

Multilayered Colonialism of Women Under Patriarchy: Liberation Achieved Successfully in Djebbar's Children of the New World

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Abstract

This study discusses and analyzes different forms of gender inequality that prevail in a patriarchal society under occupation. The researchers conduct a feminist analysis of Assia Djebbar's "Children of the New World." The main female characters in the novel experience multilayered colonialism as they are colonized women suffering under the strict rules of their patriarchal society on one hand, and colonized citizens enduring the harsh conditions of the French occupation on the other. These women resort to various coping mechanisms for survival as a means of decolonization and self-liberation, such as arming themselves with education and forming solidarity among themselves and with men. They deconstruct and subvert the stereotypical image of weak and passive women living in a patriarchal society, providing a new understanding of strong-willed and supportive women who play a significant role in liberating themselves and their country.

Key words: Patriarchy, Colonialism, Deconstruction, Decolonization, Liberation.

1. Introduction

Djebbar (2005) examines and discusses the situation of women living in patriarchal societies and suffering from different pressures in their surroundings such as living under the French occupation (1954–1962). Accordingly, those pressures work as a colonizer that deprives women from their rights and dissuade them from achieving what they aspire in life. The colonizer here is double bind since it refers to those who colonize women and those who colonize nations. Hence, Algerian women experience multilayered Colonialism under the patriarchal system they live in. For example, Amna is doubly colonized, for she is oppressed and suppressed at the hands of her husband and her patriarchal culture besides her living under the French colonization. There are also the conformists Cherifa and Lila who have never known the streets of their town just like most of their fellow women. However, the narrator chronicles the key role Algerian women play in supporting men to liberate their country.

Children of the New World foregrounds education and financial independence as effective means of self-liberation. Djebbar (2005) proves that knowledgeable women use their knowledge to benefit their people and their country. Salima, Suzanne, and Rachid who challenges the patriarch

of his family and insists that his daughter continues her studies and grows up to be a liberated woman are some examples of those who value education and use it to benefit their country. We examine in this article the patriotic deeds of women like Salima and Hasiba and to what extent they are available to serve their country. Those liberated women are helpful and beneficial to their society; they unite with men to improve their community and liberate it from the invading forces. The novel highlights women's essential role in attaining liberty whether on the national level or on the domestic level. As example, on the domestic level, Cherifa liberates herself from unwanted marriage by various sorts of rebellion against her husband and then she contrives a second marriage with a man whom she loves and respects.

After gaining her liberation, Cherifa becomes more vigilant and aware of her country's situation, and her national sense intensifies so much that she encourages and helps her second husband in his struggle to liberate their country. Lila grows up to be a nonconformist woman who stands up to the strict regulations of patriarchy. Lila's mentality has been formed by her father's teachings and beliefs. Lila's father has always challenged the patriarchal culture giving his wife and daughter all their rights to assert their individuality and insisting that his daughter should complete her studies. Solidarity is also among the cornerstones that lead to the eventual defeat of the colonizer, and it is embodied in the character of Amna. Motivated by her love to her country and to her friend, Amna supports her neighbors Cherifa and her husband in their resistance activities and hides valuable information when interrogated about them. Solidarity is also exemplified in the collaboration between other characters in the novel like Suzanne and her friends.

In fact, this study will analyze the patriarchal systems using Derrida's (1982) deconstruction theory that works on binary oppositions in hierarchical structure which exists in the patriarchal system male/female and the colonial scheme. As for Derrida (1982) in this "violent hierarchy" one term governs the other and has the upper hand. To deconstruct this binary opposition, the hierarchy must be overturned in addition to "bringing low what was high." This can only be achieved when women decolonize and liberate themselves from the patriarchal grip and collaborate with men to defy the foreign colonizer from their country. The patriarchal hierarchy can also be overturned by highlighting the immense importance of women and their essential role in supporting and cooperating with men to achieve the well-being of their families and country as well.

McQuillan (2002) who is influenced by Derrida (1982) explains that deconstruction aims at shedding light on the binary thinking which is built upon a faulty hierarchy in which one concept is privileged over another marginalized one, such as male/female, and West/East. To apply the deconstructive method on a binary opposition, the importance of the marginalized subject should be asserted (6). Thus, women's importance and their crucial roles in society should be stressed so that they become able to break free from the confines of the limited roles assigned to them in society by colonization and patriarchal system. Further, stressing women's significant value as good family members and good citizens will help women to assume powerful positions and have equal opportunities as their male counterparts.

In this article, we draw a comparison between the tyrannically oppressive patriarch and the colonizer who usurps and abuses a land and its people. In this vein, we draw on Vergès' A Decolonial Feminism who points out that "practices of the colonial civilizing mission are still used to justify and legitimize the politics of theft" (13). In the same way, the oppressed women resemble the colonized in that they are deprived of their freedom and of living a life of their choice, and the oppression acted upon them has a long-lasting influence that negatively affects the rest of their

lives. Furthermore, feminism and postcolonialism have another similarity in that the stronger party uses a strategy of marginalizing and controlling the weaker party. In fact, this is the focus of Edward Said who explains that the literary works of the Western orientalist have constructed images and impressions of Asia from figments of their imagination. This representation is based on a binary opposition in which the East and the West contradict each other. The orientalist have represented the East as retarded, marginalized, irrational, childish and uncivilized. Namely, the West has dehumanized the East and created problems needed solutions while at the same time craving their lands (Said, 1978).

Similarly, the patriarchal system has the same conviction about women viewing and depicting them as less than their male counterparts. From a similar perspective, De Beauvoir (2016) explains that women are “defined through notions created by the male consciousness” (107). These beliefs create a binary opposition; women are represented negatively (the East), and men are represented positively (the West). Hence, such representations facilitate the rule of the strong over the weak. In any piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group based on their shared persecution the thing that binds women together (Mohanty, 1988). In this case, women are defined systematically as the victims of male control. Although the potential of male violence against women reflects their social position, defining women as archetypal victims molds them as objects and men as subjects and all societies as opposition between the powerless (women) and the powerful (men) groups of people (Mohanty, 1988).

Mohanty (1988) extends that all women, regardless of their class and cultural differences, are seen as being similarly affected by patriarchal kinship system including Arab and Muslim women who can be negatively influenced by patriarchy irrespective of their roles as mothers, wives, and sisters.

In the same context, De Beauvoir (2016) states in her book, *The Second Sex*, that “[t][t] her term “female” is pejorative not because” of the nature of women itself but because it confines women in their sex. Nevertheless, women have an enormous potential to do and achieve far more than what the patriarchy expects from them. Women can assume as powerful and effective position in their societies as their men counterparts if they are given the opportunity to do this. As Shepherd (2015) puts it: women have the potential to fulfill a higher status in their respective societies; they are still becoming “what a woman is now in society is not what a woman can be” (176). Women are not “a fixed reality,” however they are becoming and constantly progressing; therefore, they must be compared with men according to their capacities and capabilities.

In her book *Feminism in Islam*, Badran (2011) examines in her analysis of feminism that people are inherently the same, and there is no one sex superior to another. By stipulating gender similarity, the feminists undermine patriarchal hierarchy, which is grounded on gender difference, to facilitate the way for women’s accession to equal social, political, and economic opportunities (78).

Notwithstanding, we personally believe that as time goes on, women have developed new and more powerful personalities, especially after the widespread acceptance of feminist concepts and ideas that furnished women’s minds with various forms and techniques that helped them to take part in decolonizing their countries from occupation and themselves from patriarchy (Shepherd, 2015). Decolonial feminism fights against all forms of oppression like racism, imperialism, and capitalism including sexism (Vergès, 2021). It rejects all those oppressive formulas because women have suffered a very bleak history: “Indigenous women during

colonization, enslaved women, Black women, women involved in the struggles for national liberation and the feminist subaltern internationalism of the 1950s–1970s, and racialized women who struggle daily even today” (Vergès, 2021). As Vergès puts it: Decolonial feminism “leads to de-patriarchal zing revolutionary struggles.” (Vergès, 2021).

Thus, as we argue in this paper, the female characters can decolonize themselves from the foreign colonial powers on the one hand and from the patriarchal confines on the other by subverting and deconstructing the colonial servitude. We mean by decolonizing women in this context the women whose situation resembles, to a great extent, the context of colonized people by foreign powers. Colonized women as well as colonized nation are deprived of their rights to control their lives and achieve what they desire in life.

Further, both are othered by their colonizers as De Beauvoir (2016) puts it, woman “is still always defined as Other” (197). Both are overpowered, and they lack the opportunity to speak up their minds. Because of women’s dependency on men, (De Beauvoir, 2016) argues, women “never dare to voice their claims: those who do are hardly heard” (161). Those women are subjugated by male members of their families such as their husbands who objectify them along with their children. Thus, we draw an analogous parallelism between such husbands and the colonizers who abduct a land and subordinate its people. Consequently, both live in a constant struggle to free themselves from the stifling restrictions imposed on them by the foreign powers in case of the colonized people or by patriarchal systems in case of the colonized women. Yet, those characters manage to defy the obstacles they face throughout the course of their lives armed with patience, resilience, steadfastness, determination, and courage.

The nation-based secular feminism has initially emerged in the form of social movements, which were connected to secular nationalist movements calling for independence from colonialism and fighting at the same time for women’s rights. Secular feminists ask for equality in the public domain while in the sphere of the family, they advocate the concept of “the complementarity of gender roles, not gender equality” which they accept as ordained by religion and nature (Badran, 2011). As such, in *Children of the New World*, we argue that the main female characters play a complementary and integrating role with their male counterparts to dismiss the French colonizers from their country, Algeria.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Sikirivwa (2015) states that feminism is a movement which fights to achieve more justice and equality in societies that consist of many forms of hierarchies. Feminism, he adds, seeks to eradicate all forms of sexist oppression (67). Feminist theorists apply deconstructive procedures to the dominant gender structures, and they show that male/female or masculine/feminine dichotomies are part of the male-dominated patriarchal social order. “Thus, to break up the binary opposition of male over female implies to open up all the other places that this binary scheme closes off,” writes Sikirivwa (67). In the same context, Sikirivwa expounds that deconstructing a text is to reticulate it rather than destroy it. It is examining the internal logic of the text searching “for hidden and alternative meanings.” Authors always mean more than what they indicate in their writings. Consequently, the text does not hold one single interpretation. Contrarily, a text always has gaps that make it open to forever changing explanations (63).

Amrane Minne & Clarke (2007) acknowledges that the most important “period in the Algerian war of decolonization” wherein the utmost aggression and brutality were practiced by the French colonizer against the Algerian citizens. Nonetheless, despite the inequality between the

powers involved in the battle, the less professionally trained “urban guerrilla” was able to thwart the expert army (340) especially that there were a solidarity and unity between all categories of the Algerian population; women and children have supported their men folks all the time at all costs until they wiped out the occupation from their land.

Cooke (2004) explores the ways in which Arab women intellectuals project “their voices as public intellectuals calling for justice and freedom” (xxviii). A certain fact is that women take part in postcolonial wars in a way that has never been so clear. Although women have supported their men counterparts in wars as nurses, camp followers, or crossdressing soldiers, they did not fight as women before. However, women’s positions have developed during anticolonial wars in Asia and Africa; women had assumed the positions of “guerrilla fighters, hijackers, and organizers of local resistance movements.”

Additionally, women have played active and effective roles in the Palestinian uprising (ibid). Many Kuwaiti women have been characterized by resilience and courage when they stayed at their homes, despite the imminent danger, to endure the Iraqi invasion while the men went out, in addition to their steadfast resistance to the invasion at the forefront.

Then, Cooke (2004) goes further to compare Kuwaiti women’s valor with that of Algerian’s during their war of independence between 1954 and 1962 in that both have smuggled arms and resistance documents. Kuwaiti and Algerian women completely veiled themselves, and this endowed them with a kind of invisibility and “enabled them to move quickly around the country more easily than men.”

Cooke (2004) also likens the “Lebanese, Palestinian, and Algerian women who stayed in their countries during their wars” to the Kuwaiti women; all of them have constructed a “humanist nationalism,” which can be considered as a form of combat that qualifies its combatants to have their human rights completely (16).

Mohanty (1988) explains in her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1988) that the veiling of women leads to universal sexual segregation and hence control of women. Similarly, numerous examples from different countries add up to this universal fact. For instance, Muslim women in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Egypt all wear a veil which indicates that the sexual control of women is a universal fact in those countries. However, Mohanty (1988) postulates that this is not necessarily true in all cases, for example, Iranian middle-class women decided to veil themselves during the 1979 revolution to express solidarity with the veiled working-class women. Veiling the Iranian women indicates either “oppositional and revolutionary gesture on the part of Iranian middle-class women or the coercive, institutional mandate.” As Mohanty (1988) puts it: “Women are seen as being affected positively or negatively by economic development policies, and this is the basis for cross-cultural comparison” (71).

2. Discussion and Analysis

In patriarchal societies, women experience very harsh conditions laid on them by the strict norms and traditions of their culture. In other words, the male members of their society colonize women. Djebbar (2005) acknowledges in her public lectures that under colonization, not only women are affected by patriarchy but also men. However, “women suffer more than men” because the culture being under attack tends to retreat to the old traditions of women oppression. The

misogynist aspect is one of the heinous consequences of colonization; many veiled and unveiled women have been murdered for violating Islamic regulations (Djebar, 2005).

In this vein, Djebar (2005) adds that “revolutionary principles” trump patriarchal conventions (220). Marriages in small towns should comply with the choice of the patriarch who presides over the family. Moreover, in such traditional societies, women are not allowed to leave their houses without male guardianship, and they are not allowed to take photos lest their photographs be seen by strangers. Nevertheless, under French colonization, Algerian women’s roles were indispensable in August 1956; they cared for the wounded and sometimes performed operations in the battlefield. The soldiers carried arms brought to them by women who had fought alongside their male counterparts. Despite the social norms and traditions of patriarchy, the male fighters were provided refuges by families, and “it was the women who received them” (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

Children of the New World is a vivid example that embodies the prominent role of Algerian women in supporting men throughout their journey of liberation despite living within the strict rules of patriarchy. The novel opens with a scene depicting the occupied Algeria wherein both men and women are suffering from colonization. The scene dramatizes the stifling waiting of the female members of the families after the men have gone for the battle. The patriarchal atmosphere pervades the scene with the mothers, each with her offspring, filled with apprehensive patience waiting for their men “at the back of their room, on the tile floor” for so long (Djebar, 2005). Those women, according to Spivak, are “doubly oppressed native women who, caught between the dominations of a native patriarchy and a foreign masculinist-imperialist ideology” (Parry, 1987). The novel shows that whereas the streets belong to the men, the traditional houses belong to the women as their private spaces where they “share a common area for cooking, washing, doing laundry” (Djebar, 2005). To put it simply, under colonization, women must abide by the patriarchal norms of their society as they experience poverty, and they Labor Day and night to serve their families doing the house chores and taking care of their children with primitive facilities available for them.

Minne expounds that women have taken part in the initial stages of resistance groups, and some of them were arrested at the beginning of 1955. They were also involved in street demonstrations afterwards (343). This is exemplified in Hasiba’s fierce desire to go up the mountain and be part of the resistance. Hasiba recollects her father, the railroad man in the capital, who was dismissed by the French after having an accident which resulted in the family’s poverty and the father’s death. Hasiba remembers her family’s fortitude under colonization; in deep despair, her mother was obliged to work as a housekeeper at rich peoples’ homes after her young son was arrested by the authorities. Hasiba has been taught by Youssef that “The revolution is not just leaving home and having faith, it’s also adversities, massacres” and death. Hasiba admits that the revolution is everyone’s battle against occupation, and occupation means France that deprives the Algerians their rights in their own country. Therefore, Hasiba is determined to take an effective part in decolonizing her country, and she asks a doctor who works in the resistance to teach her how to be a nurse (Djebar, 2005).

When the mountain is under fire, the overwhelmed women neglect the duties of their homes as their afraid children cling to their dresses. Under such circumstances, four or five families usually live in the same house: a room for each family. Even after the bombing quiets, women are still afraid of the rain of bombs’ fragments which have murdered an old woman before named Lla Aicha as she was crouching in the courtyard next to her room door (Djebar, 2005). The embittered

women often stay at their houses while their husbands go for work. However, this habit changes as the men stay at their houses when there is a sudden military clash between the Algerian and the French for fear they will be dragged “off by the army, which happens just about everywhere” (Djebar, 2005).

French colonizers go everywhere looting and plundering the citizens’ possessions spreading poverty and destruction; it is possible at any time for the French soldiers to set fire in farms burning the Algerian possessions and killing their cattle. There are random assassination attempts and mass arrests everywhere in the capital. People got tired “of always knowing there is an enemy. An enemy whose presence they despise.” They resent the colonizers’ incessant intervention in their affairs. They also hate the colonizers’ free will in controlling the colonized lives under the pretense of protecting them (Djebar, 2005).

Just as the colonizers subjugate the occupied people, husbands often deal with their wives as the Other who are subordinated to their husbands’ will “[b]ut this will be ambiguous: by total annexation, woman will be lowered to the rank of a thing.” Nevertheless, what differentiates the colonization of women from the colonization of a population is that “one of the problems [the patriarch] will seek to solve is how to make his wife both a servant and a companion at the same time (De Beauvoir, 2016).

De Beauvoir (2016) elaborates that “every society tends toward a patriarchal form” whose every stage of its development gives men the realization of their superiority. On the other hand, women are “destined to be subordinated, possessed, and exploited;” this awareness of women’s dependency on men makes it easy for men to control women (107).

In the same context, the strict patriarchal norms have formed a different kind of colonization over Algerian women. Women are not supposed to show up outside their homes without their men. In *Children of the New World*, Lila has never known the street of her town “just the murmuring, the silences, and the shadow of the old houses.” Lila has digested the patriarchal customs of the family like keeping the dress code and covering the arms above the elbow and the legs down to the ankles. These patriarchal norms dictate women obedience and conformity; for instance, the narrator describes Lila’s total submission to her husband Ali: “she yielded to Ali’s ambition more with radiant pleasure than with gratitude, not noticing that by wanting to mold her he would also limit her.” The narrator notes that Ali is very tough towards his wife; he is too commanding and arrogant. Lila has never questioned her husband “on anything other than their relationship.” Further, Ali has a kind of taciturn personality with his wife, and he might disappear for several mornings without any justification; however, on his return, Ali would find his wife waiting patiently for him preparing a meal and talking randomly about trivial things. Lila has used to act passively always adopts a preservative position; “she had never been heard to speak, to define a political position or to lapse more easily into some general diatribe” (Djebar, 2005).

Salima is one of the staunch opponents of the French colonialism, and she is imprisoned as a result. She suffers torture physically and spiritually in prison where she cannot sleep. She becomes able to sleep only after two weeks of investigation. The processes of interrogation exhaust her and drive her crazy. Salima has inherited her pride from her mother who lost her husband and was forced to do many odd jobs to support her orphaned children such as serving at the homes of the bourgeoisie. Salima and her mother are embittered by the imprisonment of Salima’s brother who was imprisoned six years ago and transferred to an anonymous place in France Usually, people who live within the dubious atmosphere of colonization are of two contradictory kinds

either patriotic ready to sacrifice themselves for the wellbeing of their country like Salima or traitors like Touma and Hakim. Touma defies the patriarchal rules and traditions of her society by betraying her country and by having intimate relationships with Frenchmen. Touma's attitude drives Salima to realize that she has experienced tricky situations in life, but she has never thought of betrayal. Hakim, the native police officer, who works against his people is compared to the character of Touma who works as a "stool pigeon" causing "Saidi's death and Youssef's run for the hills." The previous two characters contradict politically, socially, and psychologically the character of Hassiba, the young urban patriot on her way to join the resistance on the mountain. *Children of the New World* portrays the stifling norms of patriarchy under which the Algerian women are suffering a different sort of colonization. Women are captivated by many stifling rules and regulations imposed on them by patriarchy. For example, Cherifa cannot see her husband's shop "although for five years she's been desperate to have a precise image of the place where her beloved husband works." Cherifa faces this hard reality, and she becomes aware of her imprisonment within the patriarchal customs when she decides to leave her house that she has never left by herself. Furthermore, Cherifa knows that this is the same situation of every woman in her family and society as if bequeathed through generations. The need to leave her house opens Cherifa's eyes to the oppressive patriarchy she lives in, and she resents the fact that only men like husbands, fathers, and brothers can leave their houses freely (Djebar, 2005).

When it happens that a woman, usually a poor woman, walks in the street for a cleaning job, the whole neighborhood looks at her with a watchful curiosity "at her veil, her gait, her ankles, her eyes" until they recognize her. As for Middle-class women, they never go out by themselves unless escorted with her spouse who "walks in front of her and guides her." Finally, Cherifa decides to go outside searching for her husband to alert him that the French police is looking for him. The narrator describes Cherifa's experience in the street alone for the first time in her life; her heart is pounding fast, and she is ashamed with all the stares fixed on her. Cherifa wishes to end her journey outside her house, and she also wishes to walk peacefully. In fact, Cherifa's acts are controlled by the patriarchal rules of her society; even when she gets lost, she does not dare to ask young men about directions, so she hopes to meet a child to offer her guidance. When Cherifa manages after heroic efforts to reach her husband's shop, she insists on staying there although Yahia, Youssef's helper, who has assimilated the patriarchal tradition, is reluctant to let her in for fear that he loses his chastity (Djebar, 2005).

The long years of occupation have culminated preceding the celebrations of July 1, 1962, when a brutal war of liberation has been raised between the nationalists against their colonizers that lasted for eight years. The conflict had been atrocious wherein torture and amputation were freely and widely conducted by both sides on the warring parties and ordinary citizens alike in the cities and the countryside. Insurgents lay down bombs in public places that are inhabited by "women and children, to maim all who happen by." French soldiers were destroying blocks of old buildings with their residents to get hold of a few suspects hidden there. Rural farms and villages alongside crops have been damaged completely. There were also forced relocation of almost two million villagers into pacification camps and widespread famine (Djebar, 2005).

Under such menacing conditions, women experience constant fear and anxiety about their men whose life is in danger all the time. Colonization has deprived Algerian women and their children from their men, for so many men have joined resistance (Djebar, 2005). Minne portrays women's suffering throughout such situation especially those having male members in prison. Once the curfew is lifted, Minne explains, the prisoners' wives and mothers go to visit their male

relatives in prisons bringing them some provisions if allowed. However, seeing the flowing water under the huge gate of prison makes them shudder with the knowledge that one of the prisoners has been executed, and this water is used to wash away the martyrs' bloodstains. Minne describes the heart-broken women who run over to read the martyr's names on a white sheet of paper pinned up on the enormous gate of prison (343).

Cherifa suffers terribly especially that the male members of her family are involved in resistance activities. Her second husband's imprisonment torments her; nonetheless, Youssef considers himself as a lucky man for his involvement in the resistance. He proclaims to Cherifa that prison was the place where he discovered his Arab brothers and where he became a man. Further, Cherifa is also anxious about her young brother "who'd run off the night before to join the demonstrations..." Since Youssef's escape to the mountain to join the resistance, Cherifa keeps her eyes fixed on the mountains thinking of her husband and fretting over his ability to come back. Then, she moves further in her thoughts to worry about her financial situation. Similarly, Lila suffers from the separation of her male members of the family who have a nationalist sense. Her father, Bachir, tells Lila about his decisive decision to join the resistance just as her husband, Ali, does. Cherifa's and Lila's situation represent other women's worries and fears under occupation; women suffer the departure of their beloved men and the shortage of the basics of life (Djebar, 2005).

People live within boisterous atmosphere under French occupation. As for Tawfik's house, the situation is the same; Tawfik expresses his sadness and anger to his mother about his sister's betrayal to the Algerian cause. In fact, Tawfik has digested the patriarchal norms of his society since he was a child, he was told how to behave when his honor is soiled by a female who gave herself to strangers. Accordingly, Tawfik plans to purify the family's honor by killing his sister (Djebar, 2005).

Yet, his act is against Islam and law as Abu Sarhan, (2011) explains washing "the dirt of reputation is deeply rooted in minds of people although it is against Islam. In Islam, only the State has the right to punish those who commit adultery or involve in any sexual relation."

Amna is indignant towards her husband, Hakim, who is collaborating with the French police. She receives him with silence as a kind of resistance and rejection as Al-Nowaihi (2001) explains that "a staged self-silencing may be an extremely powerful form of public opposition, denoting rejection and even rebellion" (479). When Amna is remarkably close to Hakim, there is no expression on her face; she is merely pondering him sadly. Amna is in great shock and bewilderment to the extent that her child's cries do not move her. Her husband "shakes her violently, and then, with a blow right to her engorged chest, causes her to topple onto the mattress." Amna screams with the first blow not out of physical pain but out of spiritual pain. Hakim strikes her on the floor and "the blows follow one another, she is unexpectedly silent" her shrieks stop altogether, and she understands. Hakim's dubious attitudes like his coming home at an odd hour to investigate his wife and hitting her refer to his disturbed state of mind. This indicates that national good must not separate from social good to achieve ethical justice and political equality. Symbolizing many Algerian women under occupation, Amna is portrayed in the novel as double colonized; she lives under the French colonization, and she is colonized by her husband's oppression. Yet, she deals with the situation patiently exerting a heroic effort in her house chores; the narrator describes her hands as "swollen and red from last night's laundry." Amna is very sacrificial in taking care of her children; she is described in the novel as: "a tree, spreading out all its branches" over people around her (Djebar, 2005).

The importance of education as means of liberation is highlighted in the novel, and Minne stresses this point in her *Women at War* wherein she focuses on the enormous positive effects of education in saving and liberating occupied nation and the urgent necessity for women to educate themselves albeit there are many female activists who are university graduates (347). Women activists and intellectual women managed to establish about thirty politicized associations for feminists' purposes which signaled a turning point for women who wanted to make their voices heard, such as: 'The voice of women' and 'Cries of women'. Those politicized women were able to make themselves visible and to attract the attention by many means such as “[d]emonstrations, publications, pamphlets, interviews on radio, programs on television” even though at one-point women were othered and silenced (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999). By these associations, women were able to gain their emancipation and to express openly their feminist perspectives. They, however, aligned with men in the workforce and in political parties (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

Cooke (2004) explains that Djebbar, Mernissi, and El Saadawi consider writing as an effective weapon in their battle to set up justice within a patriarchal system. For El Saadawi, the act of writing has become a way of “rebellion against injustice exercised in the name of religion, or morals, or love.” In the same context, Clarisse Zimra explains in her chapter titled “Afterwards” that Djebbar herself cared so much about education, and Europe-based critics would position Djebbar as a credit to her race and to her gender namely the token educated female Arab “even a credit to the French colonial school system.” Djebbar graduated from high school in 1954, and she moved to Paris to prepare herself for the entrance exams to *Ecole Normale de Sèvres*, the tough competitive school. Successfully she enrolled in fall 1955 as “the first and only Maghrebien student to be so admitted”; however, she was prohibited from the premises the following spring also banned from ever taking the yearly qualifying exams because of her participation in the National Liberation Front in Algeria. Further, she could not go back home, so she spent her time authoring novels (Djebbar, 2005).

Djebbar (2005) herself has always put a lot of efforts to participate in liberating her country; in Tunis she found more opportunities to work with “the FLN political newspaper *El Moudjahid* whose editor was the revolutionary West Indian writer and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, and Djebbar paid visits to the refugee camps to gather information about the war. She gained M.A degree in history with Louis Massignon the highly acclaimed Islamic scholar about Muslim female mystic of the Middle Ages. In fact, Djebbar (2005) foregrounds women's crucial contribution in supporting men throughout history taking Prophet Mohammed's female entourage as an example. At the end of 1959, Djebbar taught North African history at the national university in Rabat while pursuing her work with the refugees. When Djebbar returned home, she decided to benefit her country with her knowledge and education after her literary success in Paris to teach history at the University of Algiers in addition to her work as Sterling Professor at New York University. In total devotion to literary life, Djebbar currently lives in permanent, self-imposed exile (Djebbar, 2005).

In occupied countries, educated and financially independent women often care very much about spreading knowledge and education among their people as means of resistance. This is exemplified in the character of Salima, who manages to assert herself through her experience in teaching. Even in her imprisonment, she worries in her half-drowsy state about her students (Djebbar, 2005). Salima has indulged herself in teaching her courses with great enthusiasm; she loves her job dearly. For the previous two years, she forgot herself as she worked preparing for the class. Salima studied attentively every didactic journal, ordered them from France, and kept herself

informed about new teaching methods which she believed the Algerians will need after their independence (Djebar, 2005). Salima is so proud of herself to be the only Muslim girl in the town to pursue her studies, and she felt that pride for the first time when she finished high school with her diploma secured. She has always been preoccupied by the fancy of believing herself to be the envy of her people in another world. She has proved herself to be loyal to her country and equal to any patriotic man in her society (Djebar, 2005). The eventual defeat of the colonizers has been achieved as it is celebrated in Minne's "Women at War." Minne praises the women activists' improvement in their character who initially were seen "pushing a straw basket with" their feet are now pervading the demonstrations of December 1960 in a different appearance; they are not veiled "dancing with a flag that bears the initials FLN" (342). Remarkably, the resistance groups of adults lived within an atmosphere that is characterized by harmony and fraternity sustained by lively effective discussions (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

As for Cherifa, she wins over the patriarchal system by a different means; she defeats the patriarchal norms of her society by her non-conformist conducts towards her first husband to whom she is married for three years, and still "everything inside her had instinctively rejected." Despite her husband's constant imploring and insistence that she should go for treatment to have children, she is satisfied with not having any children, and she exposes this openly because she has always been considering divorce. The narrator states that Cherifa is so strong that her husband cannot defeat her rebellious stance. Although she is used to avoid him and remain silent in his presence, her rebellion succeeds to break her contemptuous silence. Cherifa is so stubborn in her refusal to her husband; she does not accept him as a husband and does not allow her heart to love him (Djebar, 2005).

Cherifa does not comply with the patriarchal tradition that enforces women to accept and obey their husbands regardless of women's feelings toward their men; Cherifa maintains a distance from her husband through silence that develops later to crying and then to verbal and active refusal. Finally, she declares her feelings of refusal loudly, and she decides to leave forever. Consequently, her husband's treatment of her becomes more abusive; she endures for many days "her husband's cries of rage and fury and beating." Cherifa remains persevering to separate with her husband at all costs; she locks herself up in her room at the back of the house "enjoying the small pleasures of defiance." Eventually, Cherifa's husband surrenders, and he decides to let her leave his house (Djebar, 2005). Contrary to what he supposes, Cherifa is happy to leave the house; she faces him with "a smile of triumph" drawn on her face. Clarisse Zemra comments on Cherifa's behavior saying that the traditional woman, Cherifa, manages to defy the patriarchal tradition of her society. Zemra adds that by refusing her husband's sexual advances, Cherifa commits something forbidden by the Qur'an. Further, she contrives her own divorce from him, and she embarks on a second marriage with Youssef; a "marriage of true equality." In fact, not only women are against patriarchy but also men like Rachid whose love and dedication for his wife and daughter urges him to challenge the patriarch of his family, his father Si Abdrahman. Hence, Rachid's close-knit society is dissatisfied with him, people gossip that since his marriage, the patriarch's "youngest and favorite son had defied his father." To Rachid's people, his love to his wife appears as irresponsible, "scandalous and immodest" especially when "they saw him preferring to spend each evening alone with his wife in their room to being with the other men on the family patio." In addition, People criticize Rachid as "Such a foolish father!" as he coddles his daughter, Lila, for many hours "rather than intuitively understanding that the role of wife and children is merely to better establish the earnestness and authority of a man." (Djebar, 2005).

Thus, the eventual defeat of colonialism can be achieved first by liberating women from patriarchy, and by forming solidarity between men and women and among women as well. Armed with knowledge and education, the colonized should also keep up resistance and never surrender the national cause.

To this effect, De Beauvoir (2016) insists that working side by side with men, women can reclaim their opportunity to actively determine the direction of their destiny and hence, as Beauvoir and Sartre assert, gain their power and liberation. Women can become intellectuals who can influence and change other women, and thus improve their society (Yusuf & Susilo, 2020).

The Algerian war proved women's role as indispensable in liberating Algeria from the French colonizer, and in doing so, the Algerian women were able to decolonize themselves from the stifling patriarchal norms and traditions. The war of 1954-62 is a prominent event in the Algerian women's lives because it marked the beginning for women to make their presence felt especially that in 1954, Algerian women were eliminated from public life. They were also deprived of their basic political rights such as voting. Algerian women participated in the armed battle from its very beginning to the very end of the eventual defeat of the French colonizer: "There were 10,949 fighting women, 3.1% of all those taking part in active combat" (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999). Algerian women experienced tough times like marching endlessly every night, cooking all night for the male fighters, and carrying letters on foot among different Algerian parties; it was a tough life of deprivation, cold, and hunger (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999). The imminent role played by the women fighters in the cities was crucial since they could be easily mistaken for civilians hence having more freedom of movement than their male folks. Further, women offered refuge to those who were wanted by the authorities (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

Additionally, Algerian women would establish contacts, offer guidance, transfer arms, collect money, medicine, or participate in attacks. Women played essential roles in working as nurses in the battlefield; therefore, the French soldiers (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999) particularly after sought nurses. When the male fighters were immobilized, the women took over; they were engaged directly in the armed struggle, "and above all took an active part in directing urban guerilla warfare." After the arrest or departure of male members, women looked after their families in addition to their support to the menfolk in prison and in the maquis as well. To have the right to see their male prisoners, women demonstrated in front of the prison; however, sometimes they would be punished by at least three-months imprisonment for such behavior (Amrane Minne & Abu-Haidar, 1999).

Having been liberated from her unwanted marriage, Cherifa is ready to participate in her country's liberation. She supports Yousef in his resistance activities to free their country and defy colonization. To help her husband move to another neighborhood far from the gaze of the police officer who lives next to his house and be free to practice his resistance activities, Cherifa offers "him her jewelry, two heavy bracelets, some clasps, and a necklace of louis d'or coins." In another attempt to protect her husband, Cherifa does her best to contact him as soon as possible to warn him that the police are searching for him. To achieve her goal, Cherifa decides to challenge the patriarchal norms of her society by going out alone to the streets for the first time looking for her husband: "she wants to act. A strange desire overtakes and worries her, to do something, something daring" (Djebar, 2005).

to assert her identity and to feel “that she has existed.” Cherifa assures Youssef that she is not weak; on the contrary, she has a lot of courage. All she cares about is her worries about her husband whose presence in her life is essential (Djebar, 2005).

Spivak (1995) highlights the importance of solidarity among the colonized as a means of liberation. The oppressed margins or the silenced men and women like “the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat” and others can speak up and make their voices heard if given the opportunity to solidarity with each other (25). Spivak asserts that “the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (28). Women solidarity with each other is a very important factor for women to defy patriarchal oppressive system, for instance, the wife of the police officer, Amna, supports her neighbor Cherifa, and she hides the information about her friend’s husband, Youssef, from her own husband, Hakim, whom she believes is sent by his superior to interrogate her (Djebar, 2005).

Suzanne has always appeared as self-dependent and active woman. She stands up to her husband, Omar, when he wants her and his daughter to leave with him for France. However, Suzanne, with a strong patriotic sense, refuses to leave, and she asks her husband to stay, to defend his people, and to help “the victims, if not the fighters and the revolution.” Suzanne supports her depressed friend Lila and asserts her solidarity with her. Further, Suzanne invites Lila to live with her during her husband’s absence. Moreover, to support her people, Suzanne tries to compensate her husband’s absence; Suzanne’s husband, Omar, was the lawyer of the town before his leave to France. Suzanne tells Lila that Salima’s mother came looking for Omar to help with getting her daughter, Salima, out of the prison. Salima’s mother was in urgent need of a lawyer, and Suzanne took it upon her shoulders to find her a lawyer in the city. Even Lila decides to support Salima’s mother in her distress, and she intends to pay her a visit (Djebar, 2005).

Most often, Algerian women risk their lives, and even sometimes their children’s lives, to support resistance in so many ways like delivering provisions, meeting partners, or providing refuge to the freedom fighters (Amrane Minne & Clarke, 2007). As an example of those patriotic women, Salima, who is caught and imprisoned several days by the French police for her resistance activities without even a bed to lie down on until she loses her sense of time (Djebar, 2005). She suffers many days of cold, sleeplessness, and an aching body during her interrogation. Even when she is given a bed at her cell in prison, it is without a blanket to warm herself during the cold nights until one day a nationalist guard, Taleb, sympathizes with her and brings her a blanket. Taleb forms a kind of solidarity with Salima; he comes closer muttering emotionally: “Oh, my sister, my sister!” The colonizer knows such nationalist people are strong, and they have the potential to end colonization eventually. As the chief of the police, Jean, is looking at Salima closely, he keeps thinking to himself that she is more powerful than him “and that grim idea will never leave him” (Djebar, 2005). To put it concisely, the opposition is becoming stronger and more recusant over time so much that it haunts the enemies’ thoughts all the time.

The sixteen years old, Hasiba, is a vivid example of the nationalists who are behind the eventual defeat of the colonizer. Despite her early age, she yearns to join the resistance and take part in liberating her country: “I want to go there, to the resistance, I want to work with those who fight! ... the revolution is for everybody, for the old and the young. I want to shed my blood for the revolution.” Hasiba is so insistent and persistent in her quest of fighting the French next to her brothers on the mountain exhibiting her willingness to sacrifice everything for her country. Consequently, she spends three months learning nursing and to be of effective use to the resistance; she learns to make bandages and give injections. Hasiba does not cower away when she learns that

joining the resistance is over straining, on the contrary, she exhibits her readiness to suffer for her country. In fact, Hasiba and her kind have a strong faith in the revolution, and they have never doubted the national cause. On the mountain, the rebellious Algerian women and men discuss the harsh conditions they suffer. They are fully aware about their exploitation at the hands of the colonizers who have stolen their land, and all they want is to fight back. Those patriots express their readiness to sacrifice their souls to achieve liberation (Djebar, 2005).

In *Children of the New World*, the female characters can assert their identity within the confines of the patriarchal society she lives in and under the stifling restrictions of occupation. Although the female characters suffer a two-fold struggle, they emerge victorious against them at the end. For example, Hasiba proves herself powerful enough to join the freedom fighters in the mountains (Ghazoul, 2007).

Throughout the Battle of Algiers, most of the demonstrations were mixed the thing that granted women their crucial role to the extent that they “partially replaced men in the resistance.” In fact, the great support of women was the main factor that facilitated the fighters’ ability to meet frequently, deliver weapons, and plant bombs (Amrane Minne & Clarke, 2007). Alistair Horne stresses in his book *A Savage War of Peace*, on the importance of demonstrations by both men and women equally in Skikda, in August 1955, and he refers to the women’s shouts of encouragement in Ain Abid to the mine workers who murdered some of the Europeans to avenge themselves against the colonizers’ suppression. Although patriarchal traditions kept women from attending the burials of the martyrs at cemeteries, women along with men managed to arrange demonstrations to signify former militants’ burial (Amrane Minne & Clarke, 2007).

Clarisse Zimra acknowledges in her chapter titled “Afterward” that the eventual defeat of the French colonizer was remarkably close in May 1958; Algerian students has marched in Algiers and riotous gatherings has taken the government buildings up for many days. Even though in the same month the French Army tried to seize power from civilian authorities, they had struggled a domestic disorder and a strong anticolonial war which was progressing in Algeria. As a result, the Algerian War had overthrown the French Fourth Republic. On July 1, 1962, the Algerians were voting in a referendum to achieve their country’s independence from France that had colonized them for one hundred and thirty-two years (Djebar, 2005).

3. Conclusion

Children of the New World depicts women in a new representation. The main female characters in the novel experience multilayered colonialism in their patriarchal society under the French occupation. Nevertheless, they are different from the passive and weak women who are overpowered by patriarchy; they are powerful and active members in their societies irrespective of the differences in their backgrounds. *Children of the New World* discloses the effective means of decolonization and self-liberation women use to deconstruct the hierarchical structure of patriarchy on the one hand and of colonization on the other. The most successful means of liberation female characters resort to in the novel are education and solidarity among women and between women and men as well.

The novel shows that the eventual defeat of foreign colonialism can be acquired when women enjoy the rightful freedom to control their lives and decisions and have equal opportunities with their men counterparts. It can also be achieved when women collaborate with each other. Those female characters subvert the stereotypical image of submissive women living in patriarchal

society. Furthermore, they provide a new understanding of resourceful and supportive women who play a prominent role in liberating themselves and their country.

Conflicts of interest statements

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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