

Tongue's blood does
not run dry by assia
djebar | review



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Assia Djebar is an Algerian writer, translator and moviemaker. She is one of North Africa's best-known and most widely celebrated writers and has in print poems, plays, and short stories, and has produced a couple of movies. In her manuscripts, Djebar has covered the harangue for social liberation and the Muslim woman's world in its intricacies. Numerous of her works deal with the effect of the warfare on women's psyche.

Djebar's impressive feminist posturing has earned her much admiration also substantial antagonism and derision from pro-autonomy critics in Algeria. In this collection of stories, Djebar attempts to tell tales to emancipate her Algerian sisters. Recalling the horrifying nights in the annals of Algerian independence in the early sixties, she pens her work between France and her native country, in the echoes of women who have dual loyalties and who are multi-lingual.

Oran, Dead Language commences the tales of horror when Algeria attained autonomy from colonialists. Oran, in Algeria boasted the elevated concentrations of pied-noirs, Settlers who fled the country for Europe and particularly France upon independence.

The narrator recalls the tearful night when her parents were killed, and how she fled her home city for France at the age of eighteen. She is forced to retreat to Algeria three decades later-though she feels just like many other storyline characters that Algeria is the forgettable past. In the story, Djebar motions at the oscillations of Europeans from their settlements to France and back to Algeria years later. Civil unrest particularly plays the catalytic agent

of movement, and forces humans to look for areas of safety. Mentally the characters deny relationship with Algeria preferring to label it as “over”.

In Algeria, the narrator expresses displeasure. Oran is a place where you forget. “Forget and forget more”. A city that has been swabbed, recollections blanched. A whole decade after it attained independence the centre of the city was left abandoned, apart from a few offices, the headquarters of two or three organizations.

In the captivating story, “Felicie’s Body,” a young man documents his mother’s life when she comes back to France for treatment from Algeria. He tries to recall his mother’s life taking us through her mother’s personal journey in respect to marriage to his Algerian father. The young man looks at his dual life analyzing which aspect of his dual to identify with and adopt and which one to disown.

Young citizens are faced with oscillations in their mental and physical status just like the young man experiences when faced with an identity crisis. The mother traveling from Algeria to France to seek treatment is also an indication of a repeated pattern where Algerians with connections to France have to keep moving from Algeria to France when they seek better conditions of life like better medicine and health facilities. His mother Felice Marie Germaine has eight children, eight of whom still live in Algeria.

Ever since his father died and was buried at Beni-Rached the young man, Karim decides he is done with Oran and all of Algeria and tells the mother who is better ridden with a not so promising health condition. The scene at the hospital gives a moving picture of the contrast of the lifestyles the two

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countries offer and the reason for the oscillations; people are always on the move to find a better life.

In *Annie and Fatima*, the narrator tells the story of her sister's friend. The narrator's sister met the friend while they were having Barber classes. On a night, when the friend is staying with her, she tells her story of Algiers. In the scene, she mentally travels to Algiers, recalling how it is a peaceful capital, dotted with a craze of mushrooming political parties and with newspapers launched. It is for a moment that she wonders how better the country would be if democratic reforms were constituted. The rise of political parties gives her hope that the political dispensation would be for the better. The development of newspapers would also open up the free media and the democratic space. Algeria at the time they were leaving as a young person was not free and fully liberated. Although not physically traveled, fear of Algerian life is legitimized inside demotic culture by a custom of the use of aggression as a legitimate means of getting economic wealth that goes back to pre-colonial days.

Consequently, monetary activity in tangential areas of urban settlement is therefore dominated by violence that is decorous by its appeal to an Islamist style, though, in reality, it is merely related to fiscal benefit. Despite indistinct sentiment in Algeria pertaining its colonial power, France has thrashed a historically preferential leaning in Algerian foreign association. Algeria went through a high level of reliance on France in the initial years after the revolution and a contradictory want to be free of that dependency.

Problems abide for the Algerians living in France and they spend time fantasizing about what their country (Algeria) could have been.

References

Djebar, A. & Raleigh, T. (2006). The tongue's blood does not run dry: Algerian stories. NY: Seven Stories Press