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Transcending Borders: A Comparative Feminist Analysis of Assia Djébar and Virginia Woolf's Literary Strategies and Representations of Women's Experiences

تجاوز الحدود: تحليل نسوي مقارنة لاستراتيجيات الكتابة وتمثيلات تجارب النساء عند

آسيا جبار و فيرجينيا وولف

Au-delà des frontières : une analyse féministe comparée des stratégies littéraires et des représentations des expériences féminines chez Assia Djébar et Virginia Woolf

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Au-delà des frontières : une analyse féministe comparée des stratégies littéraires et des représentations des expériences féminines chez Assia Djebar et Virginia Woolf

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Introduction

The bridge between literature and feminist theory offers a profound perspective on how narratives construct and reflect women's experiences. Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf are two major figures of 20th-century literature who transcend conventional gender stories with their innovative narrative strategies. Despite significant differences in cultures and historical contexts, both of them have significantly contributed to the discourse on gender and identity within their respective cultures.

Assia Djebar, an Algerian writer and filmmaker, deconstructs postcolonial narratives to give voice to the silent stories of Algerian women's experiences (Murray, 2008; Wolf, 2010). Her works, such as *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, envision the complex interplay of history, memory, and gender under postcolonial conditions. Virginia Woolf, an English modernist writer, has been acclaimed for her similar engagement with women's inner lives, the social expectations surrounding them, and how patriarchal structures interfere (Briggs, 2006; Ratcliffe, 2016). Her two best-known works, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, reflect on feminine subjectivity and social roles.

The problem of this study lies in the persistent marginalization of women's voices in both literary and historical narratives. Djebar and Woolf use distinct narrative techniques to address and resist these oppressive discourses. This raises an essential question: In what ways do Djebar and Woolf present female narratives differently, and to what extent do their differing ways of depicting women's lives speak not only about specific women in specific cultures but also about the broader possibilities for subordination and/or resistance across various cultures?

This paper aims to bridge the gap in the existing literature exploring their works (Riquelme, 2013; Winston, 2014) by providing an extensive comparative analysis of the literary aspects of Djebar and Woolf, focusing on major parameters such as history, gender, language, and feminine subjectivity.

The paper is structured as follows: first, an analysis of the contextual and cultural settings of Djebar's and Woolf's writings, how they positioned themselves, and how they used form to understand the context in which they wrote. This will be followed by a critical evaluation of how these techniques are used as tools to counter oppressive gender discourses. The final section discusses how their work complicates the category of women's writing within the frameworks of feminist and postcolonial literary criticism and demonstrates that, across cultures, women face similar issues.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory sheds light on how stories affect and are impacted by women's lives (Hemmings, 2011). Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf were influential figures in 20th-century literature who defied traditional gender narratives through their creative narrative strategies (Green, 2019; Gada & Aini, 2020). Although each came from different cultural and historical backgrounds, they made substantial contributions to the discussion of gender and identity, making their works suitable for comparative analysis. This study aims to examine how Djebar and Woolf identified gender, identity challenges, and the marginalization of female voices in their selected works.

The works of Simone de Beauvoir (1970) and Judith Butler emphasize the importance of investigating how literature reflects and influences gender norms, making them relevant critical references for this study. Woolf's selected works often grapple with the social difficulties women of her time faced, as they endeavor to define their unique and autonomous identities against the restrictions of a male-dominated society (Hiddleston, 2006). Djebar's writings, by contrast, intersect themes of gender, colonialism, and national identity, reflecting the oppression, resistance, and struggles encountered by Algerian women in postcolonial Algeria (Nkealah, 2008). Djebar's depiction of gender is framed through the distinct mechanisms of colonial and postcolonial female oppression, offering alternative narratives to historical accounts.

Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for understanding the historical and cultural backgrounds of literature (Gandhi, 2018), as seen in

Djebar's selected works. Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's writings are relevant examples of how literature explores colonial histories, oppression, and power relations. Djebar reconstructs the identity of Algerian women, whose images were erased by colonization, through narratives of historical and personal colonization, demonstrating the legacy of oppression and tyranny that women experienced.

Psychoanalytic theory, developed by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, provides a foundation for understanding how feminine subjectivity is portrayed in literature (Carusi, 2020; Rabaté, 2001), such as in Woolf's writings. Woolf often delves into the psychological depths of her characters by using the stream-of-consciousness technique (Goldman, 2006; Lackey & Avery, 2018) to explore themes of identity, awareness, and the subconscious. Freud's concept of the unconscious (Akhtar & O'Neil, 2018) and Lacan's mirror stage theory (Li & Zhou, 2021; Brenner, 2021) are applicable to analyze Woolf's characters' inner conflicts and their strategies for asserting their sense of self. Woolf's juxtaposition of the stream of consciousness with disjointed and tumultuous inner phases reflects the complexities of the human psychological sphere (Lackey & Avery, 2018). Thus, a psychoanalytic approach to Woolf's work provides valuable insights into how literature portrays the psychological issues of everyday characters.

This study presents a comprehensive model for analyzing Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf's literary strategies. It integrates feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic theories to examine how each author represents women's experiences and challenges within male-dominated narratives and complex cultural and historical contexts. As a result, this paper underscores the importance of their contributions to feminist and postcolonial literature.

1.2. Previous Studies

This section presents the existing literature that explores comparative studies of Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf from different perspectives, highlighting their contributions to feminist and postcolonial literary studies.

Dalgarno (2011) studied how translated versions of Djebar's works preserve the authenticity of her style, themes, language, and culture. Dalgarno argued that Djebar and her translator use translation as both a linguistic tool and a form of cultural and historical resistance to maintain an ethical stance against assimilation. This perspective sheds light on how Djebar negotiates oppressive regimes through her narrative choices.

Marcus (2006) highlighted the symbiotic relationship between Woolf's writing and feminist theory, arguing that her exploration of gender identities

and female concerns, along with her narrative techniques and stream-of-consciousness approach (Goldman, 2006; Lackey & Avery, 2018), made significant contributions to feminist theory (Hiddleston, 2015), particularly in the second half of the 20th century.

Geesey (2008) and Abdellaoui (2022) examined Djébar's works not merely as explorations of female gender identities, but as depictions of Algerian history and collective memory through women's stories. Silmi (2023) argued that Djébar's works focus more on politics, history, and colonization than on equity between genders. Donadey (2007) investigated how Djébar's narratives reclaim and rearticulate the suppressed voices of Algerian women, creating a counter-discourse to the colonial erasure of their image by portraying their strength and resistance tactics (Ringrose, 2006).

Riquelme (2013) suggested that both authors resist conventional narrative models to depict fragmented realities and interior consciousness. Winston (2014) emphasized the role of modernist techniques in enabling them to transcend their characters' consciousness, offering an artistic platform for feminist and psychoanalytic criticism.

These studies examine how Djébar and Woolf critique their societies' cultural backgrounds through gender, history, and language. Their often postmodern approaches oppose dominant discourses of their time and propose different possibilities for women's representations in varied cultural and historical contexts. This body of work forms a solid foundation for further comparative analyses, complementing the existing corpus of feminist and postcolonial literary analysis.

2. Methodology

Through a comparative analysis approach, this study examines the narrative techniques in selected passages, exploring female experiences in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, as well as Assia Djébar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. It incorporates feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive examination of how these authors challenge dominant gender narratives.

2.1. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Approach

This study draws its theoretical framework from foundational feminist works by Simone de Beauvoir (1970) and Judith Butler, examining how Woolf and Djébar address gender identity and the marginalization of women's voices. Woolf's character portrayals often reflect personal experiences of societal constraints, aligning with feminist critiques of women's independence.

Djebar's novels, meanwhile, emphasize the intersection of colonialism, gender, and national identity, highlighting women's challenges in postcolonial contexts.

Second, the study uses Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's postcolonial theory to analyze Djebar's works. This approach examines how Djebar's novels aim to restore the erased histories of Algerian women, emphasizing the enduring legacies of colonialism in contemporary gender dynamics. Djebar's use of historical and personal narratives illustrates how her literary strategies challenge both colonial and patriarchal oppression.

Additionally, the study employs Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories to explore Woolf's portrayal of feminine subjectivity. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique is analyzed to uncover the psychological dimensions of her characters, particularly related to themes of identity, awareness, and the subconscious.

2.2. Textual and Contextual Analysis

This research adopts textual and contextual analysis methods. The textual analysis focuses on pre-defined themes and motifs, while the contextual analysis examines narrative structures, styles, and character portrayals. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique and Djebar's fragmented narratives are central to this study, which explores how these modernist strategies depict female consciousness and challenge hegemonic discourses.

The historical, social, and cultural settings of both authors are considered in order to understand their literary background. Woolf's works are situated in interwar Britain, while Djebar's writings are set in postcolonial Algeria. Analyzing these settings helps to reveal how these environments shaped the selected texts. This approach provides a clearer understanding of how context and literary method influence Woolf's and Djebar's portrayals of women's lives.

By integrating text and context analysis, this study reveals the relationship between the authors' conceptual and discursive practices and their cultural and historical contexts. Woolf and Djebar's literary contributions are thus positioned as reflections of the societal priorities that shaped them as writers.

2.3. Comparative Analysis

In the comparative analysis, several elements are examined to understand how Virginia Woolf and Assia Djebar expressed women's identity and resistance through their narrative strategies.

Firstly, the study compares Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique with Djebar's fragmented narrative structure. These strategies are crucial for depicting the multilayered nature of women's subjectivity. Woolf's stream-of-consciousness offers insight into the continuous flow of her characters' thoughts and feelings. Djebar's fragmented structure, by contrast, captures the heterogeneous and pluralized postcolonial experience, reflecting the shattered and reconstructed female subject position in a postcolonial world. This analysis reveals how each author's stylistic choices contribute to anti-patriarchal and anti-colonial sentiments.

Moreover, gender and identity are central themes in both authors' works. Woolf transcends gender stereotypes by depicting not only women's inner struggles but also the societal pressures they faced. Similarly, Djebar links colonialism and gender, portraying Algerian women's resistance to both colonialism and patriarchy (Geesey, 2008). The analysis shows how, despite their different cultural and historical backgrounds, both authors rework and subvert oppressive gender narratives.

Characterization and subjectivity remain important in this comparative analysis, which explores how narrative techniques and thematic developments reflect the evolution of female characters in both Woolf's and Djebar's texts. In Woolf's novels, characters struggle between societal expectations and personal desires, reflecting tensions between conformity and rebellion. In contrast, Djebar's characters embody the repressed collective memory of Algerian women, confronting identity issues in a postcolonial society marked by colonial and patriarchal remnants. Through this lens, the study highlights how both authors reveal the power struggles faced by women.

Consequently, this comparative study aims to uncover the literary strategies Woolf and Djebar use to represent women's stories and challenge dominant gender and colonial discourses, contributing to feminist and postcolonial studies.

2.4 Data Collection

This research involved systematically collecting data from primary and secondary sources for the analysis of Virginia Woolf's and Assia Djebar's works. The primary sources are Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, along with Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. These texts were analyzed to explore the authors' depictions of women's lives and resistance to oppressive discourses, focusing on themes, narrative strategies, and characterizations.

Additionally, secondary sources, including academic research, books, and essays critically evaluating Woolf's and Djebbar's legacies, were consulted. The works of feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir (1970) and Judith Butler were essential for understanding gender and women's oppression. Postcolonial theories by Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provided insights into Djebbar's treatment of colonialism and gender. Finally, Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic theories helped to deconstruct Woolf's representation of feminine subjectivity and psychological depth.

3. Findings and Analytical Discussion

3.1. Narrative Techniques and Feminine Subjectivity

3.1.1. Virginia Woolf: Stream-of-Consciousness

Virginia Woolf is known for employing the stream-of-consciousness technique, prioritizing the inner monologues of her characters in pivotal scenes (Goldman, 2006). This technique serves as a literary tool for portraying the social and psychological dilemmas women experience (Liu, 2021). For example, Clarissa's internal monologue in *Mrs. Dalloway* mirrors her concerns about identity, societal expectations, and personal desires. This technique bridges the innermost thoughts, emotions, and memories of characters with the reader, who becomes deeply curious to explore the psychological landscape of these characters (Weiss, 2023). An excerpt from *Mrs. Dalloway* reads:

“She felt very young; at the same time, she was unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time, she was outside, looking on.” (Pg. 8).

This passage captures the conflicting nature of female consciousness, especially regarding age and femininity (Lackey & Avery, 2018). The expression of feeling both “very young” and “unspeakably aged” reflects the intrinsic contradiction Clarissa faces, torn between her vigorous past and her constrained present. Woolf's skill lies in managing these converging states of mind, reflecting the fluidity of human consciousness, particularly in the context of female experiences.

Another excerpt from *To the Lighthouse* highlights Mrs. Ramsay's internal dialogues and monologues, displaying Woolf's multifaceted perspective on the fluidity of time in human experience. Woolf writes:

“She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of, to think; well, not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of

solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.” (p. 62).

This excerpt personifies a woman’s solitude and comfort amid her roles as a wife and mother, as Carusi (2020) observed. The metaphor of “expansive, glittering, vocal” versus “a wedge-shaped core of darkness” illustrates the profound tension between public roles and the personal self, often hidden from others, which forms the core of female identity.

In addition, Mrs. Ramsay’s contemplation of time and mortality is encapsulated in the statement: “Life stand still here,” she said, knowing her words lay behind a veil, as if meant to be heard by herself alone (p. 126). Woolf explores the fleeting nature of existence and the deep, often unspoken thoughts women hold (Brenner, 2021). Mrs. Ramsay’s need for moments of peace and solitude allows her to rearticulate her own value within her family (Li & Zhou, 2021).

These excerpts show how Woolf’s stream-of-consciousness technique not only reflects women’s hidden desires but critically examines the societal pressures they face, shaping their complex personalities (Goldman, 2006). Woolf’s ability to convey the intricacies of feminine selfhood through fragmented, introspective narratives invites readers to delve into the deep psychological backdrop of identity in her texts.

3.1.2. Assia Djebar : Fragmented Narratives

In contrast to Woolf’s techniques, Djebar’s depiction of female identity employs fragmented storytelling to highlight the disconnected realities of Algerian women’s postcolonial experiences (Donadey, 2007). In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, multiple voices and perspectives of various characters aim to reclaim Algerian women’s silenced histories. Drawing on Said’s (1978) and Spivak’s (2023) theories, this fragmentation in Djebar’s texts highlights the negative impact of French colonialism and the continuous fight for Algeria’s self-determination. Djebar writes, “These women, shut away in their apartments, their dreams, their silences, reassemble their fragmented selves through stories, through memory.” (p. 45). This passage reflects the long struggle for freedom, where female resilience played an essential role against colonial oppression. Djebar, according to Ringrose (2006), narrates stories of resistance and resilience, with heroines like Cherifa and Leila representing typical Algerian women with their simplicity, modesty, and authenticity (p. 45–47).

Moreover, the juxtaposition of historical records and personal stories in *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* creates a mosaic of collective memory,

challenging the conservative image of Algerian women (Abdellaoui, 2022). Djébar personifies an anonymous woman, symbolizing all Algerian women who participated in the resistance against French colonialism, blending personal stories with historical events (p. 72–75). Djébar’s fragmented narrative technique reflects how personal and collective memories reinforce an understanding of the broader historical context.

Djébar’s use of fragmented narratives serves as a powerful tool to resist and reframe oppressive gender discourses, illustrating the complex interplay between individual and collective identity (Geesey, 2008). In *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*, Djébar writes: “They reassemble their fragmented selves through stories, through memory” (p. 99). This line highlights the role of storytelling in reclaiming agency, allowing women to piece together their identities in a postcolonial context.

Another example from *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* reiterates the broader implications of the Algerian struggle for independence through stories of personal sacrifice and bravery. Djébar discusses female resistance, writing: “Her story, like many others, is a fragment of our national tapestry, each piece a testament to the enduring spirit of our women” (p. 143). This passage emphasizes the role of women’s stories in contributing to a larger historical narrative and collective memory.

3.2. Exploration of Gender

3.2.1. Woolf’s Exploration of Gender Roles

Although Woolf’s novels were written in the early 20th century, British readers were still conservative about topics such as female sexual desire in literature (Goldman, 2006). Clarissa’s repressed desires in *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplify the internal conflict women face when conforming to societal norms. As Lackey & Avery (2018) observed, Clarissa’s dissatisfaction with being confined to her role as a wife and mother highlights the broader issue of female identity. Woolf writes: “But often now this body she wore ... this body, with all its potential, was naught, nothing at all” (p. 30). This passage reflects Clarissa’s existential dissatisfaction with societal expectations that reduce her body to a mere social tool.

Similarly, Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* grapples with societal pressures as she pursues her painting. Woolf writes: “She could see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked; it was when she took her brush in her hand that the whole thing changed” (p. 52).

This passage embodies Beauvoir’s (1970) feminist theory, illustrating Lily’s internal conflict between her artistic ambitions and the social limitations

placed on her. Eventually, Lily declares: “She would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; she was an independent little creature, and they would laugh at her” (p. 158). Her rejection of marriage and traditional roles makes her an independent and self-determined character.

Towards the end of the novel, Lily’s completion of her painting symbolizes her triumph over societal constraints: “With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished” (p. 209). This act of drawing “a line there, in the centre” represents her assertion of identity and control over her creativity.

3.2.2. Djebar’s Intersection of Gender and Colonialism

In Djebar’s works, gender is intertwined with the struggle for independence and the unique conflicts Algerian women face in postcolonial contexts (Geesey, 2008; Donadey, 2007). Several scenes in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* illustrate the dual oppression of patriarchy and colonialism. Djebar emphasizes the importance of introspective narration, allowing Algerian women to reclaim their agency and reshape their identities through storytelling.

In *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, Djebar writes: “I transcribe their cries, their laments; they rise like smoke, like incense, in the perfumed air of history” (p. 120). This metaphor personifies Algerian women’s voices as essential elements of history, challenging the dominant colonial narrative. Lila, a character in *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* exemplifies the struggle for both national and personal liberation. Djebar writes: “Her voice, a thread in the tapestry of resistance, wove through the dense fabric of history, connecting her personal liberation to the collective struggle for freedom” (p. 143). This imagery underscores the interconnectedness of gender and national identity in Djebar’s works.

3.3 Characterization and Resistance

3.3.1 Woolf’s Characters: Internal Struggles and Societal Pressures

Internal struggles and external societal pressures are the main concerns of Woolf’s female characters (Abel, 2016). For instance, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Clarissa’s* reflection on her current life reveals a profound sense of alienation, yearning for a more authentic existence. The dual struggle to reconcile her split public and private entities symbolizes the broader tensions between personal identity and societal expectations. For instance, in the same work, Woolf writes:

“She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown ... this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.” (p. 11).

Clarissa’s subsumption under the role of Mrs. Richard Dalloway creates a sense of invisibility and loss of identity. The use of “unseen; unknown” reveals a negative connotation emphasizing her alienation and reawakening the conflict between her true self and the societal role imposed upon her. This internal conflict, as Abel (2016) summarizes, is a continual theme, echoing the broader societal pressures women face to conform to prescribed roles.

In the same sense, sexual male and female stereotypes are evident in the character of Lily Briscoe from *To the Lighthouse*. As an unmarried female artist, Lily goes against the norms and has to struggle with the impact of social expectations. She desires to bring her painting to its final state despite experiencing prohibitions both within her community and the physical barriers that reflect women’s struggle for liberty and creative freedom. Woolf writes: “She was not good enough for that, not clever enough for that, not meant for that” (p. 93). In this passage, the author captures the essence of the “second-class status” phenomenon, which hinders Lily with self-doubt. However, her determination to continue with art reveals her eagerness to resist societal pressures. Lily’s development from a young girl to a professional artist contributes to creating a strong feminist message about women’s right to independence and creative autonomy.

Towards the end of the novel, Lily achieves a moment of artistic lucidity: “With a sudden sharpness, as if the clay had suddenly frowned from the darkness of the kiln, she drew a line: there; she closed it: it was finished” (p. 209). This moment symbolizes her triumph over the societal norms imposed on her by family and friends, as well as over her own self-doubt. In response to Marcus’s (2006) study, the above extracts show that completing her painting symbolizes victory over oneself and the pursuit of freedom and liberation of women.

Woolf’s depiction of the interiority and social contexts of her characters gives a critical view of gender stereotyping. Self-division and the despair that arises from it illustrate the position of women in society. The reader also sees Lily Briscoe’s struggle to become an artist, pointing to female emancipation and rebellion. The role of female characters in this novel aligns with Bowlby’s (2016) views that suggest Woolf’s major contribution to feminist literary studies symbolizes the voices of female characters and emphasizes the necessity of resisting oppressive male-dominated discourse.

3.3.2 Djebar's Characters: Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness

Opposing Abedellaoui (2022), the following excerpts indicate that Djebar's characters are tangible figures of Algerian female identity, which is deeply engraved in the memorial and historical experience of the country. The female characters of *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* act as rebellious figures within postcolonial society, resisting the legacy of patriarchy that came with colonialism's end. Due to the issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, the narrative is fragmented and tangled, much like the identity of postcolonial women. Djebar provides a literary counterhegemonic perspective on these women's lives and asserts the discursive force of reclaiming female subjectivity. For instance, she writes:

“These women, shut away in their apartments, their dreams, their silences, they reassemble their fragmented selves through stories, through memory”. (p. 99).

This passage reflects how women integrate and maintain their fragmented identities by using storytelling to stitch together their experiences, gaining agency in postcolonial Algeria.

In another example, Djebar describes the collective experience of women: “In this silence, we construct our words the way a fabric is made, each stitch a part of our shared history”. (p. 112). Here, Djebar emphasizes the collective approach to storytelling, comparing it to the creation of a carpet. Each woman's narrative forms a strand in the larger narrative of Algerian women, reinforcing the significance of interconnected stories.

Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade exemplifies the personal within the historical, similar to the findings of Silmi (2023). The character of Isma represents the loss of identity in the context of colonialism. Djebar writes: “Isma's voice, trembling yet resolute, echoed through the corridors of history, a testament to her struggle and resilience” (p. 84). This shows Isma's determination to strike a blow for her race despite the oppressive colonial environment. Her “trembling yet resolute” voice portrays the nature of her rebelliousness. Lila, another character, continuously struggles for both national and personal liberation. She writes: “Lila's defiance was not just against the colonial power, but against the layers of patriarchal control that sought to silence her. In reclaiming her voice, she reclaimed her place in history” (p. 187). Lila embodies rebellion against both colonialism and patriarchy (Dalgarno, 2011). After enduring rape, Lila's reclamation of her voice symbolizes the reclamation of her life, body, and right to narrate her history.

Another moment that portrays women in resistance is: “The women, with their silent courage, became the invisible threads in the fabric of revolution” (p. 132). This imagery suggests that although the female contribution to the revolution may be invisible, it is nonetheless crucial to the process of emancipation.

Djebar’s depiction of these characters highlights the multifaceted nature of women’s resistance, illustrating the broader implications of their struggles within the postcolonial context, as Dalgarno (2011) assumed. By foregrounding the voices and experiences of Algerian women, she challenges dominant historical narratives and emphasizes the importance of female agency in postcolonial contexts. Her works contribute significantly to feminist and postcolonial literary scholarship, enriching our understanding of the enduring impact of colonial legacies on gender dynamics.

3.4 Broader Implications for Feminist and Postcolonial Studies

The comparison of the works of these authors includes specific aspects of literary techniques to discuss feminism and postcolonial theories. Similar to Winston’s findings (2014), this paper concludes that, despite similarities, there are significant distinctions between the two authors. Woolf and Djebar use innovative methods to prioritize gender voices in global discourses, suggesting new forms of reading and writing for women from various cultural and historical backgrounds.

This is particularly evident in Woolf’s stream-of-consciousness technique (Goldman, 2006) and Djebar’s fragmented narratives, as both methods represent subjectivity and resistance in their most complex forms for female characters (Silmi, 2023). The characters of Clarissa Dalloway and Lily Briscoe in Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Light House*, exhibit conflicts between the self and society, focusing on the struggle between the desire for individuality and conformity to societal norms. By enhancing the characters’ psychological perspectives, Woolf reveals the pressures of social contexts and explores gender inequalities as societal challenges.

Similarly, Djebar’s characters in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* navigate their subject positions within the colonial and patriarchal context. By using short and interrupted narrative digressions to highlight the discontinuities in postcolonial women’s subjectivity, Djebar represents the strength of Algerian women in their efforts to reclaim their right to narrate history. Through characters like Isma and Lila, she illustrates how women’s agency is a complex phenomenon, intertwined with both the liberation struggle of the nation and personal self-assertion.

Woolf and Djebar also emphasize women's agency in their works, where the characters are active participants in the plot. Woolf's portrayal of Clarissa's and Lily's journeys towards self-discovery and freedom symbolizes key principles of feminism, including liberation from the constraints of male authority. By completing a painting that serves as both an artistic and personal declaration, Lily embodies the search for self-fulfillment in restrictive communities.

By exploring the role of storytelling in Djebar's novels, it will be demonstrated how Algerian women reconstruct their shattered self-definitions and assert themselves in a postcolonial world. Memory and historical awareness in her characters underscore the collective nature of their struggle. An overarching sense of the oral history of colonial and patriarchal domination clarifies how the individual heroism of female characters contributes to the collective struggle.

In more detail, both Woolf and Djebar address themes of gender, identity, and social oppression as central concerns for women, regardless of geographical context. Similarly to Riquelme's (2013) findings, the features of their narrative techniques demonstrate how diverse female voices are crucial for enriching literary discourse. By enriching the legacy of female writing, Woolf and Djebar remain significant in the fields of postcolonialism and feminism, presenting the voices of women from the Global South as active subjects striving for change.

Woolf's focus on individual consciousness, coupled with her use of the stream-of-consciousness technique within the context of social oppression, provides deep insights into human experience and identity. Conversely, Djebar uses fragmented narratives to depict the postcolonial female subject within the context of Algerian women's fight against various forms of oppression, including colonialism and patriarchy.

As a result of their works, Woolf and Djebar remain relevant sources that provide contemporary audiences with tools to discuss gender, identity, and resistance. These works provide evidence of the continued relevance of their contributions to modern literature, focusing on issues specifically related to women's lives and the impact of colonial forces on various cultures. Thus, Woolf and Djebar's novels and their multiple appeals to readers demonstrate that literature can effectively respond to and question dominant patriarchal gender narratives, contributing to a more equitable reconsideration of women's rights and agency.

Conclusion

A comparative feminist analysis of the works of Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf aims to understand the complex and diverse means by which women's experiences and their fight against patriarchy are depicted, along with the literary techniques that enable such representations. To a significant extent, the themes and techniques of both authors correlate to provide deep contemplation of the feminine essence and the key virtues of the feminine spirit.

Virginia Woolf, in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, employs the stream-of-consciousness technique, which shows male and female characters' subconscious by slicing their minds. She depicts restraint in the lives of the women of early twentieth-century England. Woolf works with not only anti-realistic narrative techniques but also complicates the female characters' psychological states and is thus rightly regarded as one of the founding figures of feminist novels.

Conversely, Assia Djebar, through *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, intertwines history and literature, autobiography and both micro and macro history, to denounce the sufferance of Algerian women under colonial and postcolonial repression. By using multilingualism and fragmented narrative, Djebar brings back and glorifies the excluded stories of Algerian women, challenging the colonial discourse that misrepresents them.

This work underlines the importance of cross-cultural analysis of women's literature from a specifically feminist perspective. By comparing Woolf's and Djebar's works, this study not only draws attention to the significant and similar subjects of gender oppression and female rebellion but also uses the cultural specificity of the two authors to stress the significance of cultural contexts as conditions influencing literary creativity.

In addition, the analysis of Woolf's and Djebar's works helps to contribute new data to the ongoing discussion in the context of "Feminist Narratology" concerning the creation and representation of feminine subjectivity. Each writer uses various literary devices to construct the sphere of representation for women.

Hence, subsequent research may provide a more specific analysis of the texts regarding race, class, and sexual practices in order to broaden the understanding of diverse aspects of female personality and resistance. Moreover, conducting comparative analyses of other postcolonial and

modernist women writers could further develop this line of research, opening up new layers of modern feminist reading practices and enhancing our world's literary collection.

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Abstract

This article presents an interdisciplinary feminist analysis of the literary legacies of Assia Djebar and Virginia Woolf, two seminal 20th-century authors renowned for challenging gender stereotypes through innovative narrative techniques. Despite their differing cultural and historical backgrounds, Djebar and Woolf both subvert dominant gender narratives, offering alternative portrayals of women's experiences. This study compares Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* with Djebar's *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* and *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. It aims to elucidate their unique narrative strategies in addressing themes of history, gender, and language. The article

examines their approaches to representing feminine subjectivity, countering oppressive discourses, and advocating for gender identity. Through an integrated analysis, this study enhances our understanding of the complexities in their portrayals of women's lives and identities, contributing to feminist and postcolonial literary scholarship by highlighting the global challenges faced by women across different cultural and historical contexts.

Keywords

Feminist Analysis, Postcolonial Narratives, Gender Identity, Psychoanalytic Theory, Modernist Literature

Résumé

Cet article propose une analyse féministe interdisciplinaire des héritages littéraires d'Assia Djebar et de Virginia Woolf, deux auteurs majeurs du XXe siècle reconnues pour leur remise en question des stéréotypes de genre par le biais de techniques narratives innovantes. Malgré leurs contextes culturels et historiques distincts, Djebar et Woolf subvertissent les récits de genre dominants, offrant des représentations alternatives des expériences féminines. Cette étude compare Mrs. Dalloway et To the Lighthouse de Woolf avec Women of Algiers in Their Apartment et Fantasia : An Algerian Cavalcade de Djebar. Elle vise à éclairer leurs stratégies narratives uniques pour aborder les thèmes de l'histoire, du genre et du langage. L'article examine leurs approches pour représenter la subjectivité féminine, contrer les discours oppressifs et défendre l'identité de genre. Grâce à une analyse intégrée, cette étude enrichit notre compréhension des complexités dans leurs représentations des vies et identités féminines, contribuant ainsi à la recherche littéraire féministe et postcoloniale en mettant en lumière les défis mondiaux auxquels sont confrontées les femmes dans différents contextes culturels et historiques.

Mots-clés

Analyse féministe, récits postcoloniaux, identité de genre, théorie psychanalytique, littérature moderniste

مستخلص

يقدم هذا المقال تحليلاً نسوياً متعدد التخصصات للإرث الأدبي لكل من عاصية جبار وفيرجينيا وولف، وهما كاتبتان بارزتان في القرن العشرين. اشتهرتا بتحدي الصور النمطية للجنس من خلال تقنيات سردية مبتكرة. على الرغم من خلفياتهما الثقافية والتاريخية المختلفة، فإن جبار وولف كلاهما يقلبان السرديات الجندرية السائدة، ويقدمان تمثيلات بديلة لتجارب النساء. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى مقارنة روايتي وولف Mrs. Dalloway وTo the Lighthouse مع Wo-men of Algiers in Their Apartment وFantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade لجبار. وتستهدف توضيح استراتيجياتهما السردية الفريدة في تناول موضوعات التاريخ والجنس واللغة. يفحص

المقال نهجهم في تمثيل الذاتية الأنثوية، ومواجهة الخطابات القمعية، والدفاع عن هوية الجنس. من خلال تحليل متكامل، تعزز هذه الدراسة فهمنا للتعقيدات في تمثيلهما لحياة وهويات النساء، مما يساهم في البحث الأدبي النسوي وما بعد الاستعماري من خلال تسليط الضوء على التحديات العالمية التي تواجهها النساء في سياقات ثقافية وتاريخية مختلفة.

كلمات مفتاحية

التحليل النسوي، الروايات ما بعد الاستعمارية، هوية الجنس، النظرية النفسية التحليلية، الأدب الحدائ