes, 2004: 149). In the same light Kelley discusses in his article "Assia Djebar: Parallels and Paradoxes" that the relationship between the rape perpetuated by the French invasion and conquest of Algeria and sexual intrusion is very clearly signaled in *l'amour, la fantasia*" (Kelley, 1996:844).

As a counter reaction to the colonizer's look, the stage is now set for the gaze of the colonized, the returning gaze. By allowing "L'Alger/ie-femme" to look back into the oppressor's eyes, Djebar aims to inscribe a shift in power dynamics and perceptions between French colonizers and Algerians. Formely, French colonizers were spectators, observing and objectifying Algerians as a spectacle. However, according to the author, this power dynamic has changed. The Algerian gaze now possesses the French in its gaze, implying a shift in power and agency. Algerians, who were once the object of the French gaze, now become the subjects, actively observing and influencing the French. Furthermore, "L'Alger/ie-femme" represents a woman who refuses to be owned or dominated, a woman who refuses to be penetrated. Despite being engulfed in the myth of Orientalism, she silently resists it with her unwavering gaze. The phrase "disturbing proximity" suggests a close and intimate relationship between the desiring subject (Algerian) and its object (French). This closeness creates tension and increases desire. It represents a complicated relationship between colonized and colonizer, in which desire and power dynamics are intertwined:

Amable Matterer, first officer of the Ville de Marseille, does not stir, nor do his companions. The Impregnable City confronts them with its many invisible eyes. Although they had been prepared for its skyline -here a dome reflected in the water, there the silhouette of a fortress or the tip of a minaret - nevertheless the dazzling white panorama freezes before them in its disturbing proximity (Djebar: 7).

Subsequently, Algiers, the capital personified as a fierce virgin "A young bride who arrives veiled at her wedding ceremony and is then unveiled by the groom"(Hiddleston: 73) gives up her final resistance, and defloration is about to begin. :

Algiers, known as the 'well-protected city', is reduced to despair. ... Three noisy, ineffectual bursts of gunfire, like a final death-rattle, punctuated the Algerian retreat.... the ritual of their hopeless action reaches its climax in these final convulsions (Djebar: 31)... Towards the end, they await with growing concern the fall of the City - until then, anchored in its century-old irredentism. Algiers prepares to live through her last night as a free city (Djebar: 42).

The traumatic experience of defloration can help us understand the colonial experience. While the literal act of defloration refers to a woman's first sexual experience, the analogy here suggests a broader metaphorical meaning. It implies that, just as defloration entails the violation and loss of "innocence", the colonial experience can be viewed as a traumatic event involving the forced intrusion, dominance and exploitation of a colonized territory or people. Furthermore, the statement suggests that there is a symbolic connection between the blood shed during the act of defloration and the blood spilled during colonial conquest, resulting in shared trauma.

The first requirement for acquiring Algeria is control over Algerian women, as the concept of Algeria was envisioned as a woman to be owned. "Algeria Unveiled," the title of Fanon's work, emphasizes the connection between the land and the women, particularly those who are veiled. Algeria is depicted as a veiled woman who is vulnerable to the act of unveiling, which is equated with rape.

According to Fanon, the French colonizers believed that by condemning the veil as a symbol of oppression, they could gain the allegiance of Algerian women and persuade them of the benefits of colonial presence. " If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society , its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women , we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses" (Fanon ,1967 : 37-8).

Contrary to this expectation, however, Algerian women instead sided with their compatriots and turned the erroneous expectations of the colonizers to their advantage. Without arousing suspicion, they were able to transport money and weapons, and conveyed messages to the guerillas (Hiddleston, 2006: 35).

Djebar endeavors to depict Algerian women authentically, allowing them to express their own experiences. By accurately translating Algerian women's body language and colloquial expressions from oral Arabic to written French, she provides them with a platform to narrate and document their own history. Through this process, Djebar reinterprets history from the perspective of women, humanizing them and emphasizing their unique subjectivities. She recounts real conversations with Algerian women as they narrate their stories, focusing on their roles and actions during the Algerian War of Independence, rather than relying on patriarchal interpretations of the war by soldiers and historians. This approach enables these women to shape their own history actively and offers a counter-narrative that challenges dominant patriarchal interpretations. Djebar's work serves as a testament to the power of representation and the importance of diverse perspectives in shaping a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of history.

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