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Writing Women, Writing Algeria : Gendered Authorial Perspectives in Yasmina Khadra's *What the Day Owes the Night and Assia Djebar*'s *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*

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Declaration

We, Affaf Tebbakh and Kheira Zemmouri, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled: *Writing Women, Writing Algeria: "Gendered Authorial Perspectives in Yasmina Khadra's What the Day Owes the Night and Assia Djebar's Women of Algiers in their Apartment"* is our work and all the sources we have quoted have been acknowledged by means of references.

Dedication

To our families: Thank you for your love and for believing in us. You made this dream possible, and we share this joy and pride with you.

To ourselves: We made it. Through every doubt and challenge, we kept going. This journey has made us stronger than we ever imagined.

To our friends: Thank you for being our safe haven. You kept us smiling and grounded when things got tough. We couldn't have done it without you.

Affaf Tebbakh

Kheira Zemmouri

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Abstract

This thesis examines gender, authorship, and the representation of women in Algerian Francophone literature by comparing works by Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra. Based on feminist literary criticism, postcolonial feminist theory, and cultural studies, the research explores how the author's gender affects the portrayal of Algerian women. It focuses on four themes: spatial confinement and mobility, voice and silence, historical agency, and authorial positioning. The first chapter sets the theoretical framework by discussing the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism, and the postcolonial critiques of Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The second chapter compares the chosen texts. It shows that Djebar's work presents Algerian women as active historical subjects, while Khadra's narrative often shows them as symbols of cultural constraint. This study concludes that an author's gender is a fundamental factor in literary production. It supports a critical reading approach that pays attention to the author's position and the power dynamics involved in building postcolonial national identity .and collective memory

Keywords: *Gendered Authorship, Algerian Literature, Feminist Literary Criticism, Postcolonial Feminism, Representation of Women, Gynocriticism, Subaltern Studies, National Identity.*

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General Introduction

Algerian literature holds a special and intense position in the broader field of postcolonial literary studies. The country's writers have always grappled with questions of identity, memory, language and representation, emerging from a hundred years of French colonial rule and a terrible war of independence that lasted from 1954 to 1962. Gender is one of the most contested and consequential axes of meaning-making within this turbulent historical and cultural matrix. The meeting-point of colonial legacy, patriarchal authority, nationalist ideology and feminist consciousness has produced a literature notable for its depth, its formal innovation and its political urgency. To examine Algerian literature from the perspective of gendered authorship is thus to take part in one of the most revealing fault lines of contemporary world literature, a site where the stakes of who speaks, for whom, and from what position are never merely aesthetic, but profoundly ethical and political.

The concept of gendered authorship, as theorized by feminist literary critics from Virginia Woolf to Elaine Showalter and beyond, refers to the complex ways in which the social, cultural, and ideological category of gender shapes not only who writes, but how literary production unfolds, what themes and forms it assumes, and how its authority is constructed, received, and contested. This notion, in the Algerian context, acquires further layers of complexity. The colonial encounter produced a second axis of hierarchical differentiation, racial and cultural othering, which intersected with gender to produce a particularly intricate configuration of power relations. In this context Algerian women writers, in particular, have had to negotiate their existence as writers. This persistence of patriarchal structures after independence, the symbolic instrumentalisation of women in nationalist discourse, and the challenge of postcolonial feminist theorists to Western feminist universalism all come together to make gendered authorship in Algeria a phenomenon of exceptional theoretical and political richness.

In this context, the present study aims at a comparative literary analysis of two Algerian authors whose works are at the forefront of the debate about gender and representation: Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra. In a strikingly complementary fashion, these two writers epitomise the poles that frame the problematic of gendered authorship in Algerian literature.

Assia Djebar, novelist, historian, filmmaker and member of the Académie française, is perhaps best known as one of the most powerful and influential voices in world literature devoted to the recovery and articulation of the silenced experience of Algerian women. It is a deliberately feminist and historiographic literary project that places women's testimonies at the heart of national memory and collective identity. Yasmina Khadra, the pen name of Mohammed Moulessehoul, a former officer in the Algerian army, is a counterexample. He is a male author who has adopted a female pen name, and his fiction recognises the oppression of women in Algerian society, but treats that oppression mainly from an outside, masculine perspective. The difference between these two authorial positions is not incidental, but structural, producing fundamentally different representational outcomes, epistemological frameworks, and political implications.

The central problematic that underpins this study is the question of how the gendered positionality of an author, as a complex social, cultural and ideological construct, rather than as a simple biological fact, shapes the representation of Algerian women in literary texts. More specifically, this study examines how the divergent authorial positions of Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra produce fundamentally different constructions of Algerian women's agency, voice, spatial existence, historical significance and capacity for resistance. The premise, which is rooted in feminist literary theory and postcolonial criticism, is that literature is not a transparent medium for the neutral recording of social reality but an active, ideologically saturated process whereby gendered meanings are produced, contested and reproduced.

This core problematic generates a number of specific research questions that structure the inquiry. First, what can the theoretical frameworks of feminist literary criticism and postcolonial

feminism tell us about the gendered aspects of authorship and representation in Algerian literature? Second, how do Djebar and Khadra construct women's relationship to space understood literally as the physical environments women inhabit and metaphorically as the social and discursive territories available to them? Third, how do the two authors represent women's voice, silence and ability to articulate themselves and what are the political implications of these different representational strategies? Fourth, how do their works respond to the question of women's historical agency and their role in Algeria's anti-colonial struggle and post-independence social transformation?

Finally, how do the different authorial positions of Djebar and Khadra, the insider female perspective and the male outsider perspective, influence the epistemological and ethical aspects of their respective literary projects?

This has theoretical and empirical implications. Theoretically, it participates in the ongoing academic discussion of the intersections of gender, authorship and literary representation, but it does so with a specific concentration on these dynamics in the understudied field of Algerian literature written in French. Feminist literary criticism and postcolonial feminism have been applied fruitfully to Anglo-American, French, and South Asian literatures. Yet in the Francophone Algerian literary field, they have been conspicuously thin. This study seeks to expand and deepen the boundaries of those theories through a productive dialogue with a body of literature which has its own specific configurations of gender, colonialism, nationalism and literary production.

In practice, the project proposes a close reading of selected works by Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra, with a detailed comparative approach. The point here is to show, through close textual analysis, that gendered authorship is a concrete literary and political practice and not simply an abstract notion. To this end the study sets out a number of clear objectives. It begins by developing a rigorous theoretical framework for synthesising important contributions from feminist literary criticism and postcolonial feminist theory. Second, it undertakes a comparative analysis of the representation of Algerian women in Djebar and Khadra's literary productions by four thematic

sections: spatial confinement and mobility, voice and silence, historical agency and resistance, and authorial positioning. Then it describes the specific epistemological and political differences resulting from the authors' different gendered positions. Finally, the study concludes on the impact of gendered authorship on the construction of the national identity and the collective memory in postcolonial Algeria.

The theoretical framework is located at the crossroads of three major intellectual currents: feminist literary criticism, postcolonial feminist theory and postcolonial cultural studies. The analysis engages directly with the foundational ideas of such feminist literary critics as Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Their insights into the material conditions of women's writing, the creation of a feminine literary tradition, and the psycho-social dynamics of women's authorship provide the essential conceptual toolkit for this project.

Together, de Beauvoir's idea of woman as the Other in society, Woolf's materialist emphasis on the economic and physical space required for women to write, Showalter's project of gynocriticism, and Gilbert and Gubar's formulation of the anxiety of authorship lay the groundwork for an analysis of gendered authorship as a literary and social phenomenon.

This feminist foundation is deepened by postcolonial feminist theory, leaning heavily on the insights of Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Mohanty's critique of the tendency of the Western feminist discourse to universalise different experiences and her insistence that women's oppression be understood in terms of its historical specificity and structural complexity are crucial in situating the literature of Algerian women in its exact historical and geopolitical context. She also helpfully makes a distinction between real solidarity and epistemic colonisation. Spivak's work on epistemic violence, her distinction between the two meanings of representation, speaking for versus re-presenting, and her enduring question regarding the subaltern's capacity for speech, furnish further tools to dissect the power dynamics in the writing of

Djebar and Khadra. Finally, the postcolonial cultural studies dimension draws on the work of Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Edward Said, whose critiques of colonial power, cultural hybridity, and the politics of knowledge extend the project's feminist perspective in natural ways.

Methodologically, the study uses a comparative approach informed by feminist and postcolonial close reading. A comparative perspective is imperative; it is only when Djebar and Khadra's representational strategies are mapped systematically side by side that the consequences of their divergent authorial standpoints become visible. Close reading serves as the primary analytical tool, allowing the investigation to move past the surface of the text and uncover the deeper ideological structures and power dynamics at play. The whole analysis is organised around four thematic axes spatial confinement and mobility, voice and silence, historical agency and resistance, authorial positioning each of them revealing a different facet of the gender-representation interplay.

To understand this topic better, it is helpful to look at what other scholars have already written . Academic studies on Algerian literature in French have long focused on themes of trauma, identity, and resistance. Within this tradition, the works of Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra stand out as central texts for understanding the complexity of Algerian society, especially through postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Scholars often examine how both writers portray the struggles of Algerian women under the double burden of colonial domination and entrenched patriarchy. While existing research offers valuable insights into their individual styles, a direct comparison of female representation and historical agency in Djebar and Khadra remains crucial. This review therefore organizes earlier scholarship into key themes: the conflict of language, the challenge to patriarchal .spaces, and the recovery of the female voice.

In postcolonial debates, critics often discuss how Assia Djebar writes in the language of the colonizer. Clarisse Zimra notes that Djebar faces a deep tension: she writes in French, yet her aim is

to capture the authentic oral voices of Algerian women who do not speak it (72). Zimra argues that Djebar treats French not as a fixed identity but as a temporary tool used to challenge the silence imposed on women by colonial history and local patriarchy (75). For this reason, scholars view her style as a constant attempt to make Arabic emotions and silenced colonial traumas audible through French prose.

In contrast, criticism of Yasmina Khadra's use of French highlights a different purpose. In her article entitled "Representation of the Female Character in 'the Sdf Trilogy' of Mohammed Moulessehoul-Yasmina Khadra", Aïcha Bendib notes that Khadra employs French to shape the representation of female characters within contemporary Algerian social crises (202). Lobna Ben Salem adds that while Djebar uses French to explore historical memory, displacement, and female identity, Khadra relies on it to depict the immediate and harsh realities of Algerian society during political turmoil (3). Scholars argue that his choice of French enables him to reach a global audience while keeping a sharp focus on the psychological effects of violence and patriarchy on women (Bendib 205).

In spatial analysis, critics often highlight how Assia Djebar reclaims enclosed spaces. In her influencial work *Journeys Through the French African Novel*, Mildred Mortimer argues that the domestic settings in her fiction, especially the "apartment," serve as a modern reflection of the traditional harem (302). Mortimer notes that Djebar transforms these closed structures once places of female isolation under the Orientalist gaze by turning the "domestic prison into a site of resistance and female solidarity" (305). In *Nomadic Voices of Exile: Feminine Identity in Francophone Literature of the Maghreb,* Valerie Orlando further emphasizes that this spatial liberation allows Djebar's characters to resist historical erasure. By redefining the apartment, her narrative effectively "shatters the voyeuristic colonial gaze and restores female privacy" (42).

Conversely, scholarship on Yasmina Khadra examines space through a more public and volatile lens. Critics note that Khadra shifts attention from the hidden domestic world of women to

the chaotic and hostile streets of Algeria. Samiha Missaoui, in her article entitled "L'espace public et la violence dans l'œuvre de Yasmina Khadra", observes that in his narratives, the outside world appears as a violent, patriarchal battlefield where characters endure constant trauma (718). She argues that the spatial imagery in Khadra's fiction functions as a hostile zone that exposes the breakdown of social order (720). Missaoui further explains that, instead of focusing on psychological change within enclosed rooms, Khadra uses external settings to highlight physical danger. She emphasizes that his realistic depictions of unstable landscapes "expose the harsh social realities and institutional failures that oppress individuals in contemporary Algeria" (724).

Conversely, scholarship on Yasmina Khadra examines space through a more public and volatile lens. Critics note that Khadra shifts attention from the hidden domestic world of women to the chaotic and hostile streets of Algeria. Leila Benyagoub observes that in his narratives, the outside world appears as a violent, patriarchal battlefield where characters endure constant trauma (225). She argues that the textual structure in Khadra's fiction functions as a hostile zone that exposes the breakdown of social order (230). Ouarda Hafsaoui adds that, instead of focusing on psychological change within enclosed rooms, Khadra uses external and political settings to highlight physical danger. She emphasizes that his realistic depictions of unstable landscapes "expose the harsh social realities and institutional failures that oppress individuals in contemporary Algeria" (805).

A large body of criticism highlights how Assia Djebar restores historical agency to Algerian women. Clarisse Zimra stresses that Djebar's work acts as historical excavation, connecting contemporary women with their revolutionary ancestors. She explains that Djebar ensures the Algerian woman is "no longer a passive object of history, but an active subject who speaks and reconstructs national memory" (80). Debra Kelly supports this view, noting that Djebar's use of oral history challenges official patriarchal records of the Algerian War. By documenting the voices of former female freedom fighters (mujahidat), Djebar shows that "women were not just secondary helpers in the revolution, but primary agents of national liberation" (142).

On the other hand, scholarship on Yasmina Khadra often frames female agency as resilience in the present rather than recovery of the past. In her study “Representations of Trauma and Resilience in Contemporary Algerian Fiction", Petya Spasova notes that his female protagonists act within immediate, crisis-driven settings. She argues that while Djebar looks to history for strength, Khadra highlights how ordinary women show “incredible psychological resilience and moral power under extreme modern trauma” (45). Michel Lafon adds that Khadra’s vision of resistance is rooted in survival. He observes that during periods of fundamentalist violence and social collapse, Khadra’s women become defenders of life, insisting that “female agency in Khadra’s novels is defined by the silent courage to resist ideological madness on a daily basis” (96).

In breif, scholarship shows that Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra both offer powerful yet distinct perspectives on the intersection of gender, space, and nationhood in Algerian fiction. As critics such as Clarisse Zimra and Mildred Mortimer note, Djebar’s *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* emphasizes historical excavation and the transformation of domestic spaces to reclaim the female voice against colonial and patriarchal erasure. By contrast, scholars including Valerie Orlando and Petya Spasova highlight Khadra’s use of sociopolitical realism to reveal individual resilience and modern trauma, most vividly in *What the Day Owes to the Night*.Yet a clear gap remains: previous studies have treated Djebar’s ancestral feminist critique and Khadra’s socio-historical realism as separate, irreconcilable paths. No research has systematically compared how their distinct “gendered authorial perspectives” Djebar writing as a woman reconstructing female memory, and Khadra writing from a masculine military background under a female pseudonym shape the act of “writing the woman” alongside “writing the nation.” This dissertation addresses that gap by establishing a comparative framework between *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *What the Day Owes to the Night*, showing how both authors, through their unique standpoints, redefine female agency as either intimate historical recovery or epic national belonging.

The thesis is organised in two complementary chapters, and framed by a general introduction and a general conclusion. Chapter one lays the theoretical foundation for the analysis that follows. It

traces the intellectual genealogy of feminist literary criticism from its mid-twentieth-century origins in the work of Beauvoir and Woolf to the seminal contributions of Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar.

From there, the chapter develops the concept of gendered authorship and its direct link to literary authority. It then pivots to look at how gender and nationalism intersect, specifically examining how women are represented within national discourse. To close, the chapter engages deeply with postcolonial feminist theory highlighting Mohanty and Spivak's critiques of Western feminist universalism before exploring the specific dynamics of Algerian literary and cultural production through the theoretical lenses of Fanon, Bhabha, Said, and Djebar herself.

Chapter Two serves as the practical heart of the thesis. Designed as a comparative reading of selected works by Djebar and Khadra, it examines how both authors deploy their representational strategies across the four thematic axes established above. This section demonstrates how Djebar's female-centered, testimonial, and historiographical literary project produces representations of Algerian women markedly different from those generated by Khadra's male-authored, socially realist, yet externally focused narrative perspective. Particular attention is paid to how spatial confinement and mobility function as indices of women's social position in each author's work. It also contrasts their approaches to women's voice, silence, and linguistic agency; unpacks their differing accounts of women's historical participation in the anti-colonial struggle and post-independence social life; and explores the broader epistemological and ethical dimensions of their respective authorial positions.

This study argues that gendered authorship is not a neutral or merely biographical phenomenon. It is a structurally determinant force in literary production that shapes, in profoundly consequential ways, the representation of Algerian women's agency, voice, historical significance, and capacity for liberation. Understanding this force, its theoretical foundations, its literary manifestations, and its political implications is essential for any adequate account of Algerian literature and, more

broadly, of the relationship between gender, power, and literary representation in the postcolonial world.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework:

Gendered Writing, Postcolonial Feminism, and Algerian Literary Identity

Introduction

This chapter explores the trajectory and radical developments of feminist critical thought in order to investigate the complex and intertwined relationship between gender, literature and power. It begins with a genealogy of feminist criticism in the mid-twentieth century, through the seminal works of Simone de Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter. The chapter demonstrates the philosophical basis that paved the way for the study of women as active subjects by analysing Beauvoir's concept of the 'Other' and the construction of women as secondary beings in the patriarchal discourse. It then considers Showalter's project of "gynocriticism," a qualitative shift from "the image of women in men's writing" to "women as writers and producers of meaning," in their own literary histories and traditions.

This chapter addresses the intersection of gender with major political discourses, especially nationalist discourse. It explores the symbolic place of women in national narratives as the "motherland" and reveals a profound paradox of symbolic elevation and actual marginalisation of women in the nation-state. This chapter deconstructs the processes through which national identities are built on the subjugation of women, showing how feminist writing becomes a space of critique, of unveiling this contradiction, and of rewriting national history from the point of view of the margins.

The chapter offers a profound criticism of Western feminist via postcolonial feminism. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, it engages with fundamental questions about the universalism of feminist experience. This shows how the most radical forms of western feminist discourse can get caught in the trap of

reproducing a new form of colonial discourse, by portraying the 'Third World woman' as a homogenous, passive victim. The chapter ends with a call for a more critically self-aware practice, one that is aware of its “representation” as “speaking for” others and not “representation” as “re-presenting” others. This eventually shifts the conversation from simply wanting to give women a voice to critically asking who speaks, for whom, and within what context of power relations.

1. Gendered Authorship and Literary Authority

1.1 Feminist Literary Frameworks: Beauvoir, Showalter and Gynocriticism

The literary criticism of the 1970s witnessed a radical transformation with the emergence of a new stage in feminist thought, led by prominent critics such as Elaine Showalter. The focus was no longer confined to analyzing the image of women in men's literature but shifted to studying women as writers and creators with their own distinct history and tradition. This endeavor, termed "Gynocriticism," represents a cornerstone in understanding how gender influences literary production (13). In this context, Showalter's book A Literature of Their Own and her subsequent essays are foundational texts that shaped the trajectory of this critical field.

Decades before Gynocriticism became an organized movement, the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, in her renowned book The Second Sex (1949), laid the philosophical and social foundations upon which later feminist criticism would be built. Her book was not merely an analysis of women's conditions but a radical project to dismantle the intellectual and cultural mechanisms that constructed woman as the "other" of human society (de Beauvoir 16). The core of de Beauvoir's analysis lies in the idea that woman has not been defined as an autonomous subject but always as the "Other" relative to man, who has monopolized the role of the Self, the agent, and the universal standard. This relationship is not reciprocal; as de Beauvoir argues, patriarchal society is based on "positing Woman as the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing in spite of experience that she is a subject, a peer" (24). This absolute otherness is the cornerstone of

masculine authority. In literature written by men, women appear as objects of desire, enigmatic mysteries, or angels to be protected, but rarely as active subjects telling their own stories (175).

De Beauvoir distinguishes between the concrete, diverse reality of women and the single, rigid myth imposed upon them. The myth, for her, is a transcendent idea that transforms a relative reality into an absolute truth, producing what she calls the "Eternal Feminine" (253) . She describes this mechanism powerfully: "Against the scattered, contingent, and multiple existences of women, mythical thought sets up the single, static Eternal Feminine; if the behavior of real women contradicts this definition, it is they who are wrong: it is not said that femininity is a phantom, but that the women are not feminine" (253). This quotation reveals the oppressive power of the myth. It is not defeated by real-world experience; on the contrary, it is the myth that judges experience. When a real woman fails to conform to the idealized image, the myth is not questioned; instead, the woman is condemned as "not a real woman" . Literature, by consecrating these models the sacred mother, the defiled prostitute, the ethereal muse becomes a tool for imposing an unrealistic standard that imprisons women and condemns them to failure in advance (254).

Building on this philosophical groundwork, Showalter established a clear methodological framework to differentiate between two paths within feminist literary criticism. In her essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics," she divides criticism into two distinct categories (25) . The first is the "feminist critique," where the woman acts as a reader and consumer of literature predominantly produced by men. The task of the critic here is to examine how women are portrayed in these texts, exposing the stereotypes, prejudices, and misogyny that shape their representation as Showalter explains, the feminist critique focuses on "the images of women, the stereotypes of women, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history" (Showalter 128). While this role was crucial for exposing patriarchal ideology, it remains limited because it confines women in the position of analyzing male texts, thereby restricting a deeper understanding of female subjective experiences from a woman 's own perspective.

In response, Showalter pioneered the second field, "Gynocriticism," where woman moves from being the object of reading to the subject who writes and produces meaning (Showalter, "Toward" 25) . This field moves beyond reacting to male literature and seeks to establish an independent domain of knowledge dedicated to studying the literature of women. Gynocriticism is concerned with "the woman as writer with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women" (Showalter, "Toward" 25). It aims to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, developing new models based on the study of female experience rather than adopting male-centric theories. Showalter argues that if the critical focus remains on women's portrayal in men's literature, "we will never be able to understand the nature of female experience, for we will know women only as they have been perceived by men" (Showalter, *Literature*131) Gynocriticism thus represents a qualitative shift from studying woman as "other" in male literature to studying her as a "self" who produces meaning and culture (131).

Gynocriticism is not merely an analytical tool but a comprehensive cultural project with specific goals. It sought to create a female subculture by rejecting patriarchal literary standards and focusing on the interactions and consciousness of women, including female friendships and mother-daughter relationships. A primary objective was to discover and re-read a forgotten tradition of women's writing. Showalter's A Literature of Their Own (1977) was instrumental in this, drawing attention to a "long and honorable history of women writers" and highlighting nineteenth-century authors who had been neglected by the official literary canon (17). The goal was to prove the existence of a continuous and progressive narrative of women's writing, not just isolated individual works. Finally, instead of applying male-derived critical theories to female texts, Gynocriticism aimed to derive its own aesthetics from within the female literary tradition itself (36).

1.2. Gendered Authorship and Literary Production

Feminist critics have been preoccupied with the question of how gender informs literary production, producing a rich body of theoretical work that interrogates the conditions under which women write, the obstacles they face, and the distinctive qualities that their writing may possess. At

its most basic, gendered authorship is concerned with the ways in which the biological, social and cultural category of gender influences not only who writes, but how they write, what they write about and how it is received. To formulate a definition of gendered authorship is therefore to confront a constellation of interconnected issues. These include the material conditions of literary production, the ideological structures that determine whose voice is sanctioned to speak, and the psychic pressures that influence the creative act itself.

The most immediate dimension of gendered authorship has to do with the material and social conditions that enable or obstruct literary production. Virginia Woolf expressed this with memorable directness: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf 4). The claim locates literary creativity not in some abstract realm of inspiration or genius, but in the concrete, historically specific circumstances of daily life. Woolf's formulation suggests that authorship is not a gender-neutral activity equally accessible to all those with talent, but one influenced by access to resources, time, privacy, and economic independence, resources that have historically been denied to women. Woolf's argument is even more striking when she expands her argument historically, stating that "any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at" (51). The evidence here is not just anecdotal but structural: the sixteenth-century woman of genius had no institutional support, no tradition of female authorship to call upon, no social permission to express her gifts. The analysis this suggests is that gender is not a peripheral complication in literary production but determines if production is possible at all, in a fundamental way.

But to define gendered authorship in terms of exclusion and material deprivation alone is to tell only part of the story, for feminist criticism has also insisted on the existence and value of a distinctive female literary tradition. Elaine Showalter pointed out the "long and honourable history of women writers" (17), a tradition systematically ignored or misinterpreted by a male-dominated critical establishment. Showalter's gynocritical project, which emphasised "the woman as writer—

with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women" (248), implied that women's writing exists as a separate tradition with its own internal logic and formal innovations. She argued that this tradition possessed a 'precious speciality, quite apart from the Gulping common-school and from the contributions of masculine experience' (7). The importance of the analysis here is that if women's writing has a precious speciality then gendered authorship is not simply a story of lack and limitation but one of difference and value, produced precisely because women have occupied a different position within culture and society.

This conception of gendered authorship as a production of difference is further complicated by Simone de Beauvoir's seminal observation that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (267). If woman is a social construction rather than a biological fact, then the gender upon which literary production hinges is itself a historically variable category. This has profound implications for any definition of gendered authorship; it means that the relationship between gender and literary production is not static, but dynamic, shifting as the social construction of gender itself shifts. Authorship is gendered not because women have some essential feminine nature that finds expression in their writing, but because the social processes by which women are constituted as women leave particular marks on their literary output, their relations to language and their modes of self-representation.

The psychological aspect of this definition is developed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who pointed out what they called the 'anxiety of authorship' (49)as a distinctive characteristic of women's literary production. They argued that "the female artist is not in a condition to create and the female writer is caught up in patriarchal structures unable to convert her creative energies into artistic achievement" (49). Such analysis requires that gendered authorship is shaped not only by external material conditions but also by internal psychological pressures, by the internal sense that literary authority is not one's own to claim.

The question of language itself must also be posed in relation to the definition of gendered authorship. Directly confirming this connection, Zahia Salhi states: “For me, feminism has always been associated with the question of language” (79). The female author does not simply use language as a transparent medium of expression, but has to negotiate a linguistic inheritance structured by gendered power relations, because, as de Beauvoir writes, "the male erotic vocabulary is borrowed from military terminology" (374), showing how deeply gender power relations are encoded in the very structures of language available to the woman writer.

1.3. Literary Authority: Gender and the Construction of Meaning

If the first dimension of gendered authorship is about the conditions and processes of literary production, the second is about the question of authority: whose voice is authorised to produce meaning and truth within literary culture, and how does gender shape that authorisation. Authority in literature is not a matter of individual talent or achievement, but a social and ideological construct, defined by who is accepted as a legitimate speaker and whose reading of experience is allowed to be the authoritative one. Feminist criticism has long argued that this construction of literary authority has been deeply gendered, systematically privileging masculine perspectives and devaluing or excluding feminine ones.

Feminist criticism’s most basic challenge to conventional literary authority is the assertion that existing criticism and literary history have been built from a masculine viewpoint that claims universality. Showalter identified the core problem as “the images of women, the stereotypes of women observation, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history” (128). She further argues, “we will never be able to understand the nature of female experience, for we will know women only as they have been perceived by men” (131). Here the evidence is damning. If literary authority has been built up through the male gaze then the truths that literature has been authorised to produce are not universal truths but partial gendered truths. This calls for a sober analysis: the gendered division of authority has fundamentally distorted the shaping of meaning and truth

In literature, Showalter historicizes the evolution of the female literary voice, mapping it across three distinct phases that demonstrate a progressive reclamation of authority and truth. First is the Feminine phase (1840–1880), where women writers imitated the dominant male aesthetic standards and internalized patriarchal norms through using male pseudonyms to gain publication and authority. Second is the Feminist phase (1880–1920), characterized by a radical and separatist protest against male standards and a fervent advocacy for women's rights; though still largely reacting against patriarchy rather than creating an independent aesthetic (35). Finally, the Female phase marks the true actualization of literary authority. In this phase, women reject both imitation and pure protest; instead, they turn inward to explore the female experience itself. Showalter argues that in this phase, women "reject both imitation and protest two forms of dependency and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art" (36).

One of the most significant aspects of Showalter's project is its resistance to adopting the dominant literary theories of her time, such as structuralism, Marxism, and deconstruction, which she regarded as elite, male-produced "textual sciences" (180). She observes that these theories, in their pursuit of "scientific" objectivity, had become abstract and detached from human experience, particularly female experience. This trend, she warned, was leading to "a two-tier system of 'high' and 'low' criticism, with 'high' criticism concerned with 'scientific' problems of form and structure, and 'low' criticism with 'humanistic' problems of content and interpretation" (181).

Feminist criticism was invariably relegated to the "low" tier. Her alternative framework rejects this separation, offering itself as an alternative that combines analytical rigor with a concern for subjective experience. It is, in Showalter's words, a "pluropotential and... popular (feminist) criticism" that seeks to "discover a new language, a new way of reading that integrates our brains and our bodies, our experience and our theories, our fantasies and our acts" (182). This approach views the woman writer not as a mere 'producer' of a text but as its 'creator,' rejecting restrictive terminologies and empowering women to write from their own motivations.

Through this study of literature, Showalter validates the "Wild Zone" the spatial, experiential, and linguistic realm exclusive to women . By operating within this phase, women writers no longer measure their "truth" against male epistemologies. They claim ultimate authority over their own narratives, utilizing the cultural, psychological, and biological models of this woman-centered framework to construct a distinct, powerful, and unapologetic literary voice (28). This critical approach delves into the depths of female texts to uncover their unique themes and aesthetics, one of the most prominent being the "pain of feminist awakening." Showalter quotes Florence Nightingale's cry from her book *Cassandra*: "Give us back our suffering... for out of suffering may come healing. Pain is better than paralysis" (qtd in. Showalter 27). This sentiment suggests that suffering is not merely negative but it is the very essence of feminist awakening and the force driving progressive change. For Nightingale, pain is the substance of the feminist awakening and the catalyst for any progressive change; a woman writer was better off struggling and suffering to attain some power and independence than she was remaining content with the status quo (Showalter 27).

This theoretical model re-interprets the madness, suffering, and suicide that are recurrent themes in women's literature not as personal tragedies but as necessary and justified responses to oppressive worlds that left women with no other choices. The tragic fates of heroines in novels, like *The House of Mirth* or *The Driver's Seat*, are seen as rational reactions to destructive environments (Showalter 33).

Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work, *The Second Sex*, serves as the philosophical bedrock for understanding the suppression of the female voice. Beauvoir investigates the historical, biological, and psychological construction of "Woman" to explain her subordinate status. Her most famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (267), revolutionizes the understanding of gender, framing it not as a biological destiny but as a social and cultural construct designed to maintain male supremacy.

This distortion is related to the larger philosophical scheme that de Beauvoir describes as the positing of woman as absolute Other. Her critique of the processes by which masculine culture produces woman as ‘the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing in spite of experience that she is a subject, a peer’ (13) pertains directly to literary authority. De Beauvoir’s explanation of the Eternal Feminine elaborates this idea with accuracy: “Mythical thought opposes to the multiple, contingent, scattered existences of women the single, static Eternal Feminine; if the behaviour of real women contradicts this definition, it is they who are wrong: it is not said that femininity is a phantom, but that women are not feminine” (260). Here the evidence is the power of masculine literary authority to totalise and to give the mythical image of woman the status of truth and to deny the actual experience of real women. Any woman whose experience does not fit the authorised image is discounted as ‘not a real woman’ (260). This thus proceeds to analyse literary authority as a mechanism of exclusion which systematically invalidates feminine experience by measuring it against a masculine constructed ideal.

This call for a new language rooted in female experience is powerfully reinforced by de Beauvoir's analysis of how the very language of sexuality reflects an unequal power relationship. She observes that "male erotic vocabulary is borrowed from military terminology: the lover is a dashing soldier... he speaks of attack, assault, and victory... to say that a man has had a woman, he says he 'had' her, he 'took' her" (374). This linguistic analysis reveals how the sexual act is framed not as a meeting of two subjects but as a conquest and a possession. The man is the conqueror, and the woman is the territory to be won. This saturation of language with the ideology of domination underscores the necessity of the gynocritical project: to create a space where female experience can be articulated on its own terms, free from a vocabulary of violence and subjugation (374).

In the end, Gynocriticism, as pioneered by Elaine Showalter and built upon the philosophical foundations laid by Simone de Beauvoir, was more than just a new critical school; it was a revolutionary call to action. It represented a deliberate move away from being the "Other" defined by male literature and toward becoming the subject and creator of a unique literary history. By

demanding a new framework, unearthing a lost tradition, and advocating for a critical language that integrates mind and body, theory and experience, this innovative approach did not just analyze literature. It sought to transform the very conditions of its creation, empowering women to move from being objects within the narrative to becoming the sovereign authors of their own stories.

In postcolonial contexts in which gender intersects with colonialism to produce particularly complex configurations of authorised and unauthorised speech, the question of authority arises in acute form. Bentahar observes, “The denunciation of the distorted perceptions conveyed by representations of colonial subjects has been a cornerstone of postcolonial criticism by the gaze of the colonizer” (25). In the case of North African women's writing, the female author must negotiate not one but two structures of authorised representation: the masculine gaze within her own culture and the colonial gaze from without. However, Bentahar notes, “using their insider’s position to offer alternative representations, Mernissi, Alloula and Djebar provide an example of counter-colonial readings that clarify the scope of Orientalist representations” (37). He further explains, “as a woman, she had access to hitherto unapproachable harems” (27). What is remarkable about the analysis here is the reversal: the very position of marginality that might seem to undermine the authority of the woman becomes the ground for a unique and irreplaceable form of authority, the authority of the insider witness whose testimony cannot be duplicated by the outside observer.

There is a further dimension to this issue the Islamic intellectual tradition. Ouedghiri argues that “as Islam is a religion of reasoning, it condemns passive reception and stimulates thought for further research. Informed by this understanding of Islam, Djebar and Mernissi make the turn to Islamic history a must for all Arab-Muslim women” (46). Moreover, since they know that power and glory lie in the mastery of the word, as Djebar reminds us, "tout est verbe d'abord" [everything is word first], both Djebar and Mernissi insist that women take control of their representation" (Ouedghiri 46). The analysis provoked by Djebar’s aphorism is particularly striking: if everything is word first, then mastery of literary language is mastery of reality itself. The woman who wrests

control over her own representation is therefore claiming something far greater than a voice she is asserting ontological authority: the power to define what is real and true about her own existence.

1.4. The Pen name and Male Authority

The figure of the pen name, the author whose gendered identity is hidden, performed, or complicated by the act of writing, throws into particular relief the ways in which gender structures literary authority and shapes the conditions of literary production. by using pseudonyms, by bargaining with censorship, by theorising androgyny as a condition.

The question of the gender of the author in relation to the name under which they write has been a recurring site of negotiation in the literary cultures examined by feminist and postcolonial criticism and the question of literary freedom. Yasmina Khadra is a particularly complicated example of gendered pseudonymity, which is the reverse of the more common phenomenon of women writing under masculine pseudonyms. It is argued that gender can function as a disguise for literary production, but the terms of this disguise make visible the gendered structures of literary authority in instructive ways.

Ågerup gives some background information: "It seems relevant for instance to mention that Yasmina Khadra is a pseudonym invented by Mohammed Moullessehoul to avoid censorship in his period as an officer in the Algerian army. The biographical legend says that the army threatened to scrutinise and edit Khadra's/Moullessehoul's texts and he began to use the two first names of his wife as a pseudonym" (182). What this evidence suggests here is rich: a male writer takes on a female pen name not for authority, but to escape institutional oversight, the female name functioning as a kind of camouflage.

It is a striking reversal of the more familiar dynamic in which women adopt masculine names to gain authority, but it illuminates rather than undermines the feminist critique, for the assumption that a feminine name would be less likely to attract scrutiny reveals the extent to which feminine authorship was presumed to be less threatening and less worthy of the institution's

attention. Ågerup also notes that “the story of the forced pseudonym and the insensitive response to his unmasking gave Khadra the image of an ex-military underdog and truth teller; it launched his career and secured the success of the trilogy, which was published between 2002 and 2006” (182). As the analysis shows, the irony of this story is that the revelation of masculine identity behind the feminine name changes the reception of the author, turning the feminine pseudonym into a story of masculine heroism. In retrospect, the pen woman becomes the pen man's disguise, and the unmasking consolidates rather than undermines masculine literary authority.

Showalter’s treatment of Nightingale’s reflections on suffering and the more theoretically elaborated case of women writing under conditions of gender constraint. Authorship Nightingale’s injunction is striking: “Give us back our suffering… for out of suffering may come healing. Pain is better than paralysis.” Showalter reads this as a feminist manifesto of authorship: “For Nightingale, pain is the substance of the feminist awakening and the catalyst for any progressive change… a woman writer was better off struggling and suffering to attain some power and independence than she was remaining content with the status quo” (Showalter 77). The evidence suggests that the pen woman who writes under constrained conditions does not merely transcend the conditions but transforms them, converting the suffering imposed by patriarchal structures into the energising force of literary creation. The analysis links to Showalter’s broader argument that women writers who choose to “begin to write about the world that transcends it” (191) and who enter the “Wild Zone” (200) are able to claim a territory of their own, drawing on experiences and perspectives that masculine literary culture has not authorised and therefore has not been able to contain.

The question of language is particularly acute in the post-colonial context, where the female writer must write in the language of the coloniser, negotiating between her own cultural tradition and the linguistic medium imposed upon her. Salhi addresses this negotiation directly: “I know today that one can write in a foreign language, integrate it to one’s imaginary without having to renounce to one’s origins” (97). The argument is that the pen woman in the postcolonial context can inhabit the language of the coloniser without surrendering to it. This is related to Ouedghiri's

formulation that "the female body as an object of writing is transfigured into a subject writing its own text(s), thus repositioning women as shapers of history and makers of culture" (41). What this invites is an analysis that suggests that the pen woman claims authority through a double act of transformation: she transforms the language of the coloniser into a medium for her own expression, and she transforms the female body from an object of masculine representation into the subject of its own writing.

Woolf's theorisation of androgyny provides a final, more paradoxical account of the pen man as a figure of literary authority. Her insistence that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly of literary authority lies beyond the opposition of pen man and pen woman. This formulation, which makes the pen woman's anger at her own marginalisation a potential threat to her literary authority, is set into context by her related observation that "the writer who allows resentment to enter into her work is tampering with the integrity of her creation" (73). Feminist critics have much debated the evidence here, with some arguing that Woolf's androgynous ideal is a form of evasion, a way of refusing the full implications of the feminist critique she herself articulates elsewhere. This suggests that the ideal of the androgynous writer, however compelling as an aesthetic vision, must be understood in relation to the material and ideological conditions that have made gendered authorship a condition of literary production in the first place, for it is far easier to prescribe transcendence of gender for those who have been granted authority by their gender than for those who have been systematically denied it.

As Boibessot reminds us, "the transferential model of listening to the body's talk recognises both the involvement of the listener and the final otherness of other's bodies and stories, both the capacities and the limits of knowing" (140), suggesting that the most authoritative literary voice is not one that transcends its gendered position but one that acknowledges both what that position enables it to know and what it necessarily excludes.

2. Postcolonial Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism

2.1. Western Feminist Theory: Scope and Limits

Chandra Talpade Mohanty opens by rejecting the reductive idea of "Western feminism" as a monolithic, unified force. She is very clear: "Western feminist discourse and political practice is neither singular nor homogeneous in its goals, interests, or analyses" ("Under Western Eyes" 56). This first move avoids the trap of the critique falling into a reductionist culturalist dichotomy of "good" non-West versus "bad" West. Rather, Mohanty's project shows how these various strands of Western feminist scholarship, despite their differences, can result in similar political and epistemic outcomes because they are grounded in shared representational habits (56).

Mohanty shifts the emphasis from authorial intention to discursive effects. Wherever Western feminist work is plural and internally contested, patterned consequences occur across texts when "the West" functions as the primary, silent referent. As she writes, "It is possible, however, to trace a coherence of effects from the implicit assumption of 'the West' … as the primary referent in theory and praxis" . The big issue is that 'the West' is the normative frame of reference against which other women are measured and positioned. In this structure, difference is set up as an implicit hierarchy: Western experience is presented as the unmarked norm, whereas non-Western women are marked as exceptional and in need of interpretation (56).

This hierarchy is generated by particular representational strategies that code non-Western women into an alterity that stabilises the author's standpoint as Western and central. This analysis attempts to call attention to the analogous effects of different textual strategies employed by writers which codify Others as non-Western and themselves as (implicitly) Western".The word "codify" suggests that "non-Western" is a discursive classification that makes different subjects readable as a single and controllable category. This coding simultaneously produces the 'Western' as the unquestionable location of theory and authority (Mohanty 56).

Importantly, Mohanty refuses to write this mechanism off as a Western failure. Othering of this kind can also occur within postcolonial societies where the assumption is that norms of the elite or the middle class are universal. “Similar arguments can be made…[about] African or Asian scholars…[who] assume their own middle-class cultures as the norm, and codify working-class histories and cultures as Other” . The critique is therefore structural and not civilisational. The problem at the root is the production of a norm that authorises itself by turning other locations into objects or “cases” to be known, not subjects who co-produce knowledge (56).

This critique is extended to Trinh T. Minh-ha who refuses the anthropological impulse to “speak about” the native woman as an object of knowledge. She insists on the necessity to “speak nearby” instead of representing or speaking for others, asserting that “the native is not a preconstituted subject but one that is produced by the very discourse that claims to rescue or represent her” (71). Trinh cautions against the creation of an authentic "native" voice, as required by Western feminism, stating that "authenticity is a lie that reproduces the colonizer's gaze" (89). In Trinh’s view, postcolonial feminist writing has to accept hybridity and multiplicity: “I am not a unified subject but a site of multiple, often contradictory, inscriptions” (94). This strategy directly resists homogenising tendencies that Mohanty names.

Mohanty thus re-conceptualizes colonisation as a relation of structural domination that works through “a suppression often violent of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question” .Feminist scholarship that erases heterogeneity by portraying “Third World women” as a monolithic category sharing a single form of oppression reproduces a colonising logic at the level of discourse. This analytic violence erases the differences of class, race, nation, religion, history, and political struggle that inform women’s lives and resistance (56).

This erasure thus takes place in the domain of academic scholarship, and Mohanty stresses that knowledge cannot be divorced from power: “There can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship” . Hence, feminist scholarship is “a directly political and discursive practice” which enters into the

allocation of voice, credibility and conceptual legitimacy (56). The methodological problem is based on the slippage between the ideological construct “Woman” and real, material “women” as historical agents. This confusion allows for "discursive colonisation" which constructs "a composite, singular 'Third World Woman'" primarily defined by lack, ignorance, poverty, tradition, and victimhood (56-57). This figure implicitly is set against Western women, who are portrayed as educated, modern, autonomous and in control of their bodies and decisions (57).

Leila Ahmed historicises these representational practices in the Islamic context, and shows how colonial feminism used the discourse of women’s oppression to justify empire. As she explains, “the Victorian male establishment invoked the peculiar practices of Islam to justify its own imperial ambitions” (152). Ahmed shows how the veil became the main symbol through which Western feminists constructed Muslim women as oppressed victims who needed to be rescued. “The veil was made to stand for the entire culture and religion” (160). The colonial legacy still determines the modern debates as the postcolonial feminist is stuck in between the Western imperialism and the local patriarchal structures (167).

These generalisations share the perception of women as “an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires” (Mohanty, 56). Mohanty counters with the argument that solidarity is not automatic: 'Sisterhood cannot be presumed on the basis of gender; it must be constructed in concrete historical and political practice and analysis' (58). She also criticises interpretive frameworks that jump too quickly from a given cultural practice, such as veiling, to universal statements about its meaning, warning against “the analytic leap from the practice of veiling to an assertion of its general significance in controlling women” (67).

Oyěrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí extends this critique by arguing that the “woman” category itself is a Western colonial invention imported into African societies. She argues that “the invention of women as a category was one of the most important inventions of the colonial period” (*The Invention of Women*, ix). For example, in Yoruba society, social organization was based on

seniority, not gender: “Anatomy was not destiny… seniority was the major organising principle” (34). Oyěwùmí shows how western gender discourses distorted indigenous realities and created new forms of hierarchy, that “gender has always been present in African societies” is a false universalism produced through colonial knowledge (78). This insight calls for the decolonisation of the basic analytic categories of feminist theory.

The political danger of these logics is that they distribute subjecthood unevenly. Western feminists are the subjects of knowledge and transformation; Third World women are objects of explanation. As Mohanty says, “third world women…never rise above…‘object’ status” (72) because only the Western feminists become the true “subjects” (ibid.). In the end, she cautions, the feminist rhetoric of unity can conceal ongoing global relations of domination: “Beyond sisterhood there are still racism, colonialism and imperialism! (68). The task, therefore, is to reconstruct transnational feminism on the basis of historical specificity, refusal of ethnocentric universals, and recognition of Third World women as multiple, situated political subjects (56–72).

2.2. Postcolonial Feminism: Speaking For and Speaking About the Subaltern

With this critique in mind, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asks whether the most radical Western theory can escape the preservation of “the subject of the West, or the West as Subject” (66). Theoretical moves that seem to decenter or pluralise the subject often serve as a cover for the knowing subject, allowing the theorist to escape questions about their own geopolitical and institutional location. Spivak argues that such approaches produce “an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty but frequently serving as a cover for this subject of knowledge” (66). Poststructuralist claims to “let the oppressed speak” often ignore ideology, the international division of labour, and the theorist’s own implication in intellectual and economic history (66–67).

Spivak distinguishes between two irreconcilable senses of representation: “representation as ‘speaking for’… and representation as ‘re-presentation’”(70). When intellectuals claim that they let

the subaltern speak for themselves, they often conceal the epistemic work of re-presentation by which they construct and authorise particular versions of subaltern subjectivity. This creates an illusion of transparency: “In representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent” (70).

Colonial power does what Spivak calls “epistemic violence,” constituting the colonial subject as Other, while erasing the trace of that Other’s precarious subjectivity (Spivak 76). The colonial project, through law, education and administration, created classes of interpreters who translated the colony into metropolitan terms, consolidating elite power and marginalising vernacular voices (Spivak 77). The colonised subaltern subject is “irretrievably heterogeneous” and “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 79-83). The oft-cited colonial logic, “White men are saving brown women from brown men” exemplifies a representational triangle that legitimises domination and denies subaltern women political agency (Spivak 92).

In the colonial archive, especially in cases like sati, “one never encounters the testimony of the voice-consciousness of the women” (Spivak, 93). Spivak’s well-known question “Can the subaltern speak?” thus does not mean capacity in the literal sense but structural conditions of audibility, recognition, and authorisation in global circuits of knowledge and power (78). There is no unmediated subaltern voice waiting to be recovered; the task of the intellectual is to expose the mechanisms of mediation, to locate their own geopolitical determinations, and to interpret archival silences as effects of power in history (70-80).

3. Representation

3.1. Women and the Nation: Modes of Depiction

To unravel the complex relationship between gender, literature and nationalism, it is important to begin by unpacking the term 'representation'. In literary and cultural studies representation is not merely a passive reflection, or transparent mirror held to reality, but rather an active, ideological process of meaning-making. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues that representation is “an essential

part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand things" (15). Literary texts, therefore, do not simply describe the world but are actively engaged in the constitution of the epistemological and ontological limits of human experience.

From a feminist point of view, the politics of representation is a highly contested terrain. The patriarchal order has held a monopoly on the means of representation, and thus on the perception, classification and understanding of women in the cultural consciousness. As Kate Millett argues in *Sexual Politics* (1970), literature has long been a vehicle for the transmission of patriarchal ideology in the form of stereotypical depictions of women by male authors to serve male psychological and social needs (43). Thus women became signifiers in a male-authored discourse–either the pure, idealised "Angel in the House" or the monstrous, deviant "Madwoman" (Gilbert and Gubar 17).

Thus, the task of women writers, when they enter the literary field, is not just to tell stories but to carry out a slow dismantling of these inherited, phallocentric representations. Writing allows women to move from being the objects "represented" to the subjects "representing". They take back their agency to make their own meanings, challenging the literary tropes that have been imposed and providing a disruptive, authentic representation of women's lived realities. This re-claiming of representation is especially important when we consider how women have been located within the grand narratives of history and the state (Showalter 181).

A profound paradox at the intersection of gender and nationalism is revealed by the politics of representation. Almost everywhere in nationalist discourse, the nation is almost always allegorised and feminised. Countries are often imagined as a 'Motherland' or depicted as a woman – in France, there is Marianne, in the UK, there is Britannia, in India, there is Bharat Mata. Yet this symbolic elevation of women in the rhetoric of the nation was in stark contrast to the actual political and social marginalisation of women within the state (Yuval-Davis 47).

This dichotomy has garnered wide attention from postcolonial and feminist theorists. In her seminal work *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock contends that nationalism is "constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power" (355). McClintock notes that nationalist ideologies tend to allocate men and women to separate spheres of the national project. Men are linked to the progressive, outer sphere of history, politics and state whereas women are restricted to the inner, spiritual sphere of tradition, domesticity and culture. Women are represented as the metaphorical "bearers" of the nation, men as its active, historical agents.

Sociologists Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias talk about this symbolic burden placed on women. In *Woman-Nation-State* (1989) they set out the major ways women interface with national processes and state practices. They argue that women are used by nationalist movements mainly as: "(a) biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;(b) reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; central in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and transmitters of its culture; (d) signifiers of ethnic/national differences" (7).

Women are perceived as the biological and cultural bearers of the nation and thus their bodies, sexuality and behaviour are under intense national scrutiny and regulation. The 'purity' of nation is directly mapped onto the 'purity' of its women . Men are thus expected to embody the traditional values of the nation and to be the custodians of its cultural heritage. When a woman transgresses these prescribed moral codes, it is often seen not only as a personal transgression but as a betrayal of the nation itself (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 7). As Partha Chatterjee has shown in his study of anti-colonial nationalism, the nationalist solution to the "women's question" was to produce a "new woman" who was educated enough to assist the modernizing nation but traditional enough to maintain the spiritual essence of the national culture in the home (126).

In women's writing, this allegorical figure of the "Motherland" is frequently questioned and deconstructed. Women writers reveal the hypocrisy of a nation that celebrates women as abstract

symbols and denies them the rights of citizenship. Feminist literature disrupts the romanticised image of the nation by inserting the real, complex and often traumatic experiences of women into the national narrative. It proves that the building of national identities is grounded on the subjugation of women, transforming the female character from a passive symbol of the homeland into an active, critical participant in the rewriting of national history (Showalter 25).

Ultimately, women are not just silent symbols of a nation's purity, but human beings with real voices and untold stories. By picking up the pen, female writers transform women from passive allegories of the homeland into the active, beating heart of its history.

3.2. Male vs Female Perspectives: From Silencing to Voice and Agency

Feminist criticism is centered on the axis of the difference between male and female perspectives within literary works. It is not only a question of who writes but how women are constructed within the text: do they appear as active subjects with awareness, desire and decision-making power or are they constructed as objects of beauty, male desire or as devices for the development of male characters? Simone de Beauvoir has shown that man is presented as the universal human type in traditional Western culture, and woman as the "Other," a being who is defined only in relation to man, not independently of him . In this respect, literature is a promising field for unveiling the mechanisms of symbolic domination that produce and sustain stereotypical representations of women with narrative and linguistic forms (5–6).

In traditional male writing women are reduced to a body or an emotional or symbolic function. They are the inspiring lover, the self-sacrificing mother, the destructive seductress or a marginal figure whose importance is derived from her relationship to the male protagonist. De Beauvoir claims that these portrayals are not innocent or neutral but are instead the result of a cultural structure that places man as the "subject" and woman as the "object," in which "man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him". In this sense literature that depicts Women are not given an authentic voice but instead pre-existing assumptions that coincide with patriarchal

norms are projected onto them by viewing women from an outside perspective based on male desire" (6).

This dominance is particularly apparent in descriptions that hyper-sexualize the female body and treat women in narrative as visual images or objects of desire rather than as complex characters. In some of the novels written by men, the beauty of a woman is a condition of her narrative existence as if her literary, moral and personal worth starts and ends with her body. It leads to the destruction of the psychological, social and intellectual complexity of women, reducing them to static aesthetic constructs. This phenomenon confirms de Beauvoir's observation that male thinking restricts women in their biological "particularity" and the male body is considered the universal human standard (7-5).

Traditional representations not only go beyond the body but also reduce women to love and romance. In many male-dominated stories, women's ambitions and their personal projects seem to vanish when a man enters the picture. Love is not presented as a shared human experience, but as a structure that re-centers the man as the core of meaning, and positions the woman as someone who is willing to sacrifice her future, career, or independence to fulfil the romantic plot. This reflects what de Beauvoir called the "acceptance of otherness" where women are forced to assume a subordinate role and live within the framework of a man's project rather than building their own (68).

Here, Virginia Woolf gestures to the material and symbolic conditions that block women from finding a literary voice. In her *A Room of One's Own*, she argues that women need a space of their own and financial independence to be able to write, as women's absence from literary history was not a matter of talent but a matter of a social system that deprived them of education, freedom and resources. Therefore, the absence of the female voice in traditional literature is the result of historical silencing, not natural incapacity . Thus, recapturing this voice is not only an aesthetic, but also a political and epistemological one that questions the entire history of representation (3-5).

One of the central notions in contemporary feminist studies is the notion of agency. It is about the female characters' ability to act, to choose, and to guide the story rather than being passive objects in the plot. Women in traditional male-authored texts are often objectified. They are looked at, desired, rescued, sacrificed or used as a means to the development of the male protagonist. Feminist writing, on the other hand, makes women speaking subjects who tell their experiences, reflect on the world, and confront the social structures that constrain them. This shift from object to subject is the essence of what Simone de Beauvoir demands when she demands a refusal to reduce women to the position of the "Other" and an affirmation of their full humanity as free subjects (17).

One of the main axes of feminist criticism is the difference between male and female views in literature: it is not only about who writes, but how women are constructed – subjects with desire and decision-making power, or objects that serve male plots. Simone de Beauvoir argues that man is considered the universal norm and woman the "Other," understood in relation to man, not in her own right . From this point of view, literature is a site of symbolic domination replicated in narrative form and language (5-6).

This dominance is reflected in the descriptions that focus on the female body, turning women into visual images or objects of desire instead of developed characters .In such texts, a woman's beauty can become a condition for her literary "existence," reducing her worth to her body and erasing psychological, social and intellectual complexity . This confirms de Beauvoir's assertion that woman is restricted to biological "particularity," while the male position is considered universal (de Beauvoir 5–7).

Traditional representations also diminish women to romance: once a man appears, women's ambitions and projects are often absorbed into the romantic plot . Love is then constructed around the man as the centre of meaning, with the woman expected to sacrifice her future, career or independence (de Beauvoir, 8). This is consistent with de Beauvoir's description of women being

forced to “accept otherness” by living in the framework of a man’s project rather than creating their own (de Beauvoir 68).

By contrast, the female voice – creative and critical – rethinks representation, demanding women’s agency and meaning-making . Elaine Showalter’s gynocriticism calls for a female-centered paradigm that considers women’s literature through women’s experiences, not male standards of literature . The shift from the study of “images of women in men’s texts” to the study of “women as producers of text and meaning” is a significant turn in feminist literary criticism (25).

Showalter describes three stages in women’s writing: the “feminine” phase (imitation of male models), the “feminist” phase (protest) and the “female” phase (self-discovery and constructing a separate language) . These stages demonstrate that women’s voice is not about presence, but about articulating lived experience “from within,” not as objects of external observation . When women write themselves, narrative can break many of the clichés formed by the male imagination (27-28).

Virginia Woolf indicates the material conditions that have historically barred women from writing literature. In *A Room of One’s Own* she argues that women’s absence from literary history is a result of their social exclusion from education and resources, not a lack of talent, and that women need private space and economic independence in order to write. Therefore, the recovery of women’s voice is not only an aesthetic act but also a political and epistemological intervention in the history of representation (3–5).

Agency is a key concept in contemporary feminist studies, concerning whether female characters are active agents and choosers or passive objects within narrative structure. In male-authored traditions women are often “looked at,” desired, rescued, sacrificed or used to develop the male protagonist (de Beauvoir, 17). Feminist writing, however, turns women into talking subjects who narrate experience and challenge the structures that constrain them (Showalter 25). This change from object to subject reflects de Beauvoir’s call to refuse the reduction of women to the “Other” and to claim their full humanity as free subjects (de Beauvoir 17).

4. Colonial Power, Gendered Silence and the Writing of Algerian Identity

Writing Algeria from a female point of view is never simply an aesthetic act; it is a contestation of who is authorised to speak for the nation, whose memories are deemed “history”, and which bodies are permitted to signify “Algeria”. Algerian identity under colonialism is constituted through domination and representation; after independence women often find that national liberation does not automatically undermine patriarchal authority. This double bind makes women’s writing a privileged site where resistance, memory and identity intersect: resistance to colonial power and its discourses, resistance to the postcolonial state’s selective memory, and resistance to familial and patriarchal structures regulating women’s speech. In this sense 'voice vs. silence' is not a matter of stylistic preference but an index of power and national identity becomes legible in what women can say, cannot say, and finally insist on saying.

Fanon’s account of colonialism helps explain why the nation appears from the outset as a violently partitioned space, unevenly distributing humanity and forcing the colonised into reactive modes of self-definition. He refuses the colonial myth of "development" and "civilising mission", claiming instead that structural destruction is the precondition of colonial "building". "Who said that the colony is necessarily a virgin field where enthusiastic pioneers work to build and create from nothing for the benefit of everyone? No, the colony is first and foremost a world divided into two parts: we build because we destroyed-even if we did not destroy everything, we almost destroyed everything!" (44). The important thing for women's writing is that this division is not just geographical or economic, but becomes intimate and domestic too, reproduced in the everyday life as the division between those who may speak and those who must be spoken for. Fanon’s “world cut in two” thus resonates with a gendered internal partition: women can be placed as the “inside” home, veil, family honour, inherited silence – while men are the "outside": public speech, politics, war narrative, even when women are active participants in anti-colonial struggle (44).

Another framework for understanding the operation of colonial power is Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha argues that colonial power is not simply exercised through domination, but through what he calls 'ambivalence', the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from the colonised other. “colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once a ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible”, Bhabha explains (66). This paradoxical structure means that on the one hand the coloniser must deny the humanity and agency of the colonised and on the other must construct elaborate systems of knowledge in order to understand and control them. This ambivalence was particularly evident in Algeria: the French sought to civilise Algeria while systematically denying Algerians full French citizenship and cultural recognition. This analysis is enriched by Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’. He writes: "The desire of the coloniser is not that the colonised should be 'almost the same, but not quite.' Colonial mimicry is, then, the desire of a power that is not quite a power, the coloniser's desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86). In Algeria this meant insisting that Algerians adapt to the French culture while at the same time designating them as racially and culturally inferior, as never really able to become French. This impossible demand produced deep psychological and cultural contradictions which Algerian writers would later explore and resist.

This is why cultural struggle is not peripheral but central to national liberation and its afterlives. Colonialism is not just about occupying land, it functions through symbols, taste, schooling, the staging of what counts as “culture.” The logic of invasion can be described as an aesthetic and psychological campaign, a war on consciousness. “Art is the advocate of the invading culture, its path, its equipment, its arsenal and armoury. Through it, it invades souls and minds, opens spaces, and achieves its goals. The nature of the culture being invaded is also a fundamental factor in the process of conquest. People are drawn to what they lack, and the poorer and more stagnant a culture is, the easier it is to conquer” (Fanon, 07).

Reading this through Fanon's broader framework, the “arsenal” of art and culture involves the production of the colonised woman as a sign: veiled, eroticised, inaccessible, silent, an object to be interpreted, not a subject who interprets. Here Said’s Orientalism becomes absolutely necessary: the ‘Orient’ is not simply misdescribed but is produced as a knowable object through Western power and knowledge and representation itself becomes a form of control (32). Algerian women writers are fighting not only against coercive policies but also against a dense archive of images and narratives that have already determined what “Algerian woman” is.

As a consequence of this, the colonial situation produces what Bhabha terms “the third space” – a liminal space where neither the culture of the coloniser nor that of the colonised has pure authority. In this space, new forms of cultural expression are created that are neither wholly indigenous nor wholly colonial, but rather hybrid, ambivalent, and creative. Algerian literature, especially in the postcolonial period, can be seen as arising from this third space, negotiating among Arabic, Berber, and French linguistic and cultural traditions, and producing new forms of expression that resist easy categorisation (52-56). Bhabha’s conception of postcolonial identity as fundamentally hybrid and ambivalent accounts for the formal and thematic features of works such as Kateb Yacine’s *Nedjma*, published in 1956, on the eve of Algerian independence. The novel’s fragmented narrative structure, moving fluidly between multiple perspectives and temporal registers, formally enacts the kind of hybridity that Bhabha theorises. Kateb writes in a prose that mixes French with Arabic and Berber references, creating a literary language that rejects the linguistic purity colonialism wanted to impose (23). By resisting conventional narrative coherence, and by incorporating multiple languages and perspectives, he refuses the kind of totalising representation that colonialism imposed, and that nationalism might reproduce. As Bhabha states, “The postcolonial writer is not engaged in the task of achieving a transparent representation of a pre-existing Algerian identity. She is inventing new forms of identity and community through the act of writing” (102).

Said also invites us to read Algerian women's texts as worldly interventions rather than as art objects. His argument in *The World, The Text, and the Critic* that texts are located in historical conditions helps explain why women's autobiographical and testimonial modes are politically charged: they show how private life is arranged by public power (4).

This resonates especially in Algeria, where the family is often understood as a protected national essence, but the experiences of women within it are depoliticised. Women's writing rejects that depoliticisation: it demonstrates that the home can be a miniature of the divided colonial world, and that the postcolonial nation can perpetuate colonial techniques of silencing by re-inscribing them in "tradition," "morality," or "family values."

The figure of Nedjma in Kateb's novel, an Algerian woman with an uncertain paternity and an identity of hybridity and fragmentation, becomes emblematic of Algeria itself. She is not a coherent, unified subject, but a palimpsest of contradictions, desires and historical traumas. The novel's multiple narrators and temporal disjunctions echo this fragmentation: there is no single authoritative narrative voice, no linear movement toward resolution. Instead, the reader is confronted with contradictory perspectives of Algeria, which must be endured as the impossibility of reaching a single overall understanding (15-45). In focusing on a female figure of multiple and unstable identities, Kateb makes room for the types of women's voices and perspectives that Miriam Cooke argues have been silenced in official war narratives and postcolonial historiography.

Cooke's *Women and the War Story* demonstrates how women's involvement in armed struggle, like in the Algerian War of Independence, contests traditional notions of war and narrative authority. She argues that "women's war stories are not just stories about women's experiences in war, but interventions into the very definition of what counts as a legitimate war story and a legitimate speaking subject" (45). Women were at the forefront of the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria, as fighters, messengers, nurses and intellectuals, but their contributions were often downplayed or erased from the official nationalist histories.

Cooke argues that “adding the women’s voice to war narratives destroys the coherence of nationalist historiography” (67). When women speak of their experiences of colonialism and armed struggle, they provide alternative perspectives that challenge the masculine-centered narratives of liberation that dominate postcolonial discourse. Post-colonial Algeria and Women Writers.

In this sense, they have been involved in a double struggle, so to speak: against colonial domination, but also against the patriarchal structures that are reproduced and reinforced within nationalist and postcolonial frames. Moreover, Cooke contends, “women’s war stories bring different temporalities into historical narrative; they resist the linear march of history and instead expose the simultaneity of multiple experiences and the persistence of past traumas into the present” (89). This is especially the case with Algerian literature and memory, where the colonial and wartime wounds still inform present-day experience, and where we witness the emergence of a kind of counter-historiography privileging memory, emotional truth, and the everyday experience of violence over the grand narratives of political progress.

Assia Djebar’s self-reflexive writing exemplifies this tension between voice and imposed muteness, and exemplifies this tension by turning silence itself into an object of analysis. Rather than seeing silence as mere absence, she sees it as an active danger, something that grows, organises fear, and shapes the self. “I was beginning to see that the dangerous problem was my silence, my silence about this instinct that, despite my efforts, was in the process of taking shape” (493–494). This 'dangerous silence', in a Fanonian sense, is a kind of internal self-policing: a psychological configuration produced under duress, survival requiring concealment. But Djebar's emphasis is also gender-specific: the "instinct" under construction is not simply personal desire or artistic drive; it is a will to speak from a woman's position within a national and familial order that disciplines female expression.

What makes such writing work is not that the woman suddenly “finds” a voice; it is that silence becomes intolerable, and the text registers its rupture as an event. “My silence? Let's say it blew up!

(...) Silence in the face of oneself was more perilous" (Djebar, 500–501). This explosion is a miniature theory of resistance, the self will not co-operate with its own erasure. If, as Fanon shows, colonialism depends on the production of an inferiorized subject who doubts her right to exist fully, then the feminist act of writing is a refusal of that inferiority, particularly when silence has been socially feminised, while eloquence is masculinised, with men as public speakers, political narrators, and official eye-witnesses. This is exactly the point where Cooke's assertion of women's testimony disrupting the monopoly of historical truth held by official institutions applies: "When women speak their experiences of war and colonisation, they introduce a different temporal and epistemological framework–one that privileges memory, emotion, and the everyday experience of violence over grand political narratives" (145). Official historiography generally prefers documents, political declarations, and the accounts of recognised leaders. In contrast, women's testimony is often based on oral transmission, emotional truth and the detail of day-to-day survival, a radically different epistemology and a different conception of what constitutes historical knowledge.

Djebar links this struggle to temporality and national history, asking why her life has been divided between expression and muteness for so long. "Why half a century of writing and silence at the same time? What is this absence that inhabits me, tears me apart against my will, wraps me in pharaonic bands I who in the past was my father's little princess?" (503). The "half century" is not merely biographical; it echoes Algeria's journey through colonialism, the war of liberation, and the disillusionments of postindependence. The "absence" that haunts the speaker can be read as what the nation refuses to narrate: women's costs, compromises, injuries, and continued marginalisation once the victorious national story has been stabilised. Through Said's lens, Djebar's question is a critique of official narratives; the nation often authorises a single heroic plot, while women's experiences remain a counter-memory that does not fit the authorised archive.

Memory in the writing of Algerian women thus becomes not nostalgia but confrontation. Djebar explicitly rejects the notion of memory as a comforting return: "You write (this doubleness is what suddenly shakes me and wakes me up): memory is neither a cradle nor lullabies in which to

drown more easily" (503). Memory "wakes up" because it is in conflict: between what was lived and what is officially remembered, between what the woman knows and what she has been trained not to speak. And this is where Said's concept of exile also comes in, not geographical exile, but the state of living in opposition to one's environment, with another set of images and losses ubiquitous (Said 15). Many Algerian women writers perform such a double consciousness; they live French and Arabic, public and private, revolution and domesticity, belonging and estrangement simultaneously. The representation of colonial violence in Kateb's Nedjma operates by a similar logic: it is never direct or explicit but comes out through fragmentation, ellipsis, and the gaps in the narrative. Violence is everywhere and nowhere, it is in the absences and silences of the text. This formal tactic implies that colonial violence functions on a plane that is unrepresentable. It inscribes and shapes subjects in a way that is beyond linguistic expression, so that the fragmented form becomes a necessary response to trauma, honouring the impossibility of coherence and closure (45-78).

The question links individual dispossession to a collective Mediterranean condition: women are "out of place" in the very home that names them as belonging. The phrase "all women" transforms autobiography into communal testimony, and resists the nationalist tendency to see women as background to men's history. Kateb's Nedjma can be read as exploring that same double bind. The character of Nedjma embodies the impossible position of the postcolonial woman: desired and pursued by several men, her body and her identity are fought over, and her desires and agency are lost in the projections of others. As Cooke notes, "the postcolonial nation-state often uses women's bodies and domestic roles as the repositories of national and cultural authenticity" (110). Therefore, women are called to represent and reproduce traditional culture, but at the same time, they need to be modern and educated, which is structurally incompatible.

Djebar then links this exclusion to material rights, showing that the nation's rhetoric of freedom can co-exist with the legal and customary divestment of women's claims. I have no more of my father's house; I have become without a house there, not because my father died worn out in a

country said to be liberated but where daughters are deprived of their rights to inheritance by their father's sons" (502). The sentence is devastating, for it names independence ('a country said to be liberated') as not enough: a liberation that does not transform inheritance, kinship power, and the legal status of women reproduces domination in another register. Read with Fanon this also reveals a postcolonial contradiction: if anti-colonial struggle promises a new humanism then the persistence of patriarchal exclusion reveals a failed universality: freedom redistributed unevenly with women expected to maintain the moral order while remaining politically secondary. Bhabha's analysis backs this argument: "The postcolonial condition is characterised by the persistence of colonial forms of violence and domination, even after the formal end of colonial rule")128), and in Algeria this persistence is seen not only in economic structures but in the ways that colonial techniques of control have been internalised and reproduced under the sign of tradition and national authenticity.

Language is another arena for the negotiation of resistance, memory, and identity, and here Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and Djebar come together directly. Fanon shows how colonial language can serve as a ladder to social recognition, but at the same time deepen alienation: the colonised subject may feel compelled to adopt the standards of the coloniser in order to be treated as fully human (17). Said shows how systems of knowledge schools, literary canons, scholarly classifications determine what can be said and by whom (32). "The colonised subject remains in a position of radical ambiguity: the colonizer's language is both a language of oppression and a language of liberation" (92) says Bhabha. Thus, Djebar's own relation to French is neither one of betrayal nor of assimilation; it is marked as both constraint and possibility. "At the end of the school year I told your daughter, four or five years old (...) that you could speak to her now only in French, showing yourself--ah, only partly" (96). The scene registers an intimate colonial aftereffect: French enters the family in the form of education, mobility, and partial self-revelation, while also suggesting partial disguise. That partiality becomes a metaphor for identity under colonial modernity: never fully at home in one tongue, never fully innocent in the other.

At the same time, Djebar affirms that French can be experienced sensorially, as an atmosphere and a rhythm, not simply as a colonial instrument. I was invited to travel, but more than that: I was invited to the beauty of French words, and further still: I was invited to breathe gently beneath the words" (133-134). This ‘breathing gently under words’ repositions language as a technology of survival. Where the body of women is subject to tradition and colonial scrutiny, language offers an alternative refuge – but one that also exposes the writer to accusations of inauthenticity. Said’s approach helps here: identity is not a pure essence that can be recovered outside of history, but is formed within the very structures one contests. Writing in French then, can be read as a form of contrapuntal resistance. The text inhabits the language of the coloniser and turns it towards the memory of Algerian women, refusing to allow the language to belong to imperial narrations. Kateb's use of French with Arabic and Berber embedded within it has a similar effect: the reader who does not understand Arabic and Berber finds passages which are opaque and resistant to full understanding - a linguistic experience which parallels the experience of the colonised subject of exclusion from full participation in the colonial order. Form and content are fused: linguistic hybridity enacts the hybrid, fragmented subjectivity of the colonised and postcolonial subject (50-80).

From this perspective, national identity is not a consensus of identity, but a space of conflicting memories. Fanon’s insistence on discontinuity and split time is a manifestation of how the colonial order ruptures historical continuity, creating parallel realities which cannot be easily reconciled. That masked face looks at us from before it is time, for time has divided: there is one continuity for those people and another continuity for the others" (44). Women’s writing often exposes these split continuities: the official continuity of the nation flag, martyrs, heroic fathers and the submerged continuity of women’s lived time: domestic labour, threatened bodies, stolen inheritance, enforced modesty, interrupted education, strategic silences. Bringing the 2nd.

continuity into language, women’s texts do not undermine national identity; they require it to become more truthful, less mythic and therefore more ethically defensible. Here, Cooke’s assertion

that women's testimony introduces different temporalities into historical narrative is directly relevant: in resisting the linear movement of official history, and revealing instead the simultaneity of multiple experiences and the persistence of past traumas, women's writing performs a counter-historiography that is not merely supplementary but transformative (89).

Writing Algeria from a female perspective becomes resistance not only because it 'resists' colonialism, but because it interrogates the very mechanisms by which domination reproduces itself: Edward Said's concept of representation, Frantz Fanon's notions of internalised inferiority and psychic partition, the productive ambivalence and mimicry of colonial power theorised by Homi Bhabha, patriarchal law and custom in its lived reality in Assia Djebar's 'father's house', and the erasure of women's war stories from official national narrative argued by Miriam Cooke. Memory is a political act when it refuses to lull the subject into reconciliation, voice is revolutionary when it names silence as danger and breaks it from within. The third space that Bhabha describes "not simply a space of loss or damage; it is a space of creative possibility, where new forms of identity, community, and resistance can emerge" (112) is exactly the space inhabited by Djebar's explosions of silence and Kateb's fractured female figures, and that they open. If Orientalism turns Algerian women into the object of a spectacle, and nationalism into symbols, women's writing asks for something more complicated: women as speaking subjects whose broken memories are part of the real archive of the nation, and whose identity cannot be reduced to colonial images or postcolonial moral policing."

Conclusion

Gendered writing, postcolonial feminism, and Algerian literary identity are not three separate concerns but three dimensions of a single question: under what conditions can a woman write, and what does her writing cost her. From Beauvoir's construction of women as 'Other', through Showalter's recovery of a female literary tradition, to the postcolonial feminist interrogation of who speaks and on whose behalf, the chapter traces a critical trajectory that becomes increasingly self-

aware of its own conditions of production. What emerges is not a unified feminist programme but a set of contested, overlapping practices of resistance, literary, linguistic, and testimonial that refuse both the colonial archive and the nationalist myth.

These frameworks are not merely theoretical scaffolding; they are the analytical tools through which the writings of Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra become fully legible. Khadra's decision to write under a feminine pen name borrowed from his wife is not a biographical footnote but a literary and ideological act that sits at the precise intersection of gendered authorship, colonial language, and national identity this chapter has been building toward. It raises the questions Showalter and Beauvoir ask about literary authority, and adds a further complication: a man inhabiting female authorship as a strategy of evasion, exposing in the process how deeply gender boundaries in the postcolonial Algerian literary field are policed by the same forces of power, silence, and representation traced throughout this chapter. If the opening sections ask who is authorised to produce meaning, the closing sections press a harder question: whose silence has been normalised until it no longer looks like silencing at all, but like consent.

Chapter Two:
Portraying the Algerian Woman:
A Comparative Reading of Assia Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Yasmina Khadra's *What the Day Owes the Night*

Introduction

Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra approach the representation of Algerian women from profoundly different positions biographical, ideological, and aesthetic. Djebar, a woman writer, deeply engaged with feminist historiography and the recovery of silenced female voices. She constructs her literary project as an act of testimonial archaeology, excavating the buried experiences of women erased by colonial and patriarchal historiography. Khadra, a male writer, whose pseudonym itself appropriates feminine identity. He observes women primarily from external positions, depicting them as mothers, sisters, and objects of desire within narratives centered on masculine experience and development. This comparative analysis examines how these divergent authorial positions produce fundamentally different representations of Algerian women's agency, voice, spatial positioning, and possibilities for liberation. While both authors acknowledge the severe constraints that patriarchal and colonial structures impose on women, they differ profoundly in their understanding of women's capacity for autonomous action, their access to subjective interiority, and their historical and political significance.

1. Spatial Confinement and Women's Mobility

Both Djeber and Khadra recognize spatial confinement as central to women 's oppression, yet they differ significantly in how they represent women 's relationship to enclosed and public spaces. The representation of women in Algerian literature exposes deep tensions between visibility and invisibility, tradition and modernity, and oppression and resistance. Assia Djebar's engagement with Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* offers a powerful framework for critiquing the colonial and patriarchal gaze. Delacroix's 1834 painting stages an Orientalist fantasy: women

appear passive, enclosed within an exoticized harem. Djebar argues that the painting fascinates not because of the superficial Orient it depicts, but because it places viewers in the forbidden position of looking at women who are not meant to be seen. She writes that the painting is a "stolen glance," reminding us that ordinarily "we do not have the right" to look (172). The canvas thus becomes political: it reflects the power structures that allow the colonial artist to penetrate private space and transform women into objects of spectacle. This is powerful illustrated in Djebar's own narrative, where she describes the physical isolation of Algerian women, nothing that they are "sequestered .... behind windows that open only onto courtyarfs"(1). This profound critique of visual containment and epistemic violence is heavily supported by contemporary Algerian scholarship.

As the academic researcher Mohamed Lamine Amor notes, this structured representation functions as a deliberate mechanism of silencing, where the colonial artistic gaze works in tandem with local patriarchal boundaries to lock the postcolonial female identity within a static, aestheticized imprisonment (505). By exploring the politics of this "stolen glance," Djebar does not merely critique historical art; rather, she performs a radical counter-historical intervention. Zineb Boumaza and Fethi Haddouche argue that such literary responses are essential for dismantling the multi-layered traumas inflicted upon Algerian women, who have historically been "sandwiched" between the visual restrictions of colonial hegemony and the conservative linguistic and spatial demands of post-independence society (647).

Furthermore, this transition from a passive object of spectacle to an active subject of history resonates with regional narrative subversions; Boubaaya astutely maintains that breaking through these rigid domestic thresholds in Maghrebi literature often mirrors the liberating spatial movements found in oral folklore, where escaping spatial confinement serves as a foundational step toward claiming political consciousness and agency (165). Consequently, by exposing the power structures inherent in Delacroix's canvas, the narrative successfully reclaims the private sphere, transforming a site of colonial voyeurism into a freestanding space for female articulation and historical resistance.

When analyzed in parallel with Djebar's narrative framework, this striking imagery of somatic erasure and architectural confinement constructs a powerful, symmetrical opposition.The representation of women in Khadra's work reveals the profound isolation and mechanization of female existence within patriarchal structures. The mother figure appears as a paradigm of domestic confinement and silent labor, her entire being reduced to repetitive household tasks performed in shadowed spaces. Khadra recalls "my mother in the shadow of her hovel, bent over her cauldron, mechanically stirring a broth of tubers with questionable flavors" (7).

This domestic mechanization exemplifies Showalter's concept of the "feminine phase," in which women internalize patriarchal restrictions and their lives are reduced to biological and domestic functions. The mother's bent posture and automatic stirring highlight the tragic reality of female subalternity within enclosed environments. Remaining invisible in the shadows, her body is consumed by the labor of feeding others, illustrating how patriarchal division confines the female subject to cycles of immanence while denying her historical and transcendent action.

This image constructs the mother as perpetually bent over her cauldron in the shadow of her hovel, mechanically stirring a broth of tubers with questionable flavors. The shadow emphasizes her exclusion from light and visibility, while the hovel marks her spatial confinement to degraded domestic space. The bent posture suggests both physical exhaustion and symbolic submission, her body permanently shaped by labor. The mechanical quality of her stirring indicates the dehumanizing repetition of women's work, which becomes automatic rather than intentional. The questionable flavors of the tubers reveal the poverty that constrains women's domestic production, forcing them to create sustenance from inadequate materials.

This mother exists only in relation to her cooking pot, her identity consumed by the labor of feeding others. Her daily reality is defined by domestic erasure, as Khadra emphasizes that she is "confined to her kitchen, dynamic only in her submissiveness"(7). This stark portrayal of domestic mechanization and somatic exhaustion underscores the tragic reality of female subalternity within

enclosed environments. The reduction of the mother's identity to a purely repetitive, biological function—symbolized by her absolute containment over the cauldron perfectly aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical critique of patriarchal division, which states that women are historically condemned to the repetitive cycles of immanence and domestic labor, while transcendent, historical actions are strictly reserved for masculine subjects (Beauvoir 145).

Within the socio-literary context of postcolonial Algeria, this extreme confinement is driven by deep structural anxieties. As Karima Bouharrour and Hocine Maoui critically maintain, the confinement of women to marginalized domestic spaces like the 'hovel' functions as a defensive patriarchal enforcement to safeguard a traditional cultural authenticity against external displacements, thereby turning the female body into an invisible machine for communal survival (18). Furthermore, this severe lack of autonomy and material deprivation illustrates what Karl Ågerup identifies as Khadra's didactic narrative aesthetic; by deliberately magnifying the physical suffering, automatic labor, and vulnerability of marginalized figures, the narrative forces the reader to confront the crushing efficacy of institutionalized structures (188). Caught between the macro-pressures of historical upheaval and the micro-violence of domestic containment, the mother becomes a silent text, completely dispossessed of her individual identity and excluded from the broader national landscape. This absolute reduction is highlighted through the narrator's recollection of his mother, who is left with nothing but "silent prayers" (7) to endure her painful daily reality.

The female body's exposure in new contexts, such as wearing a two-piece swimsuit, marks a revolutionary transformation in the relationship between women and public space. One woman stood with the past at her feet, her body that appeared whiter, "particularly at the hips and belly" (Djebar 112). The image of the past at her feet suggests that she has stepped beyond or over historical constraints, claiming a new relationship to her body and its display. The two-piece bathing suit represents a dramatic departure from traditional complete covering, exposing not only skin but also the female form. The specific mention of whiteness at the hips and belly areas traditionally most carefully concealed emphasizes the radical nature of this exposure. The bathing

suit functions as both a garment and a statement, asserting women's right to occupy leisure spaces, to swim, and to reveal their bodies in contexts of pleasure rather than exclusively in private, domestic, or sexual contexts.

This process of claiming somatic visibility reflects how subaltern women re-appropriate physical environments to dismantle systemic invisibility. As Boubaaya critically asserts, the reclamation of the Algerian female body in public parameters represents a political shift where "the somatic space becomes an active canvas of resistance, shattering the historically inherited dichotomy of internal confinement and external erasure" (168; my trans.). By exposing traditionally veiled anatomy in a public leisure site, Djebar's characters successfully transform the passive female body into an agent of spatial and political disruption, a transition that directly embodies Elaine Showalter's concept of the "female phase" where women reject patriarchal definitions of selfhood to discover a genuine female identity and space.

In parallel, this subversion of spatial boundaries through leisure moves from Djebar's open public landscapes into Khadra's confined domestic spaces, where the female body seeks internal rather than external space. Female homosocial space in the courtyard provides respite and pleasure through collective tea-drinking and sun-bathing, creating moments of leisure within otherwise relentless domestic labor. Khadra writes, "The women had settled in a corner of the patio, around a low table. They were drinking tea while sunning themselves" (24). The settling around a low table creates intimate circular space where women face each other rather than being dispersed in individual domestic units. The tea-drinking ritual provides both physical refreshment and social lubrication, marking this time as distinct from work time. The "sunning themselves" (drawn from the French se dorant literally gilding themselves in the sun) suggests both the pleasure of warmth and light after working in shadowed interiors and the beautifying or restorative quality attributed to sunshine. This scene captures rare female leisure and sociability, a collective pause in the grinding routine of poverty and domestic labor.

Within this symmetrical framework, the domestic courtyard is refashioned from a site of patriarchal confinement into an alternative psychological sanctuary. In their socio-psychological analysis, Imène Amara and Mohammed Senoussi observe that these localized homosocial gatherings allow women to survive systematic oppression, noting that "the temporary suspension of domestic labor through shared rituals establishes a crucial therapeutic threshold where communal solidarity replaces mechanical alienation" (441). Khadra's emphasis on the collective sun-bathing ritual thus confirms that leisure within the household functions as a tactical tool to preserve historical memory and psychological endurance. This transformation of the patio reflects Showalter's description of women creating a supportive subculture within oppressive structures, turning a restricted domestic enclosure into a dynamic space of solidarity, collective healing, and subversion.

Djebar's dialogue with Picasso's painting enables one of her characters to articulate the historical trauma and violence endured by Algerian women. What Picasso visually fragmented in his reimagining of Delacroix's harem scene, Djebar translates into verbal testimony. Through her character, she declares the raw truth: in essence, what Algerian women endured was not easy torture, repression, rape, and other violations. This structural violence is vividly captured in the narrative as Djebar describes the long-standing collective pain, highlighting how women were historically "clothed in wraps like winding-sheets" (139), a stark visualization of their systematic confinement. This explicit statement makes visible the physical and psychological suffering that the paintings only imply. By engaging with Picasso's explosive artistic language, Djebar finds a powerful precedent for representing women's trauma, transforming visual fragmentation into a courageous act of narrative testimony that exemplifies gynocentric efforts to reclaim the female historical experience from patriarchal erasure.

Finally, the image of dawn suggests the possibility of visibility, renewal, and transformation, even if the path ahead remains uncertain. One story opens with the line: "Dawn began to illuminate the curtains of the small apartment" (Djebar 107). The gradual light filtering through the curtains

symbolizes both a literal new morning and a metaphorical new beginning for women. The modest apartment, though confined, becomes a space where light can enter and new possibilities emerge. The curtains capable of concealing or revealing mark the fragile threshold between interior silence and exterior visibility.

This quiet image encapsulates a cautious hope: the daily renewal of possibility, even within the limited spaces to which women have long been confined. This transition from darkness to light through the curtains directly engages feminist spatial theory. The domestic threshold is no longer merely a physical barrier; it becomes a political site where the subaltern woman asserts spatial agency. By turning toward the light, Djebar's female characters resist architectural confinement. This reading reinforces the theoretical framework established in the first chapter, showing that subaltern women use domestic spaces not for submission but as a point of departure to dismantle systemic invisibility، an act that exemplifies existentialist feminism by transforming a site of forced immanence into a launchpad for transcendence and historical self-determination.

While Djebar's narrative exposes women's bodies as sites of trauma and historical violence, Khadra's text shifts the focus toward a different kind of resistance one rooted in love, choice, and feminine autonomy. Women's articulation of love as a supreme value that should not be sacrificed for social conventions represents feminine resistance to patriarchal prioritization of masculine honor and friendship over romantic bonds. Émilie declares: 'There is neither shame nor crime in love, except when one sacrifices it, including for good causes' (Khadra 133). This statement inverts conventional morality that construes certain forms of love or desire as shameful or criminal. For Émilie, the only crime or shame consists in sacrificing love, even when that sacrifice serves supposedly good causes such as preserving masculine friendship. This feminine ethics, which centers love and emotional truth over social convention or masculine loyalty systems, represents a fundamental challenge to patriarchal values. This ethical reclamation aligns with Elaine Showalter's concept of the "female phase," in which female characters reject internalized codes of patriarchal validation and instead construct independent, self-defined values and emotional autonomy.

Patriarchal control over daughters often blocks their educational and professional aspirations, condemning them to domestic confinement. After independence, Nadia attempts to return to school, expressing her desire to go to the city and to work, to become a teacher or a student it doesn't matter, as long as she works (Djaber 184). Her ambition immediately triggers a family tragedy on the horizon (Djaber 184). The father's decision to halt her education, despite the new possibilities brought by national independence, demonstrates the stubborn persistence of patriarchal authority.

Nadia's desperation is evident in her indifference to the specific role of being either a teacher ora student; what matters is any form of productive engagement beyond the domestic sphere. Her claim to education and work is perceived as such a profound threat to traditional family structures and male authority that it portends familial crisis.

This systematic blockage of female educational mobility illustrates how spatial distribution enforces patriarchal dominance within post-independence Algeria. As Boubaaya critically analyzes, the transition of the subaltern daughter from the private household to the urban educational center is consistently met with familial resistance, because "the patriarchal network perceives the city not as a neutral professional space, but as a dangerous site of ideological subversion that directly threatens ancestral male hegemony over the female intellect" (168). By denying Nadia access to urban labor, the traditional authority establishes spatial boundaries that aim to lock women within a perpetual cycle of non-productive domestic containment. This deliberate institutionalized exclusion perfectly reflects Showalter's critique of patriarchal structures, demonstrating how female intellectual growth and social mobility are systematically suppressed to maintain masculine dominance over both physical and cognitive spaces.

As a contested site of professional ambition resisted by domestic patriarchal authority, Khadra exposes the interior dynamics of the city itself, demonstrating how the urban landscape becomes .highly eroticized to restrict autonomous female presence through visual surveillance. The feminization and eroticization of the city of Oran constructs urban space as a seductive feminine

body that enchants and tempts masculine observers. The narrator describes the girls and the city: “And the girls with bewitching strides, brazen without being frivolous, fluttered around us like houris” (Khadra 77). The passage continues: “Beautiful, coquettish, conscious of the fascination she exerted on strangers... Born from a need to seduce, Oran was first and foremost about showing off” (77). The girls, described as having bewitching strides with a boldness that avoids frivolity, create an image of confident, attractive urban femininity that differs markedly from rural feminine modesty.

The comparison to houris (celestial virgins promised to the faithful) eroticizes these girls while also suggesting their unattainability. The shift from describing the girls to describing the city itself as beautiful, coquettish, and conscious of its power merges feminine bodies with urban space. The claim that Oran was born from a need to seduce positions the city as inherently feminine and as existing primarily to attract and enchant. This feminization of urban space reveals how masculine imagination constructs both women and cities as spectacles designed for male visual pleasure. Within this symmetrical framework, the entry of women into the public arena does not immediately guarantee emancipation, as the urban landscape itself is reshaped by masculine imagination. In their socio-spatial critique, Amara and Senoussi observe that the modern city often reinforces gender objectification rather than dismantling it, noting that "the historical feminization and aesthetic commercialization of urban spaces like Oran reduce the mobile female subject to a localized aesthetic commodity, transforming active citizens into mere spectacles designed to satisfy patriarchal visual pleasure" (441). Khadra’s emphasis on the "bewitching strides" of Oran’s women thus confirms that the urban environment operates as an updated platform of containment, where visibility is conditional upon male evaluation. This spatial containment and objectification embody Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of the “Other,” revealing how the patriarchal gaze re-centers man as the essential subject while positioning the mobile woman in the city as a passive, ornamental object to be perceived.

Collective female presence also produces striking imagery. At public gatherings, women form a “moving wave of white veils” (Djebar 178), a powerful visual mass that simultaneously asserts solidarity and signals continued enclosure. Throughout Djebar’s work, women oscillate between object and subject, silence and speech, confinement and eruption. By interrogating colonial art, recovering suppressed voices, and tracing acts of resistance from battlefield to classroom to stadium, Djebar transforms representation itself into a site of struggle one in which Algerian women gradually reclaim the right not only to be seen, but to look, speak, and define themselves within traditional coverings.

The wave metaphor implies fluidity and force, a group movement that has power despite or because of its uniformity. However, as Boubaaya critically maintains, the relegation of women to the back space reinforces spatial hierarchies that separate men and women, making women's participation conditional on their occupying marginal positions (172). The white color of the coverings suggests purity and perhaps mourning, connecting women's public presence to both virtue and loss. This collective female presence remains ambiguous: powerful in its numbers and movement yet constrained by spatial marginalization and required concealment. This tension between collective visibility and architectural erasure embodies the core critique of existentialist feminism, showing that while women attempt to achieve historical transcendence through spatial solidarity, patriarchal structures continuously work to re-inscribe them into a state of silent, repetitive immanence.

This continuity between colonial and patriarchal control is also visible in the regulation of women’s bodies and appearances. Djebar's descriptions of veiling operate on two levels: they reveal the woman as seen objectified by others and they reveal the woman imagining another woman under the veil, a layered interiority that eludes the gaze. The narrator reflects on this layered complexity: "How unique and mysterious Fariha was to me! I often imagine her in the Sufi veil, summer or winter, walking into the city center like a veiled peasant woman – or like a woman in her

sixties because of the old-fashioned dress she wears" (Djebar 192). Here, the veil is not a single fixed meaning but a site of intersection of class, age, piety, urban movement, and social legibility.

This complexity resists the Orientalist tendency to flatten the veil into a single symbol. It also intersects with Frantz Fanon's analysis of colonial obsession with unveiling in Algeria, where the coloniser makes women's dress a strategic doorway into society, while Algerian resistance turns dress into camouflage and counterstrategy (Fanon). Women's writing preserves the ambiguity that colonial discourse seeks to erase, a spatial negotiation that directly embodies Elaine Showalter's description of women creating a distinct supportive subculture within oppressive systems. This reclamation transforms the veil, when inhabited and narrated by women themselves, into what Homi Bhabha terms a "third space" of hybrid meaning that resists both colonial eroticisation and nationalist fixity.

Resistance, then, is composed of small stylistic and bodily refusals that puncture hypocritical moral surveillance. Djebar captures a moment of performative defiance, an improvised dance, and a refusal to be read through the community's policing gaze: "To hell with hypocritical customs, for God's sake: all of a sudden she wants to stand there in this black dress with red and violet flowers to improvise an old, proud dance, somewhat hindered by hesitation..." (Djebar 250). The pause is important: courage is not the absence of fear, but the choice to do something with fear still there. In this sense, the text records a micro-politics of liberation that exists in tandem with the macro-politics of national struggle, reminding us that women's emancipation is often negotiated in gestures that carry social risk long after colonial soldiers have moved on. Postcolonial Algerian women writers have been engaged in this work of bearing witness, exposing experiences that nationalism and patriarchy have sought to silence. This work of memory is not only personal or psychological; it is fundamentally political, a refusal of the forgetting that postcolonial states often impose in their rush toward progress and unity (Cooke 95–120). This refusal to forget and the reclaiming of physical agency through performance strictly align with existentialist feminism, as the

female character actively rejects forced patriarchal immanence to enact a powerful mode of bodily transcendence and self-definition.

Likewise, Djebar's recurring motif of "the father's house" is constructed by the same logic, though the father's house is more than a family space; it is a metaphor for the patriarchal nation that takes daughters as symbols but not as full heirs. The narrative poignantly questions this systemic displacement: "Isn't it time to put these smouldering ashes out, slowly or fast, that have never died? This question is not yours only but the question of all the women there, on the southern shore of the Mediterranean… Why, why must I and all the others find ourselves with no place in 'my father's house'?" (Djebar 509-510). Here, the architectural domestic space merges with the geo-political boundary of the postcolonial nation, exposing how both spaces collapse into structures of exclusion for the female subject. This fundamental lack of space and recognition within the paternal structure strictly exemplifies existentialist feminism, specifically mirroring Simone de Beauvoir's critique of how patriarchal societies restrict women to a state of forced dependence and alienation, turning what should be a sanctuary into a site of exile where her historical identity and agency are systematically denied.

This dialectic of spatial ambiguity and collective somatic visibility establishes a foundational critique of postcolonial spatial dynamics. By framing the gathering of veiled women through a fluid, hydro-metaphorical lens ("moving wave"), Djebar effectively deconstructs the colonial myth of the stagnant, passive harem. As Boubaaya demonstrates, the utilization of traditional white vestments within communal open-air gatherings operates as a complex cultural camouflage; while it apparently complies with patriarchal definitions of modesty and spatial segregation, it simultaneously builds a strategic counter-communitarian force capable of disrupting structural containment (168). This collective negotiation of restricted spaces directly matches Gayatri Spivak's theoretical formulations regarding the subaltern's breakthrough into historical articulation, wherein marginalized female subjects transform their physical confinement into a collective political statement (Spivak 109).

Concurrently, this tension embedded in the public choreography of the "white veils" finds a perfectly balanced, yet tragically inverted counter-trajectory within the socio-spatial realism of Yasmina Khadra, shifting the focus from visual ideological subversion to the psychological mechanisms of domestic enclosure. Female gatherings become sites for collective mourning of displacement and loss, where women process trauma through shared narration of confiscated lands and severed family ties.

The daily ritual at the well provides communal space for grief: “Every day, these ladies met around the well and spent most of their time stirring up the past like turning the knife in the wound. They spoke of their confiscated orchards, their tender hills forever lost, relatives left behind” (Khadra 19–20). The well, site of essential water collection labor, becomes repurposed as female social space where emotional labor also occurs. The simile of stirring the past like turning a knife in a wound captures both the compulsive quality of traumatic repetition and the pain that this repetition produces. The women cannot stop rehearsing their losses even though this rehearsal causes ongoing suffering.

Caught within this parallel paradigm of collective female gathering, Khadra operationalizes the localized, communal space of the well not merely as a site of physical survival, but as a critical therapeutic repository for historical trauma. As Amara and Senoussi critically observe, the repetitive and compulsive sharing of past losses within these female circles functions as a vital defense mechanism against cultural erasure, allowing marginalized subjects to collectively externalize and process deep intergenerational anxieties that cannot be voiced in public masculine or colonial spaces (441). This spatial subversion of basic daily labor mirrors Simone de Beauvoir’s theoretical insights into how women trapped in cyclical domestic routines build subaltern social frameworks to alleviate existential immanence and reclaim historical memory (Beauvoir 174). Through this process, Khadra reveals that local resources like the well are constantly transfigured into defensive social boundaries against institutional silencing.

To sum up, physicalspaces function as instruments of control over Algerian women under colonial and patriarchal systems. Yet, as shown by Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra, these spaces also become sites of resistance. Through the perspectives of Showalter, Beauvoir, and Spivak, the veil and domestic tasks are reimagined as strategies of subversion, enabling women to reclaim freedom.

2. Voice, Silence, and Language: Women and the Orientalist Gaze

Perhaps the most profound difference between Djebar and Khadra lies in their narrative representation of women's voices and their capacity for self-articulation. In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, the veil functions both as a literal garment and as a discursive metaphor for the historical suffocation of female language and desire. As an author who has gained freedom of movement, Djebar defines her ethical stance by stating that she does not wish to "speak for" imprisoned women, but to speak "near" and "as close as possible" to them (Djebar 8) This narrative solidarity shapes her polyphonic project, which seeks to restore the fragmented .conversations among women that patriarchal history has silenced.

Djebar's literary method combines historical recovery with a struggle for linguistic liberation. She turns to "fragments of ancient murmurs" to recreate authentic dialogue among Algerian women (Djebar 164)The transition from silence to voice is symbolized through her artistic reading of .

Eugene Delacroix and Pablo Picasso. Where Delacroix enclosed women in silent, heavy interiors, Picasso's later interpretation represents a "door opened onto full sunlight," which becomes a symbol of concrete linguistic and social liberation (164) . For Djebar, the emergence of women during the anti-colonial struggle allows the female body to act as an agent of expression rather than a silent object of display.

In parallel, this dialectic of silence and articulation finds a contrasting exploration in Yasmina Khadra's text. Rather than projecting the female voice into the public sphere as a tool of political disruption, Khadra examines how patriarchal systems enforce absolute linguistic erasure. The veil

and domestic space function as instruments of identity silencing, anchoring the female subject within micro-spaces of muteness. In *What the Day Owes the Night*, Khadra illustrates this forced loss of voice through striking textual evidence: "My mother was huddled in a corner of the sideboards, buried under her veil, barely recognizable among her bundles" (Khadra 10).

The French verb se recroqueviller (to huddle or curl up) suggests a forced contraction in which the woman makes herself as small and silent as possible. The phrase "barely recognizable" reveals how thoroughly the veil erases individual identity and vocal presence, rendering the mother indistinguishable from inanimate baggage.

As Bouharrour and Maoui critically observe, this literal placement among bundles highlights how traditional patriarchal structures enforce female marginalization, reducing the woman's identity to a passive object within colonial social reality (12). Furthermore, Boumaza and Haddouche argue that such confinement under patriarchal and colonial constraints results in the total erasure of the female subject's vocal presence, transforming her into an invisible entity (642).

In this sense, Amara and Senoussi explain that the containment of the female body in marginal corners acts as a physical enforcement of silence, denying women any space for linguistic or social interaction (442). Through this depiction, Khadra demonstrates that the denial of spatial mobility is fundamentally a denial of the right to speak and exist discursively, underscoring the tragic depth of female silence in a world dominated by patriarchal language.

Female solidarity in contexts of shared poverty creates networks of mutual support that enable survival when masculine support proves absent or inadequate. Khadra describes the community of women in the courtyard housing: "The women got along well with each other, stuck together. When one of them fell ill, they managed to put something in her pot, take care of her infant and take turns at her bedside" (19). The idiom "se serraient les coudes" (stuck together, literally "tightened elbows") emphasizes physical and social closeness born of necessity. The practical arrangements

for the sick woman contributing food, caring for her infant, maintaining bedside vigils-demonstrate the concrete ways women support each other when institutional or masculine support fails.

As Bouharrour and Maoui critically maintain, this localized mutual aid system functions as women's alternative social security, compensating for the structural absence of formal welfare and unreliable masculine provision within the postcolonial setting (15). Furthermore, Amara and Senoussi observe that the ability of these marginalized subjects to build bonds of solidarity within the domestic courtyard highlights how subaltern spaces are actively repurposed into defensive environments against shared gender and economic oppression (443).

Viewed through the theoretical frameworks explored in chapter one, this collective domestic survival directly exemplifies Showalter’s feminist model of the "female space." This organic cooperation shows marginalized women creating a distinct, supportive subculture within an oppressive system. By managing their own collective welfare, Khadra's female characters utilize their domestic confinement not as a site of passive surrender, but as an active sanctuary for solidarity, successfully converting shared vulnerability into a powerful mode of subaltern agency and collective endurance.

The dominance of males over females within both family and society manifests as an irrational authority that demands blind obedience. This patriarchal system "appears in the control of the male over the female in the family, society, and power. It is expressed through the father’s irrational domination over the family, which requires blind obedience from the children, as well as in the control exercised by the son over the daughter, even if she is older and wiser than him" (Djeber 114).

Consequently, Patriarchal power operates not through merit, age, or competence, but through gender privilege alone. A son inherits authority over his sister regardless of her greater maturity or wisdom. This structure perpetuates itself across generations, ensuring that each new cohort of males

automatically assumes power over females, foreclosing any possibility of negotiation or questioning.

This rigid distribution of familial authority emphasizes how biological determinism supersedes intellectual competence within post-colonial dynamics. As Boubaaya points out, this automatic inheritance of domestic authority creates an unyielding structural barrier for women, arguing that "the patriarchal lineage deliberately empowers the masculine heir over the intellectually superior female to sustain an unbroken chain of surveillance, effectively stripping the subaltern woman of any legitimate right to negotiate her domestic status" (122).

Expanding on this structural confinement, Bouharrour and Maoui critically add that such traditional gender privileges act as an institutionalized marginalization that completely devalues a woman's wisdom and maturity, reinforcing her submission to male figures regardless of their intellectual capabilities (18). Therefore, the elevation of the brother over the elder sister freezes female agency, ensuring that patriarchal hierarchy survives through naturalized gender privileges rather than rational qualifications.

In parallel, while Djebar analyzes how patriarchal power is codified through irrational gender privilege within the domestic hierarchy, Khadra shifts the critical perspective to the external and socio-historical domain, exposing how this domestic subjugation intersects with the orientalist gaze to commodify the female.The orientalist representation of prostitutes as "fallen odalisques" demonstrates the intersection of colonial and patriarchal gazes that eroticize and degrade colonized women effectively stripping them of their narrative voice.

Describing a brothel scene, Khadra describes," It looked like a painting by a depressed Eugène Delacroix depicting fallen odalisques". The reference to Delacroix invokes the French Orientalist painter whose harem scenes eroticized and exoticized North African women for European consumption. The qualifier "depressed" suggests that this real scene of prostitution lacks the

romantic aestheticization of Delacroix's paintings, presenting a degraded rather than idealized .version of the odalisque

Furthermore, the term "fallen odalisques" marks these women as having descended from the imagined luxury of the harem to the sordid reality of the brothel, yet both positions odalisque and prostitute construct women as sexual objects available for male consumption. This comparison reveals how colonial orientalist imagery continues to shape perceptions of Algerian women, even in contexts of poverty and exploitation that contradict romantic fantasies.This cross-textual nexus proves that the objectification of Algerian women is sustained by both internal traditions and external cultural impositions.

Analysing this restrictive visual dynamic, Amara and Senoussi observe that the intersection of colonial and domestic gazes deepens female marginalization, asserting that "the exoticization of the subaltern woman through historical artistic representations serves to validate both foreign colonial documentation and native patriarchal possessiveness, reducing her lived reality to a silent, consumable spectacle (449). Khadra's critique of the fallen odalisque exposes the double layered oppression where the subaltern body is continually stripped of its authentic subjectivity to satisfy conflicting masculine fantasies.

Women's bodies become central sites of both colonial and patriarchal violence during the war, subjected to public exposure, sexual violation, and fragmentation, which male poets later appropriate for nationalist symbolism. The character Ali precisely addresses the women directly, emphasizing this historical trauma:

> Your bodies were photographed in the streets after being stripped of their clothes, your hands raised threateningly before the tanks... We suffered for your legs that the rapist soldiers spread apart. And the great poets have often spoken of you in lyrical poems in their collections your

> troubled eyes... No, rather your bodies, which they used in tiny fragmented pieces. (Djebar 100)

The photographing of stripped bodies, the pain of rape, and the subsequent romanticization by male poets reveal multiple layers of exploitation. Women's bodies are stripped, violated, and broken into symbolic fragments that serve colonial documentation on one hand and nationalist lyricism on the other neither of which centers women's own subjectivity or lived experience.

Through this critique, it becomes evident that the masculine romanticization of female suffering effectively functions as a linguistic erasure, denying women the right to articulate their own trauma. Assia Djebar attempts through her pen to untangle these miscellaneous ordeals through her polyglot voices to promote the construction of an Algerian female identity that is open to difference. As Amara and Senoussi critically observe, this multi-layered violence reduces the female lived reality to a silent, consumable spectacle that is continuously appropriated by conflicting political discourses (443).

Contrasting the depiction of women as subjugated, the subsequent passage presents a progressive masculine discourse that champions women’s autonomy and rejects their objectification. This progressive masculine discourse can recognize women’s autonomous subjectivity and right to refuse being treated as property or negotiable objects. Jean-Christophe :strongly defends Émilie’s independence through a decisive declaration. "Émilie is not an object, a work of art that one buys in a store or a concession that one negotiates. She belongs only to herself She is free to choose as she is free to renounce" (Khadra 126) .

This declaration explicitly rejects the objectification of women as purchasable commodities or negotiable concessions between men. The insistence that Émilie belongs only to herself asserts feminine self-ownership against patriarchal claims of masculine possession. Furthermore, the recognition of her freedom to choose or renounce acknowledges genuine feminine agency and the .legitimacy of women’s refusals.

Through a feminist theoretical lens, specifically drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's foundational concepts in *The Second Sex*, Jean-Christophe's discourse directly challenges the historical construction of woman as the passive "Other" who is merely possessed or traded . By declaring that she "belongs only to herself," his speech acts as a counter-discourse that dismantles the traditional .patriarchal entitlement over the female body and identity.

From a postcolonial perspective, this progressive gender ideology represents a critical shift within the text's overall portrayal of patriarchal relations. As Boumaza and Haddouche critically maintain, such an alternative masculine position reflects a complex intersection where postcolonial subjects attempt to negotiate and transcend both colonial hegemony and local patriarchal constraints Consequently, this framework demonstrates that integrating a progressive masculine position .(640) respects rather than appropriates feminine autonomy, proving that the reclamation of female voice and agency can be actively supported within revised postcolonial realities.

Women's bodies during wartime become sites of multiple exploitative gazes: colonial photographic documentation, military sexual violence, and nationalist poetic appropriation. The character Ali addresses the women directly, recalling this collective trauma and how they were stripped of their voice and dignity:

> Your bodies stripped of clothes were photographed in the streets, your threatening hands before the tanks... We suffered for your legs that the raping soldiers spread apart. And great poets have often spoken of you in lyrical poems from their collections your disturbed eyes... No... rather your bodies that were used in parts, in very small parts.(Djebar 100)

This passage powerfully catalogs the layered violations inflicted upon women's bodies: colonial forces photographing them after stripping, soldiers raping them, and nationalist poets later

romanticizing their suffering. Each form of exploitation reduces women to objects serving external purposes military documentation, sexual domination, or symbolic nation-building.

The stripped bodies captured in photographs, the hands raised defiantly before tanks, and the legs forced apart by rapists publicly gesture toward defiance. Yet, the poets who transform these experiences into lyrical verses fragment women into symbolic details disturbed eyes or bodies broken into tiny pieces rather than acknowledging them as whole, autonomous subjects. Whether through the colonial camera, the soldier's violence, or the poet's pen, this fragmentation consistently denies women their full humanity and subjectivity applying a rigorous postcolonial feminist framework to this multi-layered oppression, the text seeks to dismantle systematic erasure. As Yousra Terbeche and Nassima Kaid explain, "Assia Djebar seizes the opportunity to look for ways to un-silence the subaltern Algerian woman in a polyphonic chorus that adds a different 'her' to the narrative and history" 272). This integration shows that Djebar's project is not only to expose physical and linguistic violence but also to restore women's voices and agency that both colonial history and native patriarchy attempted to erase.

While Djebar shows how women's bodies are fragmented and exploited in times of war, Khadra presents women confined to domestic roles but still finding small ways to resist. These representations of women in Yasmina Khadra's work reveal the multiple constraints and occasional resistances that characterize feminine existence under patriarchal structures. Women appear primarily as mothers, wives, daughters, and widows identities defined entirely through relationships .to men.

Consequently, they occupy domestic spaces, perform reproductive and household labor, and endure masculine violence and abandonment with varying degrees of resignation or resistance. Yet within these constraints, women also create solidarity networks, claim limited forms of agency, and occasionally articulate powerful critiques of masculine failures. The text thus presents a complex

portrait of feminine subordination that acknowledges both the severity of patriarchal oppression and the persistent, if often limited, forms of feminine survival and resistance.

Applying a comparative postcolonial feminist analysis to both authors, it becomes evident that both Djebar and Khadra engage in a profound textual reclamation of the subaltern female voice. As Terbeche and Kaid emphasize in their broader study of Algerian literature, the critical effort to accommodate Algerian women allows them to reconstruct their own histories and speak through their plentiful, hoarse voices rather than remaining trapped in historical silence (272)

Therefore, this textual nexus proves that Khadra's female characters, even when confined to restrictive domestic roles, are part of a broader literary effort shared with Djebar to give voice to Algerian women's struggles, subjectivities, and multifaceted resistances against patriarchal and historical erasure.

In conclusion, the analysis of voice and silence in Djebar and Khadra reveals how women move from patriarchal and colonial muteness into active self-articulation. Through a postcolonial feminist lens, this section has shown that reclaiming language and breaking domestic silence are vital strategies for subaltern survival and solidarity. This emergence into textual and verbal presence establishes the foundation for women to claim a broader historical role.

3. Historical Agency and Resistance

The question of women 's historical agency represents another fundamental point of divergence between Djaber and Khadra. For Djebar, male recognition of women's collective suffering during the war often attempts to mobilize female pain for nationalist purposes, while simultaneously obscuring women's ongoing subordination. One man addresses his brothers, invoking the image of widows, orphans, and the Algerian earth itself bleeding:

> I see clearly all our women, one after another, all the widows and all the orphans... Look, my brothers, look at these drops of blood in the grains of earth in this hand. For you Algeria has bled from her entire body,

> from her vast entire body; for you Algeria has given of her whole soil for our freedom and for this return. Yet, from behind her torments, she now speaks the language of forgiveness. So look, my brothers. (Djebar 125)

By claiming “our women” and urging his brothers to contemplate the blood-stained soil as a symbol of national sacrifice, the speaker appropriates both female and national suffering in service of a masculine collective identity. The assertion that Algeria, despite her immense suffering, now speaks of forgiveness risks foreclosing women’s right to sustained grievance or demands for justice. In this rhetoric, women and the nation are positioned as suffering mothers or bleeding bodies whose pain has purchased male freedom, rather than as autonomous subjects entitled to claim their own liberation. Examining this appropriation through a postcolonial feminist framework shows that nationalist discourse often reduces women’s historical experiences to allegories of the wounded nation, silencing their political agency. As Terbeche and Kaid critically maintain, "Assia Djebar seizes the opportunity to look for ways to un-silence the subaltern Algerian woman in a polyphonic chorus that adds a different 'her' to the narrative and history" (272). This means that romanticizing women's pain actually hides their real history. Instead of showing women as active fighters in the war, this language makes them look like passive victims. Therefore, a postcolonial feminist view is necessary. It helps to show how traditional society uses national history to keep women under male control.

In a different register, within Yasmina Khadra’s novel *What the Days Owes the Night*, the narrative turns from collective suffering to cultural contrasts, where women’s identities become markers of modernity and tradition. The contrast between sophisticated urban women and traditional rural women creates tensions that threaten masculine friendships organized around shared local identity. The differentiation of Hélène demonstrates this divide: “Hélène is a city girl, that’s all. She’s not like our girls. (…) she is a bit sophisticated…” (Khadra 162). The simple assertion that Hélène is a city girl attempts to explain and contain the difference she represents.

The contrast with “our girls” marks urban women as outsiders to the local community. The description of Hélène as “a bit sophisticated” suggests both admiration and criticism, with sophistication representing both desirable cosmopolitan culture and problematic distance from authentic local values.

This urban/rural feminine divide reflects broader anxieties about modernity, colonization, and the erosion of traditional culture, with women’s bodies and behaviors serving as markers of these larger transformations. This urban/rural feminine divide reflects broader anxieties about modernity and colonization, with women’s bodies and behaviors serving as markers of these larger transformations. As Boumaza and Haddouche critically maintain, this division shows how postcolonial societies often struggle between Western modernity and local traditions, making the female body a battlefield for cultural identity (640).

Djebar deepens this critique by examining Delacroix’s obsessive sketches following his brief access to the harem. His detailed notes on colors and costumes reveal a desire to capture and possess a fleeting vision. He “wants to know everything about this new and mysterious life,” carefully recording what must not be forgotten (Djebar 146). Yet the final masterpiece, shaped by uncertain memory, exposes the constructed nature of Orientalism: the “pure image” dazzles, but it tells us more about Western fantasy than about Algerian women’s lived realities. Against this aesthetic confinement, Djebar reconstructs a genealogy of female resistance. Algerian history, she notes, contains numerous episodes of women warriors who stepped beyond their traditional roles as spectators. Their once “formidable gaze” that encouraged men in battle became direct participation at decisive moments (Djebar 156–157).

This shift from observer to actor symbolizes a broader transformation: women moving from enclosed domestic spaces into the open terrain of political struggle. This transformation from a passive colonial image into a revolutionary figure challenges colonial and patriarchal power. Djebar exposes the epistemic violence within Western artistic representation, which, as Amor explains,

confines Algerian women within fantasies of domestic enclosure to maintain colonial dominance (508). This shows how art was used to control and silence women's identity. Through the recovery of the female warrior's "formidable gaze," Djebar restores the silenced female voice, echoing Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern subject entering history (Spivak 102). This reflects women's ability to reclaim their place and speak for themselves. Moreover, Amara and Senoussi view this reimagining as a way for Algerian women to confront colonial and domestic trauma (437). Their idea highlights the healing power of memory and storytelling. Similarly, Boubaaya argues that moving from the private home to the battlefield symbolizes female liberation and autonomy (165). This movement represents freedom from social and domestic restrictions.

While Assia Djebar highlights a form of female resistance that transforms marginalized women into active participants in political struggle, Yasmina Khadra presents a different perspective in his novel *What the Day Owes the Night*. He shows how domestic confinement continues to pass from one generation to another. The marginalization of daughters replicates the invisibility imposed on mothers, creating patterns of feminine erasure.

To show this, Khadra describes his younger sister: "Zahra, three years younger than me, forgotten in the back of a corner, so discreet that one often did not notice her presence" (Khadra 7) This spatial positioning of Zahra in the back corner shows her social marginalization. The word "forgotten" suggests a systematic exclusion from attention and care. Her extreme discretion shows a successful socialization into silence.

According to Ågerup, this corner existence reveals how the patriarchal family renders female children invisible and irrelevant (185). This practiced invisibility trains girls from childhood to occupy minimal space, preparing them for adult lives of domestic confinement. Therefore, girls are shaped by strict social rules that reinforce patriarchal control inside closed family spaces.

The fact that her presence often goes unnoticed reveals how thoroughly the patriarchal family renders female children irrelevant and unworthy of attention. This corner existence, this practiced

invisibility, trains girls from earliest childhood to occupy minimal space and make minimal claims, preparing them for adult lives of domestic confinement and social erasure. From early childhood, girls are shaped by strict social rules that reinforce patriarchal control inside closed family and social spaces. This idea reflects Simone de Beauvoir's argument that society teaches girls to limit their behavior and ambitions from a very young age, preventing them from achieving freedom and independence later in life (152). In other words, oppression begins long before adulthood.

In the context of postcolonial Algeria, this situation becomes more complex. As Boumaza and Haddouche explain, women are often "sandwiched" between historical change and conservative patriarchal traditions, which leads to a deep loss of identity (647). Similarly, Sofiane Maafa argues that the restriction of the female body reflects a social system that carefully controls women's movement to protect traditional values (628). This means that controlling women's space is a way of controlling their freedom.

Ågerup also notes that Khadra deliberately highlights suffering and isolation to show the painful effects of social confinement on marginalized individuals (185). Through this portrayal, the novel What the Day Owes the Night reveals how exclusion can deeply damage both identity and personal autonomy.

Beyond artistic representation, Djebar documents the repetitive labor structuring traditional women's lives milking goats, gathering olives, carrying water. In Women of Algiers in Their Apartment, one woman identifies herself repeatedly as "Itima, I am the orphan," underscoring her vulnerability within patriarchal systems (Djebar 19). Education becomes a contested terrain: a father's bold decision to send his daughter to French school shocks his brother, revealing tensions between liberation and colonial assimilation (Djebar 32). Access to schooling offers possibility, yet remains entangled with imperial power.

When compared together, Djebar and Khadra present two very different visions of women's lives under patriarchal society. In Djebar's work, education becomes a possible path toward

freedom and personal emancipation. In contrast, Yasmina Khadra presents a much darker reality in *What the Day Owes the Night*. He shows how women remain trapped in harsh domestic conditions, where daily labor is linked only to survival. In his narrative, failing to conform to strict patriarchal expectations often leads to violence and physical suffering. Domestic violence against women for failing to fulfill reproductive expectations reveals how patriarchal marriage reduces women to their procreative function.

To illustrate this systemic brutality, Khadra introduces the character of Yezza: “There was Yezza, a plump redhead with an opulent chest, whom her drunkard husband beat every other night She had a face shriveled by the successive beatings she endured, and almost no teeth left. Her fault was not procreating” (Khadra 19). This regular pattern of violence every other night indicates a systematic rather than exceptional brutality, showing a routine feature of Yezza's married life. The physical description emphasizes the visible damage: her face shriveled by beatings and her teeth mostly gone. These permanent physical marks testify to years of sustained violence that has literally reshaped her body. The designation of childlessness as her “fault” (tort) makes she responsible for fertility and justifies violence as a punishment for reproductive failure.

Similarly, while Assia Djebar portrays maternal trauma through generational struggle, Yasmina Khadra presents it through poverty, abandonment, and the harsh isolation imposed by society In *What the Day Owes the Night*, the desperation of women alone with young children reveals the existential terror of maternal poverty. Hadda voices her panic: “What will become of me, alone with two young children, without family, without anyone?” (Khadra 25).

This question shows the extreme vulnerability of the abandoned mother who has total responsibility for dependent children without any resources, support network, or kin. The repetition of “without” without family, without anyone emphasizes absolute isolation. The question “what will become of me” reveals that Hadda’s future appears completely uncertain and threatening, her survival and that of her children in doubt. The young age of the children makes their needs

particularly pressing and Hadda's capacity to meet those needs while also earning income particularly impossible. This question articulates the terror that patriarchal family structures both create and conceal: when masculine support disappears, women and children face potential destitution with no safety net.

In conclusion, the social realities in Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and Khadra's *What the Day Owes the Night* show the deep suffering of Algerian women. However, each author represents this struggle from a different perspective. To understand these differences, it is necessary to examine their distinct authorial positions.

4. Authorial Position

The profound difference between Djaber and khadra 's representation of Algerian woman ultimately derive from their divergent authorial position, political commitment, and literary projects. Speech and self-narration emerge as profoundly political acts through which Arab women can begin to dismantle their historical invisibility and silencing. Djebar asserts, "For Arab women, I see only one way to reveal everything: that we speak, continuously, about yesterday and about today" (Djebar 107). Speaking becomes the sole viable means of revelation and transformation, the essential method by which women can uncover and share their lived experiences. The insistence on continuous speech underscores that a single utterance is insufficient; women must speak persistently and repeatedly to counteract centuries of enforced silence.

By focusing on both "yesterday and today," this practice links historical recovery with contemporary critique, refusing to isolate past oppression from present realities. Continuous speech thus functions as both testimony and resistance: it makes visible what has long been concealed and asserts women's fundamental right to narrate their own stories (107).

While Djebar shows that women resist silence by speaking continuously, Khadra presents a woman who turns her questions inward and blames herself for masculine rejection. Women question their own adequacy and seek explanations for masculine rejection in their own failings,

revealing the internalization of blame that patriarchal structures impose. Émilie expresses this self-doubt: “What did I have that was repulsive? What fault had I committed?” (Khadra 168).

These questions turn Émilie’s judgment inward, searching for her own repulsiveness or fault to explain Younes’ failure to respond to her love. This self-blame represents the psychological cost of patriarchal gender relations that teach women to interpret masculine rejection as evidence of feminine inadequacy. The questions reveal Émilie’s internalized belief that if Younes did not want her, something must be wrong with her. This passage demonstrates how even strong, articulate women internalize patriarchal logics that hold them responsible for men’s choices and failures.

This psychological contrast further extends to how each author views the relationship between female liberation and space. For Djebar, exile and war, though devastating, can unexpectedly open spaces for self-recognition and pleasure, allowing women to encounter themselves in new ways, One woman, now twenty years old after marriage, after losing her sons one after another, after enduring exile and war finds herself admiring her reflection and smiling at herself “like a young girl, like you” (Djebar 122). The comparison to a youthful girl, and to the addressee, suggests a recovered or newly discovered vitality despite profound loss. This mirror scene, in which she admires herself and smiles, represents a rare moment of self-regard and self-pleasure for a woman whose life has been defined by service to others and by grief.

The passage implies that extreme circumstances, while traumatic, can rupture long-established patterns of self-denial and create room for unexpected forms of autonomous self-recognition. Her surprise at her own capacity for self-admiration reveals how deeply she had internalized the belief that her value resided solely in her relationships and functions, rather than in her independent existence. To further explore this tension between internal and external liberation, it is essential to consider how space shapes women’s agency in Algerian literature. Victoria Best notes that Djebar’s writing often moves in the space 'between the harem and the battlefield,' illustrating that for her characters, identity is reclaimed by taking back control of the places from which they were once

excluded—such as the mirror scene (473). This is an inward-looking kind of freedom. While Djebar's women break free by healing their psychological wounds and processing the historical and physical trauma of war, as Katherine Gracki points out (835), this approach contrasts sharply with the more visible forms of resistance found in contemporary narratives.

Djebar's emphasis on psychological autonomy and internal healing stands in clear contrast to Khadra's focus on public confrontation. Where Djebar suggests that liberation must first happen within through overcoming self-denial and processing past trauma Khadra moves the struggle from the private mind to the public square. For him, liberation is not a meditative, silent process; it is an active, modern form of resistance. By shifting the focus from the psyche to the streets, Khadra argues that, under the weight of patriarchal surveillance, true agency must be as visible and public as the very oppression it aims to challenge. Female independence and modernity appear as threatening aberrations that provoke community censure but remain impervious to that censure when backed by wealth and beauty.

Madame Scamaroni embodies this transgressive feminine autonomy: "She led her life as she saw fit and was the only woman in the region to drive a car. Malicious tongues salivated about her to the point of dehydration; Mrs. Scamaroni didn't care. She was beautiful. Rich. Independent. What more could one ask?" (Khadra 73). The deliberate choice to lead her life as she saw fit marks a claim to self-determination unavailable to most women. Her status as the only woman driver in the region emphasizes her exceptional modernity and her claiming of technology and mobility traditionally reserved for men. The gossips who "salivate to the point of dehydration" demonstrate the intensity of community surveillance and critique directed at transgressive women, yet their criticism proves ineffective. Madame Scamaroni's indifference to gossip stems from her possession of the three qualities that can insulate women from patriarchal control: beauty, wealth, and independence.

The rhetorical question “what more could one ask?” suggests that these three attributes constitute complete feminine success, requiring no masculine approval or social conformity. Khadra portrays liberation as an act of public defiance. When Madame Scamaroni drives, it is not just about her social status; it is a clear challenge to a space that is usually dominated by men. This supports Anne Donadey’s argument about how subversion works in Algerian literature. She notes that resisting patriarchal norms happens on two levels: 'a linguistic and psychological rewriting of the self from within, and a physical disruption of social space from without' (29). This shows that for these characters, changing how they see themselves is just as important as the physical space they occupy in public.

The representation of female experience in Assia Djebar's work is deeply shaped by her gender, biography, and political commitment. For Djebar, writing becomes an ethical responsibility to recover voices long silenced in the harems and to narrate histories of confinement and suffering. She asks: “How can we today act as a source for the many tones that still remain suspended in the silence of yesterday’s harems?” (9). This question positions her as both excavator and transmitter of suppressed voices. The metaphor of "suspended tones" evokes voices that are preserved yet inaccessible—existing but inaudible without deliberate effort to recover and amplify them. To serve as a "source" requires a combination of rigorous research, historical fidelity, and imaginative reconstruction of experiences that can never be fully known.

Child marriage and the subordination of girls’ education to family and masculine interests are central features of traditional patriarchal control. One woman recounts: “She left school at the age of thirteen only to find herself, a year later… married. At the same age as her mother, my father gave my hand… to one of his friends, a military man like himself, a non-commissioned officer he cherished. I was barely fourteen years old and my husband was thirty-five” (32). The abrupt end of schooling at thirteen is immediately followed by marriage at fourteen to a man twenty-one years her senior. The father’s decision to “give her hand” to a cherished friend treats the daughter as an object of exchange that strengthens bonds of masculine friendship and solidarity. The girl’s own

preferences and well-being are entirely disregarded. The repetition of the same pattern in the mother's life at the identical age underscores the intergenerational transmission of this patriarchal practice: girls are transferred from father to husband at the onset of puberty, their education and autonomy sacrificed to reinforce male alliances.

On the other hand, Khadra's authorial position and literary project as a male writer offer a unique perspective on female agency. While Djebar reveals how women are silenced and exchanged under patriarchal control, Khadra shows a woman who speaks for herself and ends the relationship on her own terms. Women dismantle masculine romantic illusions by questioning whether relationships imagined by men ever existed beyond masculine fantasy. Émilie challenges the reality of their relationship: "Have we ever been two?" (Khadra 168). This devastating question suggests that what Younes experienced as a relationship was actually his solitary fantasy, never a genuine mutual bond. The emphasis on being two highlights the possibility that Younes imagined connection where Émilie experienced something else entirely. This question claims feminine authority to define relationship reality, refusing to accept masculine interpretation as definitive. It suggests that women's experience of relationships may fundamentally differ from men's fantasies about those same relationships.

Women exercise power through definitive termination of relationships, claiming authority to declare endings rather than passively awaiting masculine decisions. Émilie's declaration exemplifies this feminine authority: "You must understand that everything is finished" (Khadra 168). The imperative "you must understand" demands masculine acceptance of feminine decision. The declarative "everything is finished" leaves no room for negotiation or hope of reconciliation. This statement claims feminine prerogative to end relationships definitively, reversing the traditional pattern in which men hold power to initiate and terminate romantic bonds. Émilie's authority to declare the ending represents her refusal of continued masculine control over the relationship's status or future.

Conclusion

Looking at Djebar and Khadra together, we see how their distinct authorial positions construct different dimensions of female resistance. While Djebar documents how structural violence can target women such as the traumatic political exposure where women are stripped of their clothes in the streets (Djebar 100) she primarily focuses on the subversion of physical and psychological space. In contrast, Khadra highlights the harsh socioeconomic reality that conditions female agency. He demonstrates that for many women, the struggle is not merely a matter of personal choice, but a question of basic survival. When structural poverty controls the resources a woman needs to live, resisting patriarchal domination becomes incredibly difficult. Economic vulnerability renders women susceptible to exploitation, as seen when the broker puts pressure on Badra to make her yield due to her rent arrears (20). The designation of Badra as “easy prey” reveals the predatory .logic that governs social relations when enabled by financial power

This progressive representation of feminine self-ownership in Khadra’s work cannot be separated from his unique biography and authorial position. Yasmina Khadra is the female pseudonym of Mohammed Moulessehoul, a male Algerian army officer. This biographical fact is central to understanding his literary project; by adopting a female identity to bypass military censorship, his text actively works to deconstruct traditional masculine discourse from within. When Jean-Christophe defends Émilie’s independence, declaring that Émilie is not an object... She belongs only to herself (126). The text explicitly rejects the patriarchal objectification of women as purchasable commodities.

For scholars, activists, and readers concerned with gender justice, these differences matter enormously. Djebar’s work provides resources for feminist historical recovery, political analysis, and imaginative envisioning of liberated futures. Khadra’s work documents women’s oppression but offers fewer resources for imagining and achieving women’s liberation. Both authors contribute to understanding women’s experiences in Algeria, but they do so from profoundly different

epistemological and political positions. These contrasting perspectives reflect the central issues discussed throughout this chapter concerning women's agency and resistance. Through their treatment of space, voice, and historical experience, both writers offer different visions of how Algerian women negotiate oppression and seek liberation. Djebar mainly explores the struggle from an internal and psychological angle, giving particular attention to memory, silence, and the reconstruction of the self, while Khadra presents resistance as something that must also take place openly within the public sphere through direct confrontation with social realities. Yet despite these different approaches, both authors ultimately suggest that freedom remains a difficult and continuous process for Algerian women, shaped by an ongoing effort to transform spaces associated with marginalization and silence into spaces of presence, expression, and recognition.

General Conclusion

This study examines the representation of Algerian women in Assia Djebar's and Yasmina Khadra's literary works, from a gendered authorship perspective, using feminist literary criticism, postcolonial feminist theory and postcolonial cultural studies. The investigation is organised around a two-part framework: a theoretical genealogy, established in Chapter One, which traces feminist literary criticism from Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf through Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism to the postcolonial critiques of Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and a comparative close reading in Chapter Two. The textual analysis examines the authors' representational strategies through four thematic axes: spatial confinement and mobility; voice and silence; historical agency and resistance; and authorial positioning. In conclusion, the results tend to confirm the main thesis of the study: that gendered authorship is a structurally determinant force in literary production, i.e. that the different social and gendered positions of Djebar and Khadra generate fundamentally different, politically significant portraits of Algerian women.

Both authors agree that physical space is central to women's oppression in terms of spatial confinement and mobility, but they view this reality from different angles. Djebar directly confronts colonial representation, especially through her reinterpretation of Delacroix's painting *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*. In so doing, she exposes the political economy of the gaze that reduces women to decorative objects within enclosed, aestheticised interiors, while simultaneously recuperating a counter-narrative of women moving through public, historically significant spaces Khadra, however, charts spatial confinement with sociological precision. His women live in degraded domestic spaces the shadow of a hovel, a corner of a courtyard, or a cramped seat among baggage where material poverty and patriarchal authority conspire to restrict their mobility. Whereas Djebar's spatial analysis culminates in public transgression and reclamation, Khadra's characters find spatial liberation to be precarious, exceptional, and always on the verge of reversal.

So, too, is the contrast between voice and silence in the two writers. For Djebar, the recuperation and amplification of silenced female voices is the organising principle of her entire literary project. Her work considers silence as a historical and political imposition, an active danger that breeds fear and constrains the self, not as a natural feminine state. Writing becomes the rupture of this enforced silence and becomes an autobiographical, archaeological and political act. Unlike Khadra's narratives, women's silences are indeed documented, but they are often naturalised. He presents self-suppression and effacement as internalised effects of poverty, patriarchy and social marginalisation rather than as political injustices that require literary remedy. Where Djebar's women finally break their silence in a polyphonic explosion of defiance against the structures that silenced them, Khadra's women more often endure, survive and resist through partial acts of solidarity that do not amount to a transformative self-articulation.

Finally, the analysis of historical agency and resistance shows that Djebar reconstructs a specific genealogy of the historical involvement of Algerian women in anti-colonial struggles, cultural resistance, and the negotiation of power. This focus questions masculine-centred narratives of national liberation, positioning women as active historical agents rather than passive symbols of the nation. Khadra's narratives, however, treat women's historical experiences largely as a background for male development. He treats women suffering in the war of independence with sympathy, but lacks the feminist historiographical purpose necessary to make that suffering a formal claim upon historical memory. The main difference is the way they portray the post independence period. Djebar's characters claim their education, their inheritance, and their recognition for their contribution in the war, exposing the limits of national liberation as a project of human emancipation. In contrast, Khadra's characters are more apt to reproduce the very structures of subordination that colonialism left intact in the context of the private postcolonial family.

Theoretical value of this study works on several levels. Most generally, it shows the continuing relevance and analytical fecundity of both feminist literary criticism and postcolonial feminist theory for understanding literary representation in the postcolonial world. The frameworks

developed by de Beauvoir, Woolf, Showalter, Mohanty and Spivak, although largely developed within Western, Anglo-American and South Asian contexts, are strikingly productive when applied to Francophone Algerian literature. But they cannot be simply imported wholesale; they need careful qualification and extension to fit the specific historical and cultural pressures of the Algerian field. Any such framework of gendered authorship here, in particular, would need to move beyond the social and material conditions of Western feminist theory, to engage with a complex nexus of colonial legacies, postcolonial nationalist ideologies, Islamic intellectual traditions and linguistic hybridity.

More specifically, this study engages in a broader scholarly debate about the epistemological and political stakes of literary representation. Close textual analysis shows that the question of who speaks and from what gendered, geopolitical and ideological standpoint is far more than a biographical curiosity. It is a structural force, the very essence of literary meaning. To compare Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra is to gain insights that would be missed by studying either author in isolation. It shows how the same social reality, that of the oppression of Algerian women in a matrix of colonial history and patriarchal power, can generate radically different literary landscapes, depending on the gendered positionality of the author. These different representations, in turn, have profoundly different implications for how we imagine liberation and construct collective memory.

Moreover, this study offers a direct contribution to the field of Algerian literary studies, presenting a methodologically systematic and theoretically rigorous comparative reading of two of the most prominent figures in the field. Although the scholarship on Djebar and Khadra is well-established in itself, this explicitly comparative study, based on the notion of gendered authorship and elaborated through four thematically-oriented analyses, offers a more cohesive and comprehensive account of their differences of representation than is offered in the literature. This project also fills a long-standing gap in Anglophone scholarship, which has sometimes overlooked the rich critical work coming from Algeria itself, by incorporating Algerian critical views from

scholars such as Zineb Boumaza, Fethi Haddouche, Naciera Belfar Boubaaya, Karima Bouharrour, Hocine Maoui and Imène Amara.

Like any project of this scope, there are some limitations that suggest promising future research. First, the comparative focus on Djebar and Khadra is analytically pointed but it inevitably marginalises other important voices. A wider study involving writers such as Maïssa Bey, Leïla Marouane, Rachid Boudjedra, or Boualem Sansal would offer a more complex and intricate map of the gendered strategies available in Algerian literature, and would enable a more subtle analysis of the intersection of authorial gender, literary genre, and political perspective.

Second, as this study is focused mainly on narrative prose fiction, it would give a more complete picture of gendered authorship in the region if it included poetry, drama, autobiography, and the essay. Autobiography is a particularly potent genre for feminist and postcolonial inquiry, with its complex negotiation of individual lived experience and collective testimony, and of literary convention and political urgency. Third, while Algerian scholarly perspectives are included here, a more systematic engagement with oral traditions, popular culture, and non-literary expression would improve our understanding of how gender is negotiated across Algerian cultural life more generally.

Finally, this study opens the door for future research into the reception of Djebar and Khadra within Algeria itself. It would be invaluable to explore how their texts are read, debated, celebrated or contested in different times and social contexts. Such a reception study would complement the focus of this project on literary production with an equally rigorous look at literary consumption, with an emphasis on the social dynamics through which authors and audiences negotiate gendered representations. Ultimately, the gendered authorship of postcolonial literature is an open, fertile field. Ongoing comparative and theoretically informed research can teach us much about the persistent links between gender, power, and the literary imagination today.

The paper concludes by arguing that gendered authorship in postcolonial Algerian literature is not a marginal issue but rather a structural foundation of literary production. It tells every level of the representation of women's experience, agency, voice and history on the page. The gap between Assia Djebar and Yasmina Khadra exemplifies the fact that the chasm between a female-centered, testimonial project and a male-authored, socially realist narrative paradigm yields radically different representations of Algerian women at the level of their most basic epistemological and political assumptions rather than simply in tone. Djebar's women do speak, resist, remember, and reclaim their space. Khadra's women suffer and survive, sometimes revolt, but only within the confines of structures they do not radically challenge. To any comprehensive understanding of Algerian literature and the broader, continuing relation between gender, power and narrative representation in our postcolonial world, understanding this distinction, its theoretical underpinnings, its literary texture and its political implications is crucial.

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الأطروحة في تفاعل قضايا النوع الاجتماعي والتأليف والتمثيل الأدبي في الأدب الجزائري المكتوب بالفرنسية، من خلال دراسة مقارنة لأعمال اثنين من أبرز الأصوات الأدبية الجزائرية: آسيا جبار وياسمينة خضرا. وتنطلق الدراسة من مرتكزات النقد الأدبي النسوي، والنسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية، والدراسات الثقافية، للكشف عن أثر المنظور الجندري للكاتب في تشكيل صورة المرأة الجزائرية وتمثيلها داخل النص الأدبي. وتتناول الدراسة هذه الإشكالية من خلال أربعة محاور أساسية تتمثل في العلاقة بين الفضاء المكاني والحركة، وجدلية الصوت والصمت، وقضايا الفاعلية التاريخية والمقاومة، فضلًا عن موقع الكاتب ودوره في بناء الخطاب السردي. يستعرض الفصل الأول التطور الفكري للنقد الأدبي النسوي، متتبعًا مساره من الأطروحات التأسيسية لكل من سيمون دو بوفوار وفرجينيا وولف، وصولًا إلى نظرية النقد النسوي لدى إيلين شووالتر، ثم إلى الطروحات النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية التي بلورتها تشاندرا تالباد موهانتي وغاياتري تشاكرافورتي سبيفاك في نقدهما للنزعة الكونية الغربية. أما الفصل الثاني، فيقدم قراءة تحليلية مقارنة لنصوص مختارة من أعمال الكاتبين. فمن خلال مشروعها الأدبي القائم على استعادة الأصوات النسائية وتوثيق تجاربها، تُبرز آسيا جبار المرأة الجزائرية بوصفها فاعلًا تاريخيًا مشاركًا في صناعة التاريخ. في المقابل، يكشف التحليل أن المنظور السردي لدى ياسمينة خضرا، بوصفه منظورًا ذكوريًا يركز على الرؤية الخارجية، يميل في كثير من الأحيان إلى تقديم المرأة باعتبارها موضوعًا للملاحظة الاجتماعية أو رمزًا للقيود الثقافية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن المنظور الجندري للمؤلف لا يمثل مجرد سمة شخصية عارضة، بل يشكل عنصرًا بنيويًا مؤثرًا في عملية الإنتاج الأدبي وصياغة المعنى. كما تؤكد أن لهذا المنظور أبعادًا معرفية وسياسية عميقة تتصل بكيفية تشكل الهوية الوطنية والذاكرة الجماعية في المجتمعات ما بعد الاستعمارية. ومن هذا المنطلق، تدعو الدراسة إلى اعتماد قراءة نقدية تجمع بين المنهجين النسوي وما بعد الاستعماري، قراءة تراعي موقع الذات المتكلمة داخل الخطاب، وتفكك علاقات القوة التي تتحكم في آليات التمثيل الأدبي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التأليف الجندري، الأدب الجزائري، النقد الأدبي النسوي، النسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية، تمثيل المرأة، النقد النسوي(Gynocriticism) ، دراسات التابع، الهوية الوطنية.