AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

"A DOOR OPEN TO FULL SUN"
THE POLITICS OF LINGUISTIC, NATIONAL, AND GENDER IDENTITIES IN LEILA AHMED'S AND ASIA DJEBAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES

by
FATIMA MOHAMMAD ZARAKET

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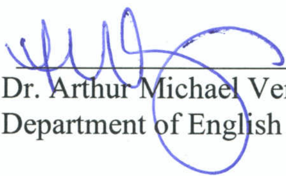

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Fatima Mohammad Zaraket for Master of Arts
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Title: "A Door Open to Full Sun" the Politics of Linguistic, National, and Gender Identities in Leila Ahmed's and Asia Djebar's autobiographical narratives

This thesis investigates identity manifestations in the autobiographical narratives of Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar. The object of my research in the broadest sense is to study the language-identity-ideology link in post-colonial contexts in the Arab world, in Egypt and Algeria particularly. More specifically, I look at the linguistic, national, and gender aspects—I dub shades—of identity manifest in the life writings of both writers as they speak of, and unpack, the diverging, and more accurately conflicting, ideologies of the time: (1) that of the hegemonic ex-colonizer and (2) that of the nationalist movements that hovered over the two countries for long. I attempt to adumbrate how ideological shifts in such turning points in the history of Egypt and Algeria have affected the identity construction of both writers, in so far as it relates to language, nation, and gender. The thesis meditates how such identity nexus responds to the political conflicts in the society with their ideological underpinnings to which no one remains outcast. It particularly traces through close textual readings how these identities are *negotiated* in the written medium that the autobiography furnishes and how they are intertwined, in an attempt to adumbrate what kind of conflicting power(s) has interpellated these three categories of identity, goading both writers to expound upon them, either covertly or overtly, in a given narrative. It follows that writing about identity and the negotiation thereof render identity balanced in its very fluidity as it moves it time and space. It further allows women to engage creatively with multilayered discourses, cultivating, as such, new consciousness(es) that fosters "multiple critiques."

Key words: identification; alienation; language identity; national identity; gender identity; nationalism; post-colonialism; ideology.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On Identity: One Root, Multiple Routes

Central to feminism is the conception of the cultural (re)construction of subjects. For instance, why do we still, in our discursively globalizing world, speak of black feminism, Islamic feminism, white feminism, and so forth? Why this vast welter of feminisms? Why aren't we all unified under the banner of feminism—women feminists so to speak? The answer draws upon our very cultural construction as subjects. In a sense, human subjects are constructed in and out of the tendentious discourses that they are subject to, thus constructed through linguistic and cultural matrices. Yet, every discourse has its very ideological flame, so pervasive, however, that sometimes goes unnoticed as ideology despises the role of language in constructing subjects.

It follows that ideology hails or interpellates individuals in ways they could not repudiate. Naturally, they become subjects through subjection: when they are called, mot accurately interpellated, by ideology. Human subjects fail to adopt a subject position, and accordingly partake in sociality, unless they "freely" and "willingly" subordinate to the authority of ideology. No subject, hence, remains outcast to ideology. Put shortly, to be a subject means, at base, that you have been interpellated by ideology and that you, in concert, have responded.

In tandem with this line of thought, the “identity as autonomous” dictum appears moribund. Equally well, looking at identity as a construct attached, strictly, to the individual’s psyche proves ideational in the strongest sense of the word. Identity is created in interaction and through the discourses that different, perhaps conflicting, ideologies provide—the precept looms large.

Now, does this entail that identity wears one dressing after another to born afresh across every new ideology and/or context human subjects encounter? Put differently, how could human subjects maintain a coherent self—a free and responsible self that does not uphold wholeheartedly to one strict affiliation—without running the risk of identity conflict. For instance, how could someone be an Islamic feminist; to be loyal to Islam and feminism at once—two poles that might appear at odds? Indeed, the more pressing question here is: how do we get to know intrinsically our multiple allegiances or affiliations?

In this thesis, through reading two book-length autobiographical narratives written by Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar entitled *A Border Passage, From Cairo to America—A Woman’s Journey* (1999) and *L’amour, La fantasia* (1985) respectively, I attempt to consider the different linguistic, national, and gender identity manifestations—I dub shades—in the narratives of both authors. Specifically, this study traces how these identities are negotiated in the written medium that the autobiographical narratives furnish, and how they are entwined, in an attempt to adumbrate what kind of conflicting power(s) has interpellated these three categories of identity, goading both writers to expound upon them, either covertly or overtly, in a given narrative.

My hope is to lay out three emerging points: (1) the power of ideology is inevitable; thus it has interpellated Ahmed and Djebar both to succumb to it through identifying with the Subject it promulgates; (2) the very acts of identifications, and by implication alienations, emerge out of persuasion and convincing—we subordinate to power because we are *persuaded* to subordinate; and, perhaps most importantly, (3) writing about identity in an autographical narrative help Arab women writers transcend the duality of local vis-à-vis global affiliations, thus (i) developing what Miriam Cooke calls "multiple critiques" that make women more aware not only of their identity but also of the complex meanings that are attached to their affiliations and (ii) attempting to gain agency at national and global arenas, both.

In the following pages I briefly read through the overarching frameworks that demarcate this study, and I attempt to elucidate why these frameworks cater well not only to understanding identity, but also elucidate the complex socio-historical, cultural, and political ideologies that trickled down to give birth to these identities.

A. Of the linguistic Route and Beyond

> [using] a number of methods could contribute to the illumination of a common problem such that the sum total of contributions, from a variety of perspectives, was greater than that from any one alone, no matter how good that one might be or how attuned it might be to the preferences of individual researchers and to the traditions of particular discipline. (Joshua Fishman, 1984, p. 45)

The nature and constructedness of identity have been studied from diverse perspectives within social sciences. For some, identity, at base, is an ongoing, dynamic, and fluid practice that paints one picture of a subject, any subject, across myriad contexts (e.g. Benwell, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Burke & Stets, 2009; Jackson & Hogg, 2010). For

others, identity is (1) “doing” different kinds of identities (Fenstermaker, S. and West, C., 2002), (2) an accomplishment that comes into fruition through interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Sidenell, 2002), (3) “performative” a la Butler’s poststructuralist theory of performativity (Butler, 1999), (4) a long mainstay examined by researchers interested in the intersection(s) of (i) language, gender, and sexuality (Barrett, 1999; Cameron, 1997; Livia and Hall, 1997) as well as (ii) language, ideology, and nationality (Silverstein, 1979; Suleiman, 2003; 2011; 2013).

Despite the intrinsic differences that demarcate each and every approach, all of these approaches help us get at a deeper understanding of identity per se and the different constructs attached to it—an understanding that does not look at identity as something rooted, primarily, in the individual psyche—hence a result of pure psychological mechanism—but rather as something constructed through *social* interaction, and, most importantly, in and out of *language*. Hence, identity is “a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of *interaction*” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, pp. 585-586; emphasis added).

While important, most of these studies treated identity as a collection of *myriad social categories*, in ways that did not often cater well to (1) deeply and complexly understand identity negotiations (2) the politics of identity with its different shades, and (3) what lies behind/beyond this very identity which interpellates it across different contexts to born anew; the reason behind this choice was, and perhaps still is, the correlationist-variationist fervor that circulates mostly in quantitative-oriented social sciences, attempting to account for the correlation between a specific social behavior and the macro-categories

of identity, such as social class, gender, age, among others[1], in ways that fail to account for what Suleiman calls “the political nature of language as a social phenomenon” (p. 10).

To that end too, these studies have documented some emerging linguistic trends in the study the language-identity link specifically. Yet, this view was contested by a new wave of researchers who attempted to study the nature of identity in linguistics outside the tight hold of the correlationist-variationist paradigm (Suleiman, 2003; 2011; 2013; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Joseph, 2004; among others).

Suleiman (2011) argues that the Labovian model, in its Arabic incarnation specifically, failed in important respects (p. 10). Excluding the political from the social in studying Arabic language within the context of the Middle East, which was, Suleiman points out, “and still is, riddled with some of the most endemic intra- and interstate conflicts of the modern world” (pp. 10-11). The point, as Suleiman sees it, is to put an end to the “depoliticisation/apoliticisation” of language in Arabic sociolinguistics—an inevitable result of the compartmentalization of disciplines, wedded to the belief that the politics in and about language belongs to politics per se and not to linguistics (Suleiman, 2011, p. 11).

Interestingly enough, Suleiman adds that “in a sanitized linguistic market, questions of identity and conflict are downplayed to a point whereby […] they fail to register on the linguistic map […] in a way that can puncture its constructed calm and normality” (p. 11). In a sense, anchoring language upon the nexus identity and conflict

[1] This was very common among early variationist sociolinguistics, such as Labov (1966; 1972) who set forth a paradigm that shaped the discipline for years to come.

would bring about new results and new understandings that speak to politics and linguistics in tandem.

Suleiman helps me ask what does it even mean to read identity formation of two Arab women writers in the Middle East and North African, who were both subject to colonial rule, in isolation from politics and ideology in the name of "depoliticisation/ apoliticisation" of the language-identity link? The point is that, identity is not ideational—not at all. On the contrary, it is reflexive; it is socially born and construed. In other words, it is co-constructed by the self and the other. Even more deeply, getting to know that I am someone in particular—and not just anyone—helps us impart meaning to the social categories that form us. For instance, getting to know that I am formerly colonized, a woman, a woman of color, from Algeria, Egypt or elsewhere in the Middle East or beyond, vis-à-vis fellow men and other white women, not only helps me get to know that I am this person in particular, but, most importantly, it helps me understand and designate meaning to patriarchy, nationalism, gender, colonialism, and all other systems of thought that lie beyond me and move me in time.

Woolard (1998) persuasively argues that the American anthropologist and linguistic tradition recognized the linkage between ideology, language, and identity as a second-hand data, giving primacy to the so-called "real" data that comes under the tutelage of the correlationist-variationist tradition. This data are not linguistic in the strong sense of the word, as they do not feed directly the paradigm of the latter tradition. In her words, "[a] dominant view in American anthropology and linguistics has long cast ideology as a somewhat unfortunate, though perhaps socioculturally interesting, distraction from primary

and thus "*real*" linguistic data" (p. 31). Woolard also argues against, and I think she is rightly, looking at linguistic ideologies as having little or pernicious implications of speech forms.

I take Woolard and Suleiman to say that our enthrallment with the so-called "real" data that often accounts for quantitative research certainly eschews a great bunch of other, perhaps richer, qualitative data, casting it to the side. Speaking of and from the positivist framework of *one* paradigm not only leads to close horizons amongst disciplines, but also, most importantly, to lose profound insights whose significance goes beyond the terrain of linguistics, offering insights into other disciplines, such as politics, anthropology, cultural studies, and so forth; and at the end getting at deeper understanding of what identity per se is, along with the process of its construction. Certainly, insights obtained from the intersection of ideology, identity, and language, within the purview of linguistics and rhetorical theory, have a key role to play in offering new understanding(s) of (1) the politics of identity with its different shades, (2) how power and ideology enter into this conundrum, and (3) how human subjects emerge through interaction and language.

Along this same line of thought, Suleiman (2011) posits that the issue is not whether this or that data "re/present' reality but whether this or that piece of research gives more accurate re/presentation of reality" (p. 14). Looking at the intersections of ideology, power, and identity, sharpens our understanding of *how* identity is created rather than *what* constitutes identity. Indeed, it also helps us tell a new, different story about the reality of identity formation; a story that does not silence some voices under the banner or the "true" or "real;" a story that is oriented toward the specifics of particular case, identity

manifestations in the autobiographical narratives of Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar here. The specificity of a particular case entails not exclusive fascination with numbers but with the peculiarity of the case—one that numbers fail to account for.

Distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) point out that while the former plots answers to questions "that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" to account for the socially constructed nature of reality (p. 8), the latter, yet, emphasizes the "measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (p. 8).

In this light, I aim at the studying *how* identity is constructed through the emerging threads of language, nationalism, and gender; henceforth, the very process of identity construction. My hope is to give account for the symbolic functions of language and gender rather than instrumental functionality often associated to them. In linguistics, the instrumental function of language is often understood as the ability of a language to convey a specific meaning through deploying the resources of the language, that is its grammar, phonology, semantics and so forth (Suleiman, 2011). The symbolic role of language, however, relates to what lies beyond and behind that level of communication, to touch upon vast fields such as politics, ideology, psychology, and anthropology; it hints at the wider social meanings of the linguistic structures.

More specifically, I look at what lies beyond these categories of identity. What lays the ground of these identities to come to fore in the autobiographies of these women in particular, especially in the context of post-colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa. Why did Ahmed and Djebar, who were both subject to profound ideological shifts and power change in their respective countries, expound upon these three shades of identity

in particular? What common affiliations, identifications that is, and by implication alienations, did they both make then to expound upon now in their very personal narratives? How does autobiography lay out the intersections of identity and ideology?

1. On the intersection of Language, Ideology, and Autobiography

Woolard (1998) points out that ideology as a term was first coined at the end of the eighteenth century, and it was soon imparted with negativity. Until today, this term has not been imparted with a unitary definition in the different disciplines of social sciences. Yet, three key strands of definitions emerge in terms of ideology. In a paradigmatic instant, Geuss makes clear distinction between what he dubs “pejorative” and “descriptive” definitions of ideology. While the former is negatively recognized, as it caters to oppressive systems driven my its deceptive and distorting reality, the latter is looked at as a belief system that does not node toward the truth or value of that very system. It should be also said that ideology is often entangled with a host of other terms including: religion, theology, nationalism, culture, anthropology, and so forth (Friedrich, 1989, 300)—and for the current study, linguistics and rhetorical theory.

The first emerging strand of definition entails ideology as ideational, it has to do with “consciousness, subjective representations, beliefs, [and] ideas” (Woolard, 1998, p. 23). Yet, in the more recent literature, ideology is not necessarily deemed as “conscious, deliberate, or systematically organized thought, or even thought at all,” it is “behavioral, practical, prereflective, or structural” (Woolard, 1998, p. 23). This takes us to the second

definition. The point is that ideology, now, is much more linked to, signification, or roughly meaning, rather than ideas in the mentalist sense of the word. One, and I guess rightly, can say that even the most materialistic aspects of life brim with meaning whenever embraced by human actions. That said, one could not outcast ideology from identity formation—the most tendentious and active part of human actions.

Seen in this light, French structuralists and poststructuralists recognize ideology not as "a matter of consciousness or subjective representations" but rather of "lived relations" (Woolard, 1998, p. 23). Althusser, for instance, argues that human subjects are subjects of *ideology*, not in the narrow sense of the term, recognized as propaganda, but rather in its broadest sense of the pervasive system laid down by subtly coercive apparatuses that the state produces for itself to maintain its power, i.e. dominating the subjects it produces through interpellation or hailing. Through hailing subjects are "subjected." And yet, most importantly, through subordination to power subjects conceive themselves as *naturally* produced.

Along these lines, Friedrich (1989) avers that ideology "is a system, or at least an amalgam, of ideas, strategies, tactics, and practical symbols for promoting, perpetuating, or changing a social and cultural order" (p. 301). Friedrich (1989) posits that ideology is "political ideas in action" (p. 301). Subsequently, in nodding toward Friedrich and having Althusser in mind, I aim to say that this *action* enshrined in the second definition of ideology is inviting in two inalienable ways: (1) it invites human subjects to identify with the Subject it promulgates, urging them to engage and reflect upon the discourse it primarily diffuses— positively troubling individuals, so to speak—and (2) through the active process of identification, and by implication alienation, subjects get to know their

identity always in comparison with the Subject that lies at the center of ideology. Subjects, then, emerge in and out of the centripetal power of ideology to acquire some identity pegs. Althusser purports that,

> idéologie est centrée, [… et] le Sujet Absolu occupe la place unique du Centre, et interpelle autour de lui l'infinité des individus en sujets, dans une double relation spéculaire telle qu'elle assujettit les sujets au Sujet, tout en leur donnant, dans le Sujet où tout sujet peut contempler sa propre image (présente et future) la garantie que c'est bien d'eux et bien de Lui qu'il s'agit.[2] (1970, p. 55)

It follows that subjects[3] gain recognition of themselves along with other subjects in line with the Subject through the founding process of subjection—*assujetissement*—hailed, interpellated or called forth, every so often, by the capillary power of ideology.

We are subjects to the power of the ideology that exceeds our grasping and to which we shall accede. In so saying, ideology interpellates subjects to approach to the Subject it calls for, and inasmuch as they identify with the Subject of ideology they bid fair in approaching the center. Subordination to power is not free—not at all. In a sense, one could not be a subject without subordination to a higher authority, although it might seem "natural," "autonomous," or even "free."

In short, subjects would not be given the guarantee of the Subject if they do not "freely" subordinate to its power. In Althusser's words, "l'individu *est interpellé en sujet*

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[2] "all ideology is *centred*, [… and] the Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the *guarantee* that this really concerns them and Him" (1970, p. 180).

[3] One shall note here that Althusser defines "subject" as "1) une subjectivité libre : un centre d'initiatives, auteur et responsable de ses actes ; 2) un être assujetti, soumis à une autorité supérieure, donc dénué de toute liberté, sauf d'accepter librement sa soumission" (1970a, p. 56). ["(1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission" (1970b, p. 162)].

(libre) pour qu'il [sic!] se soumette librement aux ordres du Sujet, donc pour qu'il [sic!] accepte (librement) son assujettissement"[4] (1970a, p. 56; original emphasis). For, in the Foucauldian sense too, there is no human subject outside the grasp of "power." Yet, I argue that processes of identification and alienation are free. The dictum looms large, though: inasmuch as you identify with the Subject, i.e. you get closer to it, you get the privileges that the ideology holds dear, thus getting the guarantees of the Subject, in an effort to "re/present" the legitimate subject.

Although important, Althusser's theory of subjection does not provide an account as to *why* individuals assent to the power of ideology and thus accept to subordinate, goaded by the voice of power. Essentially, here, rhetorical theory has a key role to play, which I will expound upon next. What could be said shortly for now is that we, human subjects, are *persuaded* to subordinate to the *convincing* power of ideology; very much akin to—and I am using this analog from Allen (2015)—billiard balls that do not like to assent even to the power that moves them (p. 197). At base, we are persuaded to move, to subordinate, through the process of persuasion and convincing, leading to either identification or alienation which both weigh heavily on identity formation. Having this working definition in mind, what makes ideology that critical in reading identity manifestations in the autobiographies of Ahmed and Djebar?

Writing an autobiography entails reflecting upon the writer's identity at a certain moment in the present, selectively engaging with memories from the past, and, instantly, attributing meaning to the cultural, political, and social terms they inherit. Olney (1980)

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[4] "the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection* " (1970b, p. 182; original emphasis).

points out that the Greek terms "*bio*" means life, "autos" means self, and "graph" alludes to writing (p. 237). Olney contends too that autobiography is a process, which, like any other, possesses a shape; it follows that memory is the hidden thread that describe this shape, which remains "hidden, unconscious, unknown, to the individual until the time when it rises to consciousness *after the fact* to present itself to him [sic!] as recollections that he can then trace back […] to discover the shape that was all the time gradually and unconsciously forming itself" (pp. 240-241). That said, autobiography does not account for life as lived, but life as *recalled*, *constructed*, and reconstructed through memory.

Recent literature on life narratives conducted by Smith and Watson (2010; 1998), Golley (2003), Lejeune (2010), Wilson (2009), Larco and Cecchini (2011) calls for reconsidering the very definition of autobiography[5] and, in parallel, to broaden its horizons in the regards to different terms used to depict the act of life writing as well as genres of life writings itself. For Smith and Watson (2010), the term *memoir* is malleable as it foregrounds "historical shifts intersecting cultural formation" and at once is, under Miller's skin, "fashionably postmodern since it hesitates to define the boundaries between private

[5] Folkenflik (1993), for instance, indicates that the term *autobiography* and its synonym *self-biography* first appeared in the eighteenth century in both England and Germany (p. 3-5), and that it was until the twentieth century the word *memoirs* was also used to denote "self-life writing.". Lee Quinby (1992) also writes about the history of the term *memoirs* in "The Subject of Memoirs: The Women Warrior's Technology of Ideographic Slefhood," indicating that the term denotes the personal writing of prominent figures that chronicle their accomplishments.

Smith and Watson (2010), however, pinpointed sixty genres of life writing (p. 253-286) each embraced by different term. The point is that (1) many scholars speak of life writing as a space with elusive borders, to which Cecchini & Larco (2011) offer a detailed discussion in their introduction, and (2) that different terminologies invite different ways of reading of the piece at hand.

Interestingly enough, Ahmed and Djebar refrained from attaching the term "memoirs" to their life-writing: while Ahmed's subtitle reads "—a women's journey," Djebar's reads "L'Amour, La Fantasia," translated into English as "Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade." There is no indication that their writing is a memoir per se. Their writings, thus, do not invite the kind of reading usually attached to memoirs.

and public, subject and object" (p. 4), this very postmodernist take attached to the term *memoir* is not the concern of this study. That's why I did not choose the term to read the life writing of Ahmed and Djebar, as their writing does not strictly fit into this category.

Conversely, Smith and Watson (2010) indicate that the term "autobiography" rigorously refers to the western tradition of retrospective life writing which emerged in the Enlightenment (p. 4). Autobiography as term is not inclusive then. It does not strictly echo voices outside the western tradition—the heart of this study. For this thesis, I have chosen to use the term narratives preceded by the adjective *autobiographical* to indicate self-referential writings. Two main reasons urged me to choose "narrative" instead of life writing.

Firstly, I am looking at the corpuses that Ahmed and Djebar provide not as the real story itself that underwrite the identity of both writers; otherwise, I am concerned with the very *telling* of these stories, with the instances that are present and, in parallel, those that are absent, and the interconnectedness of both: that is the very pattern and sequence of remembering. Secondly, the term *narrative* enables me to look at these autobiographies not as an objective source of data which, in turn, opens a room for a complex socio-historical understanding of what constitutes the narrated self.

Also, it opens a door to trace the complexities that form one's identity that is never linear—one constituent leads to the other; but rather one that is highly knotted; weaved by historical and contextual circumstances. And at the end get at a full understanding of how these events trickle down to the personal level hailing identities to be created. The narrative

itself shapes the identity of the author; it invites the reader to engage in particular instances and *not* others. Storing a history for the self is not diligent task, and narratavization through text is one of the possible ways to do so. Approaching the history of Ahmed and Djebar as narratives allows for a reading that does not look at identity in isolation. Rather, it reads identity within an intertwined nexus of setting that is transparent at some point and not at others.

Put shortly, people tell their stories to elucidate at the micro level what's going on at the macro level. That's how our identity emerges. We do not passively nod to the power that moves us in specific time and place. Conversely, we succinctly reify the discourse we are subject to bringing it unto the personal level in an effort to impart meaning to it. Once persuaded by the discourse(s) of ideology identification with the Subject takes place. After all, autobiographical narratives provide mediums to negotiate the different discourses of ideology.

Thus far, we have pointed out that ideology is *centred*: at its center resides a Subject that hails or interpellates the plethora of other subjects to identify with it. Here lies what Althusser calls "*double relation spéculaire*," [i.e., double mirror-connexion], through which the different subjects contemplate their own image through that of the Subject. Accordingly, it is through this process of hailing that subjects come to know who they are following the different processes of identifications and alienations. We have also pointed out that human subjects are (1) produced through linguistic means—through the discourse

that ideology produces and that (2) whenever there is power there is resistance. Now, how is autobiographical narrative part of this conundrum?

Autobiographical narratives often emerge out as counter discourses, carving spaces for their authors out of the ideology that they are subject to in an effort to either identify with or resist the hegemonic discourse of dominant ideologies, which usually determine *whose* stories shall be told, and otherwise, whose stories shall languish in the depth of despair, as well as *what* kind of stories shall be brought to paper. Seen in this light, autobiographical narratives furnish mediums for identification(s); for stories to be told; for identities to get enshrined. People tell their stories because their stories are meaningful to them. Because they impart personal significance and personal meanings to the discourse they are subject to.

Having Althusser in mind, Elizabeth Wingrove (1999) points out that "agents change, and change their world, by virtue of the systemic operation of multiple ideologies" (p. 883). Human subjects are always subject to discursive, often conflicting, set of ideologies. These different ideologies do not produce an intelligible subject at once; conversely, this multiplicity of ideologies "hails" the subject to reconfigure the system itself along with the subject. In Wingrove's words, this multiplicity "exposes both the subject and the system to perpetual reconfiguration" (p. 883). The point is that, one figures out his/her identity upon commenting on this multiplicity of ideologies (s)he was, and perhaps still is, subject to. Creativity here is a key: it guarantees human agency.

Autobiographical narratives, hence, help writers not only to expound upon the different ideologies that weaved them in an effort to paint certain identity for themselves, but also it gives them agency as they become more aware of the cracks and fissures that the conflicting ideologies carve deep in their identity—henceforth they become more aware of the unsaturated spaces and thereby they dare to resist freely this or that discourse of ideology. Wingrove (1999) argues that "agency is possible because there are cracks and fissures that interrupt systemic wholes, and freedom is what happens" (p. 873). I am taking Wingrove to say that autobiographical narratives bring into light these "cracks and fissures" and help authors understand themselves differently: not be caught by the dialectics of their "freedom" and "autonomy," but eccentrically mesmerized by their "agency," their ability to resist, now and then, developing a new consciousness that emerges in and out of the gnarled roots of ideology.

Autographical narratives then play a multifaceted role: not only do they call the attention of writers to the importance of their human agency but they also allow for a new catholic understanding of reality, and in parallel, the social categories that constituted writers. Ahmed and Djebar reflected in different textual moments that upon writing their biographies, they developed a new awareness, a new understanding not only of who they are but also of the world that they are surrounded by. This gets even more complex upon reading the identity of formerly colonized subjects, to which Ahmed and Djebar are no exception. In a sense, these subjects are surrounded by different worlds, powers, and ideologies and, in turn, each calls for different acts of identification and resistance. It follows that because human subjects have a sort of agency, they are always able to

negotiate the different interpellations they are subject to. Sometimes, interpellation happens and as such recognition takes place; on other times, misinterpellation surfaces and misrecognition emerges driven by the very human agency.

Now, agency gains even great momentum upon pondering over the autobiographies of previously colonized subjects—women subjects specifically, as they inscribe their identities in light of myriad, and perhaps conflicting, ideologies: (1) the ideology of the ex-colonizer, (2) that of the ruling power, in postcolonial era, that is either resisting or internalizing the ideology of the ex-colonizer, and (3) their own ideological understanding of themselves being women—feminist subjects that is.

This study reads Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar who have been both educated in the language of the colonizer, and they have both negotiated their identity within the aforementioned nexus of ideologies: the colonizer, the ruling, nationalist power during post colonialism, and being women in the Middle East and North Africa. Both were interpellated as colonized, as women, as women of color, who have neither internalized the ideology of the hegemonic ex-colonizer nor that of the nationalist postcolonial ideology.

Autobiographical narratives provide Ahmed and Djebar discursive places, allowing them to mediate between these ideologies, in an effort to find their place—to understand who they are—within the ongoing power change in the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, the receptibility of these autobiographies as providing new voices in a formerly male-dominant tradition, and strictly oral in the case of women (if any), is what allows for agency to rise in ways that were previously inimical and out of the grasping of

these women. Through understanding the politics of agency, and how power enters into this muddle, it becomes possible to elucidate the complexities of autobiographical narratives and to, further, theorize for identity formation and manifestation in the context of the Middle East and North Africa.

B. Social Identity Theory and Identity Theory: Not Wide Enough?

In this section I sketch out how identity is looked at differently in distinct fields of knowledge that often times feed each other; more specifically, I look at the identity, ideology, and language link manifest in the autobiographies of Ahmed and Djebar, to showcase how studying identity from a multidisciplinary perspective enriches our understanding of identity in so many ways that were previously intangible, if only partial. Moreover, it helps us understands how power is clustered upon the different shades of identity in particular ways that, in turn, unveil the very process of subordination of subjections to ideology leading to social hierarchy. Put differently, it helps us understand not only the meaning of these shades of identity, but also their particular values and the thing they stand for.

In an attempt to establish a theory of the self—one that attend to both macro and micro processes—and simultaneously to avoid the redundancies of separate theories on the myriad aspects of the self, Stets and Burke (2000) make a comparison between Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory[6] to contend that the although differences exist between both theories, they are differences of emphasis rather than kind (p. 224-237). Accordingly,

[6] Most literature that deals with studying identity in literary production from the purview of linguistics adopt either of these two theories as an overarching framework of the studies.

looking at the self from both lenses not in isolation but in combination they would allow for a general theory of the self that attends to macro, meso-, and micro levels.

Central key concepts emerge here. For identity theory, the bedrock concept is *role,* and that for social identity theory are *categories* or *groups*. On the one hand, both theories speak about *salience*, or activation of identity, across different contexts; and, on the other, the implications of such a *salience*. The cognitive implication of *salience* are "depersonalization (in social identity theory), self-verification (in identity theory), self-esteem (in social identity theory), and self-efficacy (in identity theory)" (Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 224).

Both theories recognize the self as reflexive, as it is able to name, categorize, or classify itself in relation to other social categories, through which it acquires meaning to both categories and itself (Stets and Burke, 2000, p.224); while this very process is named *self-categorization* in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell, 1987), it is called identification in identity theory (McCall and Simmons, 1978). The self is formed through these processes of identifications. Moreover, social identity theory deals mainly with the concept of intergroup relations. That is to say, how people often see themselves as one group in comparison with another; however, identity theory shifts its focus on occupying roles and the implications thereof.

In so saying, it is critical to look at the different strata of group affiliations. Often times the self does not hold wholeheartedly an allegiance to one particular group as it is constituted of different strata that could not breed one single closed allegiance. For

instance, how could Asia Djebar and Leila Ahmed see themselves as women, as women of color in relation to men in relation to white women, as a women in relation to their patriarchal fellow men, and most importantly, as a women of color in relation to their ex-colonizer—something that social identity theory does not often cater well to, considering that the people often "behaves in concert within one group" (p. 226). How could we then speak of different allegiances within one group? Moreover, Identity is not only a shared experience with one group per se. It mediates between the personal and the collectivity that we identify with. That said, there necessarily should be something to balance the weight between the demands of the group and that of the very self. Often, writing balances out the amalgam of the affiliations as it provides a contact zone where all these affiliations are negotiated.

Social identity theory scholars bring to light the importance of balancing the "the demands of role identities with the demands of person identities (Stets, 1995, p. 143). However, how could this balancing happen on the level of identification or the so called self-categorization? I argue that looking at these theories together in line with identification and Intersectionality from rhetorical theory would address issues of agency, ideology, doing and being, and ideology, which are all critical in understanding the self and identity formation. Rhetorical theory blurs, then, this dichotomy between personal identity and social identity, looking at the self as a discursive unit that emerges out of stylistic identifications and symbolic structures.

C. On Rhetorical Theory, Why so important?

Rhetoric as a field of inquiry has been studied, defined, and redefined from a multiplicity of perspectives. For instance, it was revisited from a philological lens calling for the reconsideration of the "terms of art" (Timmerman and Schiappa, 2010), from the perspective of feminist historiography that argues for a new reading that is inclusive—one that traces the shadowy, or perhaps previously barren, areas on its map (Glenn, 1997; Lunsford, 1995), and yet another perspective that purports the "presence" of rhetoric being an act of accomplished rhetors to consciously affect the audience through argumentation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969), or even from the perspective of psychoanalysis and Aristotelian lens that sees rhetoric as an act of identification (Burke, 1984), nodding less toward scientism and more toward formalism. At base, however, all these authors recognize Rhetoric as coming in and out of *persuading* and *convincing*.

Earlier in this introduction I have brought to light the importance of rhetorical theory in understanding why human subjects freely, and perhaps naturally, accept to subordinate to the authority of the ideologies that goes beyond their grasping in the process of *assujetissement*. It is necessary now to anchor on rhetorical theory. What makes rhetorical theory so profound in telling, and accordingly interpreting, the stories of Ahmed and Djebar?

1. Keneth Burke[7]: Identification before Alienation

Under Burke's skin too, rhetoric is, at base, persuasive. It follows that the primary condition for persuasiveness is identification. Certainly, any act of persuasiveness is, fundamentally, an act of identification. Identification happens because there is division; it is "compensatory to division." For Burke, rhetoric does not aim at wining an argument in the narrow sense of the word. Rather it aims at establishing connections through identification.

Human beings are much aware of the fact that they are not identical; however, they identify with one another either if their interests are joined or if they are *persuaded* to so believe (Burke, 1969, pp. 20-21). Upon identification, individuals realize that they are at once connected and separated; they are one unique substance inasmuch as they are consubstantial with the other. Again to be consubstantial with something, or someone, is to identify with him/her but yet, simultaneously, being different from him/her.

Identification, accordingly, provides a mediatory ground for two individuals to speak to each other. Autobiography here underwrites an exemplary manifestation for mediatory ground: it provides a medium, a ground, for the writer to, primarily, identify with the Subject of ideology, in an attempt to identify with the readers themselves. Through this process of identification people develop a sense of identity—of who they are; that they are *someone in particular* and not, haphazardly, just *someone*. My identity, then, is a product of complex identifications that lie beyond my grasping. "Identity is not individual,"

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[7] Burke is a literary theorist that had a powerful impact on the 20th century philosophy, aesthetics, criticism and rhetorical theory. He looked at rhetoric as, what he calls, "symbolic action." He was, akin to the his 20th century peers, heavily influenced by the ideas of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. For more on this, check, Davis, D. (2008). Identification: Burke and Freud on Who You Are. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *38*(2), 123-147.

Burke insists (p. 263); "man [sic!] identifies himself with all sort of manifestations beyond himself" (p. 263).

It is now critical to say that I am not reticent about declaring that the distinction between individuals and their environment is subsiding. Identity is neither private nor peculiar heeded by the psyche but rather by sociality. Our identity is defined by our action across different social contexts, and it is a result, by and large, of linguistic identifications. Burke also insists that identification is another name for "function of sociality" (p. 267). One could not take a role in a collectivity without identifying with this collectivity. For Burke, identity also includes a "change of identity"

> Change of identity is a way of "seeing around the corner." For since the twice born begins as one man and becomes another, he is at once a continuum and a duality. Such changes of identity occur in everyone. They become acute when a person has been particularly scrupulous in forming himself along one set of coordinates, so scrupulous that the shift to new co-ordinates require a violent wrenching of his earlier categories. (1984, p.269)

Clearly, new identifications occur in everyone, bringing about new identities. That's why identities are a continuum: we do not totally brush away our previous allegiances or identifications because—now and at this particular moment—we hinge upon new ones.

Conversely, we "look around the corner," very much like hesitantly trying to put one foot in a territory while keeping the other out. Once persuaded by our new identifications we steadily root both feet into that territory. That's how we develop new unprejudiced perspectives—sometime acute, other times subtle—that enable us to see our identity from a wider spectrum. We perform a repertoire of identities that we constantly negotiate and renegotiate across different circumstances (different coordinates per Burke)

to get at, precisely, scrupulous and very intrinsic understanding of who we are then and now. Writing an autobiographical narrative helps writers see from two angles at once, in order to scrupulously reconsider the coordinates that have formed them already, and still do. It allows for what Burke dubs “wrenching” that is sometimes violent, or perhaps conscious.

Ahmed and Djebar both talk about this very wrenching differently. They both declare that before writing their narratives they were not very conscious of their allegiances and identifications, to use Burke’s term. They have both confessed that the act of writing renders them aware, thus more scrupulous, in ways that were previously impossible. This very act of writing garners a new understanding of the self that clears vagueness and renders identifications and alienations crystal clear. Now, if writing an autobiography makes Ahmed and Djebar more aware of their identifications how do they grapple with all of them? How does autobiography help them look at these different shades of identity and identifications with no awe? How could they balance them all? This leads us to the next discussion, which shows that identities, when understood as intersectional not as additives, helps better understand their connectedness an d how their values foster a la Crenshaw and create social hierarchies per se.

2. The Feminist Terrain: Identities as Intersectional

One could not declare, however, that identity is merely an amalgam of sundry parts that emerge solely in and out of ongoing negotiation(s). In a sense, we couldn’t, for instance, just add the implications of one identity to those of the other to get to know the position from which someone speaks; identities “are not additive but intersectional” (Smith

and Watson, 2010, p. 41). To speak about an Arab woman from Egypt, and equally an Arab woman from Algeria, does not mean to speak about an Arab, an Egyptian and a woman; it rather means to speak about an Arab-Egyptian woman. Similarly, it does not mean to speak about an Arab and an Algerian and a woman. It gets even more complex if we speak about a formerly colonized Arab-(Egyptian or Algerian) woman. Thus our identity is always situated within a welter of subordinating groups that, for Kimberle Crenshaw, "frequently pursue conflicting political agenda" (p. 1252).

The point is that a comprehensive understanding of identity purports not juxtaposing its constituents but rather looking at them as intersectional. Juxtaposing brings birth to fragmented selves; while Intersectionality helps us understand the hierarchy of these categories, and how ideologies cluster around—hence interpellates—some categories while despising others. It helps us understand the fluidity of identities as they move through time and space and across different *political* contexts.

What could be said for now is that the different aspects of identity are not separately existing—one could not consider them in isolation; however, they are complexly intertwined, and that through understanding their very interconnectedness—i.e. Intersectionality, that we come to understand the human identity as a whole.

Kimberle Crenshaw (1993) coined the word "Intersectionality[8]" to construe how race and gender interact to shape the experiences of harassment and discrimination against Black women within their workplaces. She argues that in order to fully account for these

[8] Originally, the term was introduced in 1913 by the sociologist Beatrice Potter Webb, but it was formally recognized as a theory when Crenshaw introduced it in the eighties.

experiences one could not look at sexism and racism in isolation. Looking at these two factors as complexly intertwined allows for the full reading of the violence exercised on women of color.

Besides, Crenshaw points out that discourses are shaped to respond to one category of identity or the other; thus the other overlapping identities go unnoticed. In her words, “Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (p. 1244).

Key here are two roles autobiographical narratives play. On the one hand, such autobiographies mediate between, and reflect upon, different discourses: in this study nationalism, colonization, Arabism, the status of Arab women and so forth. Thus they provide an account of how the identity of women is constructed at the intersection of all these discourses; how they are intertwined, regardless of how conflicting they are, to paint a different picture of women. In a sense, Intersectionality feeds consubstantiality; while the latter operates on the level of mind-psyche the former speaks of social hierarchies attached to the different categories of identity.

On the second, writing an autobiographical narrative implies being seen and engaging in these discourses. It emerges to echo, through talking about the writer’s intersectional identity, the validity of their identity and that of the discourses that they are shaped by. Autobiography provides agency—a voice for women in an attempt to not be overlooked or to languish into forgetting. It provides a contact zone to resist, and perhaps

subvert, different interpellations of conflicting ideologies, in the case of Ahmed and Djebar those of hegemonic colonialism and post-independence ideologies that rage against the former.

Also, Intersectionality conforms to the line of thought we have pinpointed already, as it looks past the so-called personal identity and bring to light the ways through which the overarching power of ideology is always rooted within identities, as it interpellates them. It stipulates that these categories of identity have meaning and consequences on women in particular and, most importantly, that these categories have a set of values attached to them and that these values “foster and create social hierarchies” (p. 1297) that writers usually become more aware of through the act of writing.

Although, clearly enough, there are unequal values attached to these categories but nonetheless there is a degree of agency, and thus resistance, that autobiographical narrative fosters as the authors become more aware of the politics of these categories and their potential values, and thus “the possibility of challenging either the construction of identity or the system of subordination based on that identity” (Crenshaw, 1991, 1297). Autobiographical narrative emerges as a zone that makes this challenging possible.

All that said, how could Ahmed and Djebar whose different shades of identities are hailed as women—women of color in particular, as Arab (Algerian or Egyptian), as formerly colonized, and the list goes on, maintain (1) a coherent understanding of their identity without the risk of being muted or silenced as they, in their autobiographical narratives, not only challenge—and sometimes internalize—the discourse of colonization

but also the patriarchal hegemonic ideologies that rule their homelands, in an effort to build double-affiliations to the complex, and often conflicting ideologies that have hailed them. What strategies do such women deploy? I take Miriam Cooke's conception of "Multiple Critique" to adumbrate that Ahmed and Djebar succeeded in so doing driven their rhetorical strategies to challenge existing rhetoric and, in concert, not wholeheartedly uphold to one affiliation in an effort to present a multi-dimensional identity in a discursively globalizing world.

3. "Multiple Critiques"—On Rhetorical Strategies of Islamic Feminists

The difference between Muslim and Islamist is for some ambiguous. In short, the former denotes an ascribed identity while the latter alludes to an achieved one. In a sense, being a Muslim denotes that you are born to a Muslim family and that you have it on your identification card, without necessarily accepting the norms and tradition that Islam underwrites. On the contrary, Islamist is more linked to the orthodox, and perhaps military, identity through devoting one's life to the establishment of an Islamist State (Cooke, 2000, p. 94).

Islamic on the other hand bridges the schism between Muslim and Islamist, as it describes "a particular kind of self-positioning that will then inform the speech, or action, or the writing, or the way of life adopted by someone who is committed to questioning Islamic epistemology *as an expansion of their faith position and not a rejection of it*" (Cooke, 2000, p. 94; original emphasis). That's why in this study whenever I refer to Djebar and Ahmed and their own epistemological understanding of Islam, especially upon

talking about their gender identity and the *Islamist* discourse it challenges, I will adopt the term Islamic as such.

Having this working definition in mind, we could shortly assert that Ahmed and Djebar used many a rhetorical strategy to affirm a coherent identity in the purview of the ideologies of their times. In "Multiple Critiques: Islamic Feminist Rhetorical Strategies," Cooke argues that Islamic feminists developed "a multilayered discourse that allows them to engage with and criticize various individuals, institutions, and systems that limit and oppress them while making sure that they are not caught in their own rhetoric" (p. 100).

I apply Cooke's assertion on Ahmed and Djebar to say that both are aware of the double antagonisms they are challenging, very much like other formerly colonized subjects—that of the global, the ex-colonizer, and that of the local, the religious zealots that have misread the Islam that Djebar and Ahmed both inherited from their moms. They are not only victims of colonialism but also, simultaneously, victims of their fellow men—a duality that they are caught up in and they keep challenging in different forms; writing an autobiographical narrative is exemplary in challenging these norms as they are present a sort of activism.

Along these lines, Khatibi (1983) argues for what he calls "pensée-autre;"[9] for him the duality itself is mobilizing: it allows for a new critique that transcends the duality itself. Accordingly, Ahmed and Djebar in their narratives are inventing new critiques; they are imagining new forms that challenge this global and local duality of antagonisms,

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[9] Thinking otherwise.

developing “multiple consciousness,”[10] one that stabilizes their different shades of identity, the *linguistic* and *national* in this study, demonstrating so vividly that they can push their voices from the sides to the center on the global arena.

This multiple consciousness makes multiple allegiances possible and opens room for writers to expound upon their different shades of identity. It is not surprising then that Ahmed and Djebar who were both subject to British and French colonialism spoke about their different shades of identity in their autobiographies as they speak about different allegiances embedded in each and every shade. They are inviting us, I argue, to look at the different interpellations of ideology, and its implication on the linguistic, gender, and national consciousness of the formerly colonized subjects, and simultaneously, telling us that their stories unveils how they have transcended the duality that the local/global antagonisms underwrite.

All that said, and echoing Fishman (1984), studying identity from these multiple, overarching perspectives provides clearer insights for researchers in an effort to not only understand identity and the different shades thereof, but also in concert, to allow for a profound understanding of the complex socio-historical and political ideologies that have given rise, and still discursively do, to the identities of Ahmed and Djebar along with their fellow women in the Middle East and North Africa.

Accordingly, this study is set out to answer the following questions:

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[10] Theorizing for black feminist ideology, Deborah King in her “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness” that the ideology that calls for black visibility of black shall meld between different ideologies that bring into light race liberation, meshed with class liberation, along with women’s liberation—one that is rooted in black women’s reality. Such an ideology caters well for, what she calls, “multiple consciousness” of black women in United States and elsewhere.

(1) How did ideological shifts in Egypt's fifties and Algeria's forties interpellate, hail, and shape Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar's linguistic, national and gender identities?

(2) How did Ahmed and Djebar challenge, internalize, or resist these interpellations through (re)negotiation in their autobiographical narratives?

(3) How do such negotiations embedded in autobiographical narratives cater to a "multiple critique" that enables women in postcolonial and Islamic contexts draw an identity that transcends the duality of the local/global to gain agency in both?

The thesis then proceeds as follows: Chapter II lays down a detailed methodology of the study. Thus it explains the data collection and data analysis procedures. It also brings to light the corpuses being studied presenting their emerging themes and tracing their textual moments that relate to linguistic, national, and gender identities. Chapter III turns its focus to Leila Ahmed's narrative to elucidate how she negotiates her identity in her narrative in an attempt to balance the conflicting ideologies she was subject to, while enshrining her identity upon their frontiers, and at once using the language of the ex-colonizer. Similarly, chapter IV meditates the three emerging shades of identity in the narrative of Djebar that seeks to bring women into the center of the Algerian national narrative in its linguistic, national, and gender imbrications. Chapter V summarizes the results making a brief comparison between both writers, while reaffirming the necessity of studying the different shades of identity at their intersections to complexly understand identity per se and the powers that go beyond it. The overall aim of the study is to

understand the formation of the post-colonial feminist subjectivity in the Arab world as it straddles the linguistic, national, and gender ideologies that dominated Egypt's 1950s and Algeria's 1940s.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

A. The Study: Purpose and Research Questions

This study aims at tracing the three shades of identity negotiations in the autobiographical narratives of Leila Ahmad and Asia Djebar: the linguistic, national, and gender. Specifically, it investigates how ideology interpellates these identities calling them to emerge to create the very subjects of both authors goaded by the very process of *assujetissement*, and then it looks at how autobiographical narratives not only furnish places for the writers to negotiate the cracks and fissure that conflicting ideologies leave but also as a mean to develop a "multiple critique"—a consciousness that allows Arab formerly colonized women gain agency in the global and national arenas, both.

Shortly, this study is set out to answer the following questions: (1) How did ideological shifts in Egypt's fifties and Algeria's forties interpellate, hail, and shape Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar's linguistic, national and gender identities? (2) How did Ahmed and Djebar challenge, internalize, or resist these interpellations through (re)negotiation(s) in their autobiographical narratives? And (3) how do such negotiations embedded in autobiographical narratives cater to "multiple critique" that enables women in postcolonial and Islamic contexts draw an identity that transcends the duality of the local/global to, alternatively, gain agency in both?

To this end, this study does not read the "textual realizations of identity," which I believe allows for an understanding of the *writer's* identity per se[11] not the far more

[11] Matsuda (2015) points out that in applied linguistics researches tend to focus on a number of textual linguistic features that play a key role in constructing the identity of the writer. He summarized these textual

complex self-identity; otherwise, it focuses on how writers are responding to the ideologies that have hailed or interpellated their different shades on identity (the linguistic, national, and gender). How did they internalize, or perhaps resist, such hailing and how they, in turn, relate to their identifications and alienations in their autobiographical narratives.

B. The Corpus

The corpus of this study is constituted of two, book length, autobiographical narratives written by Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar. The following table presents a brief description of the autobiographical narrative selected for this thesis study.

Title of Autobiographical Narrative/Author	Year of Publication	Number of Textual moments on Linguistic Identity	Number of Textual moments on Gender Identity	Number of Textual moments on National Identity	Number of pages
A Border Passage from Cairo To American—A Woman's Journey by Leila Ahmed	1999	33	101	85	307

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functions as: appraisal, evaluation, judgment, intensity, posture, stance and engagement. The last two allow for understanding identity-in-interaction, that is positioning—the focus of this study. That said, in this study I focus not on the function of these textual features. Rather, on how writers position themselves in terms of the ideologies and rhetoric(s) that interpellate them.

L'amour, la fantasia[12] by Asia Djebar	Asia Djebar (1985)	67	127	59	315

Table 2.1 *Selection of Arab women Autobiographical narratives Analyzed in this Study*

Three main criteria guided the selection of the texts: (1) both texts are written by Arab women writers in French and British post-colonial contexts as this study aims at examining the formation of post-colonial feminist subjectivity in the Arab world; (2) both texts are written in the language of the ex-colonizer; (3) both texts include chapters/sections that expound upon the linguistic, gender, and national identities of the authors.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

For each of the autobiographical narratives a corpus was manually collected to sketch out all textual moments that highlight the three shades of identities of both authors. Two different reading schemas were thus collected in two spread sheet formats alongside with the additional notes from the corpus to emphasis how writing about identity had contributed to the identities of the Ahmed and Djebar.

It is worth mentioning that I am not looking at these reading schemas as a transparent window toward the self both authors are narrating. That is to say, not looking at autobiography as an objective source of data opens a room for complex socio-historical understanding of what constitutes the narrated self. Also, it opens a door to trace the complexities that form one's identity that is never linear—one constituent leading to the

[12] The English edition is entitled, *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* translated by Dorothy Blaire (1989). In this thesis, whenever I refer to the English translation of L'amour, I'll be using Blaire's translation unless stated otherwise.

other; but rather one that is knotted and intersectional following Crenshaw's theory on Intersectionality. As a result, I am approaching these autobiographical texts as a performative acts of identity—one that is narrating a self, an identity as such, and as a result deciding to present certain aspects of this self to the audience while overlooking others, tantamount to pedantic nitpicking. Interestingly enough, Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar both admit that their autobiography shares a welter of features with fiction writing.

All that said, in my analysis, I simultaneously present two levels of reading: micro and macro analyses under the purview of Critical Discourse Analysis. While the latter helps me run a critical eye that looks at how ideology enters into play to interpellate Ahmed and Djebar's identities, and thus form their subjectivity, the former guides to analyze how ideology trickles down to work at the level of the self. Thus, I systematically integrate the background information I have collected on the status of women in Egypt and Algeria and their linkage with the ideologies of the time—that of the colonial imperial power and that of the nationalist post independent movements equally well.

Two main approaches feed my analysis: a linguistic approach and a rhetorical approach. I argue that both allow for a more complex understanding of identity. In line with the former approach, I take Stets and Burke's (2000) Identity Negotiation Theory and Identity Theory as a point of departure, in order to understand *what* is at stake when negotiation emerges. The latter approach, further, helps me deeply understand *how* ideology hails, with Althusser in mind, human subjects to form their subjectivity.

I argue, a la Burke, that human subjects identify with the Subject of ideology as they go through an internal rhetoric understood in light of Nienkamp's (2001) theory on internal rhetoric. Put differently, individuals are persuaded to subordinate to ideology in an effort to gain subjectivity goaded by their internal rhetoric. As a result, identifications, and naturally alienations, emerge. Putting these two approaches together not only allows for a complex understanding of the different categories of identity and the set of meanings they breed, but also for a deeper understanding of the sociohistorical contexts themselves that led to their existence and, even more deeply, the social hierarchies that these values foster[13].

D. Summary of the Narratives and their Emerging Themes

1. Leila Ahmed's A Border Passage from Cairo To American—A Woman's Journey

Two main themes widely circulate in Leila Ahmed's narrative: Arabness or Arabism and the discursivity of Islam along with their key role in shaping the identity of women in the Middle East. Growing up in the final days of the British colonial rule in Egypt to an upper middle class family, Leila Ahmed—now professor at Harvard Divinity School—probes toward negotiating, and equally imagining, new ways of being woman in post-colonial contexts, negotiating the colonial impositions on women in the Middle East and at once articulating new understanding of Islam—one that she inherits from her grandmother and that diverges from what she calls "men's understanding of Islam."

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[13] I am also referring here to Crenshaw's theory on Intersectionality. Crenshaw suggests that the process of categorizing, or naming to use identity terms, is not at all unilateral. In her words, "Subordinated people can and do participate, sometimes even subverting, the naming process in empowering ways" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1297). Looking at the different shades of identity in their linkage with ideology and history helps us profoundly investigate the empowering ways Ahmed and Djebar deploy and negotiate.

Indeed, she is in quest for an Arab identity that does not identify with the one laid down by the ex-colonizer and, equally, by the nationalist movements in post-independence era. She rages against Nasser's grasp on power, following the nationalization of Egypt and particularly following her father's, himself a renowned engineer, crises with the new regime as the latter opposed Nasser's plan to build a dam at Aswan River. This crisis constituted a turning point in Ahmed's life, after which she left for Cambridge. Ahmed expounds abundantly upon her love-hate relationship with the Arabic language. While writing her autobiographical narrative, Ahmed reconciliates with the Arabic language and identity; further, she cultivates a new understanding and critique of the status of women in the post-colonial Middle East, and in Egypt particularly.

2. Asia Djebar's L'amour, la fantasia

Fatima-Zohra lmalayen, often referred to by her pen name Asia Djebar, presents in her autobiographical attempt her own history of identity and in parallel the history of Algeria and that of her fellow Algerian women. In her narrative, Djebar explores the discontinuities of women's histories in Algiers under the purview of the two dominant historical narratives of Algeria—that of the colonizer and patriarchal. By so doing, she juxtaposes her own narrative with the official narratives. Djebar showcases the myriad episodes that constituted the history of women of Algeria so as to negotiate them all and to, further, enshrine her own identity, and that of her women collectivity, across them all. Haunted by her Quranic and French education, Djebar's narrative is nuanced as she mediates between her triple linguistic inheritances: the French, Berber, and Arabic, while

putting forward a feminist narrative of Algeria—one that brings the fragmented histories of women into its core.

Interestingly, both narratives use the metaphor of voice abundantly. Ahmed starts, and ends, her narrative with the sound of the reed in reference to Rumi to speak of her nostalgia and sense of loss and remembrance that she aims to recover through writing. However, Djebar uses the sound of the Algerian women's cry and their ululations when they watch the Algerian fantasia, as she aims at resurrecting this cry for it not to languish in neglect.

CHAPTER III

LEILA AHMED'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

ON WHO I AM?

A STEP FURTHER

> I think that we are always plural. Not either this *or* that, but this *and* that. And we always embody in our multiple shifting consciousnesses a convergence of traditions, cultures, histories, coming together in this time and this place and moving like rivers through us. And I know now that the point is to look back with insight and without judgment, and I know now that it is of the nature of being in this place, this place of convergence of histories, cultures, ways of thought, that there will always be new ways to understand what we are living through. (Ahmed, pp. 25-26; original emphasis)

> [I]deology is at heart of whatever makes language a political phenomenon. Ideology will always be a mixture of fact and fiction, but when fictions take hold of in a community over a long period of time, they can turn into founding myths that resonate with how the community comes to imagine itself, turning them into some kind of psychological 'truths.' The power of ideology lies in those acts of imagining that can serve as sources of important symbolic resources in society, language cannot avoid the intrusion of ideology, nor should it be protected against such an intrusion. (Suleiman, 2011, p. 234)

A. Chapter Overview: The Argument

The quest for identity, henceforth identity negotiation, is a recurrent theme in Leila Ahmed's autobiographical narrative, *A Border Passage, From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (1999); wherein history, political turmoil of the time, along with the ideological shifts in Egypt's 1950s, emerge not only as three protagonists in Ahmed's narrative, but also as molding forces that have changed the history of Egypt itself, as well as the trajectory of identity of this woman in particular. Ahmed's narrative addresses questions enmeshed with Arab identity formation in postcolonial contexts. Indeed, she thrives for constructing an identity that diverges from the one inherited from the colonizer

in order to enshrine her identity as an Arab women in history, which intersects with the history of Islam itself.

Comparing the politics of the time to the music that haunts listeners by a sense of loss, Ahmed posits clearly from the very beginning that her narrative, "begins for [her] with the disruption of that world and the desolation that for a time overtook [their] lives. For it was only then that [she'd] begin to follow the path that would bring [her]—exactly here. And so it is with those years and their upheaval and with the politics that framed [their] lives that [she] must begin" (p. 5).

Thus, Ahmed's narrative begins in a moment in history. It starts off as Ahmed lodges herself into—rather than disentangling from—history. Differently put, her autobiographical venture emerges out not to trim herself off history but rather to reconstruct herself self more *fully* within the fault-lines of history. Indeed, understanding one's identity unfolding in a specific narrative, autobiographical here, necessitates, par excellence, going back and deftly delving into the historical territory to scrutinize how events—whether political, economic, social, religious or cultural—unfolding at the macro-level trickled down unto the micro-level constituting one's narrative and identity as such.

To [1] understand someone's story entails squarely delving into the historical events that have constituted his/her story. Also, to [2] understand who one is, his/her identity henceforth, requires understanding the structures through which (s)he has emerged, as Allen (2015) interestingly puts it, "who we are, it should be no surprising to say, is in substantive measure a function of the structures in and by virtue of we emerge" (p. 204).

Getting at an understanding of who the person is, imposes studying the very structures that had inscribed that very identity. Burke (1984) insists that, "the so-called "I" is a unique combination of […] "corporate we's"," (p. 264). Along this line of thought, Allen (2015) continues, "[w]e are at once composed by the voices of others and also ever in the midst of composing our selves and others" (p. 204). Said shortly then, identity is co-constructed—by the self and by others, in the ongoing process of constructing itself and the other. However, this very construction does not come unbound; as one always carries the baggage of the past as she moves forward in life.

We are discursively emerging in a world that is controlled by political and ideological[14] power, and confining our discursiveness as such. Emergence imposes having identity. Hence, ideology is not what subjects oppose. On the contrary, and in a strong sense, ideology is what human subjects rely upon in their very existence and what they further "harbor and preserve in the beings that [they] are" (Butler, 1997, p. 2). It follows, Butler avers, that the power of ideology "imposes itself on us, and, weakened by its force, we come to internalize or accept its terms" (p. 2). Subjection then is a multifaceted process. It signifies (1) subordinating to ideology, (2) identifying with and, by implication, alienating from certain categories imposed by it and the discourse it presents, and, finally, (3) becoming a subject.

[14] Understood here in the Althusserian sense: it is not propaganda in the narrow sense of the word, rather, in its broader sense, which signifies the pervasive cultural ideas that human beings possess about the way through which the world must function and how we function within this world, which is always present and always there, unabatedly imposed, and instantiated, by institutions Althusser calls "Ideological State Apparatuses."

Althusser recognizes that *assujetissement* takes places through "hailing," one that is less coercive and subtle. Ideology, with its institutions and discourses, "hails" or "interpellates" subjects that enter into them goading them into embracing the practices of the established order. In Althusser's words, "une reproduction de sa soumission aux règles de l'ordre établi, c'est dire une reproduction de sa soumission à l'idéologie dominante"[15] (1970, p.11). Subjects are subjected through hailing then. Hence, they recognize themselves as doing "those sorts of things"—thus partaking in a certain collectivity—that replicates the discourses of the hailing ideology. Most importantly though, Althusser argues that individuals must be "steeped" in the ruling ideology in order to perform their roles. In his words, "[t]ous les agents de la production […] doivent être à un titre ou à un autre "pénétrés" de cette idéologie, pour s'acquitter "consciencieusement" de leur tâche" (1970, p. 12).[16]

Accordingly, an identity, any identity, is implausible outside the cultural and historical underpinning of the ideologies that have originally constituted it. And our identity per se is not our very own in the tightest sense of the word. Rather, it is acquired through processes of identification(s), dubbed *self-categorization* in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell, 1987), in an effort to hinge upon different—rather than one—locales. Stets and Burke (2000) point out that identity is "reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications" (p. 224). Identity, then, is constituted

[15] "A reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology" (Althusser, 1971, pp. 132-133).
[16] Subjects "must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'" (Althusser, 1971, p. 133).

through an ongoing process of identifications and classifications across different contexts and situations.

Through identification individuals accentuate the differences and similarities between their own identity and that of others, thus becoming more aware of the social categories that they hinge upon and that are part of the structured society that they are born into. It's worth noting that these categories exist only "in relation to other contrasting categories" (Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 225), for instance, male vs. female, black vs. white, east vs. west, and so forth; and that these categories precede individuals (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Moreover, each category has more or less power, social status, and prestige.

What can be said for now is that identity, at base, is not an autonomous concept, confined within specific time and place. It starts off in a specific time in history but it is dynamic and fluid as recognized by most contemporary scholarly work on identity (Benwell, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Burke & Stets, 2009; Jackson & Hogg, 2010).

For instance, Hall (1994) posits that cultural identities are "the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within discourses of history and culture" (p. 395). Henceforth, to get at a full understanding of such "unstable points" that construct identity, one shall read through the discourses that individuals are subjected to, discourses deployed by conflicting ideologies particularly in post-colonial contexts as two ideological rifts hover over the formerly colonized nation: that of the ex-colonizer and that of the post-

independence movements; in Leila Ahmed's case that of the British empire and that of the pan-Arabism and nationalism that she deeply resents.

Reading through such discourses of history and culture provides readers with a productive, rather than reductive, understanding of how subjects emerge in and out of ideology and what kind of, perhaps, conflicting discourse(s) interplay, goading the formation of subjects across shifting political/social contexts. Further, understating their underpinnings helps us fully adumbrate the multiple shades of identities and their intersection but also, even more deeply, sketch out how and why ideology fosters certain shades and gloss others.

The chapter then proceeds as follows: the first section explores, although briefly, the political and cultural contours of Egypt 50s, especially in regard to nationalism and feminism and their subtle link with language. The second section entails close readings into the three shades of identity in Leila Ahmed, to showcase her identity construction as it mirrors, par excellence, the ideology of the time. Although different sections are allowed to the different shades of identity every section speaks to the other and draws upon the other in an effort to demonstrate their Intersectionality.

B. "We are All Mired in the Meanings and Histories of Our Time," On Contextualizing the Narrative

Contextualizing autobiographies in their historical, political, and cultural frameworks allows for a complex understanding of how individuals are constructed as human subjects; of how we are, in a substantive manner and at base, unavoidably molded by the structures that politically, culturally, and historically lie beyond us. Differently said,

we echo the voices of others, inasmuch as we, always and ever, lie in the midst of an ongoing negotiation with that *other*.

1. toward a New Regime: The Revolution of 1952

Egypt's nationalist rhetoric traces its root back to the aftermath of the World War I, resulting in Egypt's formal independence from Great Britain in 1922; accordingly, in early 1920s a newly established monarchy, headed by King Fouad (1922-1936) and followed by his son King Farouk (1936-1952), tightened its grasp on power which lasted until the military's seizure of power led by the Free Officers Movement in 1952 (Jankowski, 2002, p. 11). The three decades under Fouad and Farouk respectively were dubbed as Egypt's "liberal era" (Ibid, p. 11), where the salient marks of the political establishment altogether were those values often associated with westernized liberal worldview, which Jankowski lays down as: "parliamentary government, a free enterprise economy, and a Westernized social structure oriented toward the promotion of secularism, individualism, and similar features of "modernity" modeled on the European experience" (Jankowski, 2002, p. 11), to which Ahmed's family belongs.

Born in 1940 in Egypt to an upper-middle class family from an Egyptian Father and a Turkish mother, Ahmed grew up in the last days of the British Empire. Throughout the whole period of the monarchy, Britain continued to exercise its power upon the Egyptian affairs (Jankowski, 2002, p. 12), and thus influenced the most of the upper-middle class elites in the Egyptian society, among which, ultimately, was Ahmed's Family.

The revolution of 1952 marked an essential turning point in the history of Egypt, and by implication Ahmed's life as well. It put an end to the power of the old governing class, including Ahmed's father, a civil engineer and tough opponent to Gamal Abdel Nasser, following the crisis that emerged out of Aswan High Dam construction. Interestingly enough, Ahmed refers to the year of 1952 at several crucial points in her narrative. At the very beginning, Ahmed states that the politics of this year "framed" her life, thus identity, positing that "democracy was abolished and Egypt was declared a socialist state, drawing its political inspiration now not from the democracies of the West but from the Soviet Union" (p. 7); however, she takes pride that the revolution was a bloodless one, reflecting on her mother's pacifist attitude that she admires.

In July 1952, a group of the "Free Officers" (*al- Ḍubbāṭ al-ʾAḥrār*)[17], headed by Gamal Abdel Nasser and Mohammad Naguib, seized power in a military coup, denouncing the evils of the *ancien régime*. Within their ideological outlook, the denunciation of western imperialism along with the corruption of the ancient regime, as well as the insistence on the complete national[18] independence and social progress were prominent (Jankowski, 2002, p. 16).

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[17] For transliterations of Arabic words into Latin characters I have used the system set by the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES).

[18] Jankowski (2002) points out that the adoption of the an Arab nationalist position by the newly established regime seems to be particularly Nasser's initiative, framed by his very individual understanding of the necessity of pan-Arabism and Arab solidarity under the banner of a joint Arab struggle in opposition to western imperialism (p. 38). Moreover, Nasr (1981) suggests in her *aṭ-Ṭaṣṣawur al-Qawmī al-ʾArabī fī Fikr Jamāl Abd al-Nāṣir* [*The Arab Nationalist Conception in Gamal Abdul Nasser*] that Nasser's personal identity crisis, driven by his unhappy childhood, has been resolved through his fervent identification with the Egyptian nationalist cause under the banner of Arab nationalism. She contends that Nasser found his identity in this national ideology driven by his former social isolation (Nar, 1981, pp. 84-88).

It is worth noting that the leaders of 1952 revolution were diverse in the narrow sense of the term: some emerge from upper-middle class and “landholding or professional families” (Jankowski, 2002, p. 14); many from the Egyptian middle class constituted of peasantry families or families of “salaried government functionaries” (p. 14); and “very few descent either from Egypt’s upper class or its rural or urban laboring population” (p. 14). Further, Lorenz (1990) puts it clearly that, “the officers represented Egypt’s middle class only in the broadest sense, the intermediate stratum between peasants (and workers) and aristocrat” (p. 52-35). With this idea in mind, one could safely say that power was falling in the hands of the people who Ahmed and her family did not identify with on so many levels—the political and economic are only few. In the aftermath of the revolution, a new rhetoric came to the fore, not only marked by anti-western and anti-hegemonic rhetoric, one that toppled the power(s) of the former ruling class, but also marked off by a newly established rhetoric suffixed with the “isms” of the time: nationalism, anti-imperialism, Arabism, Arab nationalism, among others.

Moreover, during the years of Ahmed’s adolescence, the name of Egypt underwent two major changes reflecting the political interests of the ruling parties and the shifting ideologies that defined the identity of Egypt itself. Under Nasser’s era, and in light of the recurring Arab nationalism, Egypt became the United Arab Republic following the brief union with Syria. Indeed, the country, later with Anwar al-Sadat, restored the name Egypt to identify the nation as the Arab Republic of Egypt. This demonstrates clearly to

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Paradoxically, the very cause that helped Nasser resolve his identity crisis, thus bringing the marginal-man unto the midst of political activism, has marginalized Leila Ahmed stripping her off the social and economic privileges she had previously enjoyed.

what extent the identity of Egypt was politically rooted in the shifting ideologies of the time—a moment during which crucial terms in the history of Egypt were defined and redefined anew; a fact that haunted Ahmed's identity by "feelings of deep uncertainty and a mysteriously guilt-ridden-sense of ambiguity" (1999, p. 10).

The year 1956, however, paints a new turning point in Ahmed's life, especially in the aftermath of the Suez invasion, which strengthened Nasser's tightened grasp on power. On the contrary, prior to Nasser's era, Egypt was looked at by the Egyptian intelligentsia, especially under Khedive Ismael, as a "rapidly advancing nation" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 35) that is thriving to be "modern" very much like the countries of Europe. They believed that European Powers should accept Egypt as a "European" Nation. With Nasser, however, all such dreams were hampered; and a new imagination of Egypt emerged as a result.

For Ahmed this year also marked an irrevocable move from colonialism to post colonialism; in her words, "[the Suez crisis of 1956] became a symbolic and important date above all because it marked the moral defeat of the European powers and the public exposure, on the world stage, of their hectoring tyranny toward countries under their dominion" (p. 32). Ahmed also points out that, "the nationalization speech was to be the first shot in an unfolding drama that would become a landmark in world history, bringing about an end to old-style imperialism, and, above all, to the old-style assumptions and attitudes of imperialism" (p. 165-166). In a sense, Ahmed considers that after 1956 a new consciousness propagated in Egypt which has, naturally, affected the nation on a larger scale.

2. Egyptian Women in Question—"The Emergence of State Feminism"

From a feminist lens, however, the year 1956 constituted a new turning point in the life of the Egyptian women generally. Bier (2011) posits that prior to 1956, and at the early stages of the revolution, a rhetoric that is directed toward Egyptian women in particular was quasi absent from the political purview, unlike the later developed rhetoric of the revolution that promised to "liberate women," largely seconded by the "Charter for National Action," wherein the gender politics found its "iconographic expression" (Bier, 2011, p. 54). One paragraph of the Charter pointed out to the importance of gender equality, stating literally that "women stand on par with men; and all barriers that hamper women's free movement shall be removed for them to participate positively and actively in creating life" (Charter for National Action, 1961, par. III; my translation)[19].

Nelson (1996) notes that granting women in the early stages of the revolution their full political rights would give rise to the opposition of the conservative parties within the newly established regime that was still struggling at the time to tighten its grasp on power (p. 185); that's why Nasser gradually implemented women in his rhetoric. Bier (2011) highlights as well the absence of the wives of the prominent officers amongst the Free Officers from the political scene unlike the female members of the old monarchy (p. 55).

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[19] "إن المرأة لابدّ أن تتساوى بالرجل، ولابدّ أن تسقط بقايا الأغلال التى تعوق حركتها الحرّة حتى تستطيع أن تشارك بعمق وإيجابية فى صنع الحياة" (ميثاق العمل الوطني، 1961، الفقرة 3).

Yet, unlike the National Charter of 1961, Nasser's book titled the *Philosophy of the Revolution*, written in 1954, made no specific mention of women being a particular constituent that needs to be mobilized (Bier, 2011, p. 54).

According to Bier (2011), the late 50s marked the end of independent feminism in Egypt paving the way for what she calls "state feminism." She purports that state feminist, "Like other intellectuals, technocrats, and cultural procedures during Nasser period, […] derived their authority from their claims to serve the cause of national liberation, social justice, and revolutionary transformation" (p. 56); they did not "passively endorse state policy. Instead, they used their positions to take an active role in shaping and contesting the gendered parameters of that project [Nasser's modernizing project] throughout the Nasser period" (Bier, 2011, p. 56).

The point is that Ahmed herself did not identify with this sort of "state feminism." She took a staunch stance against the newly established regime. She even internalized the low-regard to local women. In her words, "But I too internalized the low regard in which Westerners and also traditional men of the local culture at large held women and the activities of women" (1999, p. 193); she adds,

> It is quite clear to me that my mother distinctly enters the fabric of my own memories in the negative. […] I too saw those women, and above all my mother, as people who "did" nothing […]. In a world where doing—doing, not being—was everything. Men *did* things, *were* something or somebody, and Western women too, […] could be something or someone, compared with the women around me in my childhood, who just *were*. (pp. 193-194; original emphasis)

It is with this negative attitude that Ahmed looked at women in her surroundings. She did not identify with them, neither with the new regime's agenda oriented toward them. Even more, she declares that the only way out of this is not through abiding to the new regime's women empowerment agenda. Instead, it was through her growing up to "become either a man or a Westerner" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 194). However—as we shall see later—it is through

the very act of writing about her identity and about other women in Egypt that Ahmed got to grapple with the question of women in the Middle East, cultivating a new consciousness—one that does not exclusively underscore the superiority of the west, and naturally, the inferiority of the native, but that ensconces in the richness of her own heritage.

C. Three Shades of Identity, One narrative

1. Of Language Identity and Beyond

Unlike Djebar, Ahmed—from the very outset of her narrative sees *fuṣḥā* Arabic in a negative light, sharply separating between classical Arabic—that of the Other—and Egyptian Arabic—that of the mother tongue.[20] For her, the *fuṣḥā* was the language of the hegemonic Other, that is the language of Arab nationalist movements: the language of Arabism, patriarchy, and textuality; whereas Egyptian Arabic was her mother tongue: the language of orality and feminism. Ahmed herself reflects extensively about her love-hate relationship with the Arabic language. The oral Egyptian Arabic, classical Arabic, and English, the language of the ex-colonizer, formulate three linguistic prisms through which Ahmed straddles to negotiate her linguistic identity. In her words,

> I've sometimes found myself wondering, that someone like Father, who loved the Quran, as he clearly did, had somehow neglected to see it that his children would have assure a command of its language—written Arabic—as he had […] English too, by all means, […] was the language of the globally dominant and the language, therefore, of knowledge and professional advancement. But why not also classical Arabic? We were completely fluent in spoken Arabic, but not the written language.

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[20] Ahmed refers to the Kenyan author Thiongo to lay down a definition for "mother tongue," as it is "the language that people used as they worked in the fields, the language that they used to tell stories in the evenings [….]. [A] language whose words had "a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meanings […]. The language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world"" (pp. 280-281).

> For me now, there is no doubt that, at least implicitly, English was valued above Arabic in ways that would have marked it, […] as being somehow innately "superior" language. English was […] the language we spoke at school, where were prohibited even in the playground from speaking Arabic. And it was the language of the people we looked up to at school, namely our British teachers. And the language of the movies […] and of the books and *their* enticing imaginary worlds. (Ahmed, 1999, p. 23; original emphasis)

Two key issues emerge here and both hint at the linkage between language, ideology, and colonialism. Firstly, while Ahmed's father loved the Quran he did not ensure that his children have the command of the language, rendering it less powerful and more inferior. Ahmed posits, "the Arabic language […] became implicitly marked as inferior (and presumably marked as native and inferior" (p. 24). Arabic was a limiting language, a *baladi*[21]—spoken by the "unsophisticated folk regions of the town" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 24). As a result, her relation with the Quran was not linguistic per se. We shall see later that this allows for a new understanding of the Quran in Ahmed—one that remained oral not written and that, as Haragoz (2014) contends, developed into "an ethics shaping a strong female consciousness" (p. 24) in Ahmed, which is at variance from the otherwise religious orthodoxy of what she calls the "patriarchal Islam."

Conversely, and secondly, Ahmed's admiration to English was driven by the hegemonic educational system of the British. Restrained from speaking Arabic at school, Ahmed looked at Arabic as inferior: it longer opened her to the "enticing imaginary world" inasmuch as English does. One shall not forget that under the Althusserian purview the

[21] The term itself invites different readings. Literally it means "my country بلدي;" however, it acquires different negative connotations such as local, indigenous, or native. Shereen (2003) notes that in Egyptian Arabic in particular, the word baladī "is pejorative and suggests poor taste, gaudiness, lack of sophistication—generally inferiority" (p. 127).

religious, educational, and family ideological state apparatuses fall on the top of his list of the ideological institutions. In Ahmed, her family and her education both looked at Arabic as being marked, while the language of the ex-colonizer was that of the prestige.

Suleiman (2011) suggests that banning Arabic in foreign schools marks the Arabic language as the "native Other, an acquiescent and contesting Other that is willing and ready, by virtue of its social norms and instrumental aspirations, to Other itself not against the dominant European culture, but, more significantly, against its own indigenous culture and native language" (pp. 96-97). Suleiman (2011) refers to Bishr's (1995) suggestion that in the first half of the twentieth century in Egypt these foreign schools created a complex situation for Egyptian youth particularly and the society at large; attending these schools, Egyptian students nativized their parents, language, and culture, distancing themselves from their "native" kin.[22] That is unequivocally true in Ahmed.

Ahmed writes, "English was from the start for us a language of subversion and a way of circumventing and baffling the adults around us and of communicating around them. […]. With our mother we almost always spoke Arabic and, if not that, French" (p. 24). This juxtaposition between "them" and "us" is very salient that allows for a complex understanding of identity creation through language. For Ahmed, language was the first marker of her identity; through which she distinguishes herself from the native other.

[22] Commenting on the influence of cultural productions on the colonial subjects, Fanon (1952) affirms that "il y a une constellation de donnees, une serie de propositions qui, lentement, sournoisement, a la faveur des ecrits, des journaux, de l'education, des livres scolaires, des affiches, du cinema, de la radio, penetrent un individu — en constituant la vision du monde de la collectivite à laquelle il appartient" (p. 124).
[There is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly but subtly—with help of books, newspapers, schools, and their texts, advertisements, films, radio—work their way into one's mind and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs (Fanon, 1886, p. 152)].

Accordingly, even the cultural productions of the colonized become native, branded as inferior and imparted with lesser supremacy.

Unlike Djebar who was searching for her identity in the language prism of the elder females of her collectivity, Ahmed was linguistically, in the full sense of the word, differentiating herself from her female collectivity that she considers *native and inferior*.

Shaaban and Ghaith (2002) suggest that subjective ethnolinguistic vitality "refers to the perceptions of group members of the language vitality of their group in relation to outgroups" (p. 260). The point is that, it is this very subjective perception of language that goads human subjects to either alienate or identify with a specific language or dialect. For instance, English for Ahmed fed her subjective vitality in her group vis-à-vis the out-groups; it was a language of subversion that enables her to alienate herself from her fellow Egyptians and, simultaneously, identify with the British teachers to whom she looked up at school.

Likewise, Egyptian Arabic brands her Egyptianess that has, for her, supremacy over the *fuṣḥā* that runs an eye of homogeneity over, what Ahmed considers, the diverging Arabic societies.[23] Interestingly, she writes, "I realized that just as Gulf Arabic and Gulf culture were different from standard Arabic and the Arab culture of literacy, so also were

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[23] Suleiman (2003) presents a full account on al-Husri's pan-Arabist ideology and its intersection with language, nationalism, and identity (pp. 126-140). Al-Husri, the twentieth century prominent ideologist of pan-Arabism, argues against all tendencies that promote different Arabic dialects at the expense of the standard *fuṣḥa* Arabic. He considers that the different boundaries between Arab nation-states shall not demarcate any linguistic boundary. Al-Husri argues for what he calls "*lugha waḥida wa-muwaḥḥidah*" ["a unified and unifying language]; pointing out that the different Arabic dialects have "little validity beyond their descriptive and geographical boundaries." After all, Egyptian Arabic, for instance, is an idealized version of the Arabic of Cairo that, in turn, differs from the Arabic of Alexandria, albeit the former is erroneously referred to by Ahmed as *Egyptian* Arabic. Accordingly, Ahmed tends to acquire a linguistic identity peg that underscores the privileges and prestige of her class.

Coincidentally, Ahmed (1999) points out that "this language of standard Arabic was not my mother tongue and the values purveyed by the Arabic texts that we read were not those of my mother culture. The characteristic, defining flavor of that culture, my native Cairene culture, was perhaps above all that it so richly and easily blended into its own unique Cairo brew a wealth of traditions and provenances and ways of histories and memories" (p. 282).

the language and culture in which I grew up, Cairene Egyptian culture and language" (Ahmed, 199, p. 282). Thus, Egyptian Arabic was the best expression of Ahmed's identity and cultural heritage, as it demarcates her differently, not as an Arab but as Egyptian.

Along these lines, Suleiman (2011) insists that "Language is the bridge through which acts of cultural subordination, and mental and psychological displacement are injected, sometimes, self-injected, into the (ex-)colonized culture" (p. 99). Moreover, Suleiman (2013) notes in his later book that "culture is political (with small 'p')" in the strongest sense of the word (p. 149). One of the key cultural constituents is language. It is, Suleiman (2013) argues, "in step with a host of other ideological formations in society" (p. 149). Hence, language is part and parcel of a larger ideological matrix.

Two contending ideological matrixes hover over Ahmed's life: the hegemonic imperial power of the British Empire, on the one hand, and the post-independence rhetoric of nationalism and Arabness, on the other. Now, while Suleiman (2011) refers to such subordinations being a result of injection, either by self or by forces that go beyond the self as such, I look at them, with Althusser in mind, as different kinds of interpellations that bring about a welter of internalizations, resistances, subversions, and hybridity. Haunted by the interpellations of both, Ahmed is forming her identity within both. She writes,

> When I began to look in my academic work at issues of colonialism and began to unmask the colonialist perspectives and racism embedded in texts on Arabs and on the colonized, steeping by myself in writings on internalized colonialism, I began to realize that it was not only in texts that these hidden messages were inscribed but they were there, too, in my childhood and in the very roots of my consciousness. I had grown up, I came to see, in a world where people, or at any rate, my father, had not merely admired European civilization but had probably internalized the colonial beliefs about the superiority of European civilization. My mother, who always distinctly kept herself at a distance from Europeans […] also explicitly cherished and honored her own heritage, never became a suspect in my mind for having her colonized consciousness in the way that my father had.

> […] I have been through many revolutions in my understanding of my father, my mother, and my own consciousness—understanding them now this way, now that, convinced at one moment that they are this and at another that they are that. For the truth is, I think that we are always plural. Not either this *or* that, but this *and* that. And we always embody in our multiple shifting consciousnesses a convergence of traditions, cultures, histories, coming together in this time and this place and moving like rivers through us. (Ahmed, 1999, p. 25)

In these lines, Ahmed clearly states that she is in a shifting consciousness, thus negotiating her identity across different ideologies—those associated with the hegemonic west, the European in particular,[24] and those of her fellow native Egyptians with their language and culture.

As a result of writing, Ahmed herself is now aware of her father's "internalized colonialism" that she deeply regrets unlike her mother's attachment to her own culture. In her narrative, Ahmed attempts to be *neither* this *nor* that, involving in a constant negotiation and, in concert, a nuanced understanding of her past and present, while contesting this "internalized colonialism." However, her ultimate identification with the Arabic, even Egyptian Arabic remains partial. In her words, "whatever school my parents sent me to, Arabic or English, I would have found myself imbibing a culture and studying a language […] that were different from those of the world in which I live" (1999, p. 283).

She continues, "The choice either entailed alienation from my home culture and home language and from the language and oral culture of other Cairenes;" she then adds, "the choice was always between colonialism and colonialism, or at any rate between domination and domination" (p. 283). In this sense, Ahmed internalized the domination as such; she did not contest it. Under Althusser's skin, Ahmed as a human subject in endowed

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[24] For instance, Ahmed (1999) says, "we grew up believing that some world over there was better, more interesting, more civilized, than this world here [i.e. Egypt]" (p. 99).

with specific ‘consciousness’ of two opposing ideologies she identifies with the ideas of the dominant ideology, the modernizing British (Ahmed, pp. 94, 259, 273), thus she freely accepts its terms and she’s forming her identity under its schema accordingly.

Now, because Ahmed is aware of her father’s “internalized colonialism”—one of its salient markers is manifest in his negative attitude toward the *fuṣḥā* Arabic, and Arabic culture generally, driven by his traumatic experience at the Quranic school[25]—she attempts to acquire a hybrid linguistic identity as she recognizes English as kin to Egyptian Arabic; in her words, “English was somehow closer and more kin to Egyptian Arabic than was standard Arabic […]. [I]n fact English *felt* more like Egyptian Arabic because it *was* more like it” for “both are living languages and both have quickness and pliancy and vitality that living spoken languages have and that the written Arabic of our days does not” (Ahmed, 1999, p. 283; original emphasis).

Commenting on such hybrid identities in Egyptian writers, Edward al-Kharrāt (2000) deploys a striking metaphor; for him, Egyptian writers for any number of reasons might have found themselves in the midst of “*lughat al-ghurbah*” [literally, the language of estrangement], however, they remained Egyptian in their *qalb* [heart] although their texts had acquired a foreign, whether French or English, *qālab* [form] (p. 23). If we apply this *qalb* criterion on Ahmed’s narrative, it will follow that the narrative falls under the banner of Arab Egyptian identity and does not resonate a fully-fledged English identity; such an attempt attenuates the idea of “internalized colonialism” in Ahmed, as she’s looking at

[25] During his school days, Ahmed’s father used to be physically punished at the *kuttāb*, the Quranic school he attended, every time he didn’t properly memorize Arabic lessons. As her father grew up, he dreaded learning Arabic lessons and he vowed not to let his children be subject to such experience (Ahmed, 1999, p. 26). Paradoxically, Ahmed, as we shall see later, was subject to a traumatic experience caused by her Palestinian Arabic teacher, Miss Nabih.

English as though it's kin to Arabic—thus sharing a kindred *qalb* although in fact it was not.

Along this line of argument, Suleiman (2013) argues, and I guess rightly, that tension in hybrid identities manifested in hybrid literary texts is not between "these two languages that may or may not be mixed with each other textually, but, more importantly, between their ideologies" (p. 169). As such, language emerges, Suleiman suggests, as a proxy "in doing politics" (p. 216).

I bring Suleiman to say that since language is a proxy in doing politics and since ideologies are bedrock, writing provides a medium—a contact zone—for Ahmed to negotiate these conflicting ideologies in an effort to anchor at assimilation and acculturation.[26] Openly, Ahmed points out that "identity was not simply a matter of rhetoric and politics but something directly touched my own life in personal if unarticulated ways" (p. 10). That said, not only does writing help Ahmed articulate, even complexly accentuate, these ways, it also appeals for stabilizing her in-betweeness position. Neither purely this, nor wholeheartedly that. Writing in English was not a personal choice, it was a natural result of colonial domination.

Moreover, Ahmed asserts,

> In all Egypt there was no school that I could have attended where I could have read books and learned to write in my mother tongue, the language we spoke at home, that everybody in Cairo spoke, and that I was completely fluent in, its words rich for me with the inflictions and music of the voices that I loved […]. There is no linguistic reason why Egyptian Arabic could not be a written language, only political reasons. (p. 283)

[26] In his "A Psychology of Immigration," Berry (2001) argues that acculturation—"a process that entails contact between two cultural groups" (p. 616)—in immigrants involves four different strategies: (i) assimilation, (ii) separation, (iii) integration, and (iv) marginalization (p. 619). Separation and marginalization are not at stake in Ahmed. Conversely, integration and assimilation are.

What Ahmed is hinting at here is the dichotomy between orality and literacy in Arabic—particularly in the Egyptian context. While the former is the living language of the "people of Cairo," and hence associated with modernity, the latter, for her, is the language of the so called "misogyny" and "patriarchy." Along this line of thought, Haeri (2003) establishes a link between vernacularization and modernity, insomuch that the former "ushers" the latter.

For Haeri, vernaculars, contrary to sacred-classical languages, fall under the authority of their speakers (p. 147). In her words, "[S]peakers are less constrained in their use of vernacular languages-they can define the limits in their creations and innovations, notwithstanding the fact that speakers are differentiated among themselves in terms of power and authority" (2003, p. 147); hence, the vernacular would definitely affirm Ahmed's economic, educational, and social status that lost its privileges under Nasser's regime. The point is that *fuṣḥā* Arabic homogenizes people unlike vernaculars; Ahmed, in light of the four strategies of acculturation, separates herself from the homogenous Arabic collectivity, in an effort to exclusively affirm her Egyptian identity—an identity whose language is not "stilted and artificial" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 283), whose language could "sustain" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 253) its speakers inasmuch as they sustain it.

Ahmed's antagonistic attitude toward *fuṣḥā* Arabic does not only reside in this orality vis-à-vis literacy dichotomy coupled with other dichotomies we have elucidated above. It resides particularly in her traumatic experience with her Palestinian Arabic teacher, Miss Nabih, which I elaborate deeply in the coming section as it anchors on the intersection of national and linguistic identity.

2. Of National Identity—or "On Becoming an Arab"

Two overarching types of definitions of nationalism are found in literature: subjective vis-à-vis objective, generally characterized by different underpinnings. While the latter refers to a full set of designated criteria that applies to a given group of people, only in this case as such, the group can be treated as "a nation proper" (Suleiman, 2003, p. 20).

In line with this argument, Stalin (1991), for instance, lays down a paradigmatic criteria for defining a nation; he says, a nation is a "*historically constituted, stable community of people, formed of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture*" (p. 20; original emphasis). He also adds, "*only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation*" (p. 21; original emphasis). Such definitions are problematic as they categorically single out some elements while overlooking others, particularly in a world with moving borders. The point is that a group of people might imagine themselves as a nation although, strictly speaking, some defining elements of the designated criteria are open to further exceptions. Naturally, such definitions might run the risk of overlooking the complexity associated with collective, or perhaps group, identity formation and role of self-identifications of human subjects within these groups.

The subjective definitions, however, stipulate a fluid conception of nation, adding a new dimension—often dubbed the "national consciousness" which is "the ultimate factor which eventually decides the issue of national identity" (Krejcí and Velímsky, 1981, p. 45). Suleiman (2003) refers to Renan's suggestion that nation is "an everyday plebiscite," to underscore the importance of "*will*" in nation building (p. 22). That is to say, the existence

of a specific nation depends on the shared—whether imagined[27] or real—beliefs that the members of the nation have in common, and, equally well, their shared "*will*" to continue to live together as a collectivity; the dictum of strict and defining borders is moribund here as a result.

Now, the Arab world presents a quasi-different case of nationalism, especially in post-colonial contexts, wherein the urge for pan-Arab nationalism constituted an adamant movement set in the 1940s and 1950s against colonialism, calling for abating the different nation state nationalism in favor of a consolidated Arab nationalism. In most Arab countries, Suleiman (2003) suggests, "the pull of cultural (pan-Arab) nationalism counterbalances in varying degrees the imperatives of the political nationalism of the sovereign state, and vice versa" (p. 25).

Moreover, Tutsch (1965) points out that "Pan-Arab nationalism, local nationalism inside the partly artificial borders of the … Arab states [state nationalism], and regional nationalism [for example, Syrian Socialist National Party ideology] grow side by side in competition to [*sic*] each other"(p. 31; as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 25). Moreover, Al-Ḥuṣarī argues that "the base in building nations and branding nationalism is the unity of language and the unity of history […] for language constitutes the spirit and life of nations,

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[27] Anderson (1983) recognizes nations as "imagined communities." He first coined the concept in 1983. For him, nation is (1) "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6), (2) "imagined as *limited*" as it has "finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (p. 6), (3)" imagined as *sovereign*," (p. 6) and finally imagined as *community*" for "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (p. 7).

With this working definition in mind, I propose that both Ahmed and Djebar throughout their autobiographical narratives are imagining new, and perhaps multiple ways, of being Egyptian or Algerian—ways that were previously unimagined in the feminist contexts of Egypt and Algerian in the post-independence era.

whereas history builds its memory and perception [consciousness]"[28] (p. 385); that is to say, al-Ḥuṣarī sees nationalism at the intersection of language and history specifically. This echoes well Hourani (1993) who argues that in the context of the Arab world, language is the key element of nationalism, as those "who spoke the same language constituted a single nation and should form one independent political unit" (p. 342); he also adds that "Arab linguistic nationalism was blended with territorial patriotism" (p. 343).

As for the Egyptian context, although al-Ḥuṣarī acknowledges the Pharaonic past to which some Egyptians are attached, he considers that this attachment is linguistically moribund; that's why Egyptians shall identify as Arabs, as the their Arabic language is the placenta that holds tight the other categories of identity of which the cultural and nationalist are only two. This was wedded to al-Ḥuṣarī's rage against vernacularization that we have mentioned earlier in the chapter. Indeed, Ahmed strongly resents this view, as she unequivocally identifies as Egyptian not as an Arab. For her, "[W]ords like *ishtirakiyya, al-wataniyya al-Arabiyya*—socialism Arab nationalism […] became for me redolent of fraud" (1999, p. 205; original emphasis).

It seems her hatred toward Arabic nationalism, and naturally language, finds its roots in a traumatic experience with her Arabic teacher. She states clearly that the prejudice of her British teacher affected her negatively in terms of her sense of self and abilities (p. 147); however, the teacher who would mark her for life "was not a British racist, but an Arab teacher, Miss Nabih" (p. 147), who was "a Palestinian. A refugee" (p. 243). It is emblematic that Ahmed is running an inferior eye at the *refugee*, who the Palestinian

[28] "إنّ الأساس في تكوين الأمّة، وبناء القوميّة هو: وحدة اللغة والتاريخ [...]. [فـ]اللغة تكوّن روح الأمّة وحياتها، والتاريخ يكوّن ذاكرة الأمّة وشعورها" (الحصري، الصفحات 385–386).

teacher was, thus alienating from her, while identifying, or at best assimilating, with the ex-colonizer teachers—the British. Moreover, Ahmed (1999) contends,

> I have always thought that those moments between me and Miss Nabih were in large part responsible for the feelings of confusion, anger, and guilt that I've felt all my life in connection with the issues of Arabness, identity, and Arabic language. […] My relations with Miss Nabih were only a symptom of the times: of the battering and reshaping of our identities that the politics of the day were subjecting us to. I would be marked by everything that was happening […]. Only when, in the process of writing this book, I began to examine this memory and others, and the history in which they were entangled, would I come to that realization. (p. 148)

Two strands of thought flow from these lines. On the one hand, identity is embedded in the politics of the time—yet in national identity language is bedrock. Being subjected to specific set of politics—that is, the ideology of Arab Nationalism and Arabness—hailed Ahmed to "batter" and "reshape" her identity; as a result she alienates herself from this rhetoric to identify with the other dominant—the hegemonic imperial rhetoric of the ex-colonizer as it ensures Ahmed's very subjectivity.

Ahmed had already stated that the way out of not being like her fellow Egyptian women who "do nothing" is to identify as a westerner. In this light, Althusser (1970) argues that human subjects are "endowed with a consciousness" in which they "freely" form or "freely" recognize ideas in which they believe. Ahmed was endowed with two diverging consciousnessess by virtue of the politics of the two dominant ideologies. Echoing Allen (2018), Ahmed's freedom is "*being in relation with limits*" (p. 5; original emphasis), represented by the constraints of both ideologies; as result new possibilities emerge. Allen (2018) declares that understanding freedom as troubled "fosters possibilities" (p. 5). After all, Ahmed deliberately declares that her identity is "battered" and "reshaped."

Suleiman (2011) also contends that the "founding myths" of ideology "resonate in how the community comes to imagine itself" (p. 234) He adds, "the power of ideology lies in those *acts of imaging* that can serve as *sources of motivation for action and counteraction* in society" (p. 234; emphasis added). Suleiman helps me deeply understand how the diverging ideologies helped Ahmed imagine new ways of being Egyptian. Both ideologies engrossed in her a source of motivation for action instead of running the risk of identity crisis. This takes me to the second strand: identity negotiation—one that fosters possibilities and new imaginations and actions.

Before writing her narrative, Ahmed did not imagine herself as an Arab. She asserts that two different moments of her childhood touch upon the intersection of nationalism, identity, and language. Ahmed recalls an incident when she was listening to a speech by Abdel Nasser—who "was at times at extremely excellent orator, not because he could make flowery speeches but because, dropping into simple colloquial Egyptian (not the standard Arabic used by radio announcers and people making speeches on the radio" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 149); upon calling her Ahmed replied that she has to listen to this speech, as "the president is speaking to us" (p. 149). Her mother inquired "who's us?" and Ahmed replied, "The children of Egypt" (p. 149).

Ahmed comments on the incident, "Everyone found this amusing—that I wholly and so unselfconsciously placed myself in the group that the president was addressing" (p. 149). At this moment she identifies as an Egyptian who identifies with the new rhetoric of the state, contrary to the attitudes of her family members. In her words, "I was the only one in the family young enough to be significantly shaped by the notion of Egypt that the revolutionary government was in the process of defining" (p. 149).

The second moment that marked her "induction into this new kind of nationalism and our re-forming identity" also occurred upon encountering Nasser at the movies. He asked Ahmed and her cousin about their names, the latter replied ""Mona," a perfectly good Egyptian Arab name" (p. 150), while Ahmed herself responded ""Lily," my name at school—not to this man who I knew hated the British" (p. 150). She positioned herself between this conundrum of being Egyptian and British: perhaps she attempts to be both. However,

> for the time in the Nasser era, when Arab nationalism and socialism were the going dogmas, fluency in European languages […] became discredited, things that one tried to hide, markers of belonging to the wrong class, the class of the ones affluent, privileged, unjust oppressors of "the masses." (Ahmed, 1999, p. 152)

Belonging to one group inevitably meant alienating from the other. She belonged to the Egyptian—what she believes to be the modernized category that would rend her close to westerners. However, since identity is "co-constructed" as we mentioned earlier, and that other's perception of our identity changes, in quite a number of ways, how we perceive ourselves, Leila Ahmed became an Arab upon crossing borders, paradoxically in the eyes of westerners themselves. She writes,

> I was not born but became a women of color when I went to America, whereas these are political identities that carry, for me, a positive charge, revealing and affirming connection and commonality, my identity as an Arab, no less a political construction, is an identity that, in contrast, I experience as deeply and perhaps irretrievably fraught with angst and confusion. I was in Cambridge […] that I first began to suffer the mute, complicated confusions of my exilic Arab identity, my identity as an Arab in the West. (p. 238)

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2014) affirm that "Competent identity-negotiation process emphasizes the importance of integrating the necessary intercultural identity-based

knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction skills to communicate appropriately, effectively, and adaptively with *culturally dissimilar others*" (p. 8; emphasis added); moreover, they suggest that *satisfactory* identity negotiation outcomes "include the feeling of being understood, respected, and affirmatively valued" (p. 8). It seems here, that although Ahmed has implemented the proper interaction skills, being herself educated in a British school and used to identify with the British and as Egyptian not Arab, she was misrecognized, and thus downplayed, as Arab by the dissimilar other. This "muted" and "exilic" Arab identity demarcates loss of satisfaction. This muteness entails that Ahmed had no language. As a result, she started to negotiate herself as being an Arab. Pavlenko (2001) suggests that the "incommensurability" of discourses and identity options often lead the newcomers upon crossing border to search for new terms to redefine their identity. As if Ahmed is returning to her own *native* culture to define it along with herself anew—at least in a culture that would affirmatively value her; at least in a culture that would not, in her eyes, mute her *language*.

Interestingly, Ahmed opened chapter 11 of her narrative titled "On Becoming an Arab" with her traumatic experience with Miss Nabih, to which Ahmed provides a full account;

> The teacher asked me to read. I started haltingly. […]
>
> "You're an Arab!" she finally screamed at me. "An Arab! And you don't know your own language"
>
> "I am not an Arab!" I said […]. "I am Egyptian! And anyways we don't speak like this!" […]
>
> "Read!"
>
> I sat on stonily, arms folded.

> "Read!"
>
> I didn't move.
>
> She struck me across the face. […]
>
> The year was 1952, the year of the revolution. What Miss Nabih was doing to me in class the government was doing to us thorough the media. (pp. 243-244).

For Ahmed, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (p. 239) branded the identity of the new Egypt; she considers that it triggered the 1952 Egyptian Revolution that, in turn, stripped Ahmed's family off its privileges. Nasser's urge as well to list Arabic as a required material following the Revolution in all schools—even foreign schools—once again elicited Ahmed's furious attitude toward Arabic and Arabism at large.

She declares, "I remember I how I hated that incessant rhetoric. *Al-qawmiyya al-Arabiyya! A;-Uruba! Nahnu al-Arab!* Arab nationalism! Arabness! We the Arabs!" (p. 244). Being an Arab in itself meant "unequivocal alignments" (p. 245), that's why she resisted the idea of being an Arab. She asks, "Did Egyptians become Arab—or have we always been Arab?" (p. 246). Yet, while writing about her identity as an Arab imposed upon her later in Nasser's era, she attempts to come to terms with her Arab identity. It took her years of extensive research on the history of the Middle East and Egypt and along with the underpinnings of colonialism and imperialism to understand the formation of her Arabic identity per se (pp. 245-250).

She writes, "Just forget it—Arab, not Arab—just forget it. It was too much complicated. How could I possibly deal with all this history?" (p. 250). Unable to come to terms with this identity even through negotiation, as she was always haunted by the fact that Egyptians, if identified as Arabs, could not equally define themselves as African,

Nilotic, Mediteranian, Islamic, or Coptic, or perhaps a combination of all (p. 11). She asserts that the politics of the time fixed Egypt's identity itself as Arab—a homogenizing adjective indeed[29]—whereas they are "Egyptians, pertaining to the lands of Egypt[30]" (p. 11). It is the "pluralistic" genius of Egypt that Ahmed cherishes most driven by her parents' attitudes and commitments. After sketching out a brief history of Egypt in light of the turbulence historic events it witnessed starting with King Farouk, the Revolution of 1952, Nasser's Era followed by Sadat, and of course the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Ahmed concludes,

> My parents were the people that they were. Of the class that they were, the milieu that the were […] And they had their feelings and beliefs about Egypt that they had, and the hopes for Egypt that they had, not indifferent toward the Palestinians and their sufferings, not commitment to some "narrow Egyptian secular nationalism," but quite simply to their own community and to the people—Copts, Jew and Muslims—who made up that community. […] Loyalty to their actual community. […] [T]heir overall position reflected their commitment to what we today call "pluralism." (p. 264)

It seems that by acknowledging "pluralism" Ahmed is hinting at "inclusion" as it allows different individuals to negotiate with one another in so many ways that were previously un-imaginable. Indeed, thriving for "pluralism" is naturally imparted with uneasiness, as "respect for diversity is not an innate characteristic. Humans have a well-developed sense of "us" and "them"" (Muasher, 2014, p. 123).

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[29] Ahmed writes, "Europeans saw us as Arabs—all of us as just Arabs" (p. 266). She goes on, ""Arabs" meant people with whom you made treaties that you did not have to honor, arabs being by definition people of a lesser humanity and there being no need to honor treaties with people of a lesser humanity. […] It meant people whose democracies you could obstruct at will, because you did not have to behave justly toward people of a lesser humanity" (p. 267). Cloaked with such negativity, the term "arab" was resented by Ahmed.

[30] Interestingly enough, Ahmed makes a sharp distinction between Maṣr, the Egyptian name of Egypt, and Miṣr, the Arabic name of Egypt. This perhaps might be seminal in understanding why Ahmed herself adopted the name "Lily" to brush out the Arabic connotation of "Leila," tantamount to the name of maṣr itself.

In a sense, pluralistic integration blurs narrow allegiances and, equally well, abates personal identity—in the strict sense of the word—merging people in a heterogonous collectivity in favor of multiple identities. It provides a mediating ground for sharing differences; it renders individuals consubstantial in line with Burke. That's how I understand Ahmed's coming to terms with her Arab identity. Although she does not confess clearly that she is an Arab[31]. Interestingly, while commenting on the cargo of negativities of the term "arab" in the European sense, Ahmed continues to say,

> Nasser […] was perhaps among the first to figure out […] the meaning of what they [the Europeans] had traced there [the Egyptian landscape]—and to respond to it by crystallizing the identity "arab" into its obverse "Arab," although, even he, as I discovered […], fully grasped that he was an Arab only a few years before I got slapped for not knowing that I was Arab.

These lines resonate, in many a respect, Althusser's conception of the Subject of ideology that invites all other subjects to identify with it. Upon identifying with the commandments of the Subject subjects emerge—Althusser's dictum looms large. In a sense, Nasser sets a new Arab Subject; Ahmed did not identify with it *persuaded* by the idea of the "pluralistic Egypt;" misrecognition as a result emerged.

Martel (2015) in his "When the Call Is Not Meant for You: Misinterpellation, Subjectivity, and the Law," argues that subjects who are unwanted or unexpected by ideology rhetorically ruin the scene of interpellation, as they offer different forms of resistance and often subversion. He asserts that "Multiplying the kinds of calls (or our awareness of their plurality) helps to further disrupt the circularity of interpellation as a

[31] She actually keeps the question open, "Was Egypt Arab? Mediterranean? Pharaonic? […] and so here we are in 1945 and Egypt, for reasons of regional strategy, officially becomes an Arab country, although not as yet exclusively Arab" (p. 265).

normativizing and subjectivizing practice" (p. 513). In other words, because we are always subject to a multiplicity of interpellations, it is of no avail to be recognized by all interpellations, as such. Accordingly, some interpellations would be rejected; others would be internalized. Martel refers to Berlant's notion of "Wait Up" vis-à-vis "Hey, You there;" the "Wait Up" call allows us to see "what kinds of subjects and what kinds of politics emerge from the failures that interpellation produces" (p. 513).

Martel (2015) helps me deeply understand how Ahmed has contested her being interpellated as an Arab because she wants to be a subject for another ideology—a *W*esterner, per se. Now, interestingly, the other ideology misrecognized her. Upon crossing borders, westerners themselves looked at her as an *A*rab. Accordingly, Unable to subvert the idea of her being an Arab in a western society, the "Wait up" call of the Arab ideology allows Ahmed *re*negotiate her resistance—(re)enshrine herself in the politics of its ideology. Interestingly enough, the Arabic language along with her cultivating a new understanding of Arab women offered her a way back to the ideology that she had escaped from for long.

Two incidents helped Ahmed come to negotiate her identity being an Arab: the very act of writing about her identity and, most importantly, attending a talk by the Lebanese novelist Hanan al-Shaykh, during which the latter recited Arabic prose. Hence, the intersection of gender and language identity fosters the negotiation of Ahmed's national identity.

In regards to writing, Ahmed confesses extensively that being an Arab adds a further layer of complexity to her own understanding of identity as inscribed in history along with her own experience in ways "that I would only come to understand fully in the process of writing this memoire" (p. 240). In conformity with this idea, Pavlenko (2001) argues that writing "may be one of the key ways to gain control over the self and the world" (p. 324). She adds that writing in the second language—the language of the ex-colonizer in Ahmed—becomes a "locus for self-translation" (p. 324). I bring Pavlenko to propose that writing becomes a prism through which not only writers take control over their lives and the world wherein they live but also, more importantly, to make meanings out of their own experience, to deeply understand their on-going identity negotiations. Indeed, writing in the language of the ex-colonizer helps Ahmed understand and talk to new discourses and to position her identity in the terms of this discourse.

Commenting on *spreadable genres* in digital contexts, Nish (2016), in "Spreadable Genres, multiple Publics," suggests that "As individuals choose to spread genres, their identities are also remade—or, perhaps more accurately, simply continue to be made in the never-finished process of identity making;" Nish continues, "Individuals who choose to take up a genre by spreading it perform acts of interpretation and meaning making" (p. 245). Here I extend Nish's argument to canonical autobiographical narratives.

The point is that, unlike digital spreadable genres that offer fragmented, perhaps incomplete, stories of the self, leading to—although important in essential ways—partial meaning making and glossed interpretations, autobiographical narratives *attempt* to offer a complete narrative through situating this narrative in its cultural and historic contexts. I am

not saying that every autobiographical narrative is a *true* narrative in the tightest sense of the word that leads necessarily to correct interpretations. However, what I am proposing is that narratives hold tight the fragmented self and make it fluid so as to flow in time and place, always situating it across different historic and cultural contexts. The narrative helps us look at identities at their interconnectedness to further our understanding of the terms that have produced us. In Ahmed, the interconnectedness of her identity shades helps us understand her myriad negotiations.

3. Of Gender Identity—or "The Primacy of the Oral"

Gender played a key role in shifting Ahmed's attitude toward Arabic culture and naturally language. Put shortly, her third shade of identity stabilizes the other two. National identity is often shaped by the individuals' gendered location on the national contexts; however gender identity is partially shaped by the national conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Stapleton and Wilson, 2004, p. 47). These two categories are part and parcel of other complex categories—particularly in Ahmed religion, i.e. Islam, as we shall see later.

Hatem (1998) mentions that Egypt nationalism and feminism gained momentum together; she points out that "the Nasser regime developed a nationalist/secularist discourse on gender that was more universalistic than culturally specific" (p. 87). Ahmed, firstly, identified with neither Arab nationalism nor the so-called "state feminism." She puts forward a new understanding of her gender identity under the purview of oral Islam—one that she inherits from her mother and grandmother; whose language is "living" inasmuch as

it “sustains” them. She attempts to deconstruct the stereotypical western notions of Arab women, and simultaneously, rages against what she calls “patriarchal Islam.”

Upon attending a lecture at Cambridge by the Lebanese Hanan al-Shaykh, Ahmed notes that the lecture was “full evocation of the streets and cafés in Beirut […] and of her youthful discoveries of the classics of contemporary Arabic literature, and of poetry read and heard and ideas exchanged under the apple trees” (p. 253). Ahmed contends that even some of the participants who were skeptic toward the fame of Arab women writers were looking happy and were “won over” (p. 253). “I found myself thinking enviously that this was what I would like to be writing, something that would affirm my community in exile” (p. 253), Ahmed points out; she goes on, “Something that would remind its members of how lovely our lives, our countries, our ways are. How lovely our literature;” she concludes,

> What a fine thing, whatever it is people say of us, what a fine thing it is in spite of them all, to be an Arab; what a wonderful heritage we have. Something that would sustain them. Sustain us. What wouldn’t I give, I sat there, listening to her quote Arab poets, to have had that in my past, all that wealth of Arabic literature that nurtured her as writer; I wouldn’t I give now to have all those poets and writers to remember and write about and remind people of. (p. 253)

It was with al-Shaykh in Cambridge where Ahmed was able to reconcile with her Arabic culture and language, while seeing a woman like her being recognized by public for her Arabic language and the literature she presents. In part, she is no more an outsider inside the prism of Arabic. Literature, as such, brought her in inasmuch as the language itself with its political underpinnings had once driven her out.

Very often than not, every time Ahmed picks up on her gender shade of identity, religion emerges as a wider framework. It is evident that these identities in Ahmed are highly entwined. Shaaban (in press) in his, *Language and Religion in the Construction of the Lebanese Identity*, suggests that

> Language and religion have many things in common as identity markers. For one thing, they play a more pivotal role in the early socialization experiences in the family than other identification markers. Later on, they serve as the basis for personal, social, cultural, and political identification for the youth. They also help define the self and the other, establish similarities and differences, and describe groupings and communities. (p. 2)

Hence, it is evident that religion is bedrock in identity construction; it is the "base" of personal identification along with a welter of different identifications. It demarcates the identity of self in a certain collectivity as it highlights the differences with the other. In light of Ahmed's urge toward pluralism, however, one might ask: What type of religion, or more accurately, what understanding(s) of Islam demarcate Ahmed's identity. It is evidently oral Islam. "[A]n emphasis on oral and aural Islam is intrinsic to Islam and to the Quran itself, an intrinsic even to the Arabic language" (p. 127), Ahmed asserts; she adds that the Arabic language emphasizes the "primacy of the spoken, literally living word" (p. 129).

For Ahmed, today's "men's Islam"—"the written Islam"—is what she calls "*the* authoritative Islam" (p. 128; original emphasis) that caters to "the one and only truth" (p. 128). She considers that literacy played a key role in spreading a particular form of Islam,

on the one hand, and strictly speaking, erased "oral and living forms of Islam"[32] (p. 128). Latter forms of Islam establish a bond in the case of women with their fellow female collectivities. Ahmed asserts that her mother's and grandmother's Islam "left them and the women among them whom they lived with wholly accepting of the ways of their society in relation to women, even when those ways were profoundly destructive" (p. 131). The point is that this oral tradition of Islam bestowed what Ahmed later considers, warmth, conviviality, companionship, and support upon the collectivity of women in the Egyptian society. Yet, it failed in catering well to when "things get wrong" (p. 131). Put shortly, she calls for an Islam that eschews "violence on women" while at once allows for a multiple faith experience that does not enter into the calculations of pen and paper.[33]

In light of the pluralistic urge of Ahmed, these two would enshrine a new identity of women in Egypt. Most importantly, acknowledging the two of the traditions helps Ahmed deconstruct the stereotypical regard to women in the Middle East and advocate a new vision of Islam—one that sustains her voice and speaks to her. Later in the narrative, Ahmed compares women talk at Girton College to those talks of her female family members at their home, Zatoun, in Alexandria.

She writes, "At Girton […] it was fictional people […] whose words and actions and motives and moral characters we analyzed endlessly" (p. 191); however, they "practiced at Alexandria […] orally and on living texts to sustain the life of the

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[32] She also attests that "Even the Western academic world is contributing to the greater visibility and legitimacy of textual Islam and to the gradual silencing and erasure of alternative oral forms of lived Islam. For we too in the west, and particularly in universities, honor, and give pride of place to, texts" (1999, p. 129).
[33] Ahmed writes, "And so we cannot simply conclude that what I have called women's Islam is invariably good and to be endorsed. And conversely, everything about what I've called men's Islam is not be automatically rejected, either" (p. 133).

community" which was called, according to Ahmed, by Arab men along with female and male westerners "idle gossip, the empty, and […] malicious talk of women" (p. 192). She retorts that what makes women's talk at Girton more honorable and rewarded is that they practiced in the tradition of men.[34]

In her narrative, however, Ahmed proposes new practices that do not gloss over the oral but thrive to bring it from margin to center. Ahmed says, "I stepped, […] too, into the stream of what was as yet a largely unwritten oral culture—the oral, living culture of the feminist movement, a culture to which there were as yet almost no guides, no maps, no books" (p. 295). Interestingly, Hall (1997) notes that "the most cultural revolution in this part of the twentieth century has come as a consequence of the margins coming into representation" (p. 183). In a sense, marginality tends to be enabling when, and only when, we negotiate its constraints, when we speak for ourselves. Hall (1997) concludes that the "discourses of power in societies, the discourses of the dominant regimes, have been certainly threatened by this decentered cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local" (p. 183). That said, Ahmed decenters cultural empowerment in an effort to empower women in a tradition of their own—in their oral tradition and on a new territory and with new people. Ahmed retorts,

> My life becomes part of other stories, American stories. It becomes part of the story of feminism in America, the story of women in America, and part of the story of Muslims in America, and of the story of American itself and of American lives in a world of dissolving boundaries and vanishing borders. (p. 296)

[34] In her words, women of Girton "practiced in the manner and tradition of men […]—in relation to written texts rather living people, as a profession, and to earn money not to sustain life" (p. 192).

Ahmed narrates herself in her autobiography picking up on the different aspects of her identity to bring to light the formation of her post-colonial female subjectivity that straddles language, nation, and gender; and that seeks recognition on different levels of affiliations and discourses. She is gaining agency and, arguably, contestatory power through offering her own historical collections that deflate the already existing ones. Written outside the borders of Egypt, in a language that Ahmed used in her childhood for subversion, Ahmed's narrative aims at escaping the narrowly defined affiliations as they move her in space and time to speak to the world—to America particularly and not back to Britain wherein she was (mis)recognized as an Arab.

CHAPTER IV

L'AMOUR, LA FANTASIA

BREAKING SILENCE:

WHOSE VOICE(S)?

WHOSE LANGUAGE? WHOSE NATION?

> L'indigène, même quand il semble soumis, n'est pas vaincu. Ne lève pas les yeux pour regarder son vainqueur. Ne le "reconnaît" pas. Ne le nomme pas. Qu'est-ce qu'une victoire si elle n'est pas nommée? [35] (Djebar, 1985, p. 69).

A. Chapter Overview

So far, I have argued that post-colonial feminist subjectivity, in the context of Algeria and Egypt particularly, are discursively produced through two overarching, perhaps conflicting, ideologies: that of the hegemonic colonial rule and that of the post-independence nationalist movements, which pervaded Algeria's 30s and Egypt's 50s equally, and often characterized by (1) the loss of faith in one's own identity due to the colonial imperialism, especially in Algeria, for instance, following 150 years of the colonial rule, and (2) producing a welter of rhetoric to which Arab women remain basically outcast. These conflicting ideologies hail individuals equally to create their own identity—their own subjectivity—in their shadows. However, what makes individuals particular human subjects within their kindred collectivities is that they *negotiate* their interpellations differently.

[35] "Even when the native seems submissive, he is not vanquished, Does not raise his eyes to gaze on his vanquisher, Does not "recognize" him. Does not name him. What is a victory if it is not named?" (Djebar, 1989, p. 56).

In a sense, human subjects within a certain historical context emerge differently—they are not copies of one another—albeit they had been interpellated by the very same diverging ideologies. Human subjectivity goes in and out of ideological interpellations yet it internalizes some, it subverts others and it resists yet another. Here lies the genius of the human agency. No body remains outcast to ideology. Ideologies circumscribe human individuals as subjects. Yet, when ideologies trickledown to human individuals they, goaded by their (1) very rhetorical agency and (2) their collective emergence react actively to their interpellations. Human subjects are not passive individuals who acquire certain *a priori* identity pegs across different historical and situational conjunctures.

All things considered, in order to get at a deeper, and perhaps complex, understanding of identity, one shall study the different ideological interpellations that hailed the subject's identity along with the subject's identifications, and naturally alienations, coupled with her rhetorical agency in a specific historical context. By so doing, one would not only understand the formation of identity per se, but also this approach allows for a complex, theoretical and historical understanding of the underpinnings of ideologies and identifications themselves in ways that might offer insights into some other stories that might not have been yet even told by human subjects.

In this chapter, I trace three emerging shades of identity in Asia Djebar's autobiographical narrative *L'amour, la fantasia*: the linguistic, national, and gender. In this hunt for understanding Djebar's identity formation, my aim is not only to unmask the ethereal spirit of her identity—it's "truth," so to speak. Put differently, I don't only aim at understanding Djebar's mere production as a subject, but also, more deeply, I aim at

elucidating how subjects are attached to their very subjection and thus negotiate it discursively through a process of internal rhetoric that caters well to the formation of identity as whole con. The aim of this chapter, then, is to closely read the three shades of identity in the Djebarian text to showcase that it is at the intersection of the three that Djebar's identity emerge.

Working across these three emerging shades of identity, which I elaborate fully in the following sections, this chapter takes as its primary aim the complex nexus between ideological interpellations, internal and external rhetoric, and identity formation, in an attempt to fully enunciate what is at stake when one writes with vigor about her identity. What does writing about identity tell us about human agency and critique—particularly the feminist agency and critique in post-colonial contexts in the Arab world.

B. of Linguistic Identity—or it is with their language that I veil my Story

In her "Experience of Evidence: Language, the Law, and the Mockery of Justice," Khanna (2008) recounts a mock trial that took place on the International Women's Day—on March 8, 1995—at La Salle Ibn Khaldoun in Algiers; where Algerian women, mostly from the Algerian Union of Democratic Women along with other women from the International Feminist Community staged a virtual trial for a number of leaders of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front along with Algeria's former president at the time Chadli Benjedid (pp. 68-69)[36]. One of the most profound and symbolic aspects of this trial was the very use of

[36] It is worth mentioning that the Algerian Union of Democratic Women, often referred to as RAFD—an acronym for Rassemblement *Algérien* des Femmes pour la Démocracie which also connotes the Arabic term رفض, meaning repudiation or refusal—brought many a case against the Islamic Salvation Front; the most important of which was that filed against Anwar Haddam who sought asylum in the United States. For more

language. Dressed in white to symbolize the common color of the Algerian veil, women plaintiffs spoke in French accusing the defendants who defended themselves in Arabic, haunted by their desire to be represented through deploying a language different from that which had failed to represent them previously (Khanna, 2008, p. 69).

Conducting a trial in the two languages, Arabic and French—the language that the Islamic Salvation Front cherishes and that of the ex-colonizer—in a country whose judicial system functions in Arabic particularly from the mid of 1980s and onwards invites us to attune to the welter of implications that language brings to the fore. At base, it invites us to look at this trial as an act of linguistic resistance to the language that carries within it an anticolonial agenda of pan-Arabism. It, also, invites us to consider that it is all more necessary to look at the very linguistic heterogeneity of Algeria, a country that speaks *ʿāmmiyya* Arabic, Tamazight, along with other Berber languages that the nationalist rhetoric failed to account for.

Conversely, for others, deploying the language of the ex-colonizer in a courtroom that advocates justice *per se* is profoundly problematic, as it invokes the tyranny of the French colonial rule, which abates, or perhaps further devaluates, the other languages spoken in Algeria. In short, this mockery trial represents a typical paradigm of the status of women in Algeria: proclaiming justice, and by implication representation, Algerian women straddle the three arenas of language, gender, and nation—for access to justice, Khanna

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on this check, Jane Doe i, et al., Plaintiffs,v. ISLAMIC SALVATION FRONT (FIS) and Anwar Haddam, Defendants. Civil Action No. 96-02792 (SS). United States District Court, District of Columbia. http:https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/993/3/2285985/. Accessed on February 20, 2018.

(2008) insists, is (1) "virtual" and is (2) "*enunciated in a language haunted by the specters of colonialism*" (p. 74; original emphasis).

Written in French, Asia Djebar's autobiographical narrative does not breach this norm. More deeply, it provides a detailed, intrinsic account of *how* is her identity formed as a woman—an Algerian woman—who speaks Berber, Tamazight[37] in particular, along with Arabic and had her education in the language of the ex-colonizer and, later, on its territory. Accordingly, it provides an unequivocally emblematic account that speaks of the intersections of language, gender, and nation, in the formation of Djebar's identity in an effort to proclaim representation at the locale and the global frontiers. In her narrative, Djebar speaks of her story along with the stories of other women in Algeria, the ancestresses of the women who contributed to the construction of the consciousness of those who set for the mockery trial of 1995.

Reading through this conundrum helps us better understand not only identity formation of women in Algeria, but, even more deeply, it caters well to understand how these women are able to balance their different allegiances. Cooke (2000) avers that women, through balancing their alliances, are able to "invent a contestatory, but also enabling, discourse within the global context that will not be easily coopted" (p. 69). The

[37] Tamazight is one of the Berber languages spoken in Morocco and Algeria by the Amazīgh or Berbers. The greatest Arabic medieval historian Ibn Khaldūn, who himself was of Berber origins, and whom, interestingly enough, Djebar quotes frequently, points out in his 13th century book *The History of the Berbers* that the ancestor of Berbers is Mazīgh, and thus the Amazīgh is used to refer to these tribes. Amazight lacks any official status in Algeria. The constitutional amendment of 1996 announced Arabic as the only language of education, business, and administration. It is largely an oral tradition, and thus remains the language of the household. It is also worth mentioning that before the Islamic spread in North Africa, the Berber languages were universally spoken there. Arabic came with these conquests and soon became the lingua franca of the population. See, Dalby, A. (2009). Dictionary of Languages: the definitive reference to more than 400 languages. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 88, 608-609.

point is that the French language even for Algerian women could not strip itself out of its colonial history, nor could the Arabic language connote in full bloom outside the nationalist discourse of pan-Arabism. Yet, writing in the language of the ex-colonizer is enabling as it initiates a new form of conversation—to take Cooke's wording (2000, p. 99)—that goes beyond the locale while bringing the latter to the global in a different linguistic dress.

In 1963, Algeria's first constitution came into effect, highlighting once more the key role of language as a national marker of the Algerian identity.[38] French, supplanted by Arabic, was no longer the official language of the nation, despite the fact that the elites of the Algerian society (the politicians, the upper class, and intelligentsia) remained bilingual (Khanna, 2008, p. 75)—a fact that finds its roots in the rhetoric of colonialism too. On the one hand, the French colonizing mission symbolized the supremacy of the French language and culture over the indigenous languages regardless of their historicity (Wardhaugh, 1987, pp. 7-8; as cited in Benrabah, 2005, p. 395).[39] And, most importantly, on the other,

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[38] The constitution reads,

"إن الإسلام و اللغة العربية قد كانا ولا يزال كل منهما قوة فعالة في الصمود ضد المحاولة التي قام بها النظام الاستعماري لتجريد الجزائريين من شخصيتهم. فيتعين على الجزائر التأكيد بأن اللغة العربية هي اللغة القومية الرسمية لها."

Retrieved from, http://www.el-mouradia.dz/arabe/symbole/textes/constitution63.htm. Accessed on, March 2, 2018.

["Islam and Arabic language have been the effective forces of resistance against the attempt of the colonial regime to strip the Algerians of their subjectivity. Algeria shall therefore affirm that the Arabic language is the national and official language of the state" (my translation)].

However, article 76, reads,

"يجب تحقيق تعميم اللغة العربية في أقرب وقت ممكن في كامل أراضي الجمهورية. بيد أنه، خلافا لأحكام هذا القانون، سوف يجوز استعمال اللغة الفرنسية مؤقتا إلى جانب اللغة العربية".

Retrieved from, http://www.el-mouradia.dz/arabe/symbole/textes/constitution63.htm. Accessed on, March 2, 2018.

["The effective achievement of Arabization shall be implemented in the shortest possible time throughout the whole territory of the Republic. Nevertheless, the French language may be used provisionally along with the Arabic as derogation to the provisions of the current law" (my translation)].

[39] For instance, it is reported that the Governor of Algeria (1832-1833) called for promoting the French language along with the French educational institutions. In his words, "The remarkable feat would be to

Benrabah (2005) and Turin (1983) point out to “Berber/Kabylian myth” propagated by the French colonial administrators and academics, who claimed that the Algerian society is comprised of two distinct groups, Berbers and Arabs.

While the former group represents the indigenous population—the real people of the land, and, by implication, gain superiority over the latter, as they were also the descendants of Europeans, the latter were considered late comers and less privileged (Benrabah, 2005, p. 395).[40] The myth also entails that Berbers are more susceptible of assimilation into the French culture and language while Arabs were less receptive (Benrabah, 2005, p. 395).[41] Accordingly, Algeria became a territory of two diametrically opposing societies—Berbers attached to Europeans, on the one hand, and Arab natives, on the other. Sivan (1979) points out that the colonial rule lumped “together all natives under one generic noun effaces not only ethnic-cultural distinctions but also individual ones” (p. 25). That’s why, being a native, and by implication speaking the language of the native, was imparted with negativity.

What makes the Algerian situation even more complex is that Algerians face a tripartite linguistic dichotomy: (1) the French, the language of the ex-colonizer versus Arabic, the new language of the national rhetoric; (2) Classical Arabic versus colloquial Algerian Arabic, known as *dārija* or *ʿāmma*; and (3) the different Berber dialects versus Arabic. Nevertheless, the 1963 constitution does not offer any mention to the local dialects

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gradually replace Arabic by French […] which can only spread among the natives, especially if the new generation will come in numbers to be educated in our schools” (Turin, 1983, pp. 40-41).

[40] Tantamount to the Phoenician narrative of the Lebanese society. Salibi (2005) presents a detailed description of this narrative in A House of Many Mansions (pp. 167-181).
[41] Eickelman (1985, pp. 219-220) and Favret (1973, p. 323) also provide a full review of this myth.

used orally at large by the population, on the one hand; and further, on the other, the hegemonic French colonialism aimed, previously, to abate the polyglot Algeria, producing, what Benrabah (2005) dubs, "another France—a linguistically and culturally homogeneous Algeria" (p. 400).

Such a hegemonic paradigm is inviting in two different ways: (1) it brushes away the linguistic richness of the Algeria, urged Algerians, the Berbers and Arabs equally, to use French language as a *lingua franca* at the expense of Arabic; and, even more deeply, in line with Sivan (1979), (2) the natives, Arabs as such, emerge as having no "name," no defining characteristic, or, perhaps, individual identity—who were simply referred to as "l'arabe" or "l'indigene." Individuals then alienate themselves from such a model in order to gain subjectivity, understood in the Althusserian sense, in an attempt to identify with the Subject of ideology.

It follows then that the elites as well as other groups of the Algerian society alienated themselves from the Arabic language and culture, identifying with the hegemonic Subject of the colonial rule, in an effort to acquire subjectivity—and not to be recognized as inferior native. In order to be a subject, to "willingly" subordinate to ideology you should, primarily, talk the language of the Subject itself. Yet interestingly, Khanna (2008) notes that although Algerians, by and large, are all willing to learn French, they still do not deem it as their own language, their mother tongue (p. 79).

Djebar reflects on this point extensively at different points in her narrative. She looks at French as the language of the outside world, as the language of the Other. "J'écris

et je parle français au-dehors"[42] (p. 212), Djebar reiterates. In tandem, she looks at Arabic as the language of her household, of the inside world—of her women ancestors, in particular, who did not speak the language of the Other per se. In her words, "Le français m'est langue marâtre"[43] (p. 298). Interestingly enough, it was her father, a French teacher himself, who introduced her along with her mother to the French language; she states early in the narrative.

Deploying French, Djebar's mom was able to speak of her father addressing him by his name, unlike her fellow women who used the title "*sīdi*" to address their husbands. Thus, French language enabled Djebar recognize that her parents were actually real couples, in contrary to her Mother's friends. It was a liberating language. Even more, her father used to *write* while abroad to her mother in French—an atypical custom amongst women and men in the Algerian society at the time.[44]

Accordingly, the language of the ex-colonizer furnished a medium for Djebar's mother to be recognized; it bred her identity, linguistically and culturally. Put differently, the French language alienates her from other fellow women and, simultaneously, imparted her with an identity—one that is culturally rooted in the same terrain of other fellow women yet is, linguistically, deracinated. Trapped in the same cocoon, Djebar, in turn,

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[42] "I write and speak French outside" (Djebar, 1989, p. 185).
[43] "French is my "Stepmother" tongue" (Djebar, 1989, p. 214).
[44] Djebar reflects on this incident in one complete chapter, titled "Mon Père Écrit à Ma Mère" [My Father Writes to My Mother"], where she writes that her dad was the *only* man to actually "write" back in person to his wife. She says, "Ainsi mon père avait "écrit" à ma mère. […]; oui, son mari lui avait écrit à elle en personne!" (1985, pp. 57-58) [So, my father had "written" to my mother […]; yes, her husband had written to her in person! (1989, p. 37)].

chronicles the voices of all these women in French, as well. However, how could she speak in the name of these women in a language that they themselves do not speak?

Two lines of thought imbricate here. (1) On the one hand, the language of the former colonizer is problematically representative. Yes, it does not fail to give account, on the locale and global levels, of the very cloistered lives of these Algerian women—echoing their voices at a transnational level; yet, it provides *another* veiling—a linguistic veiling that covers to liberate, to break the confinements, in an effort to gain identity outside the frontiers thereof. Intriguingly, Djebar describes Algeria as a women being raped by France: it follows that perhaps writing in French provides yet another veil for this women in an effort to claim legitimacy and authority in its culture. (2) Nonetheless, on the other hand, a new linguistic suffering emerge, Djebar writes,

> Des lettres de mots français se profilent, allongées ou élargies dans leur étrangeté, contre les parois des cavernes, dans l'aura des flammes d'incendies successifs, tatouant les visages disparus de diaprures rougeoyantes... Et l'inscription du texte étranger se renverse dans le miroir de la *souffrance*, me proposant son double évanescent en lettres arabes, de droite à gauche redévidées; elles se délavent ensuite en dessins d'un Hoggar préhistorique.[45] (p.58)

Paradoxically enough, French emerges as a language that underwrites Arabic; it veils it as it brings it to the fore. Suffering is consistent here—"la souffrance" under Djebar's skin. Expounding upon Francophone writers and literature,[46] the Maghrebine in particular, Marx-

[45] "The flickering flames of successive fires from the letters of French words, curiously elongated or expanded, against cave walls tattooing vanished faces with lurid mottling… And for a fleeting moment I glimpse the mirror-image of the foreign inscription, reflected in Arabic letters, writ from right to left in the mirror of suffering; then the letters fade into pictures of the mountainous Hoggar in the prehistoric times" (Djebar, 1989, p. 46).

[46] Francophone literature nomenclature is not very much self-defining as it might appear. It guises, inasmuch as it reveals. Unlike "French," which is homogenous and relatively unidimensional—so to speak, denoting writing as part of the people with no sense of alterity or otherness, the adjective "francophone" is

Scouras (1986) notes that these writes are caught in an untenable site, as they appreciate the language of their conqueror (p. 3).

Commenting on the colonized and colonizer in the Maghrebine context, Memmi (1991) notes that colonial bilingualism differs in many respects from any other linguistic dualism (p. 107). The point is that, possessing two languages does not simply mean straddling between two different linguistic realms; however, it entails moving between two different cultures: (i) the superior, or perhaps the purist, wedded to the colonizer, and (ii) the inferior, or neutral at best, tied with the colonized. It is a "linguistic drama," to use Memmi words (1991, p. 108).

Thus, alienation from the colonized language takes place. Alienation here is understood a la Burke: in a sense, human subjects alienate themselves from world that they do not really *own*, as this world seems "*basically unreasonable*" (Burke, 1984, p. 216; original emphasis). Notably, Burke purports that alienation occurs on the level of literary production; "it creeps into literature" (p. 219). He argues that the rise of a new literary material which is imparted with a specific style often alters the productive pattern itself. In his words, "[the new material] 'slides out from in under' the stylistic tradition by which the writers are still forming themselves" (p. 219).

Djebar's narrative is paradigmatic here. She writes in the language of the ex-colonizer from under to echo the Algerian voices upon a new venue and to, simultaneously,

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multidimensional, breeding a sense of otherness somewhere within its cracks and fissures. Corcoran (2007) notes that *franchophonie* is the generalizing term of the "plurality of voices and histories engaged in the relation with France but contesting France's ownership of History" (p. 17). Corcoran notes as well that "postcolonial francophone literature" challenges the official *franchophonie* from within, presenting a counter-discourse that claims legitimacy and proprietorship. Asia Djebar's literature suits this latter category, as she speaks back to the empire presenting an "alternative history" that echoes the voices of her fellow Algerians and, at once, engaging with France and contesting it.

discover her own identity. She mentions in her narrative upon addressing an Algerian woman, "[t]a voix s'est prise au piège; mon parler français la déguise sans l'habiller. A peine si je frôle l'ombre de ton pas!"[47] (p. 161); then, she adds, "au seul métissage que la foi ancestrale ne condamne pas: celui de la langue et non celui du sang" (p. 161).[48] Indeed, the act of writing an autobiography in the language of the former colonizer might run the risk of betrayal, very much akin to that of searching for identity in the colonizer's cultural scripts. Djebar is, as such, aware that her ancestors condemn not the betrayal of language but that of blood, instead. She subverts the language of the colonizer and its meaning.

Albeit the script of her narrative varies from that for her experience, the core of the Algerian experience is one and is translatable; that's why Djebar contends that she follows the footsteps of her ancestors without clothing their language. In a sense, in her narrative, she strides toward providing a different historical account—a counter narrative—about Algeria and herself equally; that said, she looks at writing as a means to, what Murdoch calls, "subjective signification" (p. 75).

Writing in the language of the ex-colonizer is the first step on the road of the signification, as such. Firstly, it helps her talk from within, deploying the language of the ex-colonizer, to proffer a history from the out—one that contests, and breaches, the *official* imperialist narrative France promulgates, to, secondly, subvert the already written official narrative, echoing her voice and those of her fellow Algerians—women and men included.

[47] "I have captured your voice; disguised it with my French without clothing it. I barely brush the shadow of your footsteps!" (Djebar, 1989, p. 142).
[48] "The only cross-breeding that the ancestral beliefs do not condemn: that of the language, not that of blood" (Djebar, 1989, p. 142).

Indeed, an account that does neither belong exclusively to France nor to Algeria, but to both.

In this light, Donadey (2000) suggests that one could not summarily judge writing in the language of the enemy with postcolonial writers as either radical subversion or treason (p. 28); as both could happen in a single text. However, Djebar deploys a welter of strategies to *fully* subvert the French language. For instance, (1) she breaches the French language at different textual moments to underwrite their Arabic connotation; at many instances she used the word "les Frères" [the Brothers] in reference to the Algerian soldiers instead of the neutral term "warriors"; at other points, reticent to use an Arabic term, Djebar adds quotes to "justiciers" [avengers][49] to alienate herself from those Algerians who used to kill their sisters on the pretext of honor killing.

Moreover, (2) she implemented the Arabic transliteration of some words without rendering them into French, such as *sheikh*, *sīdī*, *saroual*, *khalkhal*, *tekbir*, *douar*, *deira*, *qalam*, djebel, *hadri*, *taleb*, *fellahin*, *hannouni*, and *zaouia*, unlike the Turkish *per se* terms for which she offers and always translation, such as *bach-kateb* and *khasanji*. (3) She had also unequivocally transliterated the name of Algiers twice as "El-Djezaïr" instead of the French "Alger," in the chapter that depicts the fall of the city, wherein she has also stated that France came up to their village instead of the French army, in an effort to pin down the epistemic violence of the French colonialism.

[49] Blaire omitted the quotation marks upon translating. She has rendered the term as those who "tak[e] the law into their own hands," with no quotation marks (p. 12). The connotation was definitely lost in translation. For more on the loss that translation often engenders especially in literary texts, check Cutter's (2005) introduction to her book titled *Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity*.

Blaire (1989), the translator of *L'amour, la fasntasia*, points out in her introduction that Djebar while expounding upon her "love-hate" relationship with French, she "seems to be colonizing the language of the colonizers. She does violence to it, forcing it to give up its riches and defying it to hand over its hidden hoard" (p. IV). Although I find Blaire's description intriguing, I do not *fully* accept it. Djebar does not do any violence to the French language. Conversely, she seems to push its boundaries to underwrite Arabic, on the one hand, and to demonstrate the beauty of the former, on the other.

For instance, Djebar makes use the homonyms, ""L'amour, ses cris" ("s'écrit")"[50] (p. 240)—naturally, then, the reader is invited to read the title of part one, "L'amour s'écrit," [literally: writing love]as "L'amour ses cris" [literally: the cries of love] also, and that of part two "LES CRIS DE LA FANTASIA" as "L'ecrit de la fantasia"—to denote the "cries of love" in reference to the Algerian national narrative and its cries that she chronicles in her autobiography, on the one hand, coupled with the Arabic connotation of *fantasia*.[51]

The point is that that Djebar is not doing any violence to language. Otherwise, she emphasizes that these languages cohabit; that is they are consubstantial in the Burkean sense. It follows that as long as this assimilation takes place linguistically it could necessarily emerge at other levels. Djebar (1985) writes, "Je cohabite avec la langue

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[50] Literally, "Love, its cries (to write)."

[51] In Arabic, fantasia فانتازيا, also known as al-Khayyāla or Taburīdah, is a traditional equestrian performance usually presented in cultural festivals in the Maghreb, often times in Berber weddings. Traditionally, this performance was known as "la'ib al-Bārūd" [the gunpowder play] or "la'ib al-Khayl" [the equestrian game], as the performers synchronize and accelerate the movements of their horses together while firing their rifles simultaneously so the sound would be easily heard from distance; thus "the cries of fantasia." Lanly (1962) points out that the name was mistakenly adopted by the painter Delacroix; when he portrayed the game he mixed between the two Arabic terms "fantasia" that is خيال and خيّال which is cavalier (pp. 45-46).

française: mes querelles, mes élans, mes soudains ou violents mutismes forment incidents d'une ordinaire vie de ménage"[52] (p. 239).

To recap shortly, Djebar subverts the language of the ex-colonizer. Interestingly, Djebar states that while writing her autobiographical attempt she journeys through herself, "Me parcourir par le désir de l'ennemi d'hier, celui dont j'ai volé la langue"[53] (1985, p. 243); hence, stealing the language of yesterday's enemy. And Suffering was always at heart, linguistically and culturally, Djebar mentions repeatedly.

Yet, Djebar's "souffrance" is better understood in light of Butler's understanding to injury and identity. For Butler, the "most injurious interpellations could also be a site of radical reoccupation and resignification" (1997, p. 104). In this line of thought, why is Djebar so attached to the language of the ex-colonizer that brings about sufferance—and naturally injury—and, paradoxically, does write her identity with its "flickering flames"?

Djebar is being interpellated by an *injurious* name, "the colonized" as such. Through this very injurious name Djebar comes into being. Put differently, she comes to realize that, socially, she is this particular colonized person and not any other. Now, because she is attached to her existence, to who she is, she embraces the terms that constitute her socially albeit injurious. It follows that by embracing these injurious terms Djebar resists and contests them. In Butler's words, "only by occupying—and being

[52] "I cohabit with the French Language: I may have quarrel with it, I may have bursts of affection, I may subside into sudden or angry silences—these are normal occurrences in the life of any couple" (Djebar, 1989, p. 213)
[53] "I journey through myself at the whim of the former enemy, the enemy whose language I have stolen" (Djebar, 1989, p. 216).

occupied by—that injurious term can I resist and oppose it, recasting the power that constitutes me as the power I oppose" (1997, p. 104).

The point is, writing an autobiography in the language of the other, albeit sufferance is bedrock, enables Djebar to resist her injurious naming. Specifically, Djebar was interpellated as a "colonized," as a Berber-Algerian women who speaks Arabic and Tamazight and who was educated in a French educational institution—the most profound ideological apparatus—and in *French*.[54] Paradoxically, through embracing French, Djebar contests her subjection and interpellation as a colonized; she alienates herself from the fading Arabic letters as they do not constitute her socially through injury inasmuch as the language of the colonizer, the language of love and rape Djebar contends.

Naturally, the mother tongue of the colonized sustains her feelings, emotions, and dreams, through which her tenderness and wonder are voiced and expressed—hence, the tongue "which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued," (Memmi, 1991, p. 107); that is to say, enshrined in an uncertain, perhaps underestimated, oral tradition. Now, because subjection, first and foremost, occurs through language,[55] the subject shall subordinate willingly to the very language of the colonizer. Djebar writes,

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[54] Again, it is worth mentioning that Djebar descends from a privileged Berber-Algerian family. She had her education at a French school. She was obliged to unveil while at the French school, and hence deprived from going to the Quranic school at later age.

[55] Althusser's very renowned example of the policeman seems paradigmatic. Individuals are called upon through language. When the policeman shouts, "hé, vous, là-bas! [hey, you there!];" the call rings out and individuals turn to recognize themselves as the ones who are called upon or hailed. Subjection then takes place linguistically. Further, individuals become subjects through hailing, either directly through repression or indirectly through ideology. That does not mean that misrecognition might not arise; conversely, it is always at play. Whenever it arises it falters the very process of subjection. That's why negotiation always looms

> Cette langue [La langue Française] était autrefois sarcophage des miens; je la porte aujourd'hui comme un messager transporterait le pli fermé ordonnant sa condamnation au silence, ou au cachot. Me mettre à nu dans cette langue me fait entretenir un danger permanent de déflagration. De l'exercice de l'autobiographie dans la langue de l'adversaire d'hier…[56] (p. 241)

And she had insisted previously that,

> Quand j'étudie ainsi [dans la langue mère], mon corps s'enroule, retrouve quelle secrète architecture de la cité et jusqu'à sa durée. Quand j'écris et lis la langue étrangère: il voyage, il va et vient dans l'espace subversif, malgré les voisins et les matrones soupçonneuses; pour peu, il s'envolerait!
> Ces apprentissages simultanés, mais de mode si différent, m'installent, tandis que j'approche de l'âge nubile (le choix paternel tranchera pour moi: la lumière plutôt que l'ombre) dans une dichotomie de l'espace. Cette chance me propulse à la frontière d'une sournoise hystérie. J'écris et je parle français au-dehors: mes mots ne se chargent pas de réalité charnelle.[57] (p. 208)

Writing in the language of "l'adversaire d'hier" [literally: yesterday's enemy] is so consuming; however, subversion lies at its heart as said earlier. And Negotiation is also bedrock. Caught between these two languages, with their opposing cultural scripts and ideologies—the language that endears and the language that entombs—Djebar enshrines her identity upon the frontiers of both worlds; by so doing, she's demonstrating that she

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large, in an effort to abate misrecognition, in order to guarantee all the privileges of the Subject of ideology. Put differently, in the case of the formerly colonized, to see in the portrait of the colonized that of the colonizer.

[56] "This language [the French] was formerly used to entomb my people; when I write it today I feel like the messenger of old, who bore a sealed missive which might sentence him to death or to the dungeon. By laying myself bare in this language I start a fire which may consume me. For attempting an autobiography in the former enemy's language…" (Djebar, 1989, p. 215).

[57] "And when I sit curled up like this to study my native language it is as though my body reproduces the architecture of my native city: the *medinas* with their tortuous alleyways closed off to outside world, living their secret life. When I write and read the foreign language, my body travels far in a subversive space, in spite of the neighbours and suspicious matrons; it would not need for it to take wing and fly away!
As I approach a marriageable age, these two different apprenticeships, undertaken simultaneously lend me in an dichotomy of location. My father's preference will decide for me: light rather than darkness. I do not realize that an irrevocable choice is being made: the outdoors and the risk, instead of prison of my peers. This stroke of luck beings me to the verge of breakdown.
I write and speak French outside: the words I use convey no flesh-and-blood reality." (pp. 184-185).

does not exclusively belong to either worlds; however to both. Certainly, because these two languages mirror two different ideologies, there is often the risk of betrayal. To that end, Djebar underscores evidently that writing in the language of the other is not a blood betrayal. She aims not to be misrecognized neither by the ideology of the colonizer nor by of the nationalist, pan-Arabic movements in the post-independence era.

Hence, writing an autobiography does not only help writers deeply understand who they are, as they reflect upon their identity, but it also provides a medium to, at some point, subvert some identifications, and, at some others, negotiate the myriad identifications and alienations, in an attempt to abate being misrecognized by the diverging allegiances and their underpinning ideologies.

Negotiation transforms identity then. One could expect no less within the Burkean purview. Writing enables Djebar to appreciate both languages—that of the colonizer and the colonized—and, naturally, cultures. She is looking at these two languages as consubstantial, under Burke's skin. They are both joined and separate; that's why she negotiates them to come to grips with both of them, underwriting her identity in the scripts of both. As she moves on in her narrative, Djebar keeps reminding readers that she is in search for both languages, as her identity is enshrined in the strands of both. Djebar goes on,

> Le français m'est langue marâtre. Quelle est ma langue mère disparue, qui m'a abandonnée sur le trottoir et s'est enfuie?... Langue-mère idéalisée ou mal-aimée, livrée aux hérauts de foire ou aux seuls geôliers!... Sous le poids des tabous que je porte en moi comme héritage, je me retrouve désertée des chants de l'amour arabe.

> Est-ce d'avoir été expulsée de ce discours amoureux qui me fait trouver aride le français que j'emploie?[58] (p. 298)

In her quest for identity, Djebar, in parallel, is in search for both languages. In this light, Pavlenko (2001) notes that through writing in the language of the ex-colonizer while recalling events from one's memory, writers explore "new hybrid identities and create new lifeplots and narratives, new postcolonial and racial consciousness" (p. 217). I take Pavlenko to say that these hybrid identities are created through negotiation *per se*; and that they very act of writing—an autobiographical narrative in particular—creates a new understanding of the postcolonial subjects.

Here, ideology does not remain outcast. On the contrary, identity formation goes in and out of the negotiation of conflicting ideologies that often interpellate individuals (colonized here) to bring them unto their own line. In short, Djebar conflates both languages along with the ideologies attached to both through negotiation to underscore that she is a subject of both at once. After all, French and Arabic are both "mothers" to her. She is native and stranger in both; self and other at once; a dilemma that could not be resolved unless through negotiation.

Paul James avers that the categories of identity are "always full of tensions and contradictions" (p. 175); he adds that these contradictions tend to be destructive, however, "they can also productive and creative" (p. 175). That is to say: I understand productivity and creativity as a fruition of complex negotiations. Not any negotiation, but *rhetorical*

[58] "French is my "stepmother" tongue. Which is my long-lost mother-tongue, that left me standing and disappeared? Mother tongue either realized or unloved, neglected and left to fairground barkers and jailers! Burdened by my inherited taboos, I discover I have no memory of love-songs, is it because I was cut off from this impassioned speech that I find the French I use so flat and unprofitable?" (Djebar, 1985, p. 214).

negotiations—internal and external. Allen (2015; 2018) argues that rhetorical theory is a negotiation of constraints. For him, rhetorical theory is "*the self-consciously ethical study of how symbolic animals negotiate constraints*" (2018, p. 4; original emphasis).

Allen and James help me better understand how negotiation is emerging in the Djebarian text. Djebar is interpellated linguistically by two conflicting, patriarchal and colonial, ideologies. The two ideologies speak two different languages. In her quest for the two languages, Djebar, in parallel, is in quest for her own sense of identity. Abiding exclusively to either options brings about a sense of betrayal for some (Algerians), and a sense of otherness for others (French). For Djebar, Arabic did not help her express freely driven by what she calls the "inherited taboos;" conversely, French was flat and unprofitable. Yet, it works as a way in: brining Djebar into the arena of the colonizing other and its literature. Djebar is making French un-flat and profitable through blending it with Arabic and Berber. French, Arabic, and Berber constitute constraints for her. She is discursively, and *creatively*, negotiating these constraints to inscribe a linguistic identity that is contingent to all.

Moreover, Djebar underscores multilingualism in Algeria, contending that she, along with other Algerian women, have at their command four languages,

> [L]e français pour l'écriture secrète, l'arabe pour nos soupirs vers Dieu étouffés, le libyco-berbère quand nous imaginons retrouver les plus anciennes de nos idoles mères. La quatrième langue, pour toutes, jeunes ou vieilles, cloîtrées ou à demi émancipées, demeure celle du corps.[59] (p. 208)

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[59] "French for secret missives; Arabic for our stifled aspirations towards God-the-Father, the God of the religions of the Book; Lybico-Berber which takes back to the pagan idols—mother gods—of pre-Islamic Mecca. The fourth language, for all females, young or old, cloistered or half-emancipated, remains that of the body" (Djebar, 1989, p. 180).

Interestingly enough, the fourth language of the Algerian women was strictly that of their bodies. In one instance, Djebar describes an Algerian woman who, upon providing food and shelter for the Algerian combatants, taught her adopted girl to only cry if the French questioned her,

> A la petite fille que j'avais adoptée, je répétais:
> — Quand ils t'interrogent, mets-toi aussitôt à pleurer! S'ils te disent: "Ta mère, qui vient chez elle? Que fait-elle? ", il faut te mettre à pleurer aussitôt... Si tu dis un mot, ils t'interrogeront davantage! Pleure, ne fais que cela![60] (Djebar, 1985, p. 181)

And that's what the little girl did. Obviously, the girl's cry was her body language. The older woman didn't ask the girl to remain silent. Otherwise, she asked her to cry: that is to use the only language at her disposal—the language of the body under Djebar's skin. The "cry" hence was the language of the Algerian women who bequeath it to the coming generation. Djebar's venture is a *written* requiem for that very cry; as though she is urging toward a voice—one that could be written to, in turn, inscribe a new voiced identity for the Algerian women in order to be part of the Algerian (hi)story, of the Algerian truth.

Djebar also adds,

> [J]e parle de l'écriture arabe dont je m'absente, comme d'un grand amour. Cette écriture que, pour ma part, j'ai apprivoisée seulement pour les paroles sacrées, la voici s'étalant devant moi en pelure d'innocence, en lacis murmurants—dès lors, les autres (la française, l'anglaise ou la grecque) ne peuvent me sembler que bavardes, jamais cautérisantes, carènes de vérité certes, mais d'une vérité ébréchée. […] Comme si soudain la langue française avait des yeux, et qu'elle me les ait donnés pour voir dans la liberté, comme si la langue française aveuglait les mâles voyeurs de mon clan et qu'à ce prix, je puisse circuler […]. [C]haque langue, je le sais, entasse dans le noir ses cimetières, ses poubelles, ses caniveaux;

[60] "To the girl that I'd adopted, I kept saying, "If they question you, begin to cry! If they ask, "who comes to visit your mother? What does she do?" you must begin to cry immediately… If you say a word, they'll ask more questions! Just cry! That's all what you do!" (Djebar, 1989, p. 160).

> or devant celle de l'ancien conquérant, me voici à éclairer ses chrysanthèmes![61] (p. 208)

Here, Djebar is resembles pendulums. She is moving across different axes: that of the French language, the Arabic language—with its oral and written imbrications, and that of the Lybico-Berber. Upon writing her autobiographical attempt, Djebar identifies with the written tradition of the Arabic language linking it with the sacred words, in reference to the Arabic language she used to learn at the Quranic School. Yet, through writing in French she realized that Arabic is spreading out before her; a language that she could use now to articulate "truth"—something she wasn't aware of before.

Unlike Leila Ahmed, with writing Djebar became more aware of the written tradition of her culture, contesting the repugnant grand narrative of the women-oral tradition conundrum. Also, through using the very term "parle" with "écriture" she is emphasizing that she, too, like the colonizer, is proud of her Arabic *written* tradition per se along with the oral. Murdoch (1993) asserts that "both the spoken and the written appear, paradoxically, to engender a *context for survival* while simultaneously elaborating reciprocity which decenters the subject mediated by both axes" (p. 90; emphasis added).

Yet, for Djebar, not only oral and written traditions of Arabic engender a context for survival; the French does so too, although it speaks "half-truths" pursuant to the

[61] "I speak the Arabic script; to be separated from it is to be separated from a great love. This script, which I mastered only to write the sacred words, I see now spread out before me cloaked in innocence and whispering arabesques—and ever since, all other scripts (French, English, Greek) see only to babble, are never cathartic; they may contain a truth, indeed, but a blemished truth. […] As if the French language suddenly had eyes, and lent them to me to see into liberty; as if the French language blinded the peeping-toms of my clan, and at this price, I could move freely […]. I know that every language is a dark depository for piled-up corpses, refuse, sewage, but faced with the language of the former conqueror, which offers me its ornaments, its jewels, its flowers, I find they are the flowers of death—chrysanthemums on tombs" (Djebar, 1989, p. 181).

Djaberian text. Indeed, French is liberating; however, it lends Djebar ornaments, jewels, and flowers of death. It echoes her voice upon new venues but it alienates her from her ancestresses. Ultimately, she is not sharing a linguistic bond with them. Upon translating their voices unto a new script, Djebar is losing her sense of communal and intimate relation with them that the Arabic language engenders. She (1985) avers, “Parler de soi-même hors de la langue des aïeules, c’est se dévoiler certes, mais pas seulement pour sortir de l’enfance, pour s’en exiler définitivement”[62] (p. 178).

Yet, echoing Murdoch (1993), writing becomes a means of signification which “ultimately undermines the colonial desire and affirms the validity of the subject by virtue of its inscription” (p. 91); further, it signifies a “subjection to cultural alienation as well as its eventual subversion and transcendence” (p. 92). The point is that, Djebar is feeding an “objective dynamism”—if I am to use Memmi’s words (1967, p. 111). Memmi (1967) asserts that through mastering the European languages of the ex-colonizer, colonized writers contribute to the liquidation of their drama as a human subject, confirming and accentuating their drama as writers (p. 111).

Ultimately, Djebar is subordinating to the linguistic power of the colonizing ideology—with Althusser in mind—hailing her to linguistically identify with the subject that lies at its heart; through subordination she becomes a subject that speaks the language of the ideology. She *freely* subordinates to gain signification—to gain the privileges of the Subject “all by herself;” although she contends, “Ainsi de la parole française pour moi. La

[62] “Speaking of oneself in a language other than that of the elders is indeed to unveil oneself, not only to emerge from childhood but to leave it, never to return” (Djebar, 1989, p. 156-157).

langue étrangère me servait, dès l'enfance, d'embrasure pour le spectacle du monde et de ses richesses. Voici qu'en certaines circonstances, elle devenait dard pointé sur ma personne"[63] (p. 143). Through writing she subverts this dagger and liquefies her fragmented colonial desire.

How does this "liquidation of the colonized drama" take place? It emerges (1) through gaining a *sense* of identity and (2) through writing this identity in history. In line with the former imbrication, Allen (2015) contends that "who we are emerge at the nexus of persuasion and conviction. We are all instances of troubled freedom" (p. 208). Allen understands "troubled freedom" as a negotiation of constraints. I take Allen to say that two ideological constraints—that of the ex-colonizer and that of the patriarchal structures—take control of Djebar's life. Indeed, she is enshrining her subjectivity on the frontiers of both. And, equally well, both are hailing her to identify with the Subject that lies at their hearts. In order to be loyal to both, she negotiates the constraints of both. Surely, negotiation of constraints, as such, takes place at the different shades of identity. It follows that Djebar subverts the contesting ideologies at one shade, she identifies with either of them at another, and she transcends them yet at some others.

The second imbrication anchors at Marx-Scouras (1986) conception of the "aesthetics of difference." In her "Poetics of Maghrebine Illegitimacy," Marx-Scouras argues that in the context of Maghrebine Francophone literature, if writing in the ex-colonizer's language was initially looked at as a negative ramification of colonialism, it is

[63] "So it as for me the French Language. Ever since I was a child the foreign language was a casement opening on the spectacle of the world and all its riches. In certain circumstances it became a dagger threatening me" (Djebar, 1989, p. 126).

today deemed as an “aesthetic of difference” (p. 4). Thus, Djebar is at once writing down her own identity in history—and simultaneously echoing the “stifled voices” of her fellow Algerians that were previously unnoticed by ideologies at the locale and global arenas.

By so doing, Djebar is resisting such ideologies at different levels. Donadey’s (2000) suggestion resonates well here. Djebar is undoing the dichotomies; her narrative “moves away from oppositional discourse to subversive reappropriation,” as the Djaberian text mocks “the binary structure” and undoes “the dichotomy between inside and out” (pp. 107, 112). This very process of “undoing” happens at the level of identity creation through wrenching the categories, or shades, of identity.

Writing stabilizes these categories to critically rearticulate them; it makes writers well aware of their human agency. Ideology is very much like the stone that disrupts still water. Yet, driven by their agency, humans are not ripples that stop and die out once they reach the edge of the lake. Contrarily, they look at the myriad categories of their identity as consubstantial, they rhetorically engage with them through negotiation to create a new identity that lies at the intersection of all.

Even more deeply, looking at identities as intersectional, with Crenshaw’s conception in mind (1993), and consubstantial, with Burke in mind, helps us think about the ways through which the power of ideology has clustered around certain shades, and about the meaning and consequences attached to these shades. Identity, hence, “continues to be site of resistance” (Crenshaw, 1993, 1297)—one that subvert earlier shades as a result of negotiation and through writing that steers well clear of the contradiction that lies at the different shades of identity.

In the following section, I showcase how Djebar is negotiating her other two shades of identity, the national and gender, through a process of internal rhetoric in an attempt to present a new critique that takes into account the Algerian women's key role in building the Algerian imagination, and as a result nation.

C. of Gender Identity and National Identity: from Silence to Cry

In her Autobiographical narrative, Djebar does not only chronicle her own individual cry but also that of her fellow Algerian women along with Algeria itself. Interestingly, she considers Algeria as woman being raped by France. Further, she refers to Algeria as the ancestress *woman*. In her autobiographical attempt, Djebar looks at the voices of the many women she chronicles as the feminine *fantasia* of Algeria—one that went unnoticed, and naturally silenced, by French historiographers of the Algerian war and afterwards by patriarchal historiographers. Djebar, unlike Leila Ahmed, is enshrining her identity in the cloak of the Algerian collectivity per se. She states clearly that she was born when the city of Algiers fell in the hands of the French soldiers. That's why her quest for identity goes back to 1830—the year that marked the fall of the Impregnable City of Algiers—as she wrenches the national history of Algeria and that of Algerian women. That's why I am closely reading Djebar's gender and national identity in parallel.

All that said, from a feminist lens, one could not embark on studying Djebar's gender and national identities without taking a closer look at the status of women, and

naturally feminism,[64] in the Maghreb, and Algeria in particular. In what follows I *briefly* present an overview of the status of women in the pre and post-independence eras.

Cooke (1989) posits that national liberation in Algeria did not bring about women's "liberation." She suggests that although national consciousness has emerged during the war, a clear expression of an activist feminist consciousness was a "post war product" (p. 2)—although Algerian women were involved in the war. In a paradigmatic instance, Djebar contends in her narrative that

> Les femmes prisonnières ne peuvent être ni spectatrices, ni objets du spectacle dans le pseudo-triomphe. Plus grave, elles ne regardent pas. […] ces Algériennes s'enduisent le visage de boue et d'excréments, quand on les conduit dans le cortège du vainqueur. L'élégant chroniqueur ne s'abuse point: elles ne se protègent pas seulement de l'ennemi, mais du chrétien, à la fois conquérant, étranger et tabou! Elles se masquent toutes comme elles peuvent, et elles le feraient avec leur sang, si besoin était.[65] (p. 73)

I bring Cooke and Djebar to say that women during the war were in this state of in-betweenness: neither true actors nor audience. Smearing one's face in mud is an act of resistance—a *silent* act of resistance though. Two thoughts imbricate here: (1) these women

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[64] The working definition of "feminism" in this study is fed by Cooke's definition of feminism. She says, "Feminism seeks justice whenever it can find it" (2000, p. 92); it is a "changing state of consciousness" that reflects "women's understanding of themselves and their situations;" it "provides a crosscultural prism through which to identify moments of *awareness* that something is wrong in the expectations for women's treatment or behavior, of *rejection* of such expectations, and of *activism* to effect some kind of change" (p. 29). The point is that, Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar upon writing their autobiographical narratives became more aware of the status of their fellow women and naturally their own and how their identity is formed at the intersection of the conflicting ideologies. It follows that writing per se constituted a sort of activism, through which subversion, or perhaps rejection, of some ideologies emerge and internalization of others took place.

[65] "The woman prisoners can be neither audience no actors in the pseudo-triumph. What is more serious they refuse even to look. […] [T]hese Algerian women smear their faces with mud and excrement when they are paraded in front of the conqueror. The elegant chronicler is not mistaken: this is not merely to protect themselves from the enemy, but also from the Christian, who is not just the conqueror, but also alien and taboo! They use the only mask at their disposal; they would use their own blood if the need arose" (Djebar, 1989, p. 56).

are so attached to their land that they cloak their faces in its mud, and this is the only act of resistance at their disposal and (2) and these women are not very much aware of who is their adversary; the point is that, they disguised their faces driven by the taboos that they have inherited not because they are aware of who their adversary is. Not because they acquired at the time a deep consciousness of their identity and that of their adversary. Djebar is bringing the silent resistance into voice. She is also, at once, highlighting the consciousness that emerged as a result of the war.

Fanon (1952, 1959), in his very renowned *Peau noire masques blancs*[66] and *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* respectively,[67] points out to the symbolic and instrumental key role played by women in mapping the Algerian identity. Fanon posits that French colonialism aimed at abating the role of Algerian men and their grasp of power, so it hinted at the liberation of women while providing them with French education and values. Haunted by the French advocacy for women's liberation, Algerian men sought to increase their control over those women, who had participated on par with them on the battle field. Yet, Fanon (1965) contends that

> The effervescence and the revolutionary spirit have been kept alive by the [Algerian] woman in the home. For revolutionary war is not a war of men. Revolutionary war, as the Algerian people is waging it, is a total war in which the woman does not merely knit for or mourn the soldier. The Algerian woman is at the heart of the combat. Arrested, tortured, raped, shot down, she testifies to the violence of the occupier and to his inhumanity. (p. 66)

However, I argue that the importance of this Algerian women participation in mapping the Algerian identity was unfortunately misread by both Algerian men and women—both

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[66] This work was translated into English by Charles Lam Markmann in 1967, as *Black Skin, White Masks*.
[67] The book was translated into English by Haakon Chevalier in 1965, as *A Dying Colonialism*.

haunted by their desperate loss of faith in their Algerian identity, particularly in the post-dependence era; directly manifested by the patriarchal nationalist urge to once again cloister women on the male's part, and the lack of acknowledged feminist consciousness, on the women's part. The war did not shake the very structure of the Algerian society; however, it bred new consciousness that took years to consolidate in the post-independence era.

Lucas (1990) also suggests that none of the Algerian women was in a decision-making position (p. 107, as cited in Badran and Cooke, 2004). They were in a support position but never entitled with the power of decision making, coupled with a lack of awareness on the Algerian women's side in regards to their role in the transformative era of the war. Cooke (1993) argues that

> Algerian women were not conscious of their opportunities. […] Consequently, it is not so surprising that they made no attempt to inscribe into the war text experiences that may have been transformative. When they had written, they had done so with little awareness of what military participation had meant. Since the women writers were not reading the men's writings to understand the men's fear of women's new visibility and activism, they were not learning—even only by proxy—how their image had changed. Without the registration of their voices and the interpretation of their experiences in the war, they had nothing to show. (pp. 185-168)

This very smart passage defines how I read Djebar's text. The Djebarian text is a venture into creating a new feminist consciousness of Algeria. It is a text that aims at inscribing into the Algerian war experience a new feminist narrative through recounting the different cries of women—one that aspires toward engaging in and interpreting the war experience and the implications thereof on the constitution of the post-colonial feminine subjectivity in Algeria. That's why I read gender and national identities in tandem in Djebar's

autobiography.[68] Interestingly, Djebar herself comments in her *Les Alouettes naïve* on this lack of consciousness among Algerian women. She points out that the Algerian women at the time felt as though they were playing a game unnoticing the importance of their role in the construction of a new nationalist consciousness of Algeria. Moreover, Khatibi notes that there is an interval of silence between colonization and decolonization (p. 48). Djebar is tightening this interval through engaging in a critical discourse through a feminist lens that puts Algerian women on par with French. She writes,

> Comment une femme pourrait parler haut, même en langue arabe, autrement que dans l'attente du grand âge? Comment dire "je", puisque ce serait dédaigner les formules-couvertures qui maintiennent le trajet individuel dans la résignation collective?... Comment entreprendre de regarder son enfance, même si elle se déroule différente? La différence, à force de la taire, disparaît. Ne parler que de la conformité, pourrait me tancer ma grand-mère: le malheur intervient, inventif, avec une variabilité dangereuse.[69] (1989, p. 177)

What I think Djebar is hinting at here is that one could not split totally from the collectivity that ensures one's sense of identity. She is searching for the difference; for her identity that refracts from, but also intersects with, her grandmother's identity. How could a woman say "I" in the midst of the collectivity; how could she emerge as distinct subjectivity within a monolithic entity without betraying the latter.

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[68] Cooke notes that other Arab women were able to benefit from the Algerian feminist experience and the lack of the feminist context that urged for a new consciousness of Algeria. She points out that in contrast to the Algerian women, the Lebanese women had a feminist context within which women were able to situate there struggles (1993, pp. 179-186); that's why the Lebanese women participation in war literature is not uncommon in comparison to the Algerian experience.

[69] "How could a woman speak aloud, even in Arabic, unless on the threshold of extreme age? How could she say "I", since that would be to scorn the blanket-formulae which ensure that each individual journeys through life in an collective resignation?…How can she undertake to analyse her childhood, even if it turns out different? The difference, if not spoken of, disappears. Only speak of what conforms, my grandmother would reprove me: to deviate is dangerous, inviting disaster in its multiple disguises" (Djebar, 1989, p. 156).

For Djebar, this sets a paradox she aims to resolve while writing her narrative. It is problematic because to fail to acknowledge the community that you are part of makes your very sense of identity unintelligible. Interestingly, Djebar contends that she aspired for a wedding night that breaches the rituals and traditions that often burden her fellow Algerian women, in an effort to enshrine her identity differently while alienating herself from the feminine rituals of night weddings entrenched in the Algerian traditions; yet, Djebar finds her own understanding of identity slipping into the risk of identity confusion. In her words,

> Dans ces noces parisiennes, *envahies de la nostalgie du sol natal*, voici que, sitôt entré dans la pièce au lit neuf, à la lampe rougeâtre posée à même le sol, le marié se dirige vers celle qui l'attend, voici qu'il la regarde et qu'il oublie.
> Des heures après […] il se souvient du cérémonial négligé. Lui qui n'avait jamais prié, il avait décidé de le faire au moins cette fois au bord des épousailles. Un pressentiment le tourmente:
> —Notre union ne sera pas préservée, murmure-t-il.
>
> *L'épouse, amusée par cette tristesse superstitieuse, le rassure*.[70] (1985, pp. 123-124; emphasis added).

Djebar then continues, "Dire aussi ma victoire, *son goût de douceur évanouie*, dans les lames de l'instant"[71] (1985, p. 123; emphasis added). After all, deviating from the rituals of her community—from the feminine traditions per se—evoked in Djebar a sense of lost sweetness of victory. In addition, nostalgia was bedrock. Even her groom's prayer reassured her sense of communal identity that prayer brings about. Paradoxically, she felt nostalgic to the Algerian soil, to the peeping women of her clan, she suddenly found herself

[70] "In this Parisian wedding permeated with nostalgia for the native soil, no sooner has the bridegroom set foot in the room with its brand-new bed, and pink-shaded lamp placed on the floor, then he hurries to the waiting woman, he gazes down at her and forgets all else. Hours later […] he remembers the neglected ceremonial. He who had never prayed, he had decided to do so just this once, prior to consummating his marriage. He is tormented by a sense of foreboding: "Our union will not be served," he murmurs. The bride, amused by thus superstitious melancholy, reassures him" (Djebar, 1989, p. 106).

[71] "And I must tell also of my victory, its taste of lost sweetness as the wave swept me" (Djebar, 1989, p. 107).

thinking about man in a traditional way. “J’évoquai soudain l’homme à la manière traditionnelle”[72] (Djebar, 1985, p. 124). The Djaberian text often sketches this very negotiation of identity in regards to gender—one that is trapped between patriarchal patrimony and colonial imperialism that looks at women as being primitive, wild, and uneducated (Dejbar, 1985, pp. 69-70). Djebar thus negotiates the ideologies of both.

By so doing, she contests their underpinning interpellations in an attempt to create a new subject position—perhaps contingent upon both—that could claim subjectivity in both. Yet, how does this negotiation emerge successfully. I have stated earlier in the chapter that negotiation of constraints takes place externally and internally. The point is that we internally negotiate our constraints to externally produce an identity.

Nienkamp (2001) avers that the human self is rhetorically constituted, in the sense that it *internally* negotiates the myriad voices—hence for this project in particular: the myriad (perhaps conflicting) interpellations of ideologies—that interact in an effort to persuade the self of their power and profound influences. Thus identity creation is a result of internal rhetoric—one that is constituted by the very social languages that shape identity through internalization and transmutation (p. 125). Nienkamp refers to Mead’s suggestion of “the generalized other;” Mead’s point is that the social group that offers the self its unity per se is called the generalized other, which is not at all monolithic, very much akin to the self itself. It follows that identity is constituted within a multiplicity of generalized others that cater to the self its unity and attachment to its very existence. Because these “generalized others” are various and situational, our rhetorical self comprehends and

[72] “I suddenly found myself thinking of the man in a traditional way” (Djebar, 1989, p. 107).

internalizes them to cultivate our consciousness; our own awareness of who we are. For Nienkamp, internal rhetoric constructs what we experience as our selves (p. 107). Further, Nienkamp (2001) argues that the "last step toward the evolution of the mind," of what she calls the rhetorical self, "is the ability to anticipate not only the responses of other individuals but also the expectations of the communities of which they are members" (p. 112).

Eileraas (2007) argues that Djebar, "reflects on the impossibility of claiming an authentic or stable identity within the context of colonization" (p. 17). Perhaps, this is the reason why Djebar suggests that her text is an autobiographical attempt. Although I find Eileraas quote intriguing as it might be, I argue that the very notion of *authentic* identity is problematic in itself. The point is that identity is an accumulation of negotiations of different ideological interpellations, particularly in the context of colonization. Even more deeply, I argue that identity is a result of internal rhetoric—one that is not deliberative or rather cathartic. Conversely, one that is imparted with "sociohistorical situatedness".

For Djebar, the ideologies of patriarchal patrimony along with colonial imperialism both comprise multiplicity of generalized others that she internalizes and transmutes in an attempt to meet the expectations of the both communities. In Djebar's self lies an internal persuasion, goaded by a set of identifications and alienations that aim at enshrining Djebar's identity upon the frontiers of double belonging. Thus, internal rhetoric serves as a nexus through which Djebar could negotiate the different symbolic worlds that she is part of. In the wedding night, Djebar is persuaded to alienate herself from her fellow Algerian women in order to inscribe a different identity that succumbs to the

internalizations of the westernized weddings, the French in particular. Melancholy emerges as a result, unfitting, or perhaps unsettling, Djebar from the new identity peg she acquires. Indeed, she feels guilty, departing from the Algerian domestic unto the Parisian house, however, this is rhetorically convincing for Djebar; as she is identifying with her fellow Algerian women upon different contexts that help in creating a nationalist, feminist consciousness of Algeria. What counts for her is creating a feminist context that caters well for embracing the stifled voices of these women.

For instance, Djebar (1985) asks,

> Vingt ans après, puis-je prétendre habiter ces voix d'asphyxie? Ne vais-je pas trouver tout au plus de l'eau évaporée? Quels fantômes réveiller, alors que, dans le désert de l'expression d'amour (amour reçu, "amour" imposé), me sont renvoyées ma propre aridité et mon aphasie.[73] (pp. 226-227).

When Djebar engages in a dialogue with these Algerian women of "voix d'asphyxie," who fought in the battle fields, she refuses to use the word "rape." Otherwise, she uses its Arabic euphemism: "damage." Djebar (1985) writes,

> "Ma" question frémit, entêtée. […] Dire le mot secret et arabe de "dommage",[74] ou tout au moins de "blessure":
> —Ma soeur, y a-t-il eu, une fois, pour toi "dommage"?
> Vocable pour suggérer le viol, ou pour le contourner.[75] (p. 226)

She talks to them using their own terms. She identifies with their values. She clarifies to them that they did not "subi la France"[76] but they have rather altogether submitted to the

[73] "Can I twenty years later, claim to revive these stifled voices? And speak for them? Shall I not at best find dried-up streams? What ghosts will be conjured up when in this absence of love (love received, "love" imposed), I see the reflections of my own barrenness, my own aphasia" (Djebar, 1989, p. 202).
[74] In Arabic, either *damār* or *khasārah*, the latter connotes the loss of something.
[75] "'My' question quivers persistently on my tongue. To say the private, Arabic word "damage", or that at the most "hurt": "Sister, did you ever, at any time, suffer "damage"? (Djebar, 1989, p. 202).

“présent étale”.[77] Through brining in their voices along, that is the feminist voice of Algeria, Djebar is resisting the emptiness, adding to the national identity of Algeria a feminist dimension that goes in and out of the cracks of emptiness. She is at once, combatting her own aphasia and that of other fellow Algerian women, in an attempt to abate the ghosts of fear.

The Algerian women’s body, under Djebar’s skin, is imparted accordingly with this multifaceted mission: it resists the “damage” of the colonizer inasmuch as it fills the emptiness of the national consciousness that, in turn, had stifled the voices of these women. By so doing, Djebar allows for those Algerian women to reimagine their own postcolonial feminist subjectivity, in an attempt to cast them unto the center of the French colonizing discourse in which they were previously unimagined and, while simultaneously, making them an essential core in the nationalist Algerian narrative.

Intriguingly, Djebar (1985) throughout writing her narrative is unveiling the role of women, she often goes back to them

> On me dit exilée. La différence est plus lourde: je suis expulsée de là-bas pour entendre et ramener à mes parentes les traces de la liberté... Je crois faire le lien, je ne fais que patouiller, dans un marécage qui s’éclaire à peine. [….] Un thrène diffus s’amorce à travers les claies de l’oubli, amour d’aurore. Et les aurores se rallument parce que j’écris. […] Le murmure des compagnes cloîtrées redevient mon feuillage. Comment trouver la force de m’arracher le voile, sinon parce qu’il me faut en couvrir la plaie inguérissable, suant les mots tout à côté ?[78] (p. 304)

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[76] “submit to France” (Djebar, 1989, p. 202).
[77] “to the present emptiness” (Djebar, 1989, p. 202).
[78] “They call me exile. It is more than that: I have been banished from my homeland to listen and bring back some traces of liberty to the women of my family… I imagine I constituted the link, but I am only floundering in a murky bog. […] The first strains of a dirge well up, penetrating the barriers of oblivion, at once a plaintive song and song of love in the first light of dawn. And every sawn is brighter because I write. […] I shelter again in the green shade of my cloistered companions’ whispers. How shall I find the strength to tear off my veil, unless I have to use it to bandage the running sore nearby from which words exude?” (Djebar, 1989, pp. 218-219).

Here, Djebar claims that her silence allows for the whispers of other women to get loud. She often goes back to these whispers to cloister in their shadow in order to liberate these women blending them in the new narrative in the post-independence era; that's why she writes, and every dawn is brighter because she writers. She is taking their fragmented stories to construct a narrative—a feminist one that caters well for the voice of all.

Djebar also writes,

> Laminage de ma culture orale en perdition: expulsée à onze, douze ans de ce théâtre des aveux féminins, ai-je par là même été épargnée du silence de la mortification? Écrire les plus anodins des souvenirs d'enfance renvoie donc au corps dépouillé de voix. Tenter l'autobiographie par les seuls mots français, c'est, sous le lent scalpel de l'autopsie à vif, montrer plus que sa peau. Sa chair se desquame, semble-t-il, en lambeaux du parler d'enfance qui ne s'écrit plus. Les blessures s'ouvrent, les veines pleurent, coule le sang de soi et des autres, qui n'a jamais séché.[79] (p. 178)

She contends that the formation of her feminist subjectivity anchors at the oral tradition that she aims to put in writing. Although she was ejected from theatre of feminine confidences, she identifies with these fellow women; she often returns to them to write about her childhood memories to preserve them.

Djebar's feminist subjectivity emerges accordingly at the complex intersections of her linguistic, national, and feminist consciousness. She delcares, "Reviennent en écho les

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[79] "My oral tradition has gradually been overlaid and is in danger of vanishing: at the age of eleven or twelve I was abruptly ejected from this theatre of feminine confidences—was I thereby spared from having to silence my humble pride? In writing of my childhood memories I am taken back to those bodies bereft of voices. To attempt an autobiography using French words alone is to lend oneself to the vivisector's scalpel, revealing what lies beneath the skin. The flesh flakes off and with it, seemingly, the last shreds of unwritten language of my childhood. Wounds are reopened, veins weep, one's own blood flows and that of others, which has never dried" (Djebar, 1989, p. 156).

clameurs des ancêtres désarçonnés lors des combats oubliés; et les hymnes des pleureuses, le thrène des spectatrices de la mort les accompagnent"[80] (p. 178).

Further, Djebar is not at pain with the Islamic understanding of women. She aims at abating the patriarchal interpretations of Islam though. She takes two prominent female figures who have moved her so deeply. The first was Abraham's wife, Sarah, who was never bereft of voice, very much akin to Djebar's mom. The second was Khadījah, the Prophet's wife. Djebar's aunt used to talk to her about Khadījah who was the first women to adhere to Islamic faith out of conjugal love, according to Djebar's relative. Djebar's heart used to melt at the stories she heard from her women relatives on how the Prophet used to love Khadījah. Djebar (1985) writes,

> Des années plus tard, je m'attendris à mon tour: pour un autre détail qu'elle rapportait. Bien après la mort de Khadidja, Mohamed ne pouvait dominer son trouble en une circonstance particulière: quand la soeur de sa femme morte approchait de la tente, le Prophète, bouleversé, disait que la soeur avait le même bruit de pas que la défunte. A ce son qui ressuscitait Khadidja, le Prophète se retenait mal de pleurer. L'évocation de ce bruit de sandales me donnerait par bouffées un désir d'Islam.[81] (p. 194)

Here, she aims at grappling with the Algerian female collectivity. Unlike Leila Ahmed, her French education did not abate her connectedness to what other women share and have in common in their cloistered arenas—in particular, their oral interpretation of Islam and the Quran.

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[80] "The battle-cries of our ancestors, unhorsed in long-forgotten combats, re-echo across the years; accompanies by the dirge of the mourning-women who watched them die" (Djebar, 1989, p. 157).

[81] "Years later, my heart too was melted by another detail of her tale. "Long after Khadijah's death," so she related, 'one particular circumstance would cause Mohammed uncontrollable distress: whenever his late wife's sister approached his tent, the Prophet would be more upset, because he said the sound, which seemed to restore Khadijah to life, the Prophet could scarce hold back his tears…' This story of the sound of sandalled feet would bring on a sudden yearning for Islam" (Djebar, 1989, p. 172).

What others might consider mere sedentary superstitions related to female circles in Algeria, was echoing in Djebar a deep sense of Muslim feminity. Moreover, when Djebar approaches the Quran along with other scriptural Islamic texts from a feminist lens, she fosters new understanding and interpretation of the texts that take women as a primary, rather than secondary, axes, which, in turn urges toward cultivating a new feminist consciousness that juxtaposes eastern texts to western approaches; Najmabadi (1998) avers that feminist writers, by so doing, make “East and West speak in new combined tongue in dialogue rather than as negating of each other” (p. 77).

The Islam that Djebar calls for conforms to the Islam of the Islamic feminist writers that Cooke puts forward. Cooke (2000) suggests that the Islam that such writers invoke, “is the internationally significant political player, but also individual faith system” one that “eschews violence as it seeks to manage both internal and external conflict” (p. 106). Djebar, unlike Ahmed, is not invoking an oral Islam per se. Conversely, she engages with the Quran—the written text—inasmuch as she engages with the whispered prayers of her ancestresses; Djebar is urging toward a new vision to Islam, one that considers women co-equal with men: both as participants, not rivals, in building the Algerian nation.

Neinkamp (2000) argues that the rhetorical self is comprised of a “colloquy of internalized social languages, interacting rhetorically to adapt attitude and behavior to personal, cultural, and environmental demands” (p. 127). I bring Neinkamp to say that Djebar had complex, internal colloquy that helped her shift between different lines of identification, and naturally alienation, in regards to the creation of her post-colonial feminine subjectivity. She internalized different social languages, hence ideological

interpellations—those related to the French colonial rule, on the one hand, and the patriarchal nationalist ideologies, on the other.

It follows that these conflicting ideologies interact rhetorically to create a new subjectivity that does not begat an exclusive alliance to either; rather, one that adapts to the cultural, personal, and political demands under the purview of being critical to all sorts of conservatism, whether nationalist or patriarchal, and equally well to the European notions of liberation. Put shortly, she stands against all sorts of identitarianism. Djebar's text is nuanced, as she internally negotiates all complex oppressions she was subject to to urge for the *cultivation* of a new consciousness of Algeria itself—one that brings the narratives of women from side to core—of Islam and of women.

D. Reimagining Algeria /Re-Narrating Women

In the very last two chapters of *L'amour, la fantasia*—titled "La *fantasia*" and "Air de *Nay*" respectively—Djebar refers to the renowned painter Eugene Fromentin who, in October 1852 set out to visit the Algerian Sahel of Djebar's childhood, where he stumbled upon a hand—an Algerian woman's amputated hand. Fromentin expounds upon the incident in his "Chronique de L'Absent;" he inspected the hand and then, unable to paint it, he threw it away. For Djebar, this very feminine hand marked the first brief appearance of an Algerian heroin in a story written in French per se.

Djebar, on her part, is bringing the *qalam* to this hand. In her words, "Plus tard, je me saisis de cette main vivante, main de la mutilation et du souvenir et je tente de lui faire

porter le "qalam [pen or stylus]""[82] (Djebar, 1985, p. 313). This brief mentioning of the hand of an Algerian woman in French sets a point of departure for Djebar and allows her to retell, years later, the new story of Algeria—a new narrative that resurrects that amputated hand that is still living (*main vivante*). Amputation here entails silence: that some linkage is missing and Djebar attempts to steer clear well what is missing through going backwards to the feminine voices—the memory—of these women in an attempt to resurrect them, as their absence imposes concentric circles of exclusion in the Algerian imagination to which women remained outcast.

The language of the ex-colonizer provides a way in, as it creates a new discourse of hybridity and multiplicity of identities that were previously unimagined within the Algerian collectivity in its Berber and Arabic scripts. Djebar's gender and national shades of her identity are dappled with her linguistic shade of identity: the three shades are consubstantial forming a fluid identity for Djebar that does not abide to narrow allegiances and belongings. This very last shade enables the other two shades to emerge—and to emerge vividly. She suggests,

> Écrire en langue étrangère, hors de l'oralité des deux langues de ma région natale — le berbère des montagnes du Dahra et l'arabe de ma ville —, écrire m'a ramenée aux cris des femmes sourdement révoltées de mon enfance, à ma seule origine.
> Écrire ne tue pas la voix, mais la réveille, surtout pour ressusciter tant de soeurs disparues.[83] (p. 284)

[82] "Later, I seize on this living hand, hand of mutilation and memory, and I attempt to bring it the *qalam*" (Dejbar, 1989, p. 226).
[83] "Writing in a foreign language, not in either of the tongues of my native country—the Berber of the Dahra mountains or the Arabic of the town where I was born—writing has brought me to the cries of the women silently rebelling in my youth, to my own origins. Writing does not silence the voice, but awakens it, above all to resurrect so many vanished sisters" (Dejbar, 1989, p. 204).

Ultimately, Djebar is remembering the cries of her fellow Algerian women in Arabic and Berber—both languages enable her to remember; to go back to the oral memory of her origin; to the two languages that impart her with a specific linguistic identity. Conversely, French, which lacks the oral history in Djebar, enables her to write the story of these women, her story, and ultimately her identity.

As if going back to the oral past needs another linguistic conduit to mediate between past and present. Here, Butler's conception that identity will never remain rooted in its injury seems paradigmatic. A new linguistic identity helps treat that injury. Injury could not be treated using the same linguistic mean; however a new linguistic identity provides a neutral ground for writing identity in history. Hailed by the language of the ideology that often determines whose voices shall be brought to fore and whose voices shall be cast to the side, Djebar within her post-colonial contexts could only emerge through speaking the language of the ex-colonizer's ideology. Through identifying with the language of the colonizer, and further appropriating it, successful returns to oral past become possible.

"L'indigène, même quand il semble soumis, n'est pas vaincu. Ne lève pas les yeux pour regarder son vainqueur. Ne le "reconnaît" pas. Ne le nomme pas. Qu'est-ce qu'une victoire si elle n'est pas nommée? "[84] Djebar asserts (1985, p. 69). In her autobiographical venture, she is at pains to name her own victory—as an Algerian woman, for naming

[84] "Even when the native seems submissive, he is not vanquished, Does not raise his eyes to gaze on his vanquisher, Does not "recognize" him. Does not name him. What is a victory if it is not named?" (Djebar, 1989, p. 56).

victory keeps the latter vital. She orients toward imagining new possibilities of being woman within an Algerian imagination. Djebar voices a new identification that caters well to a transnational sense of belonging that does not negate the locale; a belonging that speaks to both her identity as a citizen of the world and in concert, as a citizen of her own nation. Negotiation occurs within a welter of uncertainties as the world pushes its frontiers within globalism; however, Djebar is presenting a critique of difference, a multi-critique that speaks to the globe and to the nation, veiling the language of the latter with the scripts of the former.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have investigated identity manifestations in the autobiographical narratives of Leila Ahmed and Asia Djebar. The object of my research in the broadest sense was to study the language-identity-ideology link in the post-colonial contexts in the Arab world, in Egypt and Algeria particularly. More specifically, I looked at the linguistic, national, and gender aspects—I dub shades—of identity manifest in the life writings of both writers as they speak of, and unpack, the diverging, and more accurately conflicting, ideologies of the time: (1) that of the hegemonic ex-colonizer and (2) that of the nationalist movements that hovered over the two countries for long. I attempted to adumbrate how ideological shifts in such turning points in the history of Egypt and Algeria have affected the identity construction of both writers, in so far as it relates to language, nation, and gender.

Studying identity at the intersection of its linguistic, national and gender shades allows for tracing the complexities that form one's identity that is never linear—one constituent leads to the other; but rather one that is highly knotted and intersectional. Looking at identity as intersectional, in turn, urges to sketch out how power is clustered over particular shades of identity and works against others, leading, as such, to the emergence of social hierarchies. It also showcases how such a nexus of identity responds to the political conflicts in the society with their ideological underpinnings to which no one

remains outcast. The identity as autonomous dictum seems ultimately moribund. Our identity is a product of a complex web of interwoven forces that lie beyond and behind us—and that consequently move us in time and place, as we negotiate them afresh and anew.

Through the processes of (*re*)negotiation identity maintains its balance. It follows that, identity negotiation and identity as fluid precepts do not mean that identities put one dress after another across every new context. Negotiation does not deny *stability*.

For instance, Leila Ahmed sharply distinguished between fuṣḥā, classical Arabic, and *ʿāmmiya*, Egyptian vernacular, recognizing the former as the language of the Other, of Arabism, and—later in the narrative—of patriarchy and misogyny, while recognizing the latter as the language of truth, of the living people, one that sustains and does not alienate. This negative attitude remains constant *in essence*; however, to certain degree, it developed several mutations, as Ahmed grapples with her other shades of identity and their interconnectedness. Interestingly, the Arabic *fuṣḥā* language that used to alienate Ahmed from her own culture and gender identity as a woman in the Middle East, brought her in after several years of displacement and disenchantment, reconciliating with her own Arabic and Egyptian cultures, which allowed Ahmed to creatively urge for a new understanding of women in the middle east in light of what she calls the oral Islam that speaks exclusively—and paradoxically enough—*ʿāmiyya* Egyptian Arabic.

One the other hand, Asia Djebar cherished the multilingualism of the Algerian society with its Berber, Arabic, and French manifestations; she also adds that all Algerian

women have at their command a fourth language: that of the body—the cry. Djebar does not distinguish between *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmiyya*. She recognizes French as her stepmother while Arabic remained her "mother." Upon writing in the language of the ex-colonizer, Djebar brings the voices, the cry, of her Algerian fellow women to new arenas in which they were previously unimaginable. The Algerian women's body, under Djebar's skin, is imparted accordingly with this multifaceted mission: it resists the "damage" of the colonizer inasmuch as it fills the emptiness of the national consciousness that, in turn, had stifled the voices of these women.

By so doing, Djebar allows these Algerian women to reimagine their own postcolonial feminist subjectivity, in an attempt to cast them unto the center of the French colonizing discourse in which they were previously unimagined, while simultaneously, making them an essential core in the nationalist Algerian narrative. Interestingly enough, Ahmed and Djebar see their gender identity from the prism of Islam and nation. Also, unlike Ahmed who seeks refuge in her own family along with its privileges, Djebar goes back to the Algerian collectivity at large in an effort to glean from it a new understanding of her own identity along with that of the collectivity.

Writing in the language of the ex-colonizer allows women in post-colonial contexts to engage with multi-layered discourses while presenting new critiques that challenge, and most importantly complicate, the discourses of the locale and global. It is enabling in the strongest sense of the word, as it helps writers cultivate a new consciousness—"multiple consciousness(es)"—that allows women to challenge the global and local duality of antagonisms, while orienting towards a "multiple critique" that makes women gain agency in their own community and in the globe. With writing Ahmed and

Djebar challenged their ideological interpellations: they contested them at times while internalizing them on others.

Writing about identity in an autobiographical narrative and in the language of the ex-colonizer brings to light the daily, perhaps scattered and fragmented, narratives of identity that, in post-colonial contexts in particular, are often imparted with ongoing injustices and sufferings; writing urges us to share our suffering and thus negotiate its constraint so as to move beyond it. It allowed Ahmed and Djebar to freely imagine new possibilities of being woman within an Algerian and Egyptian imagination—new forms of Egyptianess and Algerianness as such.

As we move in time and as we cross borders, we carry with us the baggage of the past. Negotiation allows us to unpack this baggage, to assimilate new identifications that cater well to a transnational sense of belonging. It opens a new door for women that is, in turn, open to the full sun of which the threads of language, nation, and gender identities emanate—to their full identity that fosters their sense of satisfaction and belonging while they complete to engage in creative dialogues.

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