

Assia djebar's fantasia: an algerian cavalcade essay



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Assia Djebar is a celebrated Algerian author who has written her work in French but has a more steeped critical and creative vision in the Berber and non-standard local Arabic cultures of her ancestry. According to her book "Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade" Assia is coming out as a strong feminist whose work made women open up their mouths and let their voices be heard. In the quote "writing in a foreign language, not in either of the tongues of my native country-the Berber of the Dahra mountains of the Arabic of the town where I was born has brought me to the cries of the women silently rebelling in my youth, to my own true origins. Writing does not silence the voice, but awakens it, above all to resurrect so many vanished sisters." Portrays on how Djebar did not use the native language but used the language of the colonizers to unveil the life of Algerian women (Jarrod 181)

This life of Algerian women is a difficult moment as they tried to fight against oppression and for the liberty of lives as an individual and of the collective, which could lead to the liberty of their nation. Djebar writes the history of colonization of Algeria and in her concern was the question of identity. It is after writing about some women that awakened and resurrected the voices of those women who had fought for liberation but the writing did not capture their voices. This is referred to as unveiling by Djebar because it is unveiling the past life of Algerian women, which at the same time reminded of brutality they went through to extent of haunting them (Jarrod 181)

Additionally, people viewed women's writings in Algeria to carry out a return to writing autobiography and origins, which in turn led to the resurrection of the past struggles of women. In this essence, autobiography especially

written by a woman was termed as the story of feminine, which in its self was a story that is supposed to remain unspoken. The exploration or the excavation of history in the *L'Amour la fantasia* was to facilitate a new relationship with their past. In her novel, Assia uses French and Arabic language. She says that her complex autobiographical and historical trajectories give testimony to her commitment to a real authentic depiction of thinking and writing with different languages in different times and in different cultures. She explores culls from musical terminology; linguistic nuance and this makes her render her own story poetically and powerfully and at the same time preserving the real peasant vernacular in her oral testimonies transcriptions of other Algerian women. Djebar uses the Algerian colonizers language to present brutal details done during War of Colonization (Assia 223).

She explains about her devastating relationship with French culture and French men and about her struggle so make her survival fruitful as an Algerian woman living in France. She continues to say that there was guilt in writing her novel using French language and a desire for her Arabic script. For her to use colonizer's language was to evolve the dialectical relationship between desire and writing in which writing becomes inextricably bound to the usual mission of unveiling and implementing the desire, the double quest for the recognition, the imposition of colonial undertaking and the integration of decolonized, valorized self into the real historical and cultural continuum. On the same token, she says that there are both cultural and identity confusions. There are suicidal thoughts, despair and suicide attempts (Jarrod 183)

She continues to say that going backwards and forwards between Algeria and France and vice versa makes her not to know the way forward. Where to go to, which sources, towards which language, which way is backward and more so, without knowing where to return to. Djebbar articulates a model for writing a history that leads to resurrection of ghosts and bring them back to haunt their present. What Djebbar digs up is actually the role of women in history as well as their hidden resistance and sufferings from history in national and colonial historiographies. Her task was to unveil women at the source on national identity. However, Djebbar's mode of unveiling is complicated because she is careful with liberation of women in a very simplistic manner and she acknowledges the real unveiling can often replace and old veil with a new one. Her feminist rewriting of Algeria as a nation brought disruption in its own way, nation dependence on heterosexual repronormativity and national family values (Jarrod 183)

In one of her narrative, Djebbar talks of a girl's childhood life that resembles hers. She talks of a girl in Algeria going through education in French school, and how she escapes sequestering and veiling. This narrative is a tale of resistance and liberation. This girl also uses the French language, which is ambiguous and serves as channel of the girl's liberation. It also marks her colonization as present in the narratives of colonial invasion, the resistant to it and Algerian Revolution. While explaining about Algerian colonization, Djebbar reveals act of violence that accompanied the French invasion. In this essence, she reveals the atrocities, which the French soldiers committed against Algerian women and uncovering the Algerian women's heroic resistance to colonization despite the capitulation of Algerian male political

elite. Similarly, she reveals the sexist mode of colonial invasion by describing the letters, which French captains wrote as projecting the fantasy of conquering and perceiving colonization as rape. Her description of colonial invasion as the rape of an Algerian woman reveals it as far from being unique to feminist writers as there were men who saw it as a violation of male honor. It was then up to Algerian men to defend this honor because it was embodied that the worst effects of the violence which were experienced during colonization especially by women were suffered by colonized men. Additionally, she uncovers the consequences of colonization to individual women and as a group of women (Jarrod 183)

Djebar exhumes or uncovers the voices of women who participated in the Revolution of Algeria, and the buried official accounts. This was because those buried strong women did not leave their written account. She also conducts interviews with women who participated in the revolution. All these accounts give voices to the Algerian women particularly those whom history erased their names, but Djebar recognizes that a complete recovery of those heroic voices is impossible. This comes out after Djebar realizing that history silenced the voice of subaltern women, and more so measuring silences especially to the object of investigation. Djebar's unveiling of Algerian women's history is parallel in their childhood, and this is because she found it as a better way of unveiling women. In the autobiography, Djebar describes one's life history in a language other than her own language with a reason of crossing the borders where unveiling becomes possible through sharing the secrets with outsiders hence washing dirty clothes outside the Nation. It is these women writing that carries out the return to the origins

and the writing of autobiography leads to the resurrection of past struggles of women. This story brings back a history where women had resistance to haunt their present Nation of official discourse (Jarrod 186).

To recap all, Djebar is coming out as strong feminist who assiduously excavates the past life of women on how they played a heroic role in the fight for their identity. Although this reminds those women of their bitter past, Djebar see it an effective vehicle to bring out the relationship of the past and the current and to acknowledge that women indeed did a heroic work. To add salt to that she does not use her native language the reason being if she could have used the native language which she would have not made it across the border and to let the colonialist know that they managed to unveil their dirty and shady deals. The negative side of it reminded women of their past which was unpleasant to many of them. For this reason, there were many cries among women whenever they remembered their past. All this removes the veil or mask, which were in secret for long (Assai 123)