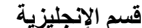


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## for Master's Degree in English

**SPECIALITY:** Cultural and Media Studies

**(1999)**

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## **Dedication**

To my lovely parents, to whom I owe my education.

To my dear brothers and sister, Kamel, Mohammed and Sadia.

To my best friends, Kenza, Nadia and Kaissa.

Thank you all for your constant support and encouragement.

Katia.

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I present my deepest gratitude to my supervisor **Pr. Mouloud SIBER** whose help allowed the accomplishment of this modest work. I thank him for his constant guidance, practical feedbacks and advice.

I also express my sincere thanks to the panel of examiners, **Dr. Nadia NAAR** and **Dr. Rabéa AZIZ**, who have given importance to my humble work and kindly accepted to examine it.

Special thanks go to my parents who have devoted their lives and efforts to ensure my education and success.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation is a comparative study of the forms of resistance manifested in Assia Djébar's *Children of the New World* (1962) and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). It has examined the ways in which the two authors have subverted colonial and patriarchal stereotypes about the colonised and women. Focus has been put on how both authors have provided different visions of their respective countries' histories. For this purpose, I have relied on Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), as a frame theory, and supporting ideas from Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2015). First, it has been deduced that Djébar and Soueif incorporate into their texts various ways for resisting colonial and patriarchal oppressions. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that the authors have engaged in resisting and opposing colonial ideology and practice by subverting and speaking against it. Finally, the analysis of the two texts has revealed the authors' stance on patriarchy and its repression of women's rights and identities.

## I. Introduction

Since memorial times, the human being has been in constant expansion and search of new places to discover and occupy. Thus, new territories had to be owned and exploited. Although it was not called imperialism, the “*mission civilisatrice*” has its roots way back in history, such as Roman imperialism, Islamic expansions, etc. However, none compares to the European imperialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Under the name of civilisation and enlightenment, the European empires, mainly France and Britain, assumed the right to take over lands in Asia, Africa, Australia, the Middle East, to name a few, because their indigenous peoples were supposedly not “fit” to rule themselves. Nevertheless, the rule was far from being “civil”. Indeed, the indigenous people have suffered great atrocities at the hands of the “civilised” coloniser who perceived them as monsters that only understood violence. As a consequence, these atrocities and acts of violence gave rise to several attempts of opposition and resistance from the local people. Resistance, as Edward Said puts it, ‘far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving history’<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, ever since they set foot on the colonised ground, claiming it theirs to exploit, the colonisers have been met with severe opposition and resistance from the indigenous people, who were associated with ‘native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, “equal”, and fit’<sup>2</sup>.

Consequently, aware of ‘belonging to a subject people’<sup>3</sup>, post-colonial writers take part in a ‘general movement of resistance’<sup>4</sup> and write new stories about their country and culture whereby they correct colonial assumptions, and ‘the formerly silent native’<sup>5</sup> is given voice and acts deliberately. Among those writers, Algerian Assia Djebar and Egyptian Ahdaf Soueif are women writers who have greatly contributed to the reestablishment and correction of their countries’ histories, considering that they both have been under the claws of the “imperial

beasts”. Among their works are respectively *Children of the New World* (1962) and *The Map of Love* (1999), in which, as colonised women, both authors convey similar forms of resistance against both colonialism and patriarchy.

## **Review of the Literature**

Both Djébar’s *Children of the New World* (1962) and Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) have been the subject of many critics. The two novels have been perceived as disruptions and corrections of Western stereotypes of the Orient. To begin with, *Children of the New World* (1962) is considered to be Djébar’s first novel in which she assumes her status as a committed writer as she depicts the events of the Algerian revolution for independence. In their “Réalité et poéticité à travers l’écriture djébarienne de la guerre dans *Les Enfants du nouveau monde*”, Farideh Alavi and Zeinab Rezvantab examine the war image that is depicted in Djébar’s novel and what differentiates it from a history book. They claim that, in *Children of the New World*, Djébar integrates and interpretes real events from a subjective and biased literary point of view. As such, she creates a theatrical ‘guerre/spectacle’<sup>6</sup> image which gives us full coverage of the consequences of the war.

In addition, Alavi and Rezvantab state that ‘Djébar crée donc une sorte d’enveloppe littéraire qu’il faut dépouiller pour trouver le fait réel brut’<sup>7</sup> (Djébar creates a sort of literary envelope that needs to be carefully examined in order to find the real facts). With its detailed description of reality, the image of the war reflected in the novel is affected by a poetic vision presented through literary devices such as metaphors and personification, which are influenced by the Kabyle oral tradition. This also shows that Djébar expresses her absolute rejection of the colonialist domination and culture through ‘une revalorisation des formes d’expression artistique populaire de l’Algérie combattante’<sup>8</sup> (a revaluation of popular forms of artistic expression of the fighting Algeria). It is worth noting that throughout the novel, the prevailing ideology is

“Nationalism”, whereby Djébar denounces colonialism and the violence that it had generated. She condemns the colonial domination by depicting the physical and psychological effects it had on the Algerian society.

Another article about Djébar’s *Children of the New World*, written by Amina Saidou, is entitled “La métaphore du dévoilement dans *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* d’Assia Djébar”. Saidou examines the Algerian woman’s condition and status during the war for independence in *Children of the New World*. Saidou states that ‘dans la progression du narrative du roman, Djébar peint cette image de femme engagée’<sup>9</sup>. As the story unfolds, the reader is shown that all women, implicitly or explicitly, have participated in the resistance against the coloniser. Saidou demonstrates that the female characters in the novel participate in the resistance differently. While the conformist female characters show their resistance passively, there are the ones who aspire to modernity and change by openly taking part in the Revolutionary war.

Moreover, Saidou argues that *Children of the New World* conveys another image of the Algerian woman, ‘cette image de femme engagée’<sup>10</sup> (that of a committed woman). Though veiled, the Algerian woman shows great determination to fight when thrown in dramatic situations such as the war. The Algerian woman, as she is depicted in Djébar’s *Children of the New World*, is ready to go beyond the imposed cultural and religious restrictions in times of need. Yet, in spite of the scholarly attention given to the author’s feminist ideology in the novel, it seems to me that, other than Saidou, critics have somehow neglected the effects that the participation in the war has on Djébar’s heroines’ sense of identity. Therefore, I believe, it needs more attention and analysis.

Like Djébar’s *Children of the New World* (1962), Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) is regarded by critics as a “writing back” to the European prejudices of the Orient. In “Soueif’s *The Map of Love*: a Postmodernist Perspective”, Muna Abd Rabbo examines to what extent



*The Map of Love* can be considered a postmodernist novel. She demonstrates how, in order to distort and deconstruct the colonial discourse of the past and the Western views on the Orient today, Soueif uses several postmodernist aspects. She uses multiple narratives and voices to ‘draw a connection between Egypt’s colonial past and the current distorted representation of the Arab Muslims in the West’<sup>11</sup>. The author introduces the reader to a variety of stories and individuals, shifting between past and present narratives, to show that the East is still suffering from colonialism and the colonial discourse.

Additionally, Abd Rabbo argues that Soueif creates a ‘pastiche-like formation’<sup>12</sup> by putting together several genres and discourses. Soueif merges facts, fiction, metafiction, postcolonial theory and feminism in order to attain a certain hybridization of reality and illusion. Besides, the diversity of languages in the novel is another way of reaching this hybridization. Abd Rabbo claims that, by transliterating and including other languages, Arabic and French, in the English text, ‘Soueif succeeds in painting a more comprehensive picture of the world represented in her novel’<sup>13</sup>. Finally, Abd Rabbo believes that, by bringing together individuals from different cultures in romantic relationships, the novel manifests a desire for a world where broader cultural harmony is possible.

Another article, entitled “Colonization: the Spirit of the Age in Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love*” written by Ali Allaham, examines Soueif’s re-reading of the British colonisation of Egypt and the way she links it to the contemporary issues suffered by Egyptians. Allaham argues that *The Map of Love* proves to be a critique of all sorts of colonialism as Soueif tries to unveil the fact that ‘the colonizer’s legacy upon the Egyptian society is not that of physical or political dominance, but of a mental and ideological one’<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, though there is no direct domination, the colonial indoctrination and hegemony still have major effects on Egyptian people’s actions and reactions.

Furthermore, Allaham demonstrates how Soueif, through *The Map of Love*, is aware of the repercussions of colonisation on the colonised, and that history cannot be changed. Yet, ‘she questions whether Arabs, and Egyptians in particular, can truly unfetter themselves from colonialism’<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, to rid the Egyptians of the colonial poison and its repercussions, she attempts, Allaham displays, to create a *mezzaterra*; ‘a hybrid world in which everyone’, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or culture, ‘participates and deflates the colonial hierarchies’<sup>16</sup>. However, it is surprising to see that no criticism has been devoted to link women’s participation in the colonial resistance to their emancipation. Therefore, I believe, it would be interesting to shed light on this perspective.

It follows from the above review of the literature that each of the two novels has been subject to criticism carried out under different perspectives. However, to my best knowledge, the two works have not been brought together before. Thus, the main purpose of this present dissertation is to analyse and compare Assia Djébar’s *Children of the New World* (1962) and Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) by putting emphasis on the conveyed forms of resistance against colonialism and patriarchy.

## **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

The aim of this study is to compare Assia Djébar’s *Children of the New World* (1962) and Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) in terms of similarities and differences. What primarily motivated me to conduct this research is that, to my best knowledge, no comparison has been conducted concerning this topic. My first hypothesis is that the two novels are quite similar. The two stories are set in important historical periods in Algeria and Egypt, namely colonial occupation. Both works exhibit themes of resistance and opposition against colonial and patriarchal oppressions. My second hypothesis is that, revolving around female

characters; both stories show how participation in the resistance has major effects on their sense of identity and liberation.

Moreover, this dissertation's purpose is to analyse and examine the techniques of resistance and emancipation developed in both narratives. Both Djébar and Soueif employ different ways of resisting the colonial and patriarchal ideologies and practices. In both texts, Djébar and Soueif subvert the colonial discourse by giving agency to the indigenous people. Indeed, the authors adopt colonial tools and Western notions in order to resist and debunk colonialism as an ideology. Furthermore, Djébar and Soueif participate in the anti-colonial struggle by using their texts as weapons against the colonisers. They engage their characters in organisations and movements of resistance and reveal the atrocities committed by the colonisers. As such, they show their nationalist sentiment and commitment to the liberation struggles. Add to that, both Djébar and Soueif show their commitment to the question of women. They both expose patriarchy in order to show its repercussions on women. Djébar and Soueif denounce patriarchy just to deconstruct and distort it; thus, emancipating women.

In order to deal with these issues, this research will be based on Chela Sandoval's strategies of oppositional consciousness developed in her *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). As a supporting theory, I will borrow some ideas on colonialism and anti-colonialism from Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (1998). These theories seem to be appropriate in the sense that Djébar and Soueif develop forms of resisting colonial and patriarchal oppressions. Sandoval, in her work, develops new ways and technologies for resisting systems of oppression and empowering the marginalised and the oppressed, which is present in Djébar's and Soueif's narratives. Moreover, my reliance on some of Loomba's ideas is prompted by the fact that she examines the effects of colonialism and anti-colonial movements on women.

In addition to an introduction, methods and materials, and a conclusion, the discussion of this dissertation will be divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, I will try to identify the ways in which the two authors subvert and reject the colonial ideology. As for the second chapter, it will be devoted to the examination of the anti-colonial practices manifested in the two novels. Finally, in the third chapter, I will explore the ways in which the two authors expose the patriarchal system and how they have emancipated their female characters through engaging them in the colonial resistance movements and organisations.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 260.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 258.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Frideh Alavi and Zeineb Rezvantaleb, 'Réalité et poéticité à travers l'écriture djebarienne de la guerre dans *Les Enfants du nouveau monde*', *Revue des Etudes de la Langue Française* 10(2014): 28, Viewed 14 April 2021, <[https://relf.ui.ac.ir/article\\_20338\\_75ac4419b79e77e99341057cd2f82077.pdf](https://relf.ui.ac.ir/article_20338_75ac4419b79e77e99341057cd2f82077.pdf)>

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Amina Saidou, 'La métaphore du dévoilement dans *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* d'Assia Djebar', *South East Coastal Conference on Languages & Literatures* 76 (2015): 4, Viewed 14 April 2021, <<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/seccll/2015/2015/76/>>

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>11</sup>Muna Abd-Rabbo, 'Soueif's *The Map of Love*: a Postmodernist Perspective', *The 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Linguistics, Literature and Translation* (2016): 67, Viewed 02 April 2021, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322065597>.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>14</sup>Ali Allaham, 'Colonisation: The Spirit of the Age in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *Damascus – University Journal for the Arts and Humanities* 34 (2018): 11, Viewed 01 April 2021, <http://damascusuniversity.edu.sy/mag/human/FCKBIH/file/2018-1/7-24.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 19.

## II. Methods and Materials

### 1. Methods

As female authors from the Third World, Djébar and Soueif seem to be interested in issues related to subordination and resistance in terms of race and gender. The present dissertation will be devoted to the identification and analysis of the different methods of resistance adopted in the two writers' respective works, *Children of the New World* (1962) and *The Map of Love* (1999). As a frame theory, it seems appropriate to apply Chela Sandoval's concepts of resistance developed in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). To develop her theory, Sandoval reinterpreted and combined several concepts she borrowed from different works of Western and Third World theorists. In her book, Sandoval developed concepts as 'Forms of Consciousness-in-Opposition'<sup>17</sup> that will make individuals 'capable of speaking to, against, and through power'<sup>18</sup>, which seem to fit our analysis of both Djébar's and Soueif's texts.

In the 'Equal-rights Mode of Consciousness'<sup>19</sup>, Sandoval argues that the subordinated peoples are aware that the differences that granted them an inferior position 'lay in appearance only, not in "reality"'<sup>20</sup>. Third World peoples have always been subject to acts of repression due solely to their racial, class, gender, and sexual differences. Sandoval adds that those who believe in this oppositional ideology 'argue for civil rights based on the philosophy that all humans are created equally'<sup>21</sup>. They believe that the essence of the human identity is beyond these differences; thus, everyone should be treated equally. The two texts arguably fit into this category as both authors seem to advocate for equal rights between class, racial or gender categories.

Furthermore, unlike the equal rights mode, the 'Revolutionary Form'<sup>22</sup> of opposition celebrates and reinforces the differences between the subjugated peoples and the 'human-in-

power'<sup>23</sup>. Under this ideology, it is believed that equality is not possible under the 'confines of the present social order'<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, the oppressed must lead rebellions and revolts against the dominant, oppressive order in the aim of destroying, reconstructing and transforming society 'toward the goal of functioning beyond all domination/subordination power axes'<sup>25</sup>. The two novels under analysis also fit into this category. Characters in both novels get involved in revolutionary actions, whether violent or peaceful, against the dominant orders.

Another concept that is elaborated in *Methodology of the Oppressed* is 'meta-ideology'<sup>26</sup>. Through this 'technology for emancipation'<sup>27</sup>, the individual is able to challenge the dominant ideology through the 'ideologization of ideology'<sup>28</sup>, functioning both within and against ideology. Sandoval argues that, for the sake of survival and social justice, the subjugated people need to strategically and consciously adopt the dominant ideology in order to be able to unveil its naivety or 'to reveal, transform, and disempower its signification'<sup>29</sup>. In order to perform this strategy, Sandoval transforms the 'Speech of the Oppressed'<sup>30</sup>, which is devoid of ideology, into a 'Revolutionary Language'<sup>31</sup> that is capable of countering and subverting the dominant discourse. This concept embodies both Djébar's and Soueif's subversion of patriarchal and colonial discourses. Indeed, both authors have strategically adopted some concepts from the patriarchy and the colonial discourse only to transform them into tactics of resistance.

In addition to meta-ideology and the language of revolution, this research will make reference to two other ways that Sandoval has identified to counter dominant ideologies. The first is the oppressed peoples' ability to speak outside the terms of ideology, or what Barthes calls 'zero-degree of language'<sup>32</sup>. In this degree, the oppressed use language in order to change their realities; thus, they are emancipated from the dominant ideology and do not run the risk of 'eternalizing the hierarchies of the dominant order'<sup>33</sup>. Besides, silence is identified

as a tool for countering ideology. Silence becomes a tool of resistance whereby the oppressed subject ‘refuses to engage ideology at all’<sup>34</sup>. These concepts, I presume, can be well applied to both texts, since they exhibit instances of silence and the ‘zero-degree of language’.

Along with the frame theory developed in Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed*, I relied on some ideas from Ania Loomba’s *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. The book offers a deep analysis of the complexities of Colonialism and Postcolonialism. In her book, Loomba asserts that nationalists and anti-colonial activists often borrow ideas from Western theories and transform them to suit their indigenous ideas. She shows how anti-colonial intellectuals’ ideas intersect with other fields such as philosophy, linguistics, feminism, etc, which brought about ‘new types of inquiries into the colonial past, a new focus on anti-colonial resistance, and a new analysis of the dynamics of recently decolonised states’<sup>35</sup>.

Moreover, Loomba studies the processes of colonial resistance and decolonisation and links it to women’s struggles by highlighting the ‘place of gender in colonial rule, anti-colonial movements and post-colonial societies’<sup>36</sup>. Colonialism, Loomba claims, has erased many ‘matrilineal and woman-friendly cultures and practices’<sup>37</sup>, thus, exposing women to more subjugation and oppression. Therefore, anti-colonial activists made it one of their missions to initiate reforms regarding women’s position as an act of resistance against colonialism. Anti-colonial struggle is perceived as a fight to ‘represent, create and recover a culture and a selfhood’<sup>38</sup> that have been destroyed and repressed by the coloniser. This suits my research as well. Basing my analysis on *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, I will try to identify the ways through which colonialism and anti-colonial movements have affected women and how the two authors have tried to rehabilitate their cultures.

## **2. Materials**

### **a. *Children of the New World* (1962)**



*Children of the New World* is a historical fiction novel written by Algerian feminist author and filmmaker Assia Djebar and published in 1962. The story is set in Blida in a single day in spring, two years into the break out of the Algerian war for independence. Divided into nine chapters, each entitled after a character, the novel recounts and illustrates the violence and atrocities that the Algerian people went through during the Algerian Revolutionary war. Being an anti-colonial work, Djebar shows through her characters what pushes people to resort to violence in order to fight for their own freedom. Cherifa, one of the main characters, decides to go against the Islamic values and went out of the house on her own in order to warn her husband, Youssef, that he is suspected by the French police of being part of a secret nationalist organisation. Learning that, Youssef decides to go to hiding in the mountain among his fellow fighters.

Lila, another main character, goes through a state of depression and anxiety, blaming her husband, Ali, for choosing the Revolution over her and fleeing to the mountains. As the story unfolds, we are introduced to Touma. Considered a traitor of the Algerian traditions and cause, she is murdered by her younger brother Tawfiq in the middle of the city. Bashir, Lila's cousin, decides to leave his promising career as a doctor to join the resistance and puts a field on fire. The next day, in the morning, Bashir is assassinated by the French police and Lila is arrested.

### **b. *The Map of Love* (1999)**

*The Map of Love* is also a historical fiction novel written by Egyptian Anglophone author Ahdaf Soueif and published in 1999. The novel recounts two stories set in different historical periods in Egypt. The first story, set in 1900, told by Amal -an Egyptian scholar, is about an English woman, Anna Winterbourne, who travels to Egypt. Driven by mere curiosity, Anna disguises as a man and goes to discover Egypt. Taking her for an Englishman,

two young native nationalists abduct her. Realising she is actually a woman, they take her to their leader's house, Sharif Basha El-Baroudi. To avoid a political catastrophe, Sharif Basha decides to escort Anna back to the Agency. On their way, the two fall in love and decide to marry against cultural and political barriers. The story carries on narrating the political events that happened during that period and in which Anna and Sharif get involved. The story ends with the assassination of Sharif Basha and Anna going back to England with their daughter.

The other story is set in 1997 modern Egypt. It is about Anna's great granddaughter, Isabel Parkman. Isabel is an American journalist who falls in love with Amal's brother Omar, who is 20 years her senior. Coming back home, Isabel finds a chest in her flat containing her great grandmother's diaries and letters. Advised by Omar, Isabel travels to Egypt to have Amal translate the diaries and workout the story of Anna Winterbourne and Sharif Basha El-Baroudi. During that process, Amal comes across a journal belonging to Sharif Basha El-Baroudi's sister, Leila El-Ghemarwi. Odd enough, Layla happens to be Amal's grandmother; thus, Amal realises that she, Omar and Isabel are in fact related by blood. As she unfolds 'Anna's story', as she calls it, Amal reconnects with her native village and gets involved in their struggles against the government. Despite the age gap and Omar's uncertainty of their relationship, Isabel gives birth to Omar's son. Eventually, Amal decides it her mission to take care of her village and her nephew.

## Endnotes

<sup>17</sup>Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (New York: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>18</sup>Angela Y. Davis, Foreword to *Methodology of the Oppressed*, by Chela Sandoval (New York: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xi.

<sup>19</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>35</sup>Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3. Viewed 12 March 2021. < <https://b-ok.africa/book/2647172/b2c47f>>.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 211.

### III. Results

This dissertation has been devoted to the analysis and comparison of Assia Djébar's *Children of the New World* (1962) and Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999) through the perspectives of Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) as a frame theory and Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2015). After the analysis of these two novels, it has been deduced that both authors have dedicated their texts in order to express their anti-colonial and feminist sentiments. Both works exhibit themes about colonial resistance and gender emancipation in the Algerian and Egyptian contexts. Through resorting to Sandoval's strategies of resisting oppressive ideologies, I have concluded that the two authors counter the dominant ideologies and practices of colonialism and patriarchy.

The first major idea relates to the anti-colonial ideology that is prevalent in both novels. Through their works, Djébar and Soueif counter the dominant ideology of colonialism. In order to do so, the authors adopt the colonial ideology only to subvert its significance and show it as untrue. Both authors demonstrate that colonialists' justification for their "*mission civilisatrice*" is wholly based on Western assumptions and stereotypes about the East. Thus, it is revealed, the two works debunk these assumptions.

In addition, the analysis of the two novels demonstrated that the colonised subjects resort to different means in order to challenge the colonial power and free their countries from it. They get involved in movements and organisations of resistance against the colonisers. This study has also revealed that, despite being unrecognised, women have taken part in these resistance movements. In fact, it is deduced; women had made great contributions to the resistance in Algeria and Egypt and were very influential in their countries' liberation. The chapter has also revealed that Djébar and Soueif, as women writers, are both committed to the nationalist fight in Algeria and Egypt. Both authors employ their texts as weapons against

colonialism to participate in anti-colonial struggle; which makes the novels a “Literature of Combat”.

Finally, the last idea relates to Djébar’s and Soueif’s exposition and challenge of the patriarchal system through their works. In both texts, the authors criticise the patriarchy by displaying it as an oppressive system for women. They denounce the effects of this system on women’s identities and freedom. The chapter has also shown that the authors challenge this system by promoting women’s rights and emancipating their female characters.

All in all, throughout this dissertation, I have reached significant findings concerning both authors and novels. Indeed, it is revealed that the writers engage in countering the colonial ideology and occupation. Both texts highlight the authors’ nationalist sentiments. Moreover, both authors criticise and reject the oppressive patriarchal system by exposing its repercussions on women and promoting women’s freedom.

## IV. Discussion

### Chapter One: Anti-colonial Ideology in Djebbar's *Children of the New World* and Soueif's *The Map of Love*

Colonial domination has encouraged anti-colonial intellectuals to assume the responsibility of countering the colonial ideology. They create a new anti-colonial praxis that proves the insignificance of colonialism as an ideology. They have written texts that debunk and subvert the colonial discourse. As Sandoval points out in her *Methodology of the Oppressed*, the oppressed subject is able to challenge and subvert the dominating ideology through 'the ideologization of ideology'<sup>39</sup>. The oppressed subjects strategically adopt the dominating ideology in order to expose its significance and subvert it. Indeed, just as any other Third World postcolonial writer, Djebbar and Soueif have participated in the rejection and subversion of the colonial ideology. They are able to adopt and, then, challenge the dominant ideology of colonialism in order to 'display [it] as naive –and no longer natural –to reveal, transform, or disempower its signification'<sup>40</sup>. Through their writings, Djebbar and Soueif subvert the colonial ideology in order to recreate visions of their nations' histories in which their people are represented as independent individuals.

In both texts, Djebbar and Soueif engage in countering the colonial ideology and assumptions about the colonised peoples. They have created characters that are able to act and speak against the colonial domination; thus, show their individuality and agency. According to Loomba, 'the white man's burden was constructed as a parental one: that of "looking after" those who were civilisationally underdeveloped (and hence figured as children), and of disciplining them into obedience'<sup>41</sup>. Indeed, the colonised people have been associated with stereotypes like primitiveness, savagery, inertia, etc. Basically, they are portrayed as children in need of the civilised Western guidance. In order to counter these assumptions, Djebbar and

Soueif give voice to their characters. The latter are portrayed as active and mature individuals. In *Children of the New World*, Ali's long conversations with Lila show that, unlike what the French assume, the Algerians are not ready to give up their rights. He says: 'The foreigner expected our submission to go on forever. But can you say you're sleeping when you know you're sleeping?'<sup>42</sup> Ali's statement shows that the colonised subjects are aware of their subordination. He goes on saying that what the people need in order to be liberated is indeed to be politically conscious of their status as subordinated people. As such, Djébar subverts the stereotype of inertia associated with the colonised people and shows that they are well aware of their situation and that they will not stand by and do nothing about their subordination.

Similarly, Soueif in *The Map of Love* shows that the indigenous people are not unaware of the injustices that they undergo. For instance, when Amal meets with her old friends in the 'Atelier'<sup>43</sup>, the conversation they have shows that people in Egypt are aware of the dominating system in the world. They know that they are subordinated and that they are reduced to stereotypical images. Moreover, the women in Tawasi show that they are freed from the dominant ideology since they are aware of their subordination by the United States. 'Isn't Amreeka the biggest country now and what she says goes?'<sup>44</sup> They know that everything is controlled by the United States, and that it is not in their benefit. This fits Sandoval's language of the oppressed or the 'zero-degree of language'<sup>45</sup>. Though trying to transform the oppressed people's reality, it is 'useless in the realm of ideology'<sup>46</sup>. Soueif writes:

Complicated or not complicated, we're here on the land and the one of us works all day till our backs snap and we still can't live. And the young people – they go and get educated and then what? They want to get married, they want a house to shelter them, they want to work and live like humans and life has become very difficult.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, these women want to have nothing to do with it, and they know they cannot do anything to change their situation. They just want to live their lives in peace.

Furthermore, both Djébar and Soueif subvert the Orientalist stereotypes about the place of women in the Muslim families. As Loomba points out, the colonialists often justify their “*mission civilisatrice*” ‘by claiming that it was rescuing native women from oppressive patriarchal domination’<sup>48</sup>. It is a commonly held belief that Muslim men are unjust towards women and keep them stuck in ‘the middle ages’<sup>49</sup>. They are perceived as oppressors who keep their women away from modernity. In *Children of the New World*, Djébar debunks this assumption through Rachid. He defies his father and sends his daughter to school and does not force her to wear the veil. He knows that a time is coming when even girls are going to be involved in public affairs and that his daughter will need the proper education, saying: ‘Times are changing and even girls will need to be properly prepared!’<sup>50</sup> This shows that Rachid is not an oppressive father who locks his daughter at home until she marries. Hence, Djébar shows that, contrary to French beliefs, Algerian men are not as oppressive as they are portrayed.

Similarly, Soueif also subverts these stereotypes. Through introducing historical figures and events into the narrative of *The Map of Love*, she proves to the West that Egyptians evoked the Question of Women way before Europe thought of granting women the right to vote. Layla gives Anna a book speaking about women. She says that the author is against the forced veiling of women and argues that ‘girls should be educated just like boys’<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, in a political meeting, while discussing the future of Egypt, Qasim Amin argues that the leaders cannot speak of a Renaissance ‘while half her population live in the Middle Ages’<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, Sharif Basha in *The Map of Love* is the perfect subversion of the Western assumptions. For instance, when Lord Cromer urges him to sign a paper saying that he would not take another wife while married to Anna, he responds by stating that it is already in the marriage contract. In addition, Sharif Basha is against the forced veiling of women and keeping them from public sphere. He advocates for women’s education and their right to



work. He wants to transform his society into one where women and men are treated equally and have the same rights and duties. As such, through Sharif Basha, Soueif subverts the British assumption about Egyptian men oppressing women in the name of religion and proves that they are willing to take a step to improve women's situation.

According to Sandoval, the oppressed people fight for their rights and to be treated according to the 'philosophy that all humans are created equally'<sup>53</sup>. They no longer want to be subordinated and show that they can be equal to the Europeans. For her, oppressed subjects can gather, from the dominant ideology, the necessary knowledge that will allow them to resist that same ideology. In *Children of the New World*, Bashir, being the only Arab there, strives to be the best in his class. His father wants him to become a doctor so that he can show to the French that 'an Arab whose brothers manage only to polish the conquerors' shoes is capable of fighting them with their own weapons'<sup>54</sup>. Unlike what the French assume, Bashir is the evidence that an Arab can excel in their own institutions. He represents the hope that in the future, even his country, like any other European country, 'will have a wealth of doctors, technicians, teachers...'<sup>55</sup>.

In *The Map of Love*, Soueif presents us with complex political conversations between Egyptian nationalists in order to show that, contrary to the Western assumptions, the Egyptians are far from being savage or backward people; they do not lack rational thinking and are not subject to religious fanaticism. She shows that the Egyptians are well educated people who also seek the best for their country. In his article, Sharif Basha argues that the Western elements found in the Egyptians are not the result of their "civilising mission". He states:

If there are elements of Western Culture in us, they have been absorbed through visiting your countries, learning in your institutions and opening ourselves to your culture. There we have been free to choose those elements that most suited our own history, our traditions and aspirations [...]<sup>56</sup>

The quote above suggests that Soueif believes that the colonised people are equally able to learn and carefully use the dominant ideology. Thus, it delegitimizes the colonial discourse on the primitiveness and backwardness of the colonised people.

Furthermore, In her *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba states that even literature ‘often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of the “other” [Western] culture’<sup>57</sup>. Postcolonial writers express their anti-colonialist and nationalist stance by the ‘appropriation and subversion of forms borrowed from the institutions of the coloniser’<sup>58</sup> only to use them against them. This is another way that the colonised people challenge the dominant ideologies and the colonial discourse. According to Bill Ashcroft, *et al.*, appropriation is defined as:

The ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the Imperial culture –language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis- that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities.<sup>59</sup>

Ashcroft’s appropriation goes hand in hand with Sandoval’s ‘meta-ideology’<sup>60</sup>, whereby the oppressed people use a ‘resistant language that functions both within and against [the dominant] ideology’<sup>61</sup>. This is done in order to show the absurdity of the dominant ideology and to subvert its significance. This applies well to both texts, for both authors use Western elements in order to discredit their discourse and assert their own identities.

In *Children of the New World*, Djébar gives voice to her female characters and engages them in the resistance in order to subvert and ‘destroy the stereotype of war as an exclusively masculine activity, and Algerian women as bystanders to their nation’s history’<sup>62</sup>. Cherifa is a traditional woman who has never gone out of her house alone as tradition prescribes. When she finds out that her husband, a nationalist fighter, is suspected to be part of anti-colonial organisations, she does not stand by and wait for what will happen. Instead, she decides that she ‘[has] to do something... [she has] to act’<sup>63</sup>. She goes out of her house across town in

order to warn her husband. Cherifa demonstrates that, as Loomba notes, colonised women are 'hardly as silent and suffering as colonial discourses claimed'<sup>64</sup>. Hence, Djébar subverts the colonial assumption that women are inactive and 'bystanders'<sup>65</sup>. Cherifa shows that she can assume the responsibility and does not stand by suffering in silence.

In addition, Salima represents the stereotypical practitioner of the 'meta-ideology'<sup>66</sup> 'technology for emancipation'<sup>67</sup>. Though she went to and teaches in a French school, she does not forget her duty to her country. When she is arrested and interrogated about the organisation and the people who run it, she uses silence as her way of resistance. One of the Orientalist assumptions held about women of the Third World is that they are weak, silent and passive creatures. Salima uses their beliefs against them as she remains silent and passive during the interrogation. She does not submit to the threats and the possibility of torture. By maintaining her position, Salima proves that an Algerian woman can be rigid, strong, and faithful to her country.

Moreover, Djébar uses the French language in order to distort its main purpose, namely cultural assimilation. During colonial times, the French colonisers used their language in order to impose their culture on the colonised Algerians. However Djébar uses it in order to denounce the colonial violence and distort French assumptions about the Algerian people. She is able to give voice to women and makes them act deliberately. As such, Djébar creates 'another level of signification'<sup>68</sup> whereby she uncovers the silent voices and debunks the stereotypes of silence attributed to the Algerian women.

Similarly, Soueif's *The Map of Love* also proves to be a subversion of the colonial assumptions about the Orient. Soueif borrows elements from Western literature and converts them to suit her purpose, which is opposition to the colonial ideology. Soueif, in order to make the story more understandable for the European, both uses the Oriental tale, and then

distorts it. According to Ayse irir, ‘her [Soueif’s] concern is to create a real Orient... and she gives voice, form and history to the orientalised Oriental’<sup>69</sup>. This suggests that Soueif, through the use and subversion of the Orientalist discourse, is able to ‘counter the weight of dominant ideological signification’<sup>70</sup>. She is able to show the gullibility of the colonial discourse and ideology. She recreates Egypt as it really is, by giving voice to the silenced local people and showing their agency.

In *The Map of Love*, Soueif adopts the literary genre of travel writing and subverts it to suit her purposes as a postcolonial writer. Travel writing is a literary genre in which the author describes the different landscapes and peoples they meet in their journey. During the European expansions, some travel writing has greatly contributed to the circulating of the colonial discourse as the writers of this genre described any non-European person as savage, primitive, exotic, and uncivilised; thus, legitimising the “civilising mission”. Soueif disrupts this genre’s primary function, and uses Anna’s, a British Lady who travelled to Egypt, letters and diaries to reveal the repercussions of the British occupation and to show the falsehood of the Orientalist assumptions from a metropolitan point of view.

The most apparent element that Soueif has adopted from the Orientalist discourse is the fantasy harem tale. In *The Map of Love*, Anna hears from her British acquaintances at the agency that ‘life of the harem [is] one of indolence and torpor’<sup>71</sup>, and they dread their visits there. This shows how the colonialist women view the native women as being lazy, uneducated and unproductive, for they are secluded from the public sphere. However, in one of her letters to her kinsman Sir Charles, Anna admits that, unlike the prevailing view at the agency, she finds ‘the company and conversation [in the harem] most pleasing’<sup>72</sup> and productive. Though secluded, women are allowed to participate in political debates about, not only the question of women, but also concerning the fate of their country. As such, Soueif

proves that, unlike the exotic, sexualised image held by Europeans about it, the harem is a place where women can freely express themselves and their political views.

In addition, Soueif uses Edward, Anna's deceased husband, to disempower the signification of the colonial ideology. Under the scope of Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Edward was a victim of the dominant ideology and its language, which aims at "eternalizing" the hierarchies of the dominant order<sup>73</sup>. Edward went to war in Sudan believing in the colonial discourse; that his country is there to "civilise" and educate the savage and primitive natives. 'He believed he was doing the right thing'<sup>74</sup>. However, his psychological unrest and his suicide after coming back from war demonstrate that the ideology is in fact ineffective. Upon arriving to Sudan, he witnessed the British atrocities and injustice towards the indigenous people, and he realised that the war he was fighting for was not an honest one. Through Edward's death, Soueif is able to show that colonialism is not an honourable mission like they claim it to be, thus, 'reveal, transform, [and] disempower its [the colonial ideology's] signification'<sup>75</sup>.

Throughout Soueif's *The Map of Love*, the reader encounters many instances where Soueif adopts a postcolonial concept, which is abrogation. Abrogation is the rejection by some postcolonial writers of the use of the 'correct or standard'<sup>76</sup> form of the colonial language. This is apparent in *The Map of Love* as Soueif distorts the dominant English language to make it suit the Arabic language. She unpredictably introduces Arabic words and phrases into her English text, which makes it difficult for a foreign reader who is unfamiliar with Arabic to understand the conversations, 'Izzay el-sehha'<sup>77</sup> (how is your health). She even 'transliterates'<sup>78</sup> Arabic proverbs and expressions, sometimes without giving its equivalent in English. She writes: 'And they'll be five in the eye of the enemy'<sup>79</sup>. According to Mohammed Albakry and Palsy Hunter Hancock, 'Soueif deploys Arabic in her narrative to represent the different aspects of the linguistic and cultural norms of Egyptian society'<sup>80</sup>. Through writing

in English, a Western element, Soueif is able to assert her cultural identity. Thus, she corrects and opposes the Western Orientalist discourse by employing their own tools, be it their language.

Through their texts, Djébar and Soueif are able to challenge the dominant ideology of colonialism in order to ‘display [it] as naive –and no longer natural –to reveal, transform, or disempower its signification’<sup>81</sup>. They demonstrate that the Orientalist and colonialist discourses are based only on the assumptions of the West about the East and Third World in general. They both distort these discourses by showing that the colonised people are not savage, primitive and backward as the West perceives them. Through *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, Djébar and Soueif show that colonialism is not a “civilising mission” after all. They show that its whole ideology is false and not valid.

## Endnotes

<sup>39</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 210.

<sup>42</sup>Assia Djébar, *Children of the New World: A Novel of the Algerian War*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (New York: Feminist Press, 2005), 106. Viewed 14 February 2021. <https://b-ok.africa/book/3780829/63710c>

<sup>43</sup>Ahdaf Soueif, *The Map of Love* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 181.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>45</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 105.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>47</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 181.

<sup>48</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 169.

<sup>49</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 309.

<sup>50</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 129.

<sup>51</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 305.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>53</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>54</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 126.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>56</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 393.

<sup>57</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 82.

<sup>58</sup>Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *Post-colonial Studies: Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 12. Viewed 11 February 2021. <https://book.africa/book/734163/61d846>.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>60</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 82.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>62</sup>Robert Mortimer, 'Seeds of Change: Assia Djebar's *Les Enfants du nouveau monde/Children of the New World*: a novel of the Algerian War', *El-Khitab* 16(2013): 147-156. Viewed 4 March 2021, < <http://revue.ummto.dz/index.php/khitab/article/view/1227>>.

<sup>63</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 84.

<sup>64</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 170.

<sup>65</sup>Mortimer, 'Seeds of Change', 155.

<sup>66</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 82.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Ayşe Çirçir, 'The Strategic Use of Positivist Orientalism in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *MOLESTO: Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2019): 102-126. Viewed 26 July 2021, [https://www.academia.edu/40136452/THE\\_STRATEGIC\\_USE\\_OF\\_POSITIVIST\\_ORIENTALISM\\_IN\\_AHDAF\\_SOUEIFS\\_THE\\_MAP\\_OF\\_LOVE](https://www.academia.edu/40136452/THE_STRATEGIC_USE_OF_POSITIVIST_ORIENTALISM_IN_AHDAF_SOUEIFS_THE_MAP_OF_LOVE).

<sup>70</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>71</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 195-6.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>73</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>74</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 23.

<sup>75</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>76</sup>Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies*, 3.

<sup>77</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 62.

<sup>78</sup>Abd-Rabbo, 'Post modernist Perspective', 71.

<sup>79</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 62.

<sup>80</sup>Mohammed Albakry and Patsy Hunter Hancock, 'Code Switching in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *Language and Literature* (2008): 221-234. Viewed 02 April 2021, <<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Code-switching-in-Ahdaf-Soueif's-The-Map-of-Love-Albakry-Hancock/372d138ac12e8e36eeb66e4a48fe39b160db857e>>.

<sup>81</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.



## Chapter Two: Anti-Colonial Practices in Djebbar's *Children of the New World* and Soueif's *The Map of Love*

In Chapter One, I concluded that both Djebbar and Soueif reject and subvert the colonial ideology. They show that the indigenous peoples are not as primitive and savage as the colonial literature portrays them. Consequently, the awareness of their subordination and the recognition of their rights give rise to rebellions and revolts by the colonised subjects. According to Sandoval, 'the practitioners of the revolutionary form believe that the assimilation of such myriad and acute differences is not possible within the confines of the present social order'<sup>82</sup>. The colonised subject thinks that under the current hierarchies, there cannot be equality between the subjugated and the 'human-in-power'<sup>83</sup>. Thus, they must rebel and fight to reconstruct and transform the dominant order. In both *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, characters get involved in movements of resistance and rebellions, in order to change the fate of their countries and free themselves from the confines of colonialism.

'Historically speaking,' Loomba states, 'anti-colonial resistance has taken many forms'<sup>84</sup>. Anti-colonial movements in Algeria and Egypt took two different forms. While most Egyptian nationalists were against violent resistance, the Algerian freedom fighters realised that diplomacy was not an option against the French. In *Children of the New World*, Djebbar depicts characters that are caught up in the throes of the violent Algerian war for independence. Though he believes that becoming a doctor is a good thing, Bashir thinks that it is not enough under the current events. For him, 'now... it's all about the revolution, the liberation struggle. No, I'm sure of it, having all that luck is no longer any luck at all right now!'<sup>85</sup>. Through Bashir, Djebbar portrays the burden put on Algerian youth during the war. They found themselves obliged to leave any chance of living a peaceful life and having a

bright future to join the resistance. Therefore, against his father's wishes, Bashir wants to go to the maquis. He states; 'I'm going to join the resistance. That's it, I'm going up to the maquis. For some people going to war is a duty, for others it's a heroic departure. For me, it's a necessity, a real chance'<sup>86</sup>. Here, Djébar transforms the 'language of the oppressed'<sup>87</sup> into a 'pure language of revolution'<sup>88</sup>. As the story unfolds, Bashir acts in a rebellious way and, as an act of resistance, burns down a French lord's farm.

Like Djébar, Soueif depicts characters that are caught, despite them, in violent incidents. Although the general anti-colonial policy in Egypt was peaceful, it did not stop the Egyptian youth to get involved in violent incidents and acts. Desperate for their leader to be released, the two young nationalists resort to abducting Anna, disguised as an English gentleman. Their act falls into Sandoval's 'revolutionary form'<sup>89</sup> of opposition. Through this 'ideology-as-tactic'<sup>90</sup>, the oppressed believe that under the current dominant ideology, their differences will not be recognised or accepted by the 'human-in-power'<sup>91</sup>. As such, the two nationalists act in an illegal way, because they know that 'the law serves the English'<sup>92</sup>. That is to say, they know that if they acted according to law, their demands will not be taken into consideration.

In order to lead the masses into a general rebellion, the intellectual elite in the colonised nations created organisations and movements of resistance. Through using Western notions of freedom and justice, they lead the masses in 'a general movement of resistance'<sup>93</sup>. In both *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, the characters are all engaged in anti-colonial movements. Djébar narrates the story of her characters as they are all involved in the liberation struggle. For instance, Youssef in *Children of the New World* recalls the events of May 8<sup>th</sup>. He remembers being in the crowd when the massacres started. Despite the French police's warning 'that they'd have to disappear, the flags kept moving forward'<sup>94</sup>. Youssef states: 'a laughable battle: people using their bare hands against bullets'<sup>95</sup>. This shows that the people, taken by surprise and having no means, still fought for the sake of their 'country's

flag, [and their] honor'<sup>96</sup>. It shows that the oppressed Algerians rebel in the hope of getting rid of 'the domination/subordination power axes'<sup>97</sup>.

Furthermore, Soueif narrates events in which the colonised Egyptians have participated in movements against the British occupation. As Sandoval points out, the oppressed rebel in order to be treated 'according to the philosophy that all humans are created equally'<sup>98</sup>. As a lawyer, Husni El-Ghemrawi helped in organising a representation by some workers for better work conditions. Because they were unfairly treated, the workers of the tram line organised a strike in order to have the 'same terms of employment as foreign workers'<sup>99</sup>; however, to no avail. They ended up being arrested and the strike was broken. This shows, as Sandoval explains, that the Egyptians cannot enjoy the same rights as the 'human-in-power'<sup>100</sup> as long as they are under the British dominating 'order'<sup>101</sup>.

On the other hand, Sharif Basha uses rather diplomatic tactics to resist the occupation. Layla writes in her journal: 'My brother had pushed at boundaries for thirty years with every legal means available to him'<sup>102</sup>. Indeed, as his own way of resistance and rebellion, Sharif Basha writes articles in which he denounces the British occupation. He uses his voice to demand that his and his people's 'humanity be legitimated, recognised as the same under the law, and assimilated into the most favoured form of the human-in-power'<sup>103</sup>. Sharif has 'campaigned against repressive laws and defended Egyptians against them'<sup>104</sup>. As an intellectual, Sharif Basha could not stand by and watch his people being oppressed by the British occupation. He knows that their rights as oppressed subjects will not be recognised 'within the confines of the present social order'<sup>105</sup>. That is to say, as long as the British are still in control, the Egyptians will not be treated as equals. Hence, Soueif shows through Sharif Basha that the Egyptian 'talking class'<sup>106</sup> spoke for the benefit of the Egyptian people.

Although unrecognised, women have greatly participated in liberation struggles in the Third World. Women in most Muslim countries are secluded to domestic spheres. However, the liberation struggles have forced them to go out into the public sphere for the sake of their countries. Although Egyptian and Algerian societies have a tendency to separate the sexes, Djébar and Soueif portray female characters that are involved in the liberation struggles by their male counterparts' side. Like Gillo Pontecorvo did in his 1965 *The Battle of Algiers*, Djébar demonstrates that women have greatly contributed in the Algerian war for independence. Smuggling food, weapons, medicines, or acting as simple informants for the militants, women have played a crucial role. In the narration of the massacres of May 8<sup>th</sup>, Youssef remembers how even women fought back. Djébar writes:

Behind them, the women stopped singing and were suddenly busy, armed with the same zeal they used at home when rolling semolina dough for the evening meal. They brought out old baskets, filling them with stones, putting some of them in their skirts and veils, and then they, too, entered the fray.<sup>107</sup>

As the quote suggests, although stereotyped as weak, women have participated in the fighting the colonial powers. They changed the signification of the veil. It was no longer the reason for their repression. Rather, it is 'transformed into a technique of camouflage, into a means of struggle'<sup>108</sup>. As such, the Algerian woman, as shown in the text, 'accepts to wear a mask'<sup>109</sup>, that of a cloistered innocent woman, in order to fight back and help the Algerian war for independence.

In addition, Hassiba is shown to be an active participant in the liberation struggle. She is motivated by the injustices the French committed towards her family to join the resistance. As Fanon writes, far into the struggle, it was revealed that 'a number of women very Europeanized in appearance were playing a fundamental role in the battle'<sup>110</sup>. In her journey to meet Youssef, a nationalist fighter, Hassiba opted for a European dress in order to not be suspected. This was a technique used by Algerian women during the liberation struggle.

Women had to remove the veil in order to be able to move freely in the European cities and not be suspected. She admits: ‘... they told me not to stand out during the train ride ... that I should pass unseen ... It’s the first time I’ve worn high heels’<sup>111</sup>. As such, she subverts the colonial strategy of unveiling the Algerian woman, and uses it in order to resist and fight. Moreover, she is shown to be a very determined woman. She expresses her desire and determination to fight the French colonisers by her compatriots’ side. She says; ‘I want to go there, to the resistance, I want to work with those who fight!’<sup>112</sup>. She even spent three months learning ‘how to nurse, make bandages, give injections’<sup>113</sup>, in order to be accepted among the fighters. As such, Djébar shows that Hassiba rebels against the colonisers in order to change her country’s reality and ‘to lead society toward the goal of functioning beyond all domination/subordination power axes’<sup>114</sup>.

Similarly, in *The Map of Love*, Soueif shows how women in Egypt have taken their husbands’ sides in the fight against the occupation. Although they did not engage in direct confrontations with the enemy like the Algerian women, the women in Egypt have shown great resistance against the Occupation. They have participated in movements and protests, written articles against the occupation, and shown great support for their men’s efforts. Women have gone against the traditional values and went out on demonstrations. In *The Map of Love*, when Isabel finds the flag of national unity, Amal explains that Sa’d Zaghloul’s revolution was ‘the first time in the history of modern Egypt that women went out and demonstrated in the streets’<sup>115</sup>. Indeed, their contribution in the nationalist demonstrations was crucial for Egypt’s independence.

From writing articles, signing petitions, to participating in demonstrations against the British occupation, women ‘became a critical force in achieving the partial removal of the British from Egypt in 1922’<sup>116</sup>. In her journal, Anna writes that she and the elite women are planning to create a ‘ladies’ magazine’<sup>117</sup>, she writes:

While the idea is to compare the condition and the aspirations of women in different societies –it is not to confine itself to the “Question of Women” but to enter into matters of general concern and so demonstrate that women are ready to enter a wider arena than that to which they have hitherto been confined.<sup>118</sup>

The quote above suggests that the women’s magazines are also dedicated to the defence of their country against the British occupation. They combine their struggles as women with their nationalist aspirations. As such, through retelling historical events from female perspectives, Soueif proves that women are not as inactive and helpless as they are often portrayed. They not only share the same aspirations as the male nationalists, but prove that women ‘could have political influence’<sup>119</sup>.

Furthermore, in *The Map of Love*, Soueif demonstrates that women have taken their male counterparts’ side in the revolution. Whether it is their brother, father, son, or husband, the women have whole heartedly supported them and believed in his nationalist beliefs. Anna, upon marrying Sharif Basha, embraces the Egyptian cause. She firmly believes that Britain should grant the Egyptians their freedom and ‘pack up and go’<sup>120</sup>. Just like Sharif Basha, she writes articles and letters where she defends the Egyptians and demand that ‘their humanity be legitimized, recognized as the same under the law, and assimilated into the most favored form of the human-in-power’<sup>121</sup>. She writes:

So long as we believe that they are like pets or small children, we can remain here to “guide them” and help them “develop”. But if we see that they are as fully conscious of themselves and their place in the world as we are, why then the honourable thing is to pack up and go.<sup>122</sup>

Anna is also among the great women of Egypt who write against the occupation. With her lineage and understanding of the British culture, she is able to write articles for the British public and connect them to the Egyptian cause, thus, raise awareness. As such, Soueif proves that, although secluded, women have contributed to the liberation of their country, hence, subverts the colonial discourse.

Finally, Djébar's *Children of the New World* and Soueif's *The Map of Love* fall into Fanon's third phase of the literature of the colonised, 'the Literature of Combat'<sup>123</sup>. Through the literature of combat, the colonised intellectual shows commitment to the anti-colonial struggle as they call 'on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation'<sup>124</sup>. Through their texts, Djébar and Soueif assume the responsibility of defending their 'nation's legitimacy'<sup>125</sup> and provide 'proofs to bear out that legitimacy'<sup>126</sup>. They both revalue their nations' cultures in order to 'make an aggressive response to the colonialist theory of pre-colonial barbarism'<sup>127</sup>. Both authors use their texts as weapons against the coloniser's hegemonic discourse. Indeed, both texts exhibit 'themes which are typically nationalist'<sup>128</sup>.

In *Children of the New World*, Djébar makes a call for all the Algerian population, regardless of sex, to take part in the struggle against the coloniser. According to Yassir Mohammed Nasr Ali and Fares Mohammed Hussein Rached al-Shuaibi, 'the novel's narrative techniques help create a sense of urgency and appeal to all Algerians, male and female alike, to take the cause of the nation'<sup>129</sup>. Djébar shows that men and women have to fight against the coloniser because they risk losing their national identity and, therefore, cease to exist as a nation. Her concern is to fight for her nation's liberation through the reviving of the Algerian popular culture, which the French tirelessly tried to destroy. She participates 'd'une certaine façon au rejet de la domination de l'autre [the French]'<sup>130</sup>. Moreover, in order to speak against the war, Djébar exposes the atrocities committed against the Algerians. She writes:

Pointing his submachine gun, the soldier nudges his belly: "Stand up straight! Straight!" and the man whose vision is blurred with exhaustion, repeats to himself in a final effort, "Stand up! Stand up!" His legs begin to sway, his knees buckle. "Stand up, you dog! Son of a bitch!" the soldier shouts, having adopted the insults and passion of this country.<sup>131</sup>

As the quote suggests, Djébar reveals the suffering and the humiliation endured by the Algerian people under French colonialism. As such, she uses her novel in order to speak against colonialism and to ‘reveal, transform, or disempower its signification’<sup>132</sup>.

Like Djébar, Soueif uses *The Map of Love* as a weapon in order to denounce the colonial occupation. Speaking to the West, and against it, Soueif fights for her ‘national culture’<sup>133</sup> in order to prove its legitimacy before the West. Indeed, in the novel, Soueif makes reference to Egypt’s Pharaonic heritage, to show that Egyptians are able of ruling themselves. Soueif writes: ‘We in Egypt have been proud of our history, proud to belong to the land that was the first mother of civilisation’<sup>134</sup>. Here, Soueif subverts the ideology of the ‘White Man’s Burden’<sup>135</sup> and ‘disempower[s] its signification’<sup>136</sup>. Unlike what the British assume, she suggests, Egyptians knew civilisation from antiquity, thus, proves their ability to rule themselves and that they do not need Western guidance. Moreover, introducing intercultural relationships, Soueif creates a ‘Mezzaterra’<sup>137</sup>; a hybrid space where she unites all people, regardless of their sex, race or culture, in order to break colonial hierarchies<sup>138</sup>. This can be considered her call for people to go beyond all boundaries and unite to fight against all sorts of colonialism.

Both *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love* can be considered as a ‘literature of combat’<sup>139</sup>. The two texts express the authors’ nationalist stance and their willingness to be part of the fight against colonialism. Although written in two different periods, both novels can be said to be a call for the colonised people to fight against colonialism. As such, Djébar and Soueif can be considered to be oppressed subjects who transform their speech into what Sandoval calls a ‘revolutionary language’<sup>140</sup>. Through their novels, the authors challenge and reject the dominant colonial hierarchies in the aim of uncovering the heroic past of their nations, and leading their nations to function ‘beyond all domination/subordination power axes’<sup>141</sup>.



## Endnotes

<sup>82</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 182.

<sup>85</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 127.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>87</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 110.

<sup>93</sup>Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 256.

<sup>94</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 120.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>97</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 127.

<sup>100</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 384.

<sup>103</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>104</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 384.

<sup>105</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>106</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 53.

<sup>107</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 120.

<sup>108</sup>Frantz Fanon, 'Algeria Unveiled', in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier. (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 61. Viewed 03 March 2021, < <https://book.ok.africa/book/1267861/2ca520>>.

<sup>109</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>110</sup>Fanon, *Dying Colonialism*, 61.

<sup>111</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 148.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>115</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 138.

<sup>116</sup>Nabila Ramdani, 'Women in the 1919 Egyptian Revolution: From Feminist Awakening to Nationalist Political Activism', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 14(2013): 39-52. Viewed 02 October 2021, <<https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1679&context=jiws>>.

<sup>117</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 288.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Ramdani, 'Women in the 1919 Egyptian Revolution', 45.

<sup>120</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 204.

<sup>121</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

<sup>122</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 204.

<sup>123</sup>Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', in *The Wretched of The Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 240. Viewed 05 April 2021 < <https://book.africa/book/901742/7a655c>>.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>129</sup>Yassir Mohammed Nasr Ali and Fares Mohammed Hussein Rached Al-Shuaibi, 'Nationalism and Feminism: Assia Djébar's *Children of the New World: A Novel of the Algerian War*', in *Literary Endeavour* X (2019): 92-99. Viewed 14 August 2021 < <https://www.literaryendeavour.org/files/o20wqhpc8rc9stl2s6pg/201905%2019%20Nationalism%20and%20Feminism%20Assia%20Djébar's%20Children%20of%20The%20New%20World%20A%20Novel%20of%20The%20Algerian%20War.pdf>>.

<sup>130</sup>Alavi and Razventaleb, 'Réalité et poéticité', 28.

<sup>131</sup>Djébar, *Children*, 5.

<sup>132</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>133</sup>Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 237.

<sup>134</sup>Soueif, *Map of Love*, 392.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>137</sup>Allaham, 'Colonisation', 19.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 240.

<sup>140</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 55.

### **Chapter Three: Gender Emancipation in Djebbar's *Children of the New World* and Soueif's *The Map of Love***

In the previous chapters, the analysis of *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love* has revealed that Djebbar and Soueif are committed to the question of colonial resistance and opposition. In this chapter, I will examine how Djebbar's and Soueif's feminist attitudes manifest in *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*. In addition to the condemnation of colonialism, both Djebbar and Soueif engage in exposing and criticising patriarchal oppression and promoting women's rights and emancipation. In both *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, women are shown to be victims of the patriarchal system as they are marginalised and subjugated. The female characters in both texts are subject to male domination and oppression. Both authors show the effects of this oppressive system on women and their sense of identity, which, however, does not remain unchallenged. As Sandoval points out, the subjugated people, once conscious of their oppression, develop 'effective sites of resistance to an oppressive ordering of power relations'<sup>142</sup>. Djebbar's and Soueif's texts constitute these "effective sites" through which the authors expose the patriarchal system only to make their characters challenge its oppressive ideology.

In both texts, Djebbar and Soueif criticise the institution of marriage and its implications on women. Indeed, marriage is held to be one of the ways whereby the patriarchal order remains intact and men maintain control over women. The authors show the effects marriage has on women. The female characters in both texts no longer think or act for themselves. They become emotionless objects that simply obey their husbands' wishes and wills. This is well exemplified through Amna in *Children of the New World*. Amna, confesses to Cherifa, never lies to her husband. She is silent, 'a wan person who listens to orders, bends her head, goes away, a faithful echo'<sup>143</sup>. Here, Djebbar demonstrates the behaviour expected of married

women. For her, women do not experience any sort of happiness or self-discovery from their marriage. Instead, they 'disappeared into the flow of time, to be swallowed up by the man they had to respect or fear, or even value'<sup>144</sup>.

In addition, Djebbar attempts at unfolding and highlighting the 'untold tale of anxiety and repression'<sup>145</sup> suffered by Algerian women in their marriage. In her long thread of thoughts, Cherifa expresses the anxiety and frustration she experienced in her first marriage. Djebbar writes: 'Nothing worse than being forced to live with a man whom everything inside her had instinctively rejected'<sup>146</sup>. Cherifa considers her wedding day, just like the massacres of May 8<sup>th</sup>, her doom day. Moreover, though she did not want to, her first husband tried to force Cherifa into having children, 'you will go for treatment and that's an order'<sup>147</sup>. This shows that marriage is an institution that deprives women of their sexual and reproductive freedom.

However, Djebbar shows that women, though oppressed, are able to express themselves and revolt against their oppressive husbands. This is well exemplified when Cherifa revolted against her husband and expressed her long repressed rejection of him. Her revolt first starts when she said she did not want any children and she would not go for treatment. She says, 'No! God has not given me any children. I don't want any!'<sup>148</sup> Patriarchy considers that bearing children is a woman's first and most important duty. By refusing to have a child, Cherifa challenges the patriarchal conception of femininity and womanhood. Therefore, Cherifa is an oppressed subject who is able to assert and free herself by transforming, what Sandoval calls, the 'speech of the oppressed'<sup>149</sup> into a 'language of revolution'<sup>150</sup>.

Like Djebbar, Soueif criticises the institution of marriage on the ground that it deprives women of their freedom of thought and decision. Soueif demonstrates that marriage in Egypt denies women their freedom over their bodies. This is well illustrated through Tahiyya. When

she brought a scan to Amal saying she is pregnant with a fifth child, Tahiyya admits that she did not plan it, and goes on saying: ‘you know what men are like’<sup>151</sup>. This shows that women have little control over their bodies and they are reduced to mere reproductive machines.

Moreover, although she is not affected by it, Soueif engages in the criticism of the Victorian marriage. In the beginning of the novel, she portrays Anna as the “Angel in the House”. She is devoted to her husband. She convinces herself that all her ‘thoughts should be bent on him, devoted to him’<sup>152</sup>. This shows that Anna does not care about her well-being as much as she cares about her husband’s. However, in her journey to Egypt after the death of her husband, Anna is shown to be liberated. In her journey to Senai, she admits to Sharif Basha: ‘I have not given free rein to my will before’<sup>153</sup>. This shows that the death of her husband has freed her from the conventions imposed on her. She is able to travel as she wills and discover things for herself. As such, Soueif is able to show the constraints marriage puts on women. And by the death of Edward, she frees Anna from them. This is reminiscent of Kate Chopin’s “A Story of an Hour”, where Mrs. Mallard felt free when she heard the news of her husband’s death.

Because of its repercussions on women, feminists have taken the responsibility of exposing the malfunctioning of an unequal marriage. In feminist theory, marriage is considered an ‘intimate colonisation’<sup>154</sup> since it deprives women of their rights and freedom and keeps them under the control of men. According to Sandoval, in order to be able to counter it, the oppressed subject needs to strategically adopt the dominant ideology. Thus, the subject will be able to unveil its naivety and insignificance. In this sense, *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love* criticise the institution of marriage. Djebbar and Soueif adopt the notion of marriage in order to challenge it and show its negative effects on women.

Furthermore, Djébar and Soueif criticise patriarchy by showing the restrictions that society puts on women. In both *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, the question of education for girls is evoked. During the colonial times, girls were rarely sent to school. If they were, they were not allowed to go to upper classes. They would be kept at home, and they wear the veil. In *Children of the New World*, Lila's grandfather, the patriarch, is against her father's decision to send her to school just because she is a girl. He states: 'She's a girl! She can perfectly well attend Koranic school, just like the rest. It'll be quite enough for her to say her prayers and understand the Koran'<sup>155</sup>. However, Rachid did not submit to his father's wishes, saying: 'don't count on her joining your harems'<sup>156</sup>. He sent her to school and made sure that she went to high school and not be locked up at home. This shows that he wants his daughter to be educated and be free from the conventions of the patriarchal society.

Additionally, Djébar shows through her text that girls want to be emancipated. They know that their only way out of the harems is through education. She writes:

The young girls beginning to be emancipated, buying magazines and reading novels that they kept hidden under their pillow –the youngest of them could hope never to wear the veil or be locked up inside the home but, on the contrary, continue school and then, one day, perhaps dare to go out to work (two or three of them had already liberated themselves this way) –all these adolescents, slightly vain and boisterous, because their luck in having grown up at a time when the customs were coming apart seemed to them a personal victory.<sup>157</sup>

The quote above suggests that young girls are emancipated from the ideology of patriarchy. They use their 'speech of the oppressed'<sup>158</sup> in the hope of changing their lived reality. However, as Sandoval asserts, it is useless unless it is transformed into a 'language of revolution'<sup>159</sup>. This is best illustrated through Salima. With a bit of luck, she was able to emancipate herself and change her reality. She remembers herself:

[...] at age fifteen, deciding, swearing, since she was the oldest, that she would "behave like a man." She'd confront any difficulty so she could take care of the rest of her family as soon as possible.<sup>160</sup>



Here, Salima is able to transform her speech into a ‘language of revolution’<sup>161</sup>. Indeed, she was able to challenge the traditional customs. She finished school and now works as a teacher to provide for her family. She has become an independent woman.

Like Rachid, Sharif Basha in *The Map of Love* is a firm believer that girls, just like boys, should get education. He believes that women should have the choice as whether to wear the veil or not. However, in his meeting with the Egyptian leaders, he is met with fierce rebuttal. The opinions on women’s education vary, and they say the veil is off limits. One of the leaders believes that educating girls is a threat to the Egyptian laws and customs. He states: ‘And where will you end? By allowing them to work? Giving them the right to divorce? Changing the laws of inheritance?’<sup>162</sup> This demonstrates that men feel threatened by educated women. Because education is an emancipating tool, men can no longer hold power over women. In her *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Loomba asserts that the only reason nationalists granted the right to education for girls is because ‘educated women will make better wives and mothers’<sup>163</sup>. This is well illustrated in Qasim Amin’s argument: ‘To take the simplest matters, how can children be brought up with the right outlook by ignorant mothers? How can a man find support and companionship with an ignorant wife?’<sup>164</sup>

However, this argument does not remain unchallenged. The women Anna has met have devoted their ‘speech of the oppressed’<sup>165</sup> to speak for women’s rights. According to Sandoval, the best way to counter ideology is ‘through the ideologization of ideology’<sup>166</sup>. The women in *The Map of Love* accept ‘to wear a mask’<sup>167</sup> and adopt the dominant ideology in order to advance their cause, which is equality of the sexes. Anna writes:

They uphold the idea that a woman’s first duty is to her family, merely arguing that she can perform this duty better if she is better educated. They also write articles arguing against the enforced seclusion of women and point out that women of the fellah class have always worked side by side with their menfolk and no harm has come to society as a result.<sup>168</sup>

As the quote suggests, the women use the same argument advanced by men. This serves them as a path to speak against the conventions imposed by the patriarchy. As such, the women are able to counter the dominating patriarchy by speaking ‘from within and against ideology’<sup>169</sup>.

One of the goals of feminist writing is to emancipate and empower women. Feminist authors have a tendency to create female characters that challenge the patriarchal system in order to change their reality. Accordingly, Djébar and Soueif emancipate their female characters through engaging them in the anti-colonialist struggle. According to Loomba, colonial resistance creates ‘new and powerful identities for colonised peoples and challenge[s] colonialism not only at a political or intellectual level, but also on an emotional plane’<sup>170</sup>. Indeed, in both texts, women, educated or not, fully engage in the anti-colonial struggle which gives them a new insight and sense of their identities.

*Children of the New World* is, according to Yassir Mohammed Nasr Ali and Fares Mohammed Hussein Rached al-Shuaibi, an emancipatory novel. It links women’s long repressed desire for freedom with the nationalist cause<sup>170</sup>. Indeed, Djébar associates her female characters’ agency and individuality to ‘situations pertaining to revolution and revolutionaries’<sup>172</sup>. The women in *Children of the New World* are liberated through the participation in the colonial opposition. They contribute to the subversion of the patriarchal conception of women and femininity. They prove that women are not as submissive, indecisive and weak as men claim they are.

In *Children of the New World*, Cherifa challenges the traditional customs when she decides to go out alone. Traditionally, young women in Algeria are not allowed to leave their home without a male escort, be it their father, brother or husband. However, when Cherifa finds out that her husband, who is a nationalist leader, is in danger, she gathers up the courage and audacity to go warn him. Djébar writes: ‘She scrutinizes herself, fears for a moment that

her hesitation or audacity can be seen in her eyes: it is the first time she has gone out alone, and alone into the heart of the town'<sup>173</sup>. As such, Cherifa challenges 'certain notions of motherhood and of femininity'<sup>174</sup> by going out into the public space. Cherifa is astonished from her desire to act, 'Me, act? Me?'<sup>175</sup>. Cherifa realises that, by acting, she is thrown into a strange world. Djébar writes:

[...]perhaps she takes herself for a person at ease with the semidarkness, accidentally thrown into the sun and then overcome by the intuition that she cannot be satisfied with the light that blinds her but must also create a new step, a new approach –a different way of seeing, being seen; of existing.<sup>176</sup>

It is apparent from the quote that Cherifa knows that she must figure out new insights in order to accustom herself to this new world; a world where the anti-colonial struggle has pushed her to go out of her ways, and "act". Thus, Cherifa goes from a cloistered, weak and indecisive woman to one that is able to face the harsh world on her own.

Like Cherifa, Lady Anna in *The Map of Love* finds a new cause by challenging and going against the Victorian conventions and rules of conduct. In order to discover the real Egypt and go into the depths of its society, Lady Anna disguises herself as a man. She worries about what her friends at the Agency might think of her, for she knows that what she has done goes against the appropriate behaviour of a Lady of her rank. She says: 'At the Agency certainly they do not believe an Englishwoman should go about unchaperoned'<sup>177</sup>. However, her "misconduct" leads her to meeting Sharif Basha and marrying him, thus embracing the cause of Egypt. By Sharif Basha's side, Anna engages in the anti-colonial struggle. She writes and translates articles against the British occupation. Through her participation in the resistance, Anna, like Cherifa, finds a new way of existing. She even admits that 'the Harem had made a working woman of her'<sup>178</sup>; something she has never thought of doing.

It is a commonly held belief that women are weak and sensitive creatures. And because of their sensitivity, they cannot face difficult situations. One of the Algerian freedom fighters'

biggest concerns in engaging women in the revolution was their ability to resist interrogations and torture. They believed women were not strong enough to endure torture. However, Salima in *Children of the New World* proves that assumption as untrue. Indeed, when arrested, Salima proves that, just like any man, she can handle the pressure of interrogation. Despite being held for ten days, and despite the threats of violence, she does not betray her compatriots, 'I'm not afraid. Why don't you just torture me?'<sup>179</sup>, she says. Her stubbornness and her 'pride'<sup>180</sup> made the captain give up interrogating her. Eventually, her pride got the best of him, and he stopped interrogating her. He even admits that 'she's the stronger one'<sup>181</sup>. As such, Djébar is able to subvert the traditional gender roles assigned to women, being weak, sensitive and submissive. She proves that women are able to handle hard situations just like men.

Like Salima, Amal in *The Map of Love* proves that she is not a weak person and she can handle hard situations well. When the men in Tawasi are arrested, the women of the village come to her for help. She takes up the courage to go to the police station. When the soldiers forbid her to enter, Amal, unlike what it is commonly believed, takes an authoritative tone and says:

Listen you and him, there's nothing called forbidden. This is a police station and I am going in to see the chief. And if you don't make way immediately right now I shall call Muhyi Bey the Governor on the mobile and turn your day black. I'll have you sent to Tokar.<sup>182</sup>

The quote shows that Amal is not intimidated by the soldiers. Instead, she transforms her speech into a 'revolutionary language'<sup>183</sup> and turns the situation back on them as she is the one giving orders. As such, Soueif attributes a traditionally male attitude, authority, to her female character, thus subverting the patriarchal stereotype of submission.

Right after independence, most historical reports and narratives about colonialism and anti-colonial movements were focused on male scenarios and perspectives. In most archives

and documents, women's activities were often disregarded, misrepresented or misunderstood. Feminist historians argue that omitting gender from the study of decolonisation limits our understanding of it since it neglects an important agent in it. Therefore, they have taken it their responsibility to bring new insight into history through women's viewpoints. They believe that including women's experiences during colonial rule and decolonisation would bring new perspectives and broaden the understanding of colonialism and the anti-colonial movements. Indeed, Djébar and Soueif take a revisionist stance vis-à-vis the representation of women in postcolonial literature. Through *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, Djébar and Soueif are able to bring a new understanding of decolonisation through female perspectives. They both retell women's experiences with decolonisation and show their agency and activity.

In *Children of the New World*, Djébar engages her female characters in the liberation movement in order to show their capacity to struggle. Indeed, the novel demonstrates that, although different, women have greatly contributed in the anti-colonial struggle. Despite her young age, Hassiba is portrayed as a determined woman who wants to participate in the movement for independence. Although she is warned that the life in the maquis is hard and dangerous, she does not show any hesitation. She responds to the dominant language of the male leaders who try to intimidate her and talk her out of it and says: 'I can walk! Barefoot if need be. I want to walk with the fighters. I want to suffer with the fighters. Night and day.'<sup>184</sup>

Moreover, though not directly involved, Cherifa plays a very important role. Indeed, if she did not rush out of her home to warn Youssef, he would have been arrested and the whole organisation may have fallen apart. As such, Djébar shows that women of all categories, educated or not, were not mere witnesses during the decolonisation. Instead, they had a major role in the resistance, whether in the armed or political struggles, or even as simple informants.

Similarly, Soueif acts as a revisionist of her country's history in *The Map of Love*. Through her text, she proves that women, though segregated, were fully involved in the liberation movement. In her work, Soueif shows that women were not mere witnesses. She subverts the assumption that women in the Harems are lazy and talkative in order to show that women had an important role in the resistance. The text shows that women in the Harems, though segregated, are involved in political debates. Anna's knowledge of English and her British acquaintances have helped Sharif Basha in the publication of his articles. Soueif writes: 'She had information from her friends in Britain and he had a knowledge of Egypt, a clear mind and a gift for logical yet impassioned argument'<sup>185</sup>. This suggests that men and women have worked hand in hand against the occupation and they were equally involved in the struggle.

Through *Children of the New World* and *The Map of Love*, Djebbar and Soueif are able to disrupt and deconstruct patriarchal stereotypes about femininity. To do so, they resort to one of Sandoval's 'emancipatory technologies'<sup>186</sup>, which is 'deconstruction'<sup>187</sup>. According to Sandoval, one way of countering 'the effects of dominant forms-as-ideology'<sup>188</sup> is by 'reading the signs of power, and then self-consciously deconstructing them'<sup>189</sup>. Djebbar and Soueif analyse the stereotypes attributed to women by the local patriarchy and colonialists in order to subvert them and deconstruct the grounds on which they are based. As such, Djebbar and Soueif are able to emancipate their female characters from the repressive and oppressive forms of the dominant patriarchy.

## Endnotes

<sup>142</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 54.

<sup>143</sup>Djebbar, *Children*, 50.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>145</sup>Ali and Al-Shuaibi, 'Nationalism and Feminism', 93.

<sup>146</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 10.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 61.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>154</sup>Sara-Jane Finlay and Victoria Clarke, "'A Marriage of Inconvenience?'" Feminist Perspectives on Marriage', in *Feminism and Psychology*, 13(2003): 415-420. Viewed 30 August 2021, <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247749405\\_A\\_Marriage\\_of\\_Inconvenience'\\_Feminist\\_Perspectives\\_on\\_Marriage](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247749405_A_Marriage_of_Inconvenience'_Feminist_Perspectives_on_Marriage)>.

<sup>155</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 129.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>158</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 64.

<sup>161</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>162</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 309.

<sup>163</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 211.

<sup>164</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 309.

<sup>165</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 195.

<sup>169</sup>Sandival, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 108.

<sup>170</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 182.

<sup>171</sup>Ali and Al-Shuaibi, 'Nationalism and Feminism', 96.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 85.

<sup>174</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 217.

<sup>175</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 84.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 86.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 364.

<sup>179</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 65.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>182</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 356.

<sup>183</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 107.

<sup>184</sup>Djebar, *Children*, 148.

<sup>185</sup>SouEIF, *Map of Love*, 354.

<sup>186</sup>Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 109.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., 84.



<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., 108.

## V. Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have analysed and compared Djébar's *Children of the New World* (1962) and Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). This study has led me to some important conclusions concerning the two works and their authors. Although written in different timelines, it is revealed that the two works express similar concerns. Thanks to these two texts, we are able to view Algerian and Egyptian histories from different perspectives. Both authors have given voice and agency to oppressed and marginalised subjects in order to speak against oppressive forms of domination, namely colonialism and patriarchy.

Djébar and Soueif use their works in order to engage in the countering of the oppressive colonial ideology and practice. On the one hand, the authors subvert and reject the colonial discourse which reduces the colonised subject to stereotypical images of primitiveness, savagery, backwardness, and inertia. They disrupt its significance and show that it is biased and untrue. On the other hand, the writers engage in their countries' struggles for independence. They reveal that the colonised people are forced to get involved in movements of resistance in order to ensure their rights and get rid of the oppressive colonisers. As such, Djébar and Soueif are shown to be committed authors who fight for their nations and identities. Thereby, their duty as committed authors is to assert their people's identities and cultures. They both provide a different image of the Algerians and Egyptians prove the colonial ideology as insignificant and untrue. Thus, they call for their people to fight against this oppressive ideology.

The last conclusion that this study has reached is that, besides being committed to the nationalist cause, both authors criticise the patriarchal system and emancipate their characters. Through their texts, Djébar and Soueif show that the patriarchal system has far reaching consequences on women. The analysis shows that the authors disrupt the patriarchal

discourse, which reduces women to an inferior position to men. It shows that this system denies them of their identities and freedom. Therefore, their aim is to subvert the patriarchal stereotypes and emancipate Algerian and Egyptian women from this oppressive system.

In the present dissertation, I have put emphasis on the colonial opposition and gender emancipation in the two selected novels by Djébar and Soueif. I would like to pave the way for other students to conduct further studies on the novels. I believe it would be interesting to compare Soueif's *The Map of Love* with other contemporary post-colonial novels. I think that these novels display similar concerns regarding the repercussions of colonialism on modern societies and place of the Third World in the new dominating neo-colonial world system.

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