



Assia Djébar: an Algerian writer of French expression

آسيا جبار: كاتبة جزائرية باللغة الفرنسية

Assia Djébar: un écrivain algérien d'expression française

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ملخص

تعتني هذه المقالة بأحد أشهر الروائيات الجزائريات وهي آسيا جبار التي اشتهرت باستعمالها المكثف للغة الفرنسية، وبينت أنها كانت إلى حد ما ضحية اللغة الفرنسية، إذ يلاحظ أنها لم تكن مرتاحة كلياً لدى استعمالها لهذه اللغة. صرحت جبار أنها تكتب باللغة الفرنسية، لغة المستعمر القديم. هذه المقالة تهدف أيضاً لتفسير كيف تقبلت جبار أخيراً الاعتماد على اللغة الفرنسية كلغة وحيدة لكتابها. أضف إلى ذلك تعالج هذه المقالة مدى ضعف اللغة القومية للجزائر خاصة في الفترة الموالية لما بعد الاستقلال وانتهاء حكم فرنسا في الجزائر عام 1962. ختاماً، سأوضح أنه بالرغم من هذا الضعف في اعتماد لغة قومية، إلا أن الجزائر لا زالت تحظى بكل الفرص لتكون بلداً متعدد اللغات بنجاح في ظل التنوع الثقافي والاقتصادي الذي تتمتع به.

الكلمات الدالة: الأنثوية؛ ما بعد الاستعمارية؛ الهوية؛ الفرنكوفونية؛ النقد الأدبي.

Abstract

This article deals with one famous Algerian female novelist. Assia Djébar is well-known for her intensive use of the French language. This article queries also with the fact that Assia Djébar was, to some extent, a victim of the "French expression". The reader to Djébar notices that she was not at ease when using the French language. Djébar declares that "she then writes in the French language, the language of the old colonizer" (Djébar¹). This article will also attempt to justify why Djébar reconciled with herself and could finally accept the French language as the only language with which she writes. Moreover, this article examines the failure of the Algerian linguistic, national language especially in the immediate postcolonial period in Algeria that is after its independence from French colonial rule in 1962. In the end, it is demonstrated that despite its failure

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to regain linguistic nationalism, Algeria still has the chance to become a successful multilingual country, with a cultural as well as an economic diversity.

Keywords: feminism; postcoloniality; identity; francophone; literary criticism.

Résumé

Cet article s'intéresse à Assia Jabbar l'une des romancières algériennes les plus célèbres pour son utilisation intensive de la langue française. La présente contribution tentera de montrer qu'Assia Jabbar a été dans une certaine mesure victime de cette langue. En effet, la lecture de ses œuvres romanesques fait ressortir qu'elle n'était pas entièrement à l'aise dans de l'utilisation de la langue française. Assia Jabbar a déclaré qu'elle écrivait en français, langue de l'ancien colonisateur, parce que cette langue était la seule qu'elle pouvait utiliser pour écrire dans le contexte de faiblesse de la langue nationale de l'Algérie, en particulier dans la période postindépendance. A partir de l'analyse de constat de coexistence linguistique inégale, nous montrerons que l'Algérie dispose les ressources pour être un pays multilinguistique et de diversité culturelle et économique.

Mots clés: féminité; post-colonialisme; identité; francophonie; critique littéraire.

Introduction

North African literature received little attention in the international level in the first half of the twentieth century, since North African countries were colonized by France at that time. However, towards the end of the twentieth century, a sudden "explosion of interest in francophone North African literature" (Hiddleston, 2016, p. 82) emerged. By the very end of the twentieth century and towards the beginning of the twenty-first century, interest in North African literature grew higher, since at that time interest in postcolonial studies in both the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain was at its peak. Postcolonial theorists like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha drew a lot of attention worldwide. In Algeria postcolonial studies were led by renowned authors like Assia Djébar, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine and Mouloud Feraoun.

Assia Djébar was a famous Algerian female writer who had lived both during and after the French colonization of Algeria. Djébar was one of the few who lived the



colonial history of Algeria and not just read about it somewhere. Algerian writers like Djébar "struggle[d] to reconcile their colonial education with a fidelity to local culture and history." (Hiddleston, 2016, p.86) In fact, many Algerian writers and scholars accepted the fact that French was the only means with which they could transmit their voice, especially abroad. This created a divide between two main groups. The first group believed in adopting the French language in daily life and in writing because, in their minds, the Algerians and the French had spent too much time together and any separation seemed quite impossible. The second group, for its part, believed that in order to achieve independence the whole Algerian nation had to adopt a unified mother tongue as the only language which would unite the people, and thus the concept of Arabization emerged, particularly after independence.

A postcolonial study of the works of Djébar allows the reader to understand the way Djébar explores personal trauma. It is pressing to emphasize the theme of personal experience, especially of postcolonial women of North Africa; Djébar henceforth is the best example when dealing with the posttraumatic effects of colonization on the women writers in North Africa. Djébar has manifestly illustrated the dangers she and many other Algerian writers faced. In her novel *La disparition de la langue française* Djébar reveals to the reader the internal dilemmas her protagonist Berkane faces due to his multilingualism when he decides to go back to his native land, Algeria.

At the age of forty-five, Berkane, heart-broken, because he has broken up with his French girlfriend Marise, decides after twenty years to settle in Algeria for good. However, the time Berkane chooses to go back, Algeria is going through hard times; the Islamists are threatening to take the country through a bloody civil war that seems never to end. In the end of the novel, Berkane disappears and is assumingly dead because he chose to write in French (the language of the enemy).

Many Algerian writers were facing similar dangers because of their language choice. We can cite, for example, Kateb Yacine who was often publicly scorned because he lived in France until his death, and because he was writing in French too. The same thing happened for Tahar Djaout who, in addition, received numerous threats of death, and was shot dead in 1993, by the terrorist group



called GIA because he had chosen to write in French. So, writing in French was not only a choice but also a threat many Algerian writers like Assia Djébar were facing every day.

In dealing with the postcolonial studies in North Africa, one often encounters questions like, why did many Algerian renowned scholars and writers choose to write in French; the language of the Other? Was that because of a deficiency in their mother tongue? Or was the French language a heavy legacy which was left by the French colonizer and which was hard to shake off? Was the French language the only language with which they could transmit their voice to the world? Or was it simply the only language they learnt at school and could effectively communicate with? If so, what would be the position of Algerian postcolonial scholars like Assia Djébar in terms of decolonization?

1. Female Writers and the Colonial Context

Assia Djébar is considered the only Algerian female voice who could overcome all the patriarchal barriers and exclusively narrate the female side of the events. However, it must be noted that it was not easy for her to make a name for herself in a patriarchal newly-independent state. In her own account Assia Djébar has written that "women remained largely spectators as Algeria moved toward Independence"(276). In fact, the Algerian colonial situation was quite complicated. In their book, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, Charles Forsdick and David Murphy demonstrate the complex ongoing colonial state of Algeria. They state that the relations between Algeria and France got more complicated after the Evian Accords of 1962: "Although both countries were henceforth chronologically 'post-colonial', their relationship remained a 'postcolonial' one, influenced by continued demographic displacement, by the pressures of neocolonial politics, by the troubled legacy of the French language, by a reluctantly shared history repressed and yet constantly threatening to return." (Forsdick; Murphy, 2003, p. 3)

Forsdick and Murphy believe that the relation between the two countries could have been far more mild and harmonious than it is now and they have illustrated this with France winning the football world cup championship of 1998 where



most of the credit was given to Zinedine Zidane² who is of Algerian origins (3). Through 'la Francophonie'³ France not only withholds to its former colonized countries but it is also maintains its opposition to what it perceives as the ever-increasing influence of English-speaking cultures."(3) Through cultural, diplomatic and commercial connections.

The focus on the writings of postcolonial women of North Africa inescapably leads to the focus on the personal suffering of these women. The Spivak analogy in the matter clarifies the double combination which long haunted these women of North Africa, thus "the homeopathic double bind of feminism in decolonization...seeks in the new state to cure the poison of patriarchy with the poison of the legacy of colonialism" (Landry; Mclean, p.195). Yet, it is not quite as bad as it may seem. It was this double bind of feminism which helped bring women's emancipation and "one of the greatest gains brought by the emancipation of women was the possibility of writing" (Spivak, 2003, p. 32).

During the colonial era, Djebar produced two main literary works, *La Soif*(1957) and *Les Impatients* (1958). The two novels did not receive the acclaim Djebar may have anticipated, and subsequently she was accused of not doing anything to reinforce the young Algerian war for independence. After her country regained independence, Djebar tackled the Algerian cause she was once accused of neglecting, by published her third novel *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* in 1962. One of the issues Djebar and many other Algerian writers of French expression had to face was the issue of Islam. These writers were often accused of standing against Islam rather than with it. However, Djebar was never against it, her novel *Loïn de Médine* (1991) better demonstrates the stance of Djebar when she strongly stressed on the importance Islam gave to women, these women "have received only secondary acknowledgement from religious historians such as Ibn Hicham, Ibn Saad, and Tabari" (Erickson,1998, p. 35)

2- Zinedine Zidane: A French Football Star of Algerian origins has most of the credit in helping France win the 1998 football World Cup championship.

3- Francophonie: The concept where a group of peoples or nations fully or partially develop French language as their lingua franca, and all adhere to the contribution to the 'greater French empire.'



However, Djébar and many of her Algerian contemporary postcolonial writers such as Kateb Yacine and Tahar Djaout were forced by the Islamist fanatics to escape to France. The bloody civil war in Algeria during the 1990s targeted the Algerian elite, the scholars, the playwrights, the writers, the singers and anyone who called for freedom. Thus, "Le romancier Tahar Djaout, le poète Youssef Sebti et le dramaturge Abdelkader Alloula, tous les trois assassinés en 1993 et 1994." ["The novelist Tahar Djaout, the poet Youssef Sebti and the dramatist and playwright Abdelkader Alloula, all three were assassinated in 1993 and 1994." (Djébar, 2001, p. 17-8).] 2001, "Mouloud Feraoun was assassinated in 1962 by the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète [OAS], the French far-right terrorist organization that was desperately trying to sabotage de Gaulle's final recognition of Algerian independence" (Bensmaïa, p.2).

In the end, one can say that Assia Djébar's role as an Algerian female writer is absolutely important in that her narrative "provides a view from a female perspective, the option that allows her to challenge power structures that support the supremacy of French colonial discourse and destabilize the boundaries that Algerian and Arab men have surrounded their women with since the dawn of history" (Lgoudjil, 2014, p. 177)

2. Writers of French Expression in Exile

In his article "The Phantom Mediators: Reflections on the Nature of the Violence in Algeria" Réda Bensmaïa states that "for three decades after independence, [Algerian] intellectuals were put in prison, exiled, killed, or forced to quit being advocates of political freedom, the rights of the person, and a transparent society" (qtd. in Briggs⁴ 20). Bensmaïa believes that speaking and writing in French was one of the main reasons which led to the breakout of the Algerian brutal civil war.

As a result," francophone writers were assassinated, exiled, and oppressed and banished from the theatre" (qtd. in Briggs 20) .Bensmaïa blames in that not only the Algerian successive governments but also the Islamist groups mainly the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) and their armed wing Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) who went bloody after their failed political endeavors. In their book

4 - Carina Lynn Briggs: Language, Identity, and Literary Expression in Algeria.



Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed Martin Evans and John Phillips argue that such violent groups "resorted to intimidation and murder against these [other] groups in order to demonstrate the minority status of Berber phones and Francophone's" (qtd. in Briggs 21). This entire struggle, most often violent, led eventually to the fact that "many Algerian writers struggle with the linguistic qualities of their writing: in which language to write, how to express themselves in this language, and how to demonstrate their multilingual perceptions in their writing" (Briggs, p. 23).

Moreover, this struggle created a blurring in the Algerian sense of nationalism. Bensmaïa argues that it is quite a normal "situation that most colonized countries inherited after independence. [Thus] For Francophone writers, the questions remained the same: to write, of course, but in which language?" (Bensmaïa, 2003, p. 4).

Bensmaïa then adds that for francophone writers "it has become impossible to write in French, while it is just as impossible to go back to writing in Arabic or, as we shall see in other instances, Berber" (Bensmaïa, 2003, p. 102). This situation has hindered, therefore the Algerian writer from writing in French; it was quite impossible to write in French, the language of the colonizer. Whereas, writing in Arabic was as hard as writing in French.

The reason behind this is first the fact that Algerians themselves did not master the Arabic language very well, and second the fact that the Algerian national identity had to take into consideration other parties like the Berbers with all their multi-ethnic groups. In the end, "both French linguistic-nationalism and Algerian linguistic-nationalism alienate the Algerian writer from the French language" (Briggs, p. 27-28).

Bensmaïa stresses on the dilemma resulting from the seemingly eternal nationalistic struggle between those who are in favor of writing in French, the language of the colonizer, and those who are for a unified Algerian national identity. Bensmaïa states that,

Indeed we cannot help but be struck by the muffled yet insistent presence of a series of formidable problems that each of these writers must face in exile: Can one (learn to) love in a foreign language? Can one think, write, dream, sing in a foreign language? These questions may



appear trivial on the surface, yet they have continued to haunt the consciousness and thinking of Maghrebi and African writers (both Francophone and Anglophone) since independence. (Bensmaïa, 2003, p. 100)

The complex of whether to write in the Algerian national language or French, the language of the colonizer, knowing that it was the only language these writers mastered, led the Algerian writers of French expression to plunge deeper into their prolonged exile. Jacques Derrida explains that the Algerian francophone writers had not much of a choice in the matter. Should they keep writing in the language of the colonizer which was imposed on them until it became their solely mastered language and with which they started writing? Or should they go back and fetch their long-lost roots and start writing in Arabic, the language of their ancestors, yet foreign to them? Derrida states that, "Dans quelle langue écrire des mémoires dès lors qu'il n'y a pas eu de langue maternelle autorisée? Comment dire un « je me rappelle » qui vaille quand il faut inventer et sa langue et son *je*, les inventer *en même temps*, par-delà ce déferlement d'amnésie qu'a déchaîné le *double interdit* ?". (Derrida,⁵ p.57). Derrida labels the Algerian linguistic dilemma "double interdit", that is to say Algerian francophone writers could neither use French at ease in their writing nor could they go back to their native language. In the end, "some authors were unsure what attitude to adopt toward the French language. On the one hand, while some used the French language to claim independence, others were forced into exile". (Lgoudjil, 2014, p. 174)

Assia Djébar could not really escape exile either, she too felt at the beginning and probably until she passed away alienated both from French, the language she wrote and Arabic her mother tongue. In her own way she describes French as the "langue de l'autre". (Djébar,⁶ p.44)

Djébar states that at the beginning writing in French was not her choice, and that French drew her away from writing in Arabic, her mother-tongue. "Ecrire se fait aujourd'hui, pour moi, dans une langue, au départ, non choisie, dans un écrit français qui a éloigné de fait l'écrit arabe de la langue maternelle" (Djébar, p.28).

5 - Jacques Derrida: Le monolinguisme de l'autre.

6 -Assia Djébar: Ces voix qui m'assiègent.



Djébar then adds that the beginning of her writing career was marked by an internal contradiction, a struggle between writing in the language of the colonizer and the threat of exile, or writing in her mother-tongue and the threat of fading away. Herwriting was "une lutte intérieure avec son silence porteur de contradictions et qui s'inscrit peu à peu ou d'emblée dans l'épaisseur d'une langue, la plus légère, la plus vive ou n'importe laquelle". (Djébar, p.28)

However, during the eighties, Djébar strikingly decided to adopt willingly French as the sole language with which to write. She declared that "le français est en train de me devenir vraiment maison d'accueil, peut-être même lieu de permanence". (Djébar, p.44). Thus, Djébar bravely chose to live in exile and write in the language of the colonizer only to defend her own mother-tongue, and no matter how long she used French in her writings, she always regarded French "as the language of the oppressor, a language that must pay the price for its French colonial past". (Lgoudjil, 2014, p. 177)

3. Writing the Algerian female body

As "a major Francophone woman writer" (Forsdick, Murphy,⁷ p.203) Djébar had to deal with the issue of the Algerian female body. In her book, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*, Djébar explains that there are four languages that every Algerian is exposed to; Berber, Arabic, French and the body. The body, according to Djébar, speaks through dances, trances and suffocations. Thus, the three languages (Berber, Arabic and French) merge with each other to form the fourth language which is the language of the body;

"Trois langues auxquelles s'accouple un quatrième langage: celui du corps avec ses danses, ses transes, ses suffocations" (Djébar, 13-4).

The body has been there all the time during the different trials the Algerians underwent in the past, especially during the French long colonial rule and the Algerian civil war. The female's body had to be drawn attention to, therefore "only by means of writing and telling, can a woman shed light on her" (Lgoudjil, p.176).

7-Charles Forsdick and David Murphy: Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction



Hélène Cixous⁸ stresses on the idea that only if women allow themselves to rediscover their bodies which were "confiscated" from them that they will be illegible to claim their rights, she states:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display-the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (Cixous, p. 880)

Cixous's idea of the female body, even though it seems bold and out of the social conventions, it addresses the issue in a quite practical way. Cixous's idea simply tells women to leave their mark, to write their physical contribution and not just sit passive in silence. In her message, she addresses the women of the world who long for freedom individually by telling them, "write yourself. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth". (Cixous, p. 880)

According to Cixous, inscribing women and women's bodies into the text is a pressing matter. There is no time for Cixous to play around, women should play their part and the ones who refuse to do so should, according to her, be killed for they prevent "the live ones from breathing." Thus, "a woman without a body, dumb, blind can't possibly be a good fighter. She is reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow. We must kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing. Inscribe the breath of the whole woman". (Cixous, p.880)

The colonial discourse which has rendered the postcolonial female writing quite passive became the main reason why the postcolonial female now "others herself" (Cixous, p.882). According to Djebar "writing the body" (Cixous, p.880) is as relevant as writing history itself, without the postcolonial woman writing her body, this woman is likely to be gendered and eventually otherized just like in the gendered colonial discourse.

8 - Hélène Cixous: The Laugh of the Medusa.



Through her writings, Djébar tried to give the Algerian woman a voice of her own. In her novel, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*,⁹ Djébar brilliantly manifests the diversity of culture Algerian women possess through a vivid written discourse. The Algerian colonial case embodied a standardized model of gendered discourse. A painting by Eugène Delacroix¹⁰ holding the title of Assia Djébar's novel *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* resembles Algeria as a naked woman available to satisfy the white European's needs. In fact not only Algeria was eroticized and portrayed as female available anytime, but also the entire continent of "Africa" was portrayed as a female ready for exploitation. (Cixous, p.877)

In fact, the female body was and still is to be kept hidden from the eye. In her works, Djébar remains faithful to the fact that the female body is precious and, as any precious thing in this world, it must be preserved and well-protected. In regard to the tradition of Algerian *hammam*¹¹ (public bath) the critic Victoria Best states that "at the time Djébar was writing [*Women of Algiers in their Apartment*], Algeria adhered strictly to Islamic custom, and women were... allowed out only once a week, often at night, to visit the baths" (874). The tradition of Algerian *hammam* not only was a revered legacy left to the Algerians by the former Ottoman empire but also resembled to the Algerian woman "the ideal meeting-place, sheltered from the male gaze, in which women can at last speak and talk to one another without the veil" (Hughes, p.868).

In the end, I must recourse back to Cixous's emphasis on the idea that in order to create meaning of herself a "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. [The] Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement". (Cixous, p. 875)

9- Assia Djébar: *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*

10- Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix (26 April 1798 – 13 August 1863) was a French Romantic artist regarded from the outset of his career as the leader of the French Romantic school.(Wikipedia)

11 -Hamam:Ḥammām or Turkish bath is a type of public bathing associated with the culture of the Ottoman Empire and more widely the Islamic world.(Wikipedia)



4. Language and Decolonizing the Culture

In her essay, " Ces voix qui m'assiègent", Assia Djébar presents her writing as a journey that helps identify the author. Djébar states that the author is sometimes asked the question, why do you write? Or why do you write in French? She then declares that this type of questions reminds the author that he or she will always be a foreigner, "L'écrivain est parfois interrogé comme en justice: «Pourquoi écrivez-vous? » A cette première question banale, une seconde souvent succède: « Pourquoi écrivez-vous en français? » Si vous êtes ainsi interpellée, c'est, bien sûr, pour rappeler que vous venez d'ailleurs". (Djébar, p. 7)

In defining herself, Djébar states that "je suis bien une femme francophone dans mon activité intellectuelle et critique" (Djébar, p.26). Djébar's statement about herself is considered a final answer to those who question her patriotism; she declares that she is a francophone. However, Djébar's loyalty to her country is unquestionable. Even though she declares that she is francophone, she remains attached to her country Algeria, suppressing the heartache of the injured Algeria especially during the 1990s,"portée par des «voix qui m'assiègent », ma propre voix, ici transcrite, a tenté, surtout au cours de ces années tumultueuses, et souvent tragiques, de mon pays, simplement de défendre la culture algérienne, qui me paraissait en danger" (Djébar, p. 7-8). ["carried by "voices which besiege me", my own voice, transcribed here, tried, especially during these tumultuous, and often tragic years, of my country, simply to defend the Algerian culture, which appeared to me in danger"].

Even though the Algerian literature written in French was seen as a contradiction to decolonization and nationalism in Algeria (Bensmaïa, p.2), Djébar never stopped writing about Algeria, most of her literary works center around events which primarily happened in Algeria; even most of her characters bear Algerian names. Therefore, and regardless of the stereotype of Algerian authors of French expression as less-patriotic", one can say that the language strategy chosen by Assia Djébar, a woman novelist of Berber origin, whose Arabic name signifies healing and who writes in French, contributes to the practice of decolonizing the consciousness of both the former colonized and colonizers" (Lutsyshyna, 2006, p70).



Djebar's prolific works are most often considered as an "investigation of a world that was as yet virtually unknown in Algeria—the world of space and time as perceived by women, the world of body and thought as experienced by Algerian women (and Maghrebi women in general) and of their relationship to the world, to sociality, politics, morality, intellectual identity" (Bensmaïa, 2003, p.84). The Algerian writer did not only talk about the Algerian cultural diversity or describe the beauty of her beloved Algeria but rather courageously portrayed the atrocities committed by the colonial French captains whose letters Djebar took the liberty to publish. These letters supposedly express the extreme love these captains felt for a country which was never theirs and which they took forcibly. Accordingly, in *Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*, Djebar reacts to the gendered colonial description of Algeria as, "a woman whom it is impossible to tame" (Djebar, p. 57).

Moreover, Djebar adds that these captains who in the first place were responsible for the ruthless atrocities against many Algerian civilians in fact "are mourning their unrequited love for my [Djebar's] Algeria. I should first and foremost be moved by the rape or suffering of the anonymous victims, which their writings resurrect; but I am strangely haunted by the agitation of the killers, by their obsessional unease". (Djebar, p. 57)

Finally, Assia Djebar is considered as one of the last female voices not only representing her native country Algeria but all of North Africa. Before she passed away, Djebar made one last cry in her mission of decolonization, in *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* she states that just like Algeria, "penetrated and deflowered; Africa is taken, in spite of the protesting cries that she cannot stifle" (Djebar, p.57).

Conclusion

Even though "the idea of an Algerian literature written in French was a contradiction in the context of decolonization", (Bensmaïa, 2003, p.2) these postcolonial writers contributed in promoting the Algerian cultural diversity. As it has been discussed earlier in this paper, Djebar can be considered as the sole voice which represented not only Algerian but also North African feminist postcolonial writes. All in all, Djebar's literary works are considered as "a dialogue between the author and the peasant women whose voices she reproduce" (Djebar, p.17).



Djébar successfully managed to cry out loud for the long-lost freedom of her country. Djébar's mission was not an easy one, since first of all she was a female, and second of all her and many Algerian writers of French "received a solid French education [which] was deprived of scholastic training in classical Arabic". (Lgoudjil, p. 174).

Moreover, Djébar was in love with the French language. "She [was] clearly in love with the musicality of French, which she exploit[ed] in those passages of prose poetry printed in italics, and in which she ma[de] the prose approximate to music, both structurally and sonically" (Djébar, p.18). Yet she especially hated the French colonial ruthless past which had for a long time deprived her country of freedom. And so, "at other times, in a conscious effort to escape from the shackles of writing in 'the enemy's language', she seemed to be colonizing the language of the colonizers. She did violence to it, forcing it to give up its riches and defying it to hand over its hidden hoard, in compensation for the treasure looted from Algiers in 1830, and also to compensate her personally for being dispossessed of her Arabic heritage" (*ibid.*).

When probing into the field of postcolonial studies of North Africa one cannot escape the question of hybridity. In fact, these Algerian writers of French expression like Assia Djébar while they were accused of being disloyal to their Algerian cause, they should have been honored for the tremendous efforts they did in carrying the voice of Algeria to the world. Therefore, "Algerian literature written in French takes on a hybrid form of literary expression given the presence of Arabic, Berber words, and metaphorical expressions specific to the sensitivities of Algerian culture" (Lgoudjil, p.168).

In an answer to the question raised before; why many Algerian writers like Djébar chose to write in French? Kamel Lgoudjil defends their choice, he states:

The use of the language of the colonizer as a means of literary expression raises questions regarding the attitude of Maghrebi writers *vis-à-vis* European languages. Is it possible for any language to express perfectly any culture? ... It is difficult for a monolingualist to decode the hybrid messages because his/her universe is monoculture,



which excludes other referential universes. In this situation, the bilingual reader grasps fully the literary and cultural significance of such hybrid literature. (Lgoudjil, p.168-9)

As a conclusion, it is safe to say that it is possible to write in the language of the colonizer, only this should serve literary hybridity. Thanks to the literary hybridity, pluralism is now possible in Algeria, and "the Algerian vernacular [now] undermines the authority of the French language, and the Algerian form of storytelling disrupts the authority of the western narrative". (Lgoudjil, p.170)

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