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Identity Crisis and Regeneration in Minority Female Literature:

***A Comparative Study between Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April
Raintree, Leila Aboulela's Minaret, and Assia Djebar's The Tongue's
Blood Does not Run Dry.***

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Abstract

This PhD research delves into minority female identity construction within colonial and post-colonial contexts, exploring the interplay between crisis and regeneration from childhood to adulthood in the works of three minority female writers. It examines how early environments, family dynamics, and colonial legacies shape self-concepts, demonstrating the enduring impact of childhood experiences on adult identity formation. Highlighting the role of language in exacerbating identity crises, the study underscores the triple displacement experienced by minority women. It argues that societal norms and same-gender relationships hinder the protagonists' quest for self-acceptance and regeneration, with colonial legacies, patriarchal influences, and interpersonal dynamics serving as pivotal milestones in their journey. By analyzing literary devices used by the writers to resist societal conventions and political systems, the study offers novel insights through comparative and close reading analyses, challenging previous scholarly approaches.

Dedication

‘My success lies with Allah. In him I trust; and to him I turn.’
Hudd 88

To my parents....

Mostepha Boumaza and Saliha Kadri

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Table of Content

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Influence of Female Figures and Childhood Environments on April's Cheryl's, Najwa's, Ouardia's and Tounsia's Primary Identities	29
1. April's Identity between Emergence and Crisis: The Effect of Childhood Environment on Self-images.	34
2. The Acculturation of Najwa's and Djebbar's Character's Arab Identities: The Role of Colonial Environments in Shaping the Female Child's Identity.....	42
2.1. The Effect of Linguistic Hegemony on Najwa's, Atyka's and April's Identity Formation.	52
3. The Evolution of the Gender Identity between Formation and Demise in Adolescence in <i>Minaret, In Search of April Raintree and Non-Return Returns</i>	58
3.1. April's, Najwa's, Ouardia's and Tounsia's Electra Complex: Patriarchy and the Gender Identity Crisis.	62
3.2. The Mother-Daughter Relationship and its Effect on Najwa's and Ourdia's Identity Crisis and Formation.	69
4. The Role of Family in Building April's and Cheryl's Identities in Colonial Milieus.....	74
4.1. April's Identity Under a Villain Mother and Female Influence.....	82
5. The Connection between the Adult Identity and Childhood Crisis: The Case of Najwa, April and the Oran, Dead Language Protagonist.	86
Chapter Two: Women's Triple Displacement: April's, Najwa's and Isma's Identity between Acceptance and Regeneration	91
1. The Contribution of Love to April's, Najwa's and Isma's Adult Selves.	93
2. April's, Najwa's and Isma's Triple Displacement through Same-Gender Relationships: The Effect of Female Characters on the Protagonists' Adult Selves and Crisis.	100
3. 'Home' and its Manipulation of Isma's, Najwa's and April's Displaced Selves.....	109
4. Self-Acceptance and the Containment of (Childhood) Crisis: April's, Najwa's and Isma's Tools of Identity Establishment and Regeneration	117
4.1. The Evolution of the Muslim Identity in <i>Minaret</i>	120
4.2. The Rising of the Metis Identity in <i>In Search of April Raintree</i>	128
5. Linguistic Pluralism and the Algerian Identity in <i>Burning and Non-Return Returns</i>	142

Chapter Three: Writing the Minority Female Cause: Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Political Stances and Orientations	152
1. Aboulela, Culleton and Djebbar: Political Stances and Biographies.	156
1.1. Locating the Muslim Diasporic Self in <i>Minaret</i>	156
1.2. <i>In Search of April Raintree</i> : Writing the Native Female Reality.	157
1.3. Anti-colonialism and Anti-patriarchy in <i>The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry</i>	158
2. Contextual Material: Circumstances Occasioning our Corpuses.	160
2.1. Internal Conflicts in Sudan and the 9/11 Islamphobia through <i>Minaret</i>	160
2.2. <i>A Rise of a Metis Consciousness: The Struggle of Being a Non-Status Citizen in In Search of April Raintree</i>	162
2.3. <i>The De-Frenchification of the Algerian Identity and the Rise of Extremist Groups in the Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry</i>	164
3. Aboulela's and Djebbar's Employment of the Veil in Constructing Female Identities Vs. Culleton's Utilization of the "Hair" in Reflecting Female Metis Identity.	166
4. The Employment and Significance of Male Figures in Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Narratives.	170
5. Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Literary Mechanisms of Overturning Male Paradigms and Advocating the Female Cause	178
Conclusion.....	211

Introduction

1. Problem Statement

Identity is one of the most complex existential questions that has captured human thought throughout the generations. In *A Question of Identity*, Dikla Rivlin Katz, et al. emphasize that “identity is widely acknowledged as complex, multifaceted, and dynamic”; they also stress that research in the last decades has been committed to understanding how identities are constructed, maintained and altered (V). The question of identity continues to govern contemporary studies with new otherness concepts¹ and dimensions. Research, in this century, examines fluid and gender identities with the new definitions introduced to “the self.” Yet, the problem to be addressed through this doctoral dissertation is minority female identity between crisis and regeneration in three postcolonial contexts: Algeria, Canada and Sudan. The choice of this scope comes from the relevance of this research to the researcher and the country it is being conducted in. Moreover, identity crisis is dynamic, alive and a hot topic in the milieus we study.

The identity problem inspected in this research is confined to three different yet similar contexts. Algeria and Sudan share, to a certain extent, the same history of colonial conquest, heterogeneity, customs and traditions. The political setting and current affairs in both countries shed light on post-colonial, Arab, Muslim, and ethnic identities. It is important to note that most of the previous research conducted on these milieus takes political directions. Amal Ibrahim Madibbo, for example, examines the Darfur conflict of 2003 to demonstrate how Arabism and Africanism, in Sudan, are intertwined which makes the National Sudanese identity fluid (*Conflict and the Conception of Identities in Sudan*). Along the same lines, Michael Humphrey probes into the question of identity in Algeria in the 1990’s. He inspects how violence—resulting from the clashing ideals between Arabophones

¹ The new sexual identities as in LGBTQIA

and Francophones—fractures and weakens the national identity (*Violence, Voice and Identity in Algeria*). On the other hand, the struggle of Native people in Canada concentrated study around Native selves and foster experiences. A good example would be James Frideres's *Aboriginal Identity in the Canadian Context* where he delves into the mechanisms of definition, and then he outlines the progression and deterioration of the Native question in Canada. We can see that the three countries share a common ground that merits investigation to better comprehend the individual and collective struggles of the protagonists.

The setting of postcolonial environments generates a confusion of self and obstructs an establishment of a final identity between the 1980's and the late 1990's. Although this thesis is time bound, the findings and consequences transcend to periods beyond the studied framework due to the continuity of colonialism in a new form. The monolingual clash in Algeria in the 1990's compels the francophone female intelligentsia to negotiate her identity to survive the extremist tyranny and femicide. Canadian constitutional acts prior to the 1980's, on the other hand, silence and murder the Native identity which in return led generations of women into suicide, prostitution and loss of self. The unsettlement of the Sudanese question between 1984 and 2004 imprisons the Sudanese identity between a Western Christian Southern part and an Arab Muslim Northern part. The reality of the political milieus occasioning our novels highlights the problematic of the identity question in our corpora.

Ethnic, migrant, post-colonial, and Arab identities are omnipresent in the three novels considered in this research (Assia Djebar's *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*, Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* and Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*). Yet, the genderidentity has the lion's share. In other words, all existential questions pertain to and revolve around the female identity. Accordingly, its instability incites crisis in all the sub and sequent identities.

The Native and Métis woman in Canada still suffers discrimination against her gender and ethnicity. This category of women lost its status and right of land, and despite the amendments² and constitution reforms, she remains unprivileged vis-à-vis the Canadian woman. Accordingly, riots and manifestations were carried out in the last decade—in 2011, 2017, 2019 and 2022—in an attempt to combat racism and assert a Native self equal to the white one. Canada's Reconciliation movement continues to introduce reforms in an attempt to cure the evils of previous acts. To attain a successful reconciliation of self, the Native problem should be acknowledged, studied and addressed. This thesis digs into the deeper origins of the female Aboriginal problem in an effort to contain or heal the crisis.

The indigenous identity problem in Canada is worth inspection because it does not only trouble Native women's identities, but it also relates this current dilemma to early childhood and how have mothers, wives, daughters and sisters been constructed into the selves they are i.e. the crisis they endure at adulthood should be treated from boarding schools and foster homes experiences otherwise generations of women continue to be unfit for their biological roles (as they endure a loss of self): raising generations and supporting their families. Canada witnesses protests and celebration of the indigenous genocides yearly as the problem remains partly solved. Consequently, this work aspires to offer the Native woman and adolescent with an insight on self-assertion.

Recent events in Sudan evidence that the identity problem is omnipresent and will continue to exist as long as the clash remains unsettled. The conflicting cultures, religions and languages trouble identity-establishment as the self is in a constant negotiation between opposing ideologies. These factors alone complex the identity quest and renders the overcome of identity crisis an impossible-like task. Yet, the Sudanese woman endures

² The amendment of the Indian Act of 1951 and Bill C-31 amendment of 1985

another dimension of crisis under the Personal Status Law³ that limits the movement and travel of widows and divorcees across Sudanese borders. The same law legalizes the marriage of girls aged ten and above which again places the fate of young girls in the hands of the patriarchal society which mostly seeks the dowry regardless of the wellbeing of the “wife child”. In fact, Liesel Gertholtz, director of Women’s Rights Division, reports to the *Human Rights Watch*⁴ that South Sudan has the highest number of child marriages with a rate of 40%. This reality directed international attention to the situation of women and girls in Sudan in the last two decades. Accordingly, women organized themselves and went on protests requesting for the annulment of discriminatory laws limiting their rights and movements.

Most Sudanese women prior to these feminist movements were passive and adhered to patriarchal dictations which engendered generations of women with fluid identities and fragile selves. This research inspects the submissiveness of this group of women and aims to guide women from similar environments to locate themselves within their societies and establish unitary independent identities.

In Algeria, French colonial powers targeted the unveiling of women during the war of independence as an assault on the Algerian man. In return, the Algerian woman abandoned the headscarf to integrate in the French community and take revolutionary actions. Upon independence, lots of the Algerian women inherited the French attire they embraced during colonialism. The majority of the Algerian population also spoke the French tongue fluently at the expense of the Arab and Amazigh ones. To murder this influence, the Algerian administration followed a policy of Arabisation to assert the Muslim Arab identity. As a result, a wave of Arabophones rose by the 1970’s. However, the job market remained French-

³ This law denies the widower or divorcee—who lives abroad—the right to enter Sudan if she does not get a written permission from a legal male guardian.

⁴ A YouTube Channel

centred which started to provoke tension between the Arabic and French Speakers with much hostility repressed against the Algerian Francophone woman.

Hatred towards the female Francophonie heightened in the 1990's, and a wave of this intelligentsia was talked into wearing the veil as a means of protection from extremist genocides. In consequence, the headscarf re-emerged and grew in numbers from the 1990's onwards. Women who challenged the extremist Arabophone wing and maintained their French tongues, positions and styling were targeted and thus murdered. Algeria observed a massive femicide and intellocide in this decade. In this manner, some women disguised their identity in Arabic and the veil. This disguise weighed heavily on women who silenced their tongues and aspirations to survive. Today, the Algerian woman is free to choose a language and a garment for herself, yet the after-effects of the Black Decade torments the modern Algerian identity as the clash between languages—at least—remains unsettled.

2. Literature Review

Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* is a reference book of Native narratives. It is considered as one of the earliest Aboriginal productions. In a very plain language, Culleton accounts the struggles of foster children and Métis women. The novel captures disturbing scenes and realities that it sparked controversy. Eventually, Culleton's work made its way to school and university syllabi. It documents the sufferings of generations as well as the achievements of early ancestors.

As one of the leading Native narratives, *In Search of April Raintree* sits at the heart of some PhD theses examining religion, native narratives and racism post the reconciliation movement of the 1980's. The latter do not directly correspond to this research. However, a myriad of articles and essays have been written on the questions of identity crisis, self-denial, racism, foster experiences which our study examines.

Hellen Hoy, in *“Nothing but the Truth”: Discursive Transparency in Beatrice Culleton*, assumes that the quest for identity in Culleton’s narrative is based on her own experiences with racism and foster care. That is, the identity crisis, in the novel, arises from the context and environment in which the writer was brought up. In fact, Hoy presumes that Culleton narrated her personal identity crisis as a Métis woman living in a racist white Canadian society. Accordingly, Hoy argues that “emphasizing a feminist reading of the novel, suggests that for Culleton the experiences of female and Métis identity are inseparable” (p, 169). This implies that the Native woman is doubly discriminated: first against her gender and second against her heritage. My thesis argues that the individual is a reflection of their entourage. That is, the fluidity of the protagonist’s identity demonstrates the instability and fragility of Native milieus. Moreover, it argues that Native females are triply displaced i.e. it examines a new dimension of the identity struggle: same gender inferiority. In other words, it scrutinizes how non-Native women patronize, and thus, alienate women of color. In fact, my research hypothesizes that the same gender discrimination causes more damage to the Métis identity. Furthermore, contrary to Hoy who examines external factors only, my thesis also examines internal factors contributing to the identity crisis. That is, how April, the main character, enslaves herself, by taking up white chauvinistic prejudices. It also examines how family affects the construction of a Native identity in Canada.

In *The Problem of “Searching” for April Raintree*, Janice Acoose depicts how racism affects the sisters’ identities. Most importantly, she shoulders the Raintree parents the blame for April’s hatred and rejection of the Native heritage. She also explains how foster experiences become the ground of the Raintree sisters’ identities. April’s chauvinistic foster home reinforces feelings of non-belonging and denial of the aboriginal self. Cheryl’s Métis self, on the other hand, is nourished by positive foster experiences.

Acoose's article centers attention on the sisters' switching and influencing of identities; yet, it marginalizes the role of family in constructing April's and Cheryl's identities. The present thesis studies the effect of family and foster experiences on both of the Raintree sisters. It also suggests that a healthy identity can be established, in the presence of racism, when domestic environments are healthy and nurturing. This will be achieved through comparing and contrasting between the sisters' foster experiences.

Heather Zwicker, in her article *The Limits of Sisterhood*, scrutinizes the sisterhood bond between the Raintree sisters and traces the evolution of their relationship from childhood to adulthood. She presents a definition of sisterhood based on feminism, and also demonstrates its limits. In this way, Zwicker claims that sisterhood in *In Search of April Raintree* generates more problems than solutions/support. She justifies her argument by showing the difference in beliefs and character between April and Cheryl, and how it widened the gulf between them at adulthood. Zwicker questions feminism and sisterhood, and opens room for discussion on how to make feminist movements more efficient to the female community. Our research compares and contrasts between the sisters' experiences to show how environment and family interactions impact identity. It also inspects the gender identity through the sister's relationship, foster mothers and female social carers. That is to say, this thesis argues that gender identity is not only affected by the relationship between the two sisters, but it is also influenced by all female figures surrounding them.

In "*What is the Proper Word for People Like You?*": *The Question of Métis identity in In Search of April Raintree*, Sharon Smulders treats the issue of "individual self-invention" Vs "national-determination". She examines, on the one hand, how stereotypes fracture April's fragile identity, and on the other hand, how books, for instance, at the Macadam's help Cheryl sustain her heritage and native identity. In fact, she looks closely at April's descriptions of her family and foster experiences to show how childhood experiences relate to

identity crisis. Besides, she examines how April internalises prejudices and becomes her own oppressor. Smulders claims that Culleton's work is a counter-narrative, and Cheryl's speeches and essays aim at providing students and children with a Native version of the history. She also assumes that the shift from speeches, to letters, and then entries in a personal journal reflect how Native people were silenced (p, 87).

Smulders scrutinizes Native children and women's right, and highlights how women can play a role in their identity invention. This is mostly highlighted through Cheryl's social work and the old lady at the Guru Guru party. What is more, she explores inferiority among Natives i.e. how Aboriginal men abuse their women to transcend their own alienation (Mark DeSoto pimping Cheryl) (p, 95). Finally, unlike other scholars, she alludes that Henry Lee—Cheryl's son—is a result of incest and even assumes that this is the real reason why she commits suicide. Along the same lines, the present thesis inspects how family and environment nurture identities. It also examines gender inequality and abuse. Most importantly, our research examines self-invention in a more holistic approach by touching on more aspects and investigating it since childhood.

Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* attracted scholars attention as it presents the Western world, post 9/11, with a completely non-political side of Muslim stories. She narrates the life of a Muslim Sudanese woman in post-colonial Sudan. Najwa, the protagonist, adheres to cultural identity and shows no individuality by following a path that has been traced for her by her father, or to be more precise the patriarchal Sudanese society. Due to some political instability, Najwa's family, apart from her father who is imprisoned by the government, flees to Britain where her cultural identity becomes unfit. In this regard, Najwa enters a series of self-quest experiences trying to locate and assert herself in the diaspora. It is also important to note that mixing between Muslim lives and romance fiction is considered a precedent in literature which nominated *Minaret* for the Orange Prize in 2006.

The number of PhDs that were conducted on Aboulela's work either center their research on female Muslim identities in the Western world, or the perception and symbolism of the headscarf post 9/11 in Islamophobic societies. Lots of articles have also been written in the same direction which leaves us with a limited number of research pertinent to the present thesis. Accordingly, I will review some literature that is of relevance while identifying the gaps of research.

Sherine Fouad Mazloun, in her article *Displaced' Muslim Women in Monica Ali's Brick Lane and Leila Aboulela's Minaret*, examines both Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* post 9/11 where Islam is considered as the potential "other" to the West. She explores how Najwa and Nazneen negotiate their Muslim beliefs and Western principles in their process of self-definition in the metropolis of London. Mazloun uses Spivak's concept of displacement as the backbone of her research to: a. Highlight the protagonists' triple displacement—Muslim, coloured and female—in glocal realities, and b. project how these minority women come to terms with their identity crisis. She reads Aboulela's work as a mechanism of cultural deconstruction i.e. Najwa's journey of self- definition is an instrument to overturn Western stereotypes. She claims that Aboulela offers an "alternative reading to the stereotyping of Muslim Women" through Najwa's rejection (her affair with Anwar) and embracement (adhering to the mosque and wearing hijab) of Islamic values (p, 557). In this fashion, Aboulela presents Islam as an instrument of emancipation rather than cultural subjugation.

Mazloun also offers a feminist interpretation of the novel through Najwa's relationship with Anwar. According to her, Aboulela portrays how Western and patriarchal societies patronise women and confine them to secondary roles. Najwa, as an example, seeks refuge in Anwar who, in return, abuses her and projects his failure as a migrant Muslim on her. Moreover, Mazloun examines how men and women assert themselves in the diaspora.

To her, men fail or struggle to come to terms with their conflicting identities (this is demonstrated through Anwar's inner struggles and questioning of essays). On the other hand, women's fluid identities and ability to live non-violently enable them to acquire new agencies, thus, succeed to embrace an identity of their own.

Mazloun's article overlooks experiences in Sudan that serve as the cornerstone of the identity struggle in London. Our research focuses on Najwa's experiences in Sudan to demonstrate how her crisis in London is a production of the ex-post-colonial society. Islam is not a central theme in our research; it stands as a key mechanism of self-assertion and regeneration. Most importantly, this thesis not only examines how men abuse women, it also examines how they can reinforce their self- definition by comparing between Najwa's relationship with Anwar and Tamer.

In *Negotiating the Veil and Identity in Leila Aboulela's Minaret*, Susan Taha Al-Karawi and Ida Baizura Bahar apply both Victor Turner's concept of liminality and Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space to scrutinize Najwa's identity crisis and constant conflict between her past and present. In this way, they outline the protagonist's journey of self-quest from questioning to assertion. They also suggest that *Minaret* is a counter-narrative refuting Western discourses that view the veil as a means of oppression. Aboulela's Muslim female characters fill in the gap in Western representations of Arab women i.e. she provides the West with images of Muslims that are not covered by media and conspiracy theories. As a matter of fact, *Minaret* endeavours to voice the concerns and struggles of Arab women in the diaspora, their feeling of displacement and negotiation of identities.

Al-karawi and Bahar explain how Najwa's past and present lead her to a middle ground, or to use Bhabha's term, a third space where she embraces a hybrid identity in resistance of Western stereotypes. Furthermore, they countermand Katayoun Toossi's study

that perceives Islam as an imposed entity/religion on women. Al-karawi and Bahar show evidence of how Islam helps Najwa, at the end of the novel, to construct an identity of her own, and therefore manages to locate herself in London.

Similar to Al-karawi and Bahar, my research attempts to display how Najwa achieves a final unitary self. Yet, it shows how this final self has always been sitting in the background waiting for a stimulus to arise. In other words, this thesis hypothesises that one's final identity is a collection of minor identities all co-existing and conflicting together (e.g. gender, ethnic, national, etc); environment and experiences affect what final identity to emerge.

In "*Original Traumas*": *Narrating Migrant Identity in British Muslim Women's Writing*, Ulrike Tancke examines migrant traumatic experiences and their effect on identity formation, more precisely, how migrants' traumatic experiences complicate self-assertion in glocal realities. In this way, he compares between Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. Moreover, Tancke applied Zadie's Smith's *White Teeth* in carrying out this comparison. He attributes the migrants' trauma to the constant conflict between Native practices and global cultures. His work supports Susan Brison's *Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self* in which she claims that trauma threatens identity and encloses the self between the past, present and future (p, 2). Tancke argues that narrating traumatic/migrant experiences is the protagonists' only outlet towards a self-reconstruction.

In the same work, Tancke examines how religion becomes the protagonists' refuge to maintain a home-like identity in a Western world. He claims that religion "functions as an antidote to the crisis of identity brought about by the traumatic" experiences (p, 4). He avers that the negotiation of/between identities (local and global) reaches its climax when both protagonists, in the abovementioned novels, engage in romance with young Muslim men. Najwa, for example, learns how to resist glocality in the presence of Tamer. She also chooses 'Muslim' as an identity for herself. In the same direction as Tancke, the present thesis

examines how “love” affects self-images and identification. Yet, unlike this article, our thesis focuses on traumatic childhood experiences instead of migrant traumatic encounters to project how early experiences outgrow the protagonist’s identity and lead into self-loss and confusion.

Assia Djébar’s collection of short stories focuses on gender identity in post-colonial Algeria. It speaks of domestic abuse, femicide, patriarchy and gender inequality. This work can be considered holistic as it studies these troubles post-independence and during the black decade (it captures the evolution of the problem at different decades). Endless articles and research has been conducted on Djébar’s *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, *The Mischief*, and *Children of the New World*. Other essays study the writer’s ideology and political stance in general like Mary Jean Green’s *Assia Djébar in the Twenty First Century: Rewriting Identities*. Yet, very few essays and articles have been written on *The Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry* which makes it challenging to back up my analyses, and locate my work within other research. It is however important to note that the novellas from the aforementioned collection were and are taught at American universities in a separate manner. My thesis examines all novellas at the same time which makes it a precedent. Moreover, it is the first time a PhD is conducted on this collection worldwide.

Bhakti Shringapore, in *Assia Djébar: Scheherazade, Storyteller*, describes Djébar as the voice of all silenced Muslim women. She examines *Women in Pieces*, a short story from *The Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry*, and demonstrates how brutal women were abused and violated in Algeria in the 1990’s and in Baghdad in the 1900’s. Shringapore studies two intertwined plots emerging in the short story: *Three Apples* (from the *One Thousand and One Nights*) and Atyka’s (the Arabic teacher teaching it). The short story retells the murder of a wife in Baghdad by her husband who cuts her in pieces, wraps her in a white veil, and tosses her into the Tigris river. Atyka meets the same fate, but not by her husband, but rather

by a group of extremists. Although both women die in the short story, narration and storytelling continue by a student of Atyka's. In fact, Atyka's spirit haunts the city persistent on telling the murder story. Shringapure claims that Djébar's work addresses misogyny aiming at silencing women to death. That is to say, she considers the murdering of the Arabic teacher as a symbol of repression and silencing. Moreover, she touches on Djébar's personal life and argues that the writer was attacked for her 'bourgeois individualism' i.e. choosing to write in French and not Arabic. Yet, she ends her electronic article by saying: "I would ask for Djébar to be remembered for something very simple—for being the Scheherazade of our time, for making storytelling the most important, human and life-giving of all activities. May she rest in power."

This thesis examines the before mentioned novella, but rather focuses on the language aspect creating conflict and crisis within the Algerian society. It also tackles misogyny not only through the murder scene but through the teacher-student interaction and Atyka's life outside school in general.

Amy Snyder Ohta, in her article "*The Shadow it Throws*": *Assia Djébar's The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry and Algeria's Attempted Islamic Revolution (Spring 2012)*, examines Algeria's history of settlement and colonialism from the 7th century to the 21st that are essential to the understanding of the identity struggle in Algeria post French colonialism. Ohta identifies and scrutinizes the divide among the Algerian population: Algerian elites retaining much of French culture and language, and Arab speakers with strong anti-French sentiments. She examines how the Algerian President Houari Boumediene, ex- freedom fighter and chief of the FLN during the Algerian war, aspired to re-establish an Algerian Arab Muslim identity through *de-frenchifying* administrations and school systems. She examines how the latter triggered tension among Algerians in the late 1980's which resulted in a civil war in the 1990's with the FLN's outset of the FIS.

This work sheds light on Assia Djébar's affiliations post the 1970's and the identity she projects through her works. In fact, Ohta references Evans and Phillips to demonstrate how literature, produced in the language of the colonizer "indicates a large weakening of the nationalism of ideology". She illustrates how the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) targeted Francophone and Berber intellectuals from writers to teachers. In this context, she claims: "Djébar epitomizes the sort of intellectuals the GIA targeted in her novels, poetry, plays, short stories and even film".

Assia Djébar's *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*, pictures the violence of the 1990's in Six of its short stories. However, the seventh one examines colonialism and how both Algerian women and men were violated by the colonizer. Djébar treated, almost, the same themes in her short stories: "Women's oppression, displacement, and fractured identities torn between Arabophonie and the Francophonie". Ohta examines only three of Djébar's short stories: *Burning*, *The Woman in Pieces*, and *Felicie's Body*. She projects how Djébar illustrates the hybridity in the Post-colonial Algerian culture and contends that "all that is live in Algeria...is always in a constant bilingualism, or trilingualism with a living dialectical Arabic, with Arabic and Berber, with Berber and French" (Rice qtd in Ohta). Djébar, according to Ohta, does not promote any ideology in Algeria. She just aims at illustrating violence practiced upon women, and laments Algeria's fate post-independence.

This thesis argues that Djébar's work shows that the Algerian identity is in a continuous identity conflict influenced by monolingualism. Most importantly, it demonstrates how the female struggle is deepened by the Arabicisation policy that gave rise to extremist groups. Our work not only treats the inferiority and abuse of women in the 1990's, but it also examines and projects Djébar's intention (by writing the lives of Algerian women): raising awareness and affecting a social change. Most importantly, this PhD dissertation argues that Assia Djébar demonstrates how fluid the Algerian identity is on the one side, and how this

crisis will continue to exist if no language reconciliation is achieved in Algeria. In other words, this thesis sees Djébar's work as an attempt to reach a linguistic armistice to end the linguistic clash, and thus the sufferings of Algerian identity.

In *The Blood of Writing: Assia Djébar's Unveiling of Women and History*, Hafid Gafaiti supports Mildred Mortimer's study of Assia Djébar's works. He endorses Mortimer's argument and argues that scrutinizing Djébar's works entails the examination of her own upbringing and development as a woman (p, 813). Furthermore, Mortimer argues that Djébar challenges patriarchy through writing as she becomes the subject instead of the object. Gafaiti explores the social and political contexts in Algeria to highlight Djébar's position and experiences. He argues that the writer snatches her freedom through writing. She also gets to revisit Algerian history as a counter discourse to French colonists and phallogocentric beliefs post-independence. Gafaiti reports that: "All of Djébar's novels are thematically centred on the women who disengage themselves from the traditional world of patriarchy and the domination of women by men" (p, 814). The whole work looks into mechanism of writing that help Djébar denounce colonialism, neo-colonialism and authoritarian discourses upon independence (p, 822). In this manner, Djébar's works unveils the truth and presents her audience with a feminist version of history.

This PhD dissertation stresses the importance of context in understanding Djébar's position and writing mechanisms. It mainly focuses on literary devices—such as symbolism—that Djébar utilizes in her counter-narrative. This thesis also sees Djébar's work as a call for gender equity and a reconciliation of identity.

3. Thesis Statement

This thesis begins with the assumption that minority women, regardless of their background, undergo a triple displacement. The protagonists are inferiorized by society, but the crisis generated by mothers and fellow women outgrow the damage caused by patriarchy

and colonial systems. This work inspects how the female adult self is undermined by same-gender relationships. It also proposes that the protagonists' quest of identity is marked by 3 milestones: colonial impact on childhood, love and patriarchal influence on the adolescent girl/young adult and same-gender relationships' effects at adulthood. We argue that the female adult attempts to reach an acceptance of self and regeneration of identity is butchered through her engagements with other women. We also maintain that these protagonists assert their identities when they unchain themselves from all dependency bonds to society and individuals which also intersects with the stability of their environments.

This doctoral dissertation begins with the assumption that environment unsettles our protagonists' identities and cage them in a struggle between crisis and re-generation of self. That is, our protagonists' identities are a reflection and production of society. The crisis the characters experience also mirrors the instability in their milieus. Furthermore, this work examines family's and society's contribution in women's displacement and fluid identities since childhood. Most importantly, one of the central critical premises of this study is to showcase how childhood crisis—generated by family and environment—governs and alters our protagonists' process of self definition. April and the protagonist in *Oran, Dead Language* experience identity disorder due to prejudices and traumatic colonial experiences encircling them. Najwa's identity, on the other hand, is dictated upon her which engenders crisis when the environment changes at adulthood. Accordingly, we exhibit how identity crisis is intertwined with internal and external environments.

This thesis is also an endeavour to show that the final self is constructed out of a number of identities—such as ethnic, Muslim, migrant, female, etc.—negotiating and taking agency towards a mature self. The final self has always existed in the background and has been nurtured by experiences and interactions. In this way, one of the identities occupies more space and emerges as the final self without suppressing the other identities. In our

research, the gender identity rules the other identities and incites more trouble. Accordingly, the protagonists' process of development is disturbed as April, Najwa and Djébar's characters do not overcome their gender inferiority which hinders moving on to next stages of growth. When the latter is addressed, each of the protagonists establishes a different identity than the gender one. April embraces her Native identity, and Najwa chooses Muslim as her identity. However, as the problem is not settled in Djébar's work, none of her characters establish a unitary final self.

This thesis argues that Assia Djébar, Beatrice Culleton and Leila Aboulela not only write the female's struggle of self assertion, but they also write as a means of political resistance. The evolution and demise of their protagonists' identities directly relate to the political settings in their countries. Accordingly, they write to overturn the dominant social and political discourses. *In Search of April Raintree* was first published in 1983—a year after the Canadian reconciliation programme of re-establishing a Native identity. The work is mostly read as a historical account of Métis struggle in Canada before 1982. Yet, this work sees it as a representation of an evolution of the Métis self (from childhood into adulthood) through the different Canadian constitution acts. *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* was published in 1997 at the height of the Black Decade. In this manner, this collection of short stories is also perceived as record of femicide and women's struggles in Algeria—particularly in the 1990's. This thesis, however, focuses on the effect of colonialism and French and Arabic monolingualism on the development of women's identities. Finally, *Minaret* was first published in 2005 at the end of the Second Sudanese Civil War. This literary work is divided into six chapters taking place between 1984 and 2004. Critics focus their research on the construction of a Muslim self in the Metropolis of London in *Minaret*, whereas our work centres attention on the conflicting of ideals, environments and thus identities. We also contend that these writers link final identities to political realities. In this manner, Najwa and

April reach a self-acceptance and establish mature identities (stable interior affairs), while Djebbar's characters remain in crisis due to the unsolved linguistic clash in the 1990's.

This thesis attempts to answer six important questions: 1. Does environment generate identity crisis in the female individual? 2. Do childhood experiences govern the female adult's life? 3. Do unresolved crises from childhood and adolescence impede the establishment of a healthy self at adulthood? 4. What are the factors contributing to women's fluid identities? 5. Do women define themselves through social relationships? 6. Are our minority writers writing to champion the female cause or are they writing as a means of political resistance?

4. Selection of Texts

In Search of April Raintree is a reference book in Native writing. In a precedent, Culleton narrates the struggles of Native children and women in Canada before the 1980's. Her work can be considered as the first Aboriginal writing that records abuse and rape scenes of these categories at length and in depth. On publication, the novel was well received by most readers and it still is until the present time; this is since middle-class feminist movements began to speak of the abuse of women and children in the late 70's and early 80's (Grant, p 237). Moreover, Canada started a movement of reconciliation with First Nation people, at that time, to reconstruct the national Native heritage and identity. These two factors contributed in the success of the work on a national and international level. In fact, the book has been revisited by Culleton for school use i.e. it has become part of the Canadian syllabus.

In agreement with Grant, Culleton's production is peculiar in that it delves—contrary to other Native works—into the abuse of April as an infant and an adult (p, 238). It covers a big part of the adult's process of development from childhood into teenagerhood and adulthood. Considering the scope of our research, the novel serves our thesis well as it

covers the whole process of investigation in the target environment. In a nutshell, Culleton's work allows a thorough investigation of the identity crisis of Native women in Canada.

Aboulela, through her first two novels mainly, introduced a new literary trend. *The Translator* is regarded as the first 'halal fiction' since it focuses on faith issues and cross-cultural relationships. *Minaret* adds 'the feminist' dimension to this genre by addressing women's concerns in Sudan and the diaspora. Accordingly, the latter attracted scholarly attention over the last decade. Critics, however, centred their research only on migrant female Muslim selves post 9/11. This work is of great relevance to the present research because it does not only examine Muslim female matters in migrant atmospheres, it also captures women's struggles in their native entourages. That is, it projects the protagonist's trackway of development from Sudan to London. *Minaret* permits a study of the evolution of the female's identity between these two opposing environments, and hence it helps us locate the origins and evolution of crisis. On this account, Aboulela's novel is chosen for this thesis.

The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry captures the situation of women in Algeria during and post-independence. In the opening novella, Djébar depicts the evils of colonialism on the Algerian identity in general and women in specific. Some of the other short stories narrate women's fears in the 1990's amidst feminicide. Moreover, the collection also looks into mixed marriages and the struggle of French women married to Algerians. Djébar's work treats the female's struggle in its broader context which gives our research a wide scope of investigation to examine female crisis in Algeria. It also offers a historical overview of the reality of Algeria post-independence which allows a thorough understanding of the protagonists' mindsets and self-struggles.

Lindsey Moore, in *Assia Djébar (1936-2015)*, writes a homage to Djébar in which she attests that the English-speaking world remains ignorant of a writer who won the Nobel Prize in literature in addition to many other awards and achievements (p, 252). There has been

some interest in Djébar's work in Europe and America in the last decades, yet the Arabic and Algerian world, using Moore's words, is ignorant of a key feminist and anti-colonialist writer. In this direction, this collection of short stories has been selected for this thesis to provide readers and scholars with axes of research and interest.

5. Methodical Approach

This PhD dissertation employs the comparative approach. The latter does not only allow a thorough inspection of the affinities between the writers' identities, it also highlights the divergences in selves and factors contributing to such disparities. The comparative approach allows us to dig into the protagonists' early environments and bring to surface conclusions regarding 'early crisis drives.' It also reinforces our hypothesis that minority females are triply displaced by projecting and drawing on Najwa's, April's and Djébar's characters' experiences. That is, this approach gives value to our research as the findings from comparison serve well our arguments. Moreover, towards the end of the novel, Culleton's and Aboulela's protagonists assert themselves and reach a final identity contrary to Djébar's. Comparison underlines the role of domestic political situations in the evolution or demise of identities. In other words, the protagonists' identities take the same direction as their domestic political position. Timely speaking, Canada starts a treaty to restore Native identities in the 1980's and so does April at the end. The same thing applies to Najwa. Sudan splits borders and the two opposing ideologies take parts and so do the Western and Muslim values in Najwa's identity. At the end, she rests on the Muslim self. Yet, the clash of languages is ongoing in Algeria which leaves Djébar's characters nowhere. They are neither mere Arabophones nor Francophones, and hence their identities remain fractured and immature.

The comparative approach permits an inspection of and comparison between the different stages of development while, at the same time, analysing the protagonists' processes

and tools of self-definition from childhood into adolescence to adulthood. This in itself helps in locating identity between crisis and regeneration which is the central theme of this research. This being said, the comparative approach controls the flow of our documentation and guides us towards the targeted results and conclusions. It is also important to mention that this thesis follows a block by block comparative approach to perfectly highlight the affinities and differences in the self quest experiences in the three novels.

The complexity of this research lends itself to a mixed approach of theory and analysis. A close look at theory in the three analytical chapters enable us to clearly manifest the identity crisis arising in the novels and at the same time backing up our hypotheses and analysis. This research takes, to a certain extent, a psychological route which may create some ambiguity if the ideas are not paired with the corresponding theory. Thus, I mix between the two to link the problem treated in my research with earlier theories and works. In this way, our arguments are strengthened by pertinent theories that also give room for an analysis in depth.

6. Theoretical Approach

Identity is a very vast question that can be studied from different perspectives. Our research however limits its borders to feminism, postcolonialism and child development. In this regard, we adopt essential theories to scrutinise the question of identity in this research. Simon De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* lays ground to a feminist reading of the novels. On the other hand, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* and Ngugi WA Thiongo's *Decolonizing The Mind* permit postcolonial analysis of the identity problem examined in this thesis. Finally, Erik Erikson's works serve as a good reference to analysing the human cycle of development. Yet, Sigmond Freud, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky complement Erikson's hypothesis and findings, and most importantly, they cover the loophole in his theories.

Accordingly, we shall show how all these theories serve our arguments and demonstrate the protagonists' process of self-definition.

In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir goes through a holistic exploration of the gender trouble. She starts her book by a historical overview of the problem (gender inequality) then delves into an explanation of such practices from different perspectives: biology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, and mythology. She then refutes prejudices attributed to the woman against her gender and presents her own justification of the existence of this sex discrimination. Our research adopts, mainly, De Beauvoir's fourth chapter where she exhibits how inferiority is fed—by society, teachers and mothers—to girls from childhood into adolescence.

De Beauvoir counters Aristotle's assertion that women are inferior by virtue of their biological nature and claims that history and mythology have defined the woman as the man's subordinate. She stresses that women are confined to a female role dictated upon them by patriarchy and not the physiological structure of her uterus. In fact, in this work, De Beauvoir places the blame on society with much focus on teachers and mothers. She explains how the little girl is taught into a 'feminine servitude', a term she connotes, by her mother first and then is reinforced by her teachers later. She also delves into the mother-daughter relationship to demonstrate how mothers project their inferiority on their daughters and enchain them with societal expectations. This indeed is how gender inferiority is transcended through generations from mothers to daughters and granddaughters. De Beauvoir highlights how these beliefs affect the young girl's process of self-definition and often generate Freud's the Electra complex.

Freud claims that girls between the age of 3 and 6 undergo the Electra complex (in the Phallic stage) where they become on the one hand more attached to their fathers and on the other hand more hostile to their mothers. He explains this as the 'Penis Envy' i.e. the little

girl notices her genital and how different it is from the boy's and starts to envy it. De Beauvoir partially denounces this view and justifies it differently. She states that the little girl does not envy the boy for his genital or any of the functions that comes with it as per Freud, but rather envies the power that is attributed to it. She demonstrates that the difference in treatment, rights and duties given to boys—in contrary to girls—by their mothers, teachers and society generate feelings of inferiority, jealousy and confusion. In this way, De Beauvoir's work helps in highlighting this kind of envy and inferiority our protagonists go through from childhood into adolescence and adulthood. It illustrates how Najwa, April and Djébar's characters undergo their first identity crisis at an early age. It also portrays how this crisis is grown by the different secondary female characters (like social worker for April, Dr. Zainab for Najwa and Lala Salma for Isma) in the novels. That is, it demonstrates that women are their first oppressors.

Erikson's *Identity and the Life Cycle, Childhood and Society, Identity Youth and Crisis* complement well De Beauvoir's the girl's cycle—as I call it—from a psychosocial perspective. He suggests a psychosocial developmental stage a child goes through from childhood to adulthood in their process of identity question and formation. He argues that both girls and boys go, to a certain extent, through the same process of development. However, according to his theory, the male is biologically equipped to reach maturity and a stable self before the female. The latter, on the other side, is biologically equipped to bear children and thus is intuitively prepared to protect her 'inner space' rather than seeking outer accomplishments like men. He also adds that girl's process of identity formation is characterized by the fear of being empty or emptied. That is to say, the girl grows fearful of not having her inner space occupied (pregnancy) which is the main trait that defines her role as an individual i.e. she is no one if not a mother. Thus, the female concentrates her efforts on getting married which automatically limit her horizons and dreams.

The present research utilizes Erikson's inner space theory to demonstrate how girls and women constraint their ambitions, dreams and identities to a child-bearer only. Moreover, combining De Beauvoir's explanations and Erikson's theory helps us to see how our protagonists internalize prejudices and roles attributed to them by society and then enclose themselves in an obedient wife/mother role. Najwa and April, in the early stages of their lives, do not seek to accomplish dreams of their own, but rather dream of starting a family and becoming mothers as per the inner space theory. Again, these dreams are social constructions. Najwa's mother talks her into marrying to a decent man after she graduates, and this is how it is internalized. April however sees marriage as the only escape route of her inferiority, and this is again because her social workers predicted The Native Girl Syndrome⁵ destiny for her. Accordingly, marrying a white man becomes her priority.

In his stages of development, Erikson submits that each stage is marked by a crisis that if not resolved the individual's development is hindered and the crisis continues to grow in the subsequent phases. For example, the play age (age 3 to 5) is defined by the Initiative Vs Guilt psychosocial crisis. In this stage, children interact with children mainly through play. Here they start to develop initiatives, make up games and even take decisions. If the later is encouraged, children's confidence boost and more initiative and creativity take place and hence they move in the direction of establishing a healthy self. If they are criticized, a sense of guilt mountains the child and thus their development is disturbed and fractured. Some of Erikson's stages allow us to better comprehend how our protagonists' crises continued to evolve and how they were not able to assert themselves through their early stages of development.

⁵ Mrs. Semple, April's social worker, tells the Raintree sisters off for running away from the DeRosiers' house and tells them that this is how the Native Girl Syndrome starts. It starts by feeling a victim, and then running away, and then prostitution and alcohol!

Like Freud, Piaget introduces four stages of development but that focus on the intellectual growth as opposed to Freud. The main concept we adopt from Piaget's theory is egocentrism. He suggests that children in their process of development fail to separate themselves from others i.e. they think that everyone thinks and sees the same things they think and see. Vygotsky's stages of development emerged as a reaction to Piaget's. He suggests that children need some formal support to be able to achieve certain tasks what he calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In other words, if children receive adult support, they can reach higher levels of thinking and thus achievement. Egocentrism and the ZPD can be applied in our research to show how April for example internalizes chauvinistic connotations (the children in the park, on the school bus and at the DeRosiers think she is dirty and bad and so she must be—egocentrism) and how Cheryl with the support of her foster family manages to do well in school and to develop pride of her heritage. All of the above theories help us to track our protagonists' process of development and self-definition each from a different perspective which makes them complementary to each other.

Our research examines the effect of colonialism on our protagonists' identities. Fanon's and Ngugi's works permit a meticulous exploration of the problem. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon offers psychological explanations of the inferiority complex resulting from colonisation. He speaks of the black man and how undermined he feels by the white man. He also explains how language is an instrument the black man uses to feel equal to his master. Most importantly, in this work, Fanon explains that the black man internalizes prejudices attributed to him by the white man—what he connotes 'self-enslavement.' This work helps us highlight how our protagonists absorb prejudices attributed to them and how they enslave themselves based on that. It also projects instruments, like language, our characters use to try and surpass their inferiority complex. In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon

speaks in depth of the Algerian community during and post colonialism. This work is very pertinent to our research as it helps us measure the Algerian identity against Djébar's work.

In *Decolonising The Mind*, Ngũgĩ narrates the evils of colonialism on children and society. He also talks about the effect of colonial language on identity loss. This work permits us to show how colonialism affected April's, Najwa's and Djébar's characters in their early childhood. Most importantly, it shows, as per Ngũgĩ, how the post-colonial generation was brainwashed to hate its origins and yearn for anything that is colonial. This work complements Fanon's as it demonstrates in more depth how language is a weapon colonial power used to assert cultural hegemony over the Native culture. This can be used to trace our protagonist's mastery of the other's language and how much the foreign language defines who they are.

7. Statement of Organization

The first chapter focuses on the protagonists' childhood experiences and their influence on identity formation. It examines how colonial and post colonial environments instil inferiority complexes and identity crisis. To be precise, the chapter projects how Canadian and Algerian governments govern the protagonists' self perceptions at childhood. It also demonstrates how colonialism continues to govern the colonized self through Najwa's identity and delayed crisis. Most importantly, it showcases how language and colonial schools unsettle the protagonists' quest of identity and generates crisis of self. In other words, this chapter concentrates on the childhood experience and colonialism. That is, how colonial environments (including language and education) hinder the colonial female child and adolescent from locating themselves in their environments, and thus they endure self-crisis episodes that continue into adolescence and adulthood.

Childhood experiences are the backbone of our first chapter. In this respect, we also inspect the role of family in developing the protagonists' identities at childhood. That is, we

depict how family can either prevent or trigger a crisis of identity. First and foremost, we centre our research on mothers' and female figures' effect on identity establishment. In other words, this chapter illustrates how colonial and patriarchal societies produce an inferiority complex that is later intensified by female figures' influence on the protagonists' self-images. These together deepen the identity crisis at adolescence and restrict April, Najwa and Djébar's characters from asserting their identities in these societies. Finally, the chapter ends with a delineation of the link between childhood crisis and the adult identity struggle.

Chapter two studies our protagonists' crisis and self-regeneration at adulthood. It treats the theme of love and how it temporarily helps the protagonists to overcome their childhood crisis. In other words, it demonstrates how April, Najwa and Isma define themselves through their husbands or partners. We thus reflect how childhood dependency and inferiority is transcended into adulthood. Most importantly, we project how concepts instilled in the protagonists in adolescence by female figures (feminine servitude and vocational role) continue to feed their identities in later stages. We also demonstrate how the final self is connected to earlier stages and crisis.

The same chapter stresses the contribution of female characters in the demise of our protagonists' identities as adults. That is to say, we display how the same-gender inferiority butchers any attempts of self-assertion at adulthood. Again, we shed light on the dependency element indoctrinated since childhood in Najwa, Isma and April i.e. after they dispose themselves of men; they define themselves in relation to women surrounding them. Additionally, we display how 'Home' continues to fragment the protagonists' identities. At the end, we present the characters' tools of self-acceptance and regeneration of different identities inspired from their entourages.

Chapter three treats the writers' feminist position and discourse. It highlights the importance of writing—in their context—as a means of overturning dominant, social and

political discourses. In other words, we examine how Culleton, Djébar and Aboulela write to champion the female cause in their countries and to challenge patriarchal discourses. In this chapter, we also study the literary devices (like symbolism) these writers utilise to refute gender discrimination and the undermining of female identities. We thus justify how the selected novels are exemplary of the gender trouble and identity crisis in the three selected environments.

Chapter One:

The Influence of Female Figures and Childhood Environments on April's, Cheryl's, Najwa's, Ourdia's and Tounsia's Primary Identities

Introduction

In Search of April Raintree and *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* project the protagonists' traumatic childhood experiences which eventually define their identities at adulthood. April Raintree is discriminated against her race by children at the playground, on the school bus and even foster siblings. Furthermore, she is patronized and looked down at by most of the adults surrounding her including social workers. Most importantly, women figures around her expect of her to go down the 'Native Girl Syndrome' path. The latter refers to Aboriginal women who drop off school, become alcoholic and drug addicted and eventually live through pregnancy and prostitution. We can see that April was set to fail as an adult before even going through the normal path of childhood development. On the other hand, some of Djébar's protagonists are marked and confused by colonial experiences at an early age. Others are repressed from living their childhood and adolescence by their society, especially mothers. These experiences combined constitute the base of these children's psyches and lay the trajectory of their adult selves.

In *Minaret*, Najwa enjoys a comfortable and stable childhood. Yet, everything is planned for her, and along family lines she moves. In other words, all of her choices were made for her and she was not given enough room to experiment with her outer world to locate and identify herself as per the normal childhood development cycle. Thus, when her 'set up' world/path collapses, she fails to adopt or assert an identity of hers. In retrospect,

Najwa did not go through her childhood stages of development which were/are vital to her adulthood self.

In this direction, it becomes necessary to examine childhood experiences and cycles of development to better understand the protagonists' crises at adulthood as both stages are intertwined. In other words, understanding and locating childhood crises explain the protagonists' state of in-betweenness at adulthood. Furthermore, it will enable us to discern the depth of crisis, and thus comprehend the complexity of self-regeneration for our protagonists. This again urges us to mix between theory and analysis to clearly illustrate and clarify the identity crisis examined in this thesis.

First, the present chapter investigates Erik Erikson's view of women—and in our case, the female protagonists—as biologically prepared not to thrive for mature identities. He claims that children, boys and girls, go through the same psychosocial developmental stages⁶ to adulthood. However, differences in their biological and psychosocial features affect their quest for identity at some stages more than others. These alterations shall be discussed fully later in this chapter. In fact, Erikson argues that males are better equipped—biologically and psychosocially—to achieve mature identities whereas females are biologically prepared to bear and deliver children. That is, women intuitionally protect their 'inner space' instead of seeking outer accomplishments. Accordingly, we shall inspect the pertinence of this standpoint through the examination of our three corpora.

Second, this section inspects the influence of society and feminine figures on our protagonists' identity formation. For this reason, we shall rely on Simon De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to carry out our investigation. This is because De Beauvoir scrutinises identity

⁶Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development include trust vs. mistrust, [autonomy](#) vs. shame/doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, [intimacy](#) vs. isolation, [generativity](#) vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair. Read more here : <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/teachereducationx92x1/chapter/eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development/>

through the male-female dichotomy, and even further through the feminist and the male-identified woman (the woman who defines herself solely through the man she is in relationship with). In fact, her work can be a very significant extension to Erikson's work—in the present research. She looks at the identity struggle through the gender-trouble, and expands on how women's biological nature, later in their adulthood, gives society room to control females' self-concepts. Her work also projects how women themselves contribute to each other's crisis in their process of self-definition. In light of this, De Beauvoir's concepts need to be paired with analysis to visualize social and feminine impacts on our protagonists' identity construction.

Third, our work also examines how the environment affects and shapes the identities of our female protagonists. We shall utilise a mix of theories to clearly project the latter. Yet, the leading works are Erikson's, Fanon's and Ngugi's. In his *Identity and the Life Cycle*, Erikson argues that identity is “both formed and manifested through social relationships” (p, 116). This statement influences the present research to investigate more the gender-trouble (that shall be chiefly studied from De Beauvoir's perspective) through the social interactions a woman experiences throughout her self-definition. These relationships include family and friendship—for the time being. Society or environment, on the other hand, affects identity. Given the fact that the three protagonists were raised in colonial and post-colonial environments, there is a need to look at colonial effects on self-definition. In fact, Franz Fanon, in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, claims that colonialism drags the individual into a constant struggle between identity and crisis. Moreover, in *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi asserts that imperialism governs people's perceptions of themselves even after independence. Along these lines, theory strengthens our analysis if matched together.

Fourth, this chapter probes into the repercussions of childhood experiences on the female's adult self. Erikson's *Childhood and Society* projects how early experiences

influence final identities at adulthood. That is the nature of experiences the child undergoes (positive or negative) besides the support they receive—mainly from parents and the surrounding environment—shapes either a healthy or unhealthy personality which continues to develop into adulthood. In fact, Erikson describes this relationship between childhood experiences and adult personalities as follow:

Every adult, whether he is a follower or a leader, a member of a mass or of an elite, was once a child. He was once small. A sense of smallness forms a substratum in his mind, ineradicably. His triumphs will be measured against this smallness, his defeats will substantiate it. The questions as to who is bigger and who can do or not do this or that, and to whom—these questions fill the adult's inner life far beyond the necessities and the desirabilities which he understands and for which he plans (p, 364).

It becomes clear that the adult keeps their childhood experiences, throughout their lifespan, which either pushes them forward or pulls them back from asserting a unitary identity of their own. That is, adults keep most of their childhood experiences in the subconscious which eventually affect their decisions and lives.

The present research demonstrates how childhood encounters shape our protagonists' identities at adulthood by applying some of Erikson's concepts. In this direction, we shall emphasise on the individual-society interaction to locate the origins of identity crisis. Trauma is a minor concept this thesis looks at, again through Erikson's work. He argues that some adults develop amnesia towards traumatic childhood memories. However, trauma remains in the background of the grownup's life. Moreover, he emphasises that the child's fear accompanies them throughout their life which in return jeopardises their maturity as adults and of course their work and accomplishments (p, 365). In that same context, Susan Brison asserts that 'trauma constitutes a fundamental threat to identity. It undoes the self by breaking the ongoing narrative, serving connections among remembered past, lived present and

anticipated future’ (quoted in “*Original Traumas*”: *Narrating Migrant Identity in British Muslim Women’s Writing*, P2).

The forthcoming pages examine how identity crisis starts at an early age by applying Erikson’s development theory. In his eight stages of development, Erikson attributes a source of crisis to each stage of growth. For example, the binary of initiative and guilt, in the play age, leads to a crisis in a child’s life. The present thesis looks at the relevant stages to this research—infancy, adolescence and adulthood, employs Erikson’s stages, compares them to the emerging crisis in the protagonists’ lives and, finally, locates the origin(s) of identity confusion.

This work probes into the protagonists’ crises from different angles to achieve a holistic analysis of the identity question. This is achieved through inspecting the conflicting theories of development. Erikson and Freud, for instance, track the process of self-definition from birth to old age, each emphasising different cycles: a psychosocial development cycle Vs. a psychosexual one—respectively. In their works they scrutinize how identity manifests and how a self-confusion is triggered in each stage. The protagonists in the three novels, mainly April and the anonymous protagonist in *Oran Dead Language*, project the identity confusion they undergo in their childhood which continues to haunt them into adolescence and adulthood. On the light of this, we shall examine how these protagonists viewed themselves as children and what factors contributed to their crisis of identity from both cycles of development.

The present chapter uses Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin White Mask* and *A Dying Colonialism*, and Wa Thiong’O Ngugi’s *Decolonising the Mind* as chief references. It also relies on close reading, analysis and comparison to demonstrate the affinities between the three female experiences. As justified in the general

introduction, the present thesis uses a mixed approach between theory and analysis to better point the origins of the identity crisis examined in this work.

1. April's Identity between Emergence and Crisis: The Effect of Childhood Environment on Self-images

April, at the age of five, starts noticing differences in her entourage. She observes that there are two types of children: 'White' children and children of her colour. On the ground of this, her journey of self-definition starts triggering much confusion and rejection to reality. She depicts these two categories as follow:

There were two different groups of children who went to the park. One group was the brown-skinned children who looked like Cheryl in most ways. Some of them even came over to our house with their parents. But they were dirty-looking and they dressed in real raggedy clothes. I didn't care to play with them at all. The other group was white-skinned and I used to envy them, especially the girls with blond hair and blue eyes. They seemed so clean and fresh, and reminded me of flowers I had seen. Some of them were freckled but they didn't seem to mind. To me, I imagined they were very rich and lived in big, beautiful houses and there was so much that I wondered about them. But they didn't care to play with Cheryl and me. They called us names and bullied us (p,15).

It is abundantly clear that April perceives people of her colour (from same heritage) as inferior, backward and dirty, while on the other hand she sees the white children as superior, beautiful, clean and rich. On the ground of this, April's rejection of her identity and her pursuit of the 'white dream' starts. It is also conspicuous that these perceptions in a child's mind come from deep-rooted prejudices in the Canadian society at that time. In other words, April's environment was hostile towards her process of development and self-definition. Accordingly, an identity crisis emerges earlier than professed by the different cycles of development.

April's first identity formation experiences manifest at the age of five. In lieu of developing a sense of belonging to her community, April's self-denial and rejection of heritage starts to build. It is the environment that shapes an inferiority complex in April's

self. It is important to look at the development cycle at this age to understand and locate the identity crisis in April. She, in fact, falls within the 'school age' as per Erikson's and Freud's⁷ development stages. According to the psychosocial model—Erikson's, this stage is characterized by the antithesis of *industry*⁸ Vs. *inferiority*. The child begins to develop notions and concepts of love, play and learning. To be more precise, the learning encompasses norms and techniques that are in compliance with 'ethos of production' (*The Life Cycle Completed*, p 74). That is, the child picks up—from social relationships—values and skills that permit an effective self-association with others, and therefore a positive contribution to the small and wider community. In their *Supporting Kindergarten Children's Social and Emotional Development: Examining the Synergetic Roles of Environments, Play and Relationships*, Gill Kirk and Jenny Jay assert that through social interaction with family, friends and even through involvement in the mother culture, children reinforce a sense of belonging through the embedded social values, and thus, develop their first self-image (p 474). If we look back at the quote in the previous page, we can understand that the values that are spread around April negate her identity and heritage. She grew up in an environment that condemns Natives and *Métis* people which eventually transcends feelings of rejection to her own community. In other words, April's entourage disturbed her cycle of development and brought forth an early identity crisis centred on the question of the self and the other.

April's crisis occupies all her childhood experiences. She is aware of the division between White Canadian and Natives, and is constantly comparing between the two groups. In this context, Erikson argues that 'crisis' is an inevitable element in each stage of development. He adds that for the child to adopt a healthy self and to continue his growth in a

⁷The Psychosexual cycle stands as a Pioneer theory that influenced all subsequent development theories. In the phallic stage (age 3 to 6), the child develops an awareness of his genitals and therefore develops a complex towards the opposite gender. Children in this stage tend to identify themselves with the same sex parent. For further details, read here: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psychosexual.html>

⁸Industry refers to society and community i.e. at this stage, the child starts to learn social conventions (first identification with the outer environment i.e. developing a national identity).

natural way, on all levels, the crisis needs to be solved before moving to the next stage. Otherwise, it will extend into adulthood. In his *Childhood and Society*, he asserts that the fear of identity loss “is left in each individual from the mere fact of childhood. In this emergency masses of people become ready to seek salvation in pseudo-identities” (p, 372). This, in fact, is exactly what April undergoes from her childhood until adulthood. Her struggle to overcome the childhood crisis grows bigger in adolescence and then adulthood. Her childhood is marked by all the white kids who surround her nativeness (the white children in the playground, the DeRosiers children (her foster siblings) and white kids on the school bus and in her classes). That is, her encounters and environment keep her engaged in a self- struggle negotiating between spaces and environments (White Vs Native). In fact, to better understand this struggle, we need to look closer at the *industry vs. inferiority* crisis arising at this stage of childhood.

The identity question provoked in April in the playground heightens when she starts schools. In fact, the milestone of self-development at this age is the school experience. Here, as per Erikson’s development cycle, the child begins to compare themselves to others, and they identify themselves in relation to others. That is to say, children start comparing their abilities and achievements to their peers, and on the basis of this they develop self-concepts. Furthermore, people’s opinions matter to the child and they affect how they see themselves. For example, children who receive positive feedback from adults or peers around them develop some confidence that helps them to succeed in their development. On the other side, children who receive negative feedback develop a sense of failure and inferiority that hinders their development. So industry refers to the child identifying themselves with a community and inferiority describes their feelings of inadequacy based on feedback and interaction received from the external environment. When living with the Dions, April develops positive self-images, and she is reconciled with her heritage owing to the feedback and support she

receives from her Family. When she moves to the DeRosiers, feelings of inferiority to the white kids at the playground surface back again as a result of the negative connotations fed to her.

At the very end of the aforementioned quote, April states that the ‘white’ kids who went to the park called Cheryl and her names and bullied them. This experience was the first to generate a sense of failure in April that made her feel inferior to the other group. In fact, the physical appearance of the girls that she depicts becomes the criteria to success: being equal and rich. As an exemplification, when April receives nice clothes in her first foster home, she says: ‘I saw that there were some more nice clothes for me and I was very happy. I thought now I was rich, too, just like those other white kids’ (p, 24). It is evident that the park experiences made April very conscious of her origins and differences which subsequently trigger a sense of non-belonging and unfitness in society. It is however important to note that ‘failure’ associated to this stage of development is more linked to achievements such as being able to draw or do some calculations, and not feelings of inferiority based on origins and race. In this direction, it becomes clearer that April’s cycle of development was shifted by its surrounding environment. In other words, we can observe the effect of environment on April’s identity formation. Her identity establishment was interrupted by bigotry around her, and thus she engages in a crisis of identity.

April absorbs the negative connotations enveloping her; hence she identifies herself as the other vis-a-vis the white Canadian children. To comprehend the damage caused by April’s early interactions on her identity development, we need to inspect other theories of development to cover a wider scope of analysis. Jean Piaget⁹, on the heels of Freud, distinguishes four stages of cognitive development. In the preoperational stage—the

⁹A Swiss psychologist who is most known for his ‘study of the acquisition of understanding in children.’ His works influenced the 20th century developmental psychology. For further details, read here: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Piaget>

counterpart of the school age, the child starts to interact with his surrounding environment—objects—to, on the one hand, locate their function in the world, and second, to work out how things around them operate. This interaction, indeed, affects their mental development (*Teaching Languages to Young Learners*, p 2). April's interactions hinder her from finding a place for her in the Canadian society which consequently affects her identity development. Furthermore, the child develops a sense of *egocentrism* i.e. they think that people around them must see, know, and think exactly the same way they do. In other words, the child fails to disassociate themselves from others. That is, April generalizes what she thinks of the white children and herself (Native people) i.e. she believes that this is how both categories of people are perceived in the Canadian society. In fact, although, Piaget's experiments focus on the progress of logic from pre-operational to operational, we can adopt his notion of egocentrism to demonstrate how April internalizes inferiority founded on what she thinks the world sees.

Before proceeding even further, Lev S. Vygotsky's¹⁰ sociocultural theory is worth mentioning in this context as it emerged as a reaction to Piaget's theory. His work focuses on how social interaction fosters a holistic development, put it precisely, how exchange between the adult-child and the child-child influences someone's development (*How Languages are Learned*, p 25). In effect, April's first interactions with her peers were very negative which generated feelings of inferiority. Moreover, her contact with adults was prejudiced as well which fractured more her identity and influenced her development. What is more, Vygotsky argues that all human beings are born with four elementary functions—attention, sensation, perception and memory—that the social and cultural milieu nurture to help the individual achieve higher intellectual functions. His central concept is the Zone of Proximal

¹⁰A Russian psychologist who founded the idea of cultural-historical psychology and is known for his contribution in the fields of Child development and cognitive psychology. Read more: <http://totallyhistory.com/lev-vygotsky/>

Development (ZPD)¹¹ meaning that children are more likely to grow and move to the next stages through support from family, friends, or educators. If support is not received, thought and abilities take longer to reach a level of maturity—as per the stage. This is correct in the case of April. She fails to locate herself within her community and she endures an identity crisis from childhood to adulthood.

If we take the concepts of ‘egocentrism’ and ‘social interaction’, we can better grasp the identity crisis that is deep rooted in April’s childhood. As a five-year-old child, April sees Natives and the mixed-blood population dirty, and she even refuses to play or get involved with them. She is aware she belongs with them—colour wise, but she chooses not to associate herself with this group of children. She wants to be identified with the white clean and rich kids she sees at the park. This desire comes from the negative interactions with children her age. She starts comparing her appearance and abilities to the first group of children—white folks. Comparison makes her understand that she will never be able to be equal or successful by virtue of her origins, and hence, she develops her first layer¹² of inferiority. Additionally, her perception of the other group of children makes her more convinced that aboriginals are dirty and filthy—as per her own description. This awareness leads to “self-enslavement” as connoted by Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin White Masks* where he states that the black man becomes his own oppressor for taking in prejudices

attributed to him by the white man.

April’s identity crisis emerges at an early age which entails a brief look at her childhood to fully picture and discern the fragility in her self-image and low self-esteem. At the age of five, she was placed in an orphanage, with her three-year-old sister, by the Welfare

¹¹In contrast to Piaget who argues that the child is an active learner who can develop by working out things on his own, Vygotsky believes that the child is an active learner in an environment full of people who can bring ideas and things to his attention. With the help of adults, children can learn much more than on their own. Source: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*

¹²I used the word ‘layer’ on purpose to hint that her complex is multi-layered and has many origins.

due to her parents' alcoholism. The entourage in the orphanage was as racist as the white kids in the park. Therefore, the feeling of inferiority keeps nourishing until it contains April in a later stage. The sisters get split up and put in different foster homes. Cheryl, luckily, gets to live with families tolerant to aboriginal people who, as a matter of fact, help the child embrace her heritage and develop a solid identity. April, on the other hand, lives one positive experience with the Dions before she gets placed in a very racist foster family—the DeRosiers. There, she is treated as a maid and is all the time reminded that she is a '*half-breed*' (a term the family uses to refer to Métis people). In effect, April undergoes lots of discrimination and maltreatment which made her long for school days hoping she could find refuge in school and make some friends.

Come school days, April's inferiority complex continues to grow bigger until it reaches a state of passivity. She speaks of her first bus experience and says: "There were a lot of kids on the bus already and being too shy to walk further I took the first empty seat near the front (p, 44). This declaration demonstrates that not only April is ashamed of being Native, but she also feels inferior to the white kids on the bus. Thus, she takes a front seat. The front seat in itself reflects April's helplessness and reluctance to face white prejudices. She continues on describing her school journey and depicts how the DeRosiers kids warned their friends from befriending her because she was a 'half-breed' and even had lice (p, 44). She could hear them giggle, calling her names but she "sat all alone in that seat, all the way to school, staring straight ahead, her face burning with humiliation" (p, 44). This again displays April's acceptance of 'white prejudices'. It shows her passivity and inferiority vis-à-vis her white peers. She endorses the negative labels ascribed to her and engages in a self-inferiority process.

It goes without saying that April's first interactions with the outer world were very hostile towards her identity which resulted in disappointment and inferiority. Fanon, in *Black*

Skin White Masks, stresses that even when a ‘Negro child’ has a normal family life, their ‘slightest contact with the white world’ turns them into abnormal’ (p, 111). That is, despite the support and strength a family can provide to their Negro child, they fail to maintain the positive images, in outer environments, allocated to them in the presence of white man. This exposes us to how vulnerable April is in face of the white world. She had suffered domestic alienation which qualifies her to passively assimilate racist connotations. We can say that she was equipped, from her foster home, to adhere to societal judgements and prejudices. Accordingly, she does not show any resistance or reaction to these negative experiences, on the contrary, she embraces them.

Accordant with all the previous theories of development, the crisis a child undergoes—at the age of five—is more related to concrete abilities and achievements. Put differently, children at this age, if ever they compare themselves to others, they compare themselves in terms of what they can or cannot do. That is, April’s struggles should have been around competences and abilities and not race and ethnicity. As children in April’s milieu project racist and prejudiced behaviour, it becomes necessary to scrutinise the society in which she was raised, and how racism hinders identity formation. In other words, it is not normal for five years old children to adopt chauvinistic ideas unless their society was racist par excellence. This indeed explains children’s behaviour in April’s milieu; they were constantly being fed prejudices against Native people.

April’s identity crisis is stimulated by early interactions with children her age and adults governing her life. She is directed towards a more complex question than her cognitive abilities. In actual fact, it is worth mentioning that Freud, as the leading figure of child development, argues that the first self-discovery experiences, from birth to the age of five, are centred on biological differences between girls and boys. That is to say, at the age of five, April should have been concerned with her sexuality as opposed to male counterparts which

did not happen due to the emerging environment. In other words, her environment did not open room for such a comparison or struggle to take place. Later, as per Freud, more complex questions arise such as position and status in family and then society. The three protagonists—April, Najwa and the multiple female figures in Djébar's—growing up somehow in the same environments, undergo these developmental crises in different orders. As the milieu calls forth a sense of non-belonging, the early struggles are related to community and not gender. In this way, we will explore the social role first, then the gender trouble second in an attempt to demonstrate how society controls the evolution of identity.

2. The Acculturation of Najwa's and Djébar's Character's Arab Identities: The Role of Colonial environments in Shaping Identity

Our protagonists' early identity formation occurs at colonial or post-independence environments. The latter promotes questions of the self and the other through the duality of 'superior' and 'inferior' race/culture. Accordingly, pejorative beliefs mushroom the target entourage including children's atmosphere. Ngugi, in his *Decolonising the Mind*, ascribes 'bigotry' as a 'child thought' to colonial endeavours to occupy the identity of the colonised (p, 15). He expands on this view by underlying that colonising the mind is crucial to dominating people's cultures and customs. He verbalizes this idea along the following lines:

[Colonialism's] most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world [...] Political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others (p, 16).

Taking into account Ngugi's observation, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the colonial desire to suppress the native heritage in Canada, for example, is deeply embedded in history books, schools' curricula, environment, etc. That is how such chauvinistic ideas found their way to children—according to theories of development—whose biggest issue would be around why they cannot draw well or be good at maths, for instance. We can

understand that the colonized child was cornered even at school. That is, April could not escape prejudices in school, but she was instead captured in them again. She therefore was guided to hate her heritage and submit to the superior race/culture.

April's self-concept, we can say, is shaped by colonial encounters. It means that colonial supremacy set Native groups as the other, and most importantly it manipulated their thoughts to viewing themselves as the inferior, dirty and savage. In this context, Ngugi, in the same work, demonstrates how children's self-images are affected by colonialism. He argues that the entourage surrounding 'the colonial child' urges him to "stand outside himself to look at himself" (p, 17). That is, the child is made to see himself through the eyes of the colonizer. He identifies himself as the superior culture defines him. If we review April's experiences at the park along with the school bus journey, we can see that she was made to see herself inferior. We can tell that she was raised in an environment that was determined to convict her Indian heritage and make her feel bad about her identity—which ultimately happens.

Najwa, on the other hand, illustrates this inferiority complex through her brother's eyes—Omar. Despite the absence of explicit reference to childhood experiences, statements made by her sibling as a young adult portray the everlasting effects of colonialism on self-perception. In the very early pages, she reports that "Omar believed [they] had been better off under the British and it was a shame that they left" (p, 12). These feelings of superiority and inferiority continue to project in latter stages. In another context, her brother shows submission to the ex-colonizer when all he listens to is Western music. Najwa explains this admiration as follow: "For my brother, anything Western was unmistakably and unquestionably better than anything Sudanese" (p, 131-132). It is apparent that Omar was made to think of his culture and himself as an individual inferior to the British one even when he belonged to the Sudanese upper class.

Unlike April, whose entourage made her very conscious of her position in society, Najwa grew up in an elite family, speaking English, going to the British club and travelling every summer to spend some time in their London house. To comment on speaking the English tongue, Ngugi argues that the colonized uses English as an instrument to reach colonial elitedom (p, 12). That is, Najwa's earliest identity was manipulated by colonial powers. Her family projected English for her as a means to become superior and to fulfil any feelings of inferiority that were once evoked during colonial times. Moreover, English was a benchmark of one's status in that society i.e. it differentiated between the different classes. Along the same lines, Fanon, in his *Black Skin White Masks*, justifies this phenomenon experienced by the 'Negro' as follow: 'Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still bare to him fifty years ago' (p, 25). In view of this, we can infer that Najwa's English education is an attempt to become equal to the previous master (British powers), and above all, it is an endeavour to become the new master or superior power. Language, in this way, influences identity formation and self-images.

By comparison with April, Najwa endured a stable childhood, and lived in an environment that encouraged the establishment of a healthy identity. To be more accurate, her process of self-definition was not interrupted by external factors. In addition, Najwa's mother's wealth and her father's title as a prime minister brought lots of advantages to her life. She had a very easy and stable childhood where questions about her role, class or position in society were never triggered. She lived by the upper-class standards and followed a normal cycle of development. In fact, growing up in a post-colonial Sudan with Western standards reflects the extent of 'the brain-wash' that has been exercised over the Arab-Muslim country. In the same perspective, Fanon accounts that the Negro elites are very

conscious of their inferiority which urges a drive, in them, to become equal to their European counterparts by behaving in accordance with their norms:

The Negros' inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly. Their way of doing so [...] is frequently naïve: "The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style, using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions, using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements" (p, 14).

This is indeed what Najwa grew up doing: wearing short skirts instead of *tobes*¹³, going to the gym, the British club, etc. She also grew up in a Western house with Sudanese and Ethiopian servants. All of this, for her parents to feel superior and equal to their Western fellows. It becomes conspicuous that Najwa's identity—despite her stable entourage—was influenced by the colonial inferiority complex, and it developed in this direction.

In Canada, Métis people were not considered one of Canada's indigenous people by the Constitution Act until 1982. This conveys a picture about the struggles of Native people, like April and her family, in their process of self-definition. Sharon Smulders, in her article "*What is the proper word for people like you?*": *The Question of Métis Identity in In Search of April Raintree*, devotes a whole section for the disadvantages of being a Métis in Canada before 1982. She notes that the Canadian government denied Aboriginals from the right of land, and only Indians were privileged to this right. More acts—like The Manitoba Act of 1870¹⁴--and movements—such as the Red River Resistance of 1869¹⁵ and the North West

¹³The national costume of Sudanese women is called "toob" ("thobe", "thawb", "toub" etc.). It is a long wrap-around cloth worn on top of a shirt and skirt/trousers. It covers the body entirely. It can be made from cotton, satin, polyester, jersey, denim and other fabrics.

¹⁴The Manitoba Act of 1870 provided for the admission of Manitoba as Canada's fifth province. It marked the legal resolution of the struggle for self-determination between people of the Red River Colony and the federal government, that began with the purchase of Rupert's Land by Canada. The Act contained protections for the region's Métis. However, these protections were not fully realized, resulting in many Métis leaving the province for the North-West Territories. For more information, read here: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-act#:~:text=The%20Manitoba%20Act%20of%201870,of%20Rupert's%20Land%20by%20Canada.>

Rebellion of 1885¹⁶--renounced many of the mixed-blood population rights. Smulders, in this context, expresses: 'By the turn of the century, the *Métis* had lost their land, their status, and their pride. As a nation, they were defunct' (p, 78). This has resulted in turning this ethnic group into a minority dropping from 82% in 1870 to 7% in 1887 (p, 78). It becomes clear that the Native and Métis identity were condemned to fail and disappear. Subsequently, it was difficult for children like April to find any positive images about their ancestors that would allow an adoption of the Native identity.

April's family, contrasted with Status Indians, was unprivileged, and thereby led into a double alienation and inferiority complex (inferior to white Canadians and Indians). That is, the Métis identity suffered more damage. To sum it up, being an Aboriginal before 1982 meant having no economic independence and thus no social status. The laws in Canada made Native people very unprivileged compared to other ethnic groups and the white people. The capital gave Indians a respectable position in the Canadian society, and it put mixed blood at disadvantage which in return heightened the inferiority complex. The same thing somehow applies to the Arab language speakers in Sudan and Algeria. They were made inferior by virtue of not speaking the other's language. Language closed various opportunity doors to *Arabophones*, and opened many others to speakers of foreign languages who, as a result,

¹⁵The Red River Rebellion (also known as the Red River Resistance) was an uprising in 1869–70 in the Red River Colony. The uprising was sparked by the transfer of the vast territory of Rupert's Land to the new Dominion of Canada. The colony of farmers and hunters, many of them *Métis*, occupied a corner of Rupert's Land and feared for their culture and land rights under Canadian control. The Métis mounted a resistance and declared a provisional government to negotiate terms for entering Confederation. The uprising led to the creation of the province of Manitoba, and the emergence of Métis leader Louis Riel — a hero to his people and many in Quebec, but an outlaw in the eyes of the Canadian government. Read further: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/red-river-rebellion>

¹⁶The North-West Rebellion (or North-West Resistance) was a violent, five-month insurgency against the Canadian government, fought mainly by Métis and their *First Nations* allies in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta. It was caused by rising fear and insecurity among the Métis and First Nations peoples as well as the white settlers of the rapidly changing West. A series of battles and other outbreaks of violence in 1885 left hundreds of people dead, but the rebels were eventually defeated by federal troops. The result was the permanent enforcement of Canadian law in the West, the subjugation of Plains Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and the conviction and hanging of Louis Riel. Read further: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-rebellion>

could make their way up the ladder. In other words, Arabic speakers could not get the same positions and the same social and economic status, and language was the chief instrument of hindrance.

Najwa, as opposed to some of Djébar's protagonists, was linguistically privileged. The mastery of English enabled her family to take high positions—her father was the prime minister—which implies an economic independence and comfort. This is reflected in her speech to Omar while they were recalling childhood memories: “How did we learn how to skate? I can't remember!” I laugh—children from hot Khartoum coming to London every summer—walking into an ice-skating rink in Queensway as if they had right to be there. Money did that, Money gave us rights” (p, 94). This is, in some way, similar to the advantages the Status Act brought Indians; it empowered them. Money empowered Najwa's identity, and saved her from an early crisis in her childhood compared to April.

On the other side, colonialism influences some of Djébar's characters' identities differently. Instead of generating a linguistic/racial inferiority complex, colonial experiences alter the children's environment and push them to mature. The anonymous protagonist in *Oran Dead Language* summarises her childhood experiences in the following way: “My childhood lasted for ten years, ending when my parents died” (p, 20). Unquestionably, the protagonist articulates how severely her parents' death affected her development putting an end to her childhood, and consequently lifting her up to a teenage, if not an adult, stage. To comprehend more this influence, it is important to take into account the circumstances in which the child was raised and how her parents were killed. The child grew up in a colonial environment to freedom fighter parents. Meaning to say, she was raised in an unstable environment where her outer environment—Frenchman—and inner one—Algerian patriots—negate each other.

The child's fractured identity can be viewed through her relationship with the French language. She went to a colonial school and had a French education, and she was indeed forced to hate the French powers, at the same time, since they murdered her parents. This alternation between identities and languages is portrayed in the following lines when the child mourns her parents' death: "Maman!" I called her by the French "Maman"—she who was assassinated by the French" (p, 15). This reflects the child's acquisition of the French education. It also demonstrates her consciousness of embracing a language whose masters caused damage to her life; nevertheless she is incapable of disassociating herself from this language. It becomes obvious that, at least, at this stage of her life she detested French powers. However, later on, she expresses longing for moving out of Algeria towards Paris. This puts us in front of an early crisis between two fluid identities. She represses the French powers for killing her parents and ruining her childhood; but she also wants to escape her country to France. This is similar to April's identity crisis to a certain extent. Colonialism forces April to reject her identity, whereas it makes this protagonist escape her own heritage and identity. That is to say, the colonial experiences alter the child's definition of home after her parents' death. In other words, France becomes the 'new home' due to the cultural and linguistic assimilation at school. Since French was the language spoken at home and with her parents, the protagonist associates 'home' and herself with the French language and country. In this respect, Ngugi argues that "language, any language, has a dual character. It is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (p, 13). If we apply this on the protagonist, French powers exercised a cultural and linguistic hegemony over herself and country. It is true that she absorbed the French tongue, but she still behaved by the Algerian norms. That is, her identity was partially contaminated by the French language which caused her frustration.

To understand the depth of this identity contamination on the protagonist and Algeria, it is necessary to reiterate some of the laws that France implemented in colonial Algeria to extinct all forms of Arabism. Dr. Labid Imad, in his article on *French Attempts to Obliterate the Algerian Identity During Occupation*¹⁷, lists the various French policies starting by the Clauzel Resolution of June 12, 1830 to the Call of March 5, 1954. The Clauzel Resolution falls under the Christianisation policy where France seized all Islamic endowments, first, then executed more anti-Islamic measures like destroying mosques and turning them into churches and military barracks, considering pilgrimage as a means of religious fanaticism, and subjecting the Islamic judiciary to the French Law (p, 6). Illiterateness and cultural imposition was another policy aimed at fragmenting the Algerian identity. To list some, The Decree of October 18, 1892 banned the starting of any Arabic school without an authorization from the French government. This incorporated showing obedience and loyalty to the colonial administration. This decree was followed by more laws banning the teaching of Arabic, Quran, the history and geography of Algeria like the Law of December 24, 1904¹⁸, the Resolution of March 08, 1938¹⁹, the Resolution of July 02, 1945²⁰, and finally the Call of March 05, 1954²¹ (p, 10,11). These policies, in fact, explain why the nameless protagonist in Djébar's *Oran Dead Language* speaks the French tongue, at ease, at the expense of her native one. The Algerian language—namely written Arabic—was exterminated by the turn of the century. The majority of the population spoke and wrote fluent French as opposed to Arabic.

¹⁷The article is written in Arabic, all quotes from this work are self-translated.

¹⁸It bans all teachers from starting a school to teach the Arabic language unless they have an authorization from military officers in their district. Conditions to get an authorization compromised the teaching of only Quran without any explanation of its meaning especially the verses about Jihad in addition to no teaching of the history of Algeria and its geography, and of course the teacher should express faithfulness to the colonial government (from Dr. Labid's article, p 10)

¹⁹It considers the Arabic language as a foreign language in Algeria and thus it forbids teaching in schools.

²⁰For Arabic teachers to be recruited in the schools that were established, it was a must for them to master the French language. France knew that Arabic teachers do not speak the foreign language, and hence, this resolution aimed at eradicating the teaching of Arabic and disabling the efforts of teachers of Arabic.

²¹It bans the teaching of Arabic in primary school fearing the Arabisation of the country, and on the basis of this call Arabic was divided into 3 categories (Dr. Labid, p 11).

Language brings confusion to the protagonist's identity as she is aware of this subjugation. Nevertheless, she passively accepts it. This is because her environment was set to take colonial influence. As a matter of fact, Malek Bennabi in his *Islam in History and Society* makes a distinction between “a country simply conquered and occupied and a colonized country;” the latter had lost its own cultural bearings and internalized the idea of the inherent superiority of the colonizing culture” (p, 53). This, to some degree, applies to Algeria during and after independence. The protagonist portrays Algerian people who internalised the French language by reason of ‘colonisabilité’²². However, it is important to note that despite the colonial reforms to frenchify the Algerian identity, the colonized culture remained superior due to the nation's resistance. Contrary to language, Arabic was contained and the French language dominated all spheres. The protagonist's speaking of French—even when she is conscious she shouldn't be speaking that language—illustrates the linguistic effects on her identity. She is incapable of thinking or expressing herself outside this language. This again establishes why the protagonist yearns to move to France.

The child's reflection on her usage of French to mourn her mother misleads us to think that she would adopt the same anti-French feelings as her parents. Notwithstanding, by dint of her education and childhood environment, she dreams of ‘departure’ in her teen years. Algeria becomes foreign to her and she feels unfit in society. She describes her city and says: “Yes, everyone forgets in my city. After three days, maybe three months, let's say [...] Forgetfulness immerses these places. As soon as I was able, I left my city, where memory effaces itself or merely dissolves into the furies of the soul” (p, 13). Here, we can say that the fourteen year old protagonist is haunted by the memories of the death of her parents. She is unable to forget their tragic murdering by the French which instigates feelings of escape from

²²A term coined by Malek Bennabi in his *Vacation de L'Islam* to project how Algeria and many other Muslim countries 'declined culturally and intellectually to a stage where colonialism becomes a "historical necessity" » (qtd in *Black skin white masks*, viii).

the city—that constantly reminds her of those traumatic incidents. She observes departing ships from her terrace and becomes more conscious about her desire to leave Algeria. She describes this longing as “grips of a violent urge to leave” (p, 13). Eventually, at the age of eighteen the protagonist moves to France. Her aunt thinks that she moved for studies, whereas she “was going away forever, she had decided. As a negation of people, of places, of things (p, 14). It is evident that the protagonist leaves Algeria to abandon traumatic experiences, and seeks refuge in a new country to construct new memories.

It becomes apparent that language influences the protagonist’s perception of home and herself. In short, the French language disconnects the child from her society, and it connects her to the colonizer’s culture and community. First and foremost, the protagonist becomes unable to disassociate traumatic colonial experiences from the milieu of occurrence. That is, she affiliates trauma with her country, and finds refuge in the colonizer’s language and hence country. We can observe how language brings confusion to the protagonist’s identity and hinder her from asserting her national identity.

Language governs the protagonist’s definition of self. Her country and language become foreign to her which eventually generates a crisis of identity. She represses colonial powers for the damage they caused to her life, and she holds negative feelings against her mother country too. We can observe the impact of language on the protagonist’s identity from childhood into adolescence. In her parents’ lifetime, she develops strong bonds with Algeria. After their murder—which symbolizes the murdering of the Arabic language by French colonials—she builds stronger ties with the colonizer’s language and country. Homi K. Bhabha in his *Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition*, on Fanon’s tongue, asserts that the Algerian was completely depersonalized from all traits of Arabism and thus was made an outsider to his mother country (p, 113). He adds that ‘the social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he

belonged' (p, 113). This summarizes the protagonist's feelings of belongings to the ex- empire. The cultural and linguistic imposition in Algeria displaced Arab customs, traditions and language, and it made them alien in their native environment. That is, it was almost impossible for the Algerian—during and post-independence—to assert a part of his identity that was bleached over a hundred and thirty-two years of eradication.

Djebar has chosen no name for her protagonist as a symbol of the fluidity or absence of a unitary solid Algerian identity. Like the character who has lost her parents to colonialism, Algeria lost part of its identity (language mainly) throughout the hundred and thirty-two years of occupation. Like the protagonist who speaks the French tongue and moves to French territories, the Algerian language utilises lots of French words in its dialect and copies a lot from the French system such as education. That being said, we need to look at how language affected identity formation in children's lives in colonial environments.

2.1.The Effect of Linguistic Hegemony on Najwa's, Atyka's and April's identity Formation

Language, in colonial milieus, affects children's tools of self-definition. It generates an inferiority complex in them and urges them to learn the 'superior' language. Armand- Karim, in *Félicie's Body*, narrates that on his visits to his father's home town—Oran, Algeria—the neighbour's children show off with their ability to speak French: "When I go out, once a day at least, the kids in the nearby streets come up and greet me. They're all happy to show me that they speak French (they still learn it in school, after Arabic)" (p, 191). This is what Fanon describes as the black man's endeavour to become white (p, 25). He claims that the Negro "who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is" (p, 25). That is colonialism generates an early inferiority complex in the colonized child and compels them to acquire the colonial language in an attempt to become equal. This is why children around Armand/Karim spoke French around

him. As he is partially French and lives in France, he is superior to these kids. Thus, they speak the language to establish a certain equality not to feel inferior. In fact, children who speak French enjoy a certain superiority against their Arabic-speaking peers which again reflects the linguistic inferiority generated by French in colonized children.

Another example of this linguistic inferiority can be seen in *The Woman in Pieces*. Atyka's parents spoke Amazigh as a first language and Arabic as a second one, but they could only study in French at the colonial school. She however chooses to earn her university diploma in French despite the Arabicisation reforms post-independence. The following surprises her father: *"I'm surprised," her father told her. "You so good in Arabic...I saw you in Arabic linguistics, in Islamic exegesis, a specialist in Muslim law...but what do I know ?"*²³(p, 99). Despite her good command of her mother tongue, the protagonist finds more comfort in the French language as it was the language that inhibited her home and surrounded her childhood. We can understand this from her mother's statement: *"Leave her alone," the mother said to him. "It's obvious that she hears us laugh and argue in what? In French! It's we two that she loves in this language"*(p, 99). It becomes conspicuous that French maintained its position by independence as it remained in the background of people's lives. That is, the new generation was raised by parents and teachers who mastered French more than Arabic. Accordingly, the Algerian identity post-independence remained linguistically contaminated. In other words, French continued to govern (for at least a decade) people's tongues post-independence as they were raised and educated in French, and thus the old generations transcended the language to the new ones.

Najwa's identity experiences the same linguistic subjugation as Djébar's protagonist. The English language exercises hegemony over Najwa's self; she therefore works on acquiring the language. In fact, this linguistic hegemony and its influence on the Sudanese

²³These quotes come italicized as Djébar wants to show the dual characters and plots in her story.

identity can be observed in an exchange between Najwa and the president of Sudan. She tells that, as a child, she was very fond of the English language. She would, in every possible occasion, try to verbalize her thoughts in this language. However, this was not welcomed by the president. She says: “Once, years ago, when I was in primary school, he phoned and when I answered I said “hello” in a very English way [...] the president got angry and he said, “speak properly, girl! Speak to me in Arabic””(p, 16). In fact, before answering the phone Najwa confesses that she had a romanticizing moment where she imagined a phone in her palm and mimicked herself saying “Hello, 44959”. This encounter partially answers’ Ngugi’s question in his *Decolonising the Mind*: “So what was the colonialist imposition of a foreign language doing to us children?” (p, 16). We can perceive the influence of the foreign language on children’s self-images and identity. Language establishes an inferiority complex and urges the colonial child to adopt the master’s tongue. Actually, this exchange between both Najwa and the president reflect the conflict between languages in Sudan and identity. That is, the Sudanese identity was—like the Algerian one—linguistically contaminated. On the other hand, the president’s reaction represents post-independence reforms to assert an Arab Sudanese identity—similar to the Arabicisation policy in Algeria.

It can be seen through Djébar’s and Aboulela’s characters that the colonizer’s language was pulling the colonized child further and further from themselves to other selves, from their world to other worlds (Ngugi, p 12). We can apply Ngugi’s view on our protagonists as they spoke the colonizer’s tongue and hence developed ties with the ex- colonizer’s culture. Djébar’s protagonists choose to migrate to France or earn a degree in French whereas Najwa feels superior in her English tongue, and spends her time and holidays in British clubs or on British lands. This is what Kwame Nkrumah²⁴ describes as Neo-

²⁴President of Ghana between 1960 and 1966. He utilized this term in the 1963 preamble of the Organisation of African Unity Charter to describe how neo-colonialism continues to exploit countries, in all aspects, even after independence.

colonialism where, after independence, the ex-colonizer continues to govern the psyches, politics, and economies of the ex-colonized. That is, the protagonists are psychologically trapped in a feeling of dependence to imperial powers, and they are unable to connect with their national identity.

The experiences of Beatrice's characters, with language, are different but complementary to Djébar's and Aboulela's encounters with the other's language. Unlike Najwa and Atyka, April grew up in an environment where her native language ceased to exist a century ago. English substituted her first language, and in English she studied literatures that disowned her existence as an individual. Therefore, April learns to reject and despise the Indian history and culture. This can be observed in her reception of Cheryl's gift—a book about Louis Riel²⁵—for her birthday:

I knew all about Riel. He was a rebel who had been hanged for treason. Worse, he had been a crazy half-breed. I had learned about his folly in history. Also, I had read about the Indians and the various methods of tortures they had put the missionaries through. No wonder they were known as savages. So, anything to do with Indians, I despised. And here I was supposed to be part-Indian. I remember how relieved I was that no one in my class knew of my heritage when we were going through that period in Canadian history.” (p, 44-45)

It is evident that history books and school curricula were designed to heighten hatred towards natives and mulattos in Canada. Therefore, when April—the Métis child—meets these chauvinistic labels, she automatically starts to hate the native heritage and thus her native identity. That is, the identity crisis triggered at the park and on the school bus is intensified by history books in school. Accordingly, at an early age, April did not have a chance to develop any positive images towards her identity.

²⁵was a Canadian politician, a founder of the province of Manitoba, and a political leader of the Métis people of the Canadian Prairies.^[1] He led two rebellions against the government of Canada and its first post-Confederation prime minister, John A. Macdonald.

April's self denial matures at school due to colonial syllabi. She is forced to see herself and heritage through the colonizer's perspective which ultimately results in denial and submissiveness to the colonial culture and identity. In this regards, Ngugi clarifies that colonial endeavours to conquer the culture of the colony involves the invoking of a sentiment of rejection to the other since childhood—and it is mainly achieved through literature (p, 17). The colonial child, in this case, perceives the world through the literature written by the white man against their being. Ngugi expands on this point by saying that the child is made to '[see] oneself from outside oneself as if one was another self [...]' but obviously it was worse when the colonial child was exposed to images of his world as mirrored in the written language of his colonizer' (p, 17-18). This is exactly the case for April. Any possibility to develop a Native identity was jeopardized by the school content about her own people. Therefore, she was persuaded that Natives were savage and uncivilized, and hence she did not want to associate herself with any of these negative images and connotations.

April's identity crisis is common among colonial children. The environment raises questions of the self and the other, and urges the colonial child to question themselves. Like Ngugi, Fanon speaks about this self quest from a different perspective. In *Black Skin White Mask*, he discloses the problem of black children in the Antilles that the magazines they read are written by white men for white children: "In the magazines, the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians" (p, 113). April goes through the same experience. Her school history books narrate the Native revolutions and uprising from a white biased prejudiced perspective which again eradicate any chance of a positive establishment or embracement of the Native self. Fanon also explains that "since there is always identification with the victor, the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary "who faces the danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes" (p, 113). This partially explains why April

yearns to associate herself with white people and rejects her heritage. She sees Aboriginals as villains and does not want to relate to them.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that these negative depictions of the colonized make the colonial child disconnect themselves from their community and seek refuge in the colonial culture and language. We can say that colonialism deprived colonial children from pursuing a normal cycle of development, and it centered their attention on questions that are bigger than their cognitive abilities—racism, alienation and inferiority. In this way, the colonial child fails to locate their social role in their mother society, and thus experiences an early identity crisis.

April's identity is not only affected by the external environment, but also by her foster-home experiences. The latter denied her Métis identity and discriminated her against it. Cheryl, however, embraces her Aboriginal identity with pride despite all the pressure coming from her entourage and schoolbooks to loath her heritage. That is because her experience with her foster family was positive. She lived among white people who respected the Indian and Métis decent, and even encouraged her to research and read about her history. The healthy home atmosphere did not numb Cheryl's curiosity and criticism of the situation in Canada. In fact, it made her speak up for herself, and hence, she did not allow the 'other' make her feel inferior or savage. Her reaction to her history teacher is a good illustration of this:

If this is history, how come so many Indian tribes were wiped out? How come they haven't got their land anymore? How come their food supplies were wiped out? Lies! Lies! Lies! Your history books don't say how the white people destroyed the Indian way of life. That's all you white people can do is teach a bunch of lies to cover your own tracks (p, 45).

It becomes conspicuous that family plays a crucial role in preventing questions of identity and inferiority from arising. Cheryl, thanks to the positive home atmosphere, adopts her

Native identity and develops a fierce character. April, on the contrary, rejects her heritage and seeks a 'white identity'. This can be observed through April's reaction to Cheryl's gift— as seen above. She lived with racist white families who made her conscious of her identity all the time. Thus, she learned to hate herself and her heritage.

The colonial child's identity—and in our case Najwa's, April's and Djebbar's protagonists'—is perplexed by conflicting languages, interactions and environment. Erikson's *Industry Vs. Inferiority* psychosocial crisis is triggered by the nature of feedback received from the child's surrounding environment. If their initiatives are supported and encouraged, they start to feel industrious. If their behaviour or initiatives are discouraged, they develop a feeling of inferiority. April and Cheryl exemplify this theory. April shrinks into a submissive self and Cheryl proudly adopts her Métis identity. Similarly, Vygotsky's *social interaction* concept stresses the role of exchange in the child's development. Furthermore, Piaget's theory acknowledges the importance of the child's experiment with the world to discover their role and locate themselves in society. His *egocentrism* concept, however, claims that children are unable to disassociate themselves and their thoughts from society. That is, if they commit a mistake and think ill of themselves, they tend to think everyone else thinks the same thing of them. This being said, the crisis children are naturally destined to undergo in infancy are sandwiched between competences and position in society (mainly family, school, teams). Nevertheless, the colonial child goes through another level of crisis: an ethnic crisis. Thus, these theories of development overlook colonial children and the damage caused to their growth by their external and internal environments.

3. The Evolution of the Gender Identity between Formation and Demise in Adolescence in Minaret, In Search of April Raintree, and Non-Return Returns

Our protagonists' identity crisis transcends into adolescence, and it develops more complexes related—mostly—to biological changes. In fact, according to the Freudian theory,

the gender question is the earliest form of identity crisis a child can encounter. Yet, in the case of our protagonists it emerges later. To achieve a better understanding of the complexity of the protagonists' identities, it is essential to bring forth important concepts that showcase this self frustration.

As noted earlier, our protagonists' process of self definition is twisted by colonial environments. As a result, their identity development experiences a disorder—in terms of crisis and self-questions. In the Phallic Stage (age 3 to 6), Freud asserts that children begin to notice the biological differences between both genders. In this way, girls develop a strong attachment to their fathers, while boys develop strong links with their mothers. At that phase, girls develop the *Electra Complex*²⁶ and boys develop the *Oedipus Complex*²⁷. Freud argues that, for girls, the *Electra Complex* is never fully solved, and hence, young girls remain fixated on this stage through adolescence to adulthood. Looking back at our protagonists' earliest identity crisis, we can see that their earliest self-questioning cantered around the colonized vs. the colonizer question and not on the gender one i.e. our protagonists' identity construction do not comply with this theory of development. April compares herself to the white children at the park and on the school bus; the *Oran, Dead Language* protagonist and Atyka are caught between two languages and spaces in their process of self-definition; Najwa, on the other hand, is fed the British language and culture to attain superiority.

In normal circumstances, our protagonists should have been engaged in constructive communications with their surrounding environment. The latter would have enabled them to locate themselves in society, and thus establish their primary identity. Our protagonists, in their milieus, were the centre of discussion; yet, they were not included. In other words, they

²⁶Freud describes this complex as a 'penis envy' where the girls wishes to have the same biological organ as the boy, and this involves functions like urinating while standing.

²⁷The young boys possession feelings of his mum and desire to suppress the father who, if he discovers these intentions, will castrate the boy which Freud calls the castration anxiety.

were the centre of discrimination and inferiority, but they were not given the opportunity to voice their feelings or defend themselves. As a matter of fact, Freud claims that in the Latent Period, children start to interact with people from their outer environment, and thus, develop a part of their identity (social and communication skills). Here, the child continues to develop their *ego*²⁸ and *super-ego*²⁹, and spends most of their time engaging in leisure activities and interacting with same-gender peers. Therefore, the sexual frustration—from the previous stage—is repressed here. Nevertheless, Freud states that some children get trapped in this stage which results in immaturity and inability to engage in successful relationships as adults. It is clear that interactions are crucial to the child's identity formation. In the case of April, for example, communications were pejorative and derogative which impacted her self-image. Moreover, she does not overcome the identity crisis she experiences at this stage which deprives her from building successful relationships as an adult. That is, her childhood identity crisis extends into adolescence and adulthood.

In adolescence, our protagonists' gender identity should have been attained, and focus should have been directed to merging the different identities together (gender, racial, etc.). Besides, in this Genital Stage—puberty to adulthood, sexual urges are reawakened and are directed towards the opposite gender (reconciliation with the opposite gender due to the establishment of the gender identity). Here, the adolescent endeavours to balance between different areas of life. According to Freud, the *ego* and *super-ego* are fully functional in this stage. However, if the child fails to transcend the complexes in the prior stages, they will never be able to reach balance and maturity in subsequent stages. The latter applies to our

²⁸According to Sigmund Freud, the ego is part of personality that mediates the demands of the ID, the superego, and reality. Freud described the ID as the most basic part of personality that urges people to fulfil their most primal needs. Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-ego-2795167>

²⁹The superego, on the other hand, is the moralistic part of personality that forms later in childhood as a result of upbringing and social influences. It is the ego's job to strike a balance between these two often competing forces and to make sure that fulfilling the needs of the id and superego conforms to the demands of reality. Source: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-superego-2795876>

protagonists. The racial/colonial complex from childhood is not contained, and hence it evolves more into adolescence and hinders other parts of the identity from developing.

As per the cycle of development, our protagonists should have experienced their ‘real’ identity crisis in their teen years. Nonetheless, owing to the circumstances they were raised in, they experience this identity confusion earlier than professed. In effect, Erikson affirms that scholars in general assume that only when the child develops their mental, social and physical skills—when they hit puberty—that they forego their first identity crisis. That is, prior than that, they are not expected to suffer any ‘self’ and ‘other’ questions. In this context, Erikson states: “We may, in fact, speak of the identity crisis as the psychosocial aspect of adolescence. Nor could this stage be passed without identity having found a form which will decisively determine later life” (Identity Youth and Crisis, p 91). In other words, crisis is a key feature of adolescence; experiences and realizations, at this stage, influence the adult’s identity, decisions and life. That is, crisis in adolescence is vital to the achievement of a final identity. Again, our protagonists do not respect this process of development, and hence they witness different crisis at different stages. It becomes essential to delve into the adolescence crisis—as per the theories of development—to better grasp the fluidity and complexity of the protagonists’ identities as adults.

The characters studied in this thesis endure a gender identity crisis in their adolescence and not in their childhood (as per the Phallic Stage). The latter is provoked by society and interactions with the other. Simon De Beauvoir, in her *Second Sex*, explains that society calls forth a gender crisis in women/girls. She argues that children, from early childhood, would hardly think of themselves as sexually differentiated; boys and girls view their bodies as an instrument to discover the world around them (p, 273). Moreover, they have the same interests and the same curiosity—especially when it comes to exploring their

bodies; in this way, the young girl, up to the age of twelve, demonstrates the same strength and mental powers as her brothers, which therefore, entitles her to be an ardent rival (p, 273).

Najwa, April and Tounsia embrace their gender role and identity at an early age. The latter, as per De Beauvoir, does not reflect the little girls' natural instinct to becoming a feminine figure and mother. It rather mirrors the "influence of others upon the [female] child [...] and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years' (p, 273-274). It is conspicuous that the gender role is imposed on the little girl since an early age. Accordingly, the majority of young women embrace an identity that was traced for them by the community. Similarly, April, Najwa and some of Djebbar's characters abide by the rules and adopt the identity imposed on them. In fact, such a societal imposition incites more crisis and inferiority that causes more damage to their identity formation.

3.1. April's, Najwa's, Ouardia's and Tounsia's Electra Complex: Patriarchy and the Gender Identity Crisis

April's earliest identity crisis revolved around racial differences. The child concentrated her thoughts on positions of powers which led to a denial of the native identity. The gender trouble, however, occurs at a later stage when April is accused of flirting with the DeRosiers men:

April, I've heard some disturbing things and I feel I should talk this over with you[...] Well, what I'm really trying to say is that you shouldn't be letting Raymond and Gilbert fondle you. From what I understand, you've also been trying to flirt with Mr. DeRosier [...] Perhaps it's not my place to be talking to you. But it's such a sensitive issue. I know you are doing well in your grades and I want to warn you that a pregnancy would disrupt your life' (p, 79).

To hide out for her children's attempt to kill Cheryl, Mrs. DeRosier accuses April of "fondling" with all men in her house. For this reason, April is lectured by the Home Care Counsellor about the possible consequences of her acts: pregnancy. Most importantly, she, solely, shouldered the blame for Raymond and Gilbert's fondling.

The Home Care Counsellor's discourse triggers a new existential question in April, and pressures her to notice another type of inferiority—gender. That is her identity crisis is complicated with a new ingredient while it did not recover yet. She reflects on the incident saying: “And had Raymond and Gilbert gotten that same kind of speech? Probably not. Only girls got pregnant” (p, 80). This was indeed April's epiphany moment that awakened feelings of inferiority based on gender. From here, April's identity crisis develops another layer of complexity: the gender trouble. This leads April into more introversion and denial as ‘pregnancy’ is attributed to Native girls. That is to say, Aboriginal girls are stereotyped of getting pregnant outside marriage. Here, April finds herself cornered with all Canadian labels which widen her identity crisis.

Najwa experiences the gender identity crisis in a later stage than April—at university. Like April, she was made to notice ‘her inferiority’ based on the gender differences. The latter raises—for the first time—self questions in Najwa. She recalls some adolescent experiences where her brother and herself had different privileges. She narrates: “Omar was allowed to smoke, and drink beer and I was not [...] He went to [seedy parties] without taking me. I had taken these things for granted, not questioned them” (p, 175). Here, Najwa realizes that she was sexually determined to behave in accordance with social conventions and expectations. She becomes aware of the gender inequality inherent in her society where men are allowed to sin, but not women. This can be more apparent in her account of Anwar's confession that “most of the guys in university used to visit brothels. Then they would beat up their sisters if they so much saw her talking to a boy” (p, 175). It is clear that Anwar faced Najwa with a gender identity she was ignorant of. His attestation engenders Najwa's first identity crisis. Henceforth, she develops inferiority towards the opposite gender which fractures her self-image. Ironically, even after this realization, Najwa resumes her feminine

vocation as she was not given room to discover or develop an identity of hers in an earlier stage of her life.

Najwa's late gender identity crisis obstructs her from pursuing a final identity. Most significantly, it stimulates a self-awareness regarding her identity i.e. Najwa becomes aware that her identity is a cultural imposition. Therefore, her identity question starts in early adulthood and is provoked by gender inferiority. According to Freud, the girl undergoes the Electra complex in the Phallic Stage, and she envies the boy for his anatomical figure which enables him to climb, fight, commit socially unacceptable mistakes, etc. De Beauvoir overturns this view by arguing that the girl develops such envy when she realizes that men govern the world (p, 276). The same matter applies to Najwa and April; their Phallic Stage is delayed until encounters of gender inferiority are triggered by society. That is, our protagonists overlook the gender identity/inferiority due to their entourage (colonial and discriminatory), and their attention is directed to questions of the self around race and position. Only when they are discriminated against their gender that their identity crisis involves questions around gender. In short, the (neo) colonial environment eclipses gender questions in childhood and affects the protagonists' process of definition.

Ourdia, in *Non-Return Returns*, experiences gender inferiority. Like Najwa and April, she shows no resistance owing to the cultural imposition of the feminine position on girls in her country at that time. In addition, like Najwa, she experiences this gender trouble as a university student which paralyses her identity from reacting (since this crisis comes deferred). In fact, Ourdia is home imprisoned because she 'brought disgrace'—as per the father—to the family by talking to a boy in the street. Her nameless teacher accounts how rumours reach Ourdia's father who decides to end his daughter's academic life; not only this, the father also "talks about "death sentences" with his wife" (p, 43). The mother on the other hand stands silent in front of the father's threat and decision. On the contrary, she feels

burdened by the father's disgraced anthem and becomes her daughter's guardian "so that the father's honour and the family name would be restored" (p, 43). In fact, the mother takes her own daughter's life to bury the "disgrace" she brought to her "father." The conclusion that can be drawn is that Ourdia stands as a family entity. Her life, fate and identity are decided by the supreme power—her father. She—nor her mother—has no power or right to interfere in the father's decision, and she is thus a production of society or patriarchy. That is, Ourdia's identity is mostly defined by her gender identity, and she passively conforms to conventions. Ourdia's story mirrors the biased roles and rights attributed to both genders in Algeria at that era that generate fractured female identities.

Gender oppression is a recurrent theme in *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*. In the same short story, Tounsia (one of the voices in *Non-Return Returns*) projects further how women are condemned into their social roles, by society, since infancy. She presents this gender inferiority from a different angle. Unlike Ourdia who could enter university and was cut out due to her 'disgrace' incident, Tounsia quit school despite her good performance in accordance with her father's wishes. She talks about her passion to school and how it ended because of her gender: "Why was it that one day, even though I was doing well in school, my father made a vow by God and his Prophet? Because of his promise, I had to stop going to school when I was fourteen! I was married six months later!" (p, 39). This, again, brings out De Beauvoir's theory that civilization sets the woman's fate the moment she is born (p, 273). This experience raises identity questions in Tounsia that she fails to answer or overcome due to patriarchy. She comes from the country side and Ourdia from the city; yet both girls/women receive the same fate. Their roles and identities are dictated upon them by society. We can understand that the female's identity—in Algeria at the peak of the Arabicisation policy—was condemned to the same fate: inferior and subject to male counterparts.

Najwa, on the other hand, experiences the same gender identity crisis in a less drastic manner than Ourdia, Tounsia and April. At university, she discerns that she is a social production and that her identity is not a personal construction. She endures an identity crisis initiated by the difference of treatment between her brother and herself. She narrates:

I know [my father] didn't think a lot about me, not because he didn't love me but because I was a girl and Mama's responsibility. He had detailed specific plans for Omar's future, while I was going to get married to someone who would determine how the rest of my life flowed (p, 78).

It becomes evident that the difference in future plans makes Najwa feel her inferiority compared to her brother. We can also observe that—in contrast to April—she goes through an identity crisis in a later stage—on account of the stability of her environment. This delay in crisis costs Najwa autonomy. She feels helpless in front of social dictations and submits to her destined role. In effect, we can also understand that Najwa's mother contributes to her daughter's inferiority by teaching her into an obedient and second role to men. We can induce the following from the mother's words: "Look after Omar, you're the girl, you're the quiet, sensible one. Look after Omar" (p, 13). It is clear that Najwa is taught into this caring and pleasing role in preparation for her future role (wife and mother). De Beauvoir renounces such behaviour and charges women with the guilt of burdening and caging their daughters' freedom and identities as children (p, 303).

Najwa is fed this gender inferiority from childhood into adolescence and adulthood. Accordingly, when she undergoes a gender identity crisis in Sudan, she quickly contains it because—through the years—she assumed her role as a woman and was ready to occupy her position without questioning. We can witness the following through her account of university days: "I was in university to kill time until I got married and had children. I thought that was why all the girls were there too but they surprised me by caring about their education, forging ahead with jobs and careers" (p, 102). It is clear that the ambitious university girls

represented a social mutation to Najwa. Social dictations make Najwa believe that women are all destined to occupy one role. Therefore, Najwa surrenders to her inferior role and embraces the identity imposed on her.

Najwa's passive identity reflects the profoundness of social effects on self development. She is convinced that her feminine role and position are the best fit for her. Therefore, she suppresses questions threatening this identity. Erikson, in his *Childhood and Society*, describes this docility as the girl's "fear of remaining empty or being emptied" (p, 370); her anatomic arrangements generate feelings of fulfillment as an individual, a wife, and a role-bearer. Therefore this "fear of being left empty" hunts the woman throughout her life; as a consequence, she either expresses full submissiveness to the male thought or willingness to possess him instead (p, 370). We can see that Najwa falls within the first category. She is raised into a wife role since childhood; hence she cannot think of herself outside this social role. We, therefore, can say that Najwa's identity is threatened by the absence of a male figure in her future. That is, her identity feeds from her dependency to a husband. Accordingly, she surrenders in front of the male thought, and accepts her position as a second-class citizen as described by De Beauvoir who, in the same direction, places blame upon the young girl's teachers and society for putting her into a passive role (p, 284).

Even when Najwa is given room to experiment with her identity, she still feels handcuffed to patriarchal commands. She is uncomfortable and unable to enjoy her space. This is illustrated through her interior monologue on the way to university: "I wished I could feel like an emancipated young student, driving her own car with confidence. Was I not an emancipated young woman driving her own car to university?" (p, 10). We can observe that Najwa does not feel comfortable with her independence. She is more accustomed to taking orders and abiding by the rules. Throughout this ride to university, she reminds herself that she is part of the thirty percent of girls who went to university, and that she is part of the the

minority of women who drove cars. She reminds herself to feel good about herself—she says (p, 10). Yet, she declared that “[she] preferred it when Omar was with [her], when Omar was driving (p, 10). Because she was taught into her dependent role, Najwa fails to act otherwise. She does not enjoy her moment of independency, and she is—paradoxically—instead anxious. This is because she was tamed to follow instructions and adhere to customs and conventions. This blind obedience deprives Najwa from establishing an identity of hers, and kills any opportunities of resisting the existent ‘defined’ self by society.

It is important to note that Najwa is partially responsible for her passive identity. It is true that society lured her into this role, but she did not show any objection. She (un)consciously accepts her identity and destiny. De Beauvoir clarifies this comportment by claiming that parents, teachers, literature, myths and society make the delights of passivity appear desirable to the young girl; “she is twelve years old and already her story is written in the heavens” (p, 301). The young girl absorbs all the temptations fed to her, and she internalizes her social role and duties more and more. In this way, her dreams never transcend marriage, and ambitions to be autonomous never see the light. Indeed, the little girl is chained to her fate and will never have the guts to reclaim her freedom. This, in fact, explains why Najwa fantasizes marriage and sees ambition in other women as bizarre. She was brain-washed from birth to believe that motherhood or wifehood is the best position for women.

Setting aside environment and society, our protagonists’ identity crises are intensified by their mothers. That is, mothers compel their daughters to accept their social role, and mute any attempts to develop independent selves. In this context, De Beauvoir asserts that mothers reinforce their daughters’ feelings of inferiority and dependence (p, 284), and in the case of Ouardia, the mother murders her child to silence people’s murmurs. In the light of this, we shall examine the mother-daughter relationship and its impact on identity formation. Since

April loses her mother at the age of five, there is nothing to say about her motherly experiences in adolescence.

3.2.The Mother-Daughter Relationship and its Effect on Najwa's and Ourdia's identity crisis and formation

Nancy Chodorow, in her *The Reproduction of Mothering*, argues that fluidity in female identities is a reflection of the mother-daughter relationship. She also claims that the bond they develop helps the young girl develop her gender identity positively. She, on the other hand, stresses the importance of the girl's separation from her mother to develop a mature identity (p, 6-7). Against this background, we shall examine how the mother-daughter relationship influences our protagonists' identities.

Ourdia, in *Non-Return Returns*, explicitly speaks of the effect of her mother's role on her self-assertion. She laments her mother's absence of support especially in her teen years, and says:

On this earth of dust and abyss—an abyss behind every look—mothers, our Demeters, no longer weep for their daughters, not if they are abducted or held captive. They are hardly there for them at all. Mothers do not cling to their daughters, nor push them forward when, from adolescence on, they hesitate to go forth. Mother...mostly encourage their sons—one minute to war, the next to nuptials (p, 34-35)³⁰.

It is clear that Ourdia wished to have her mother's support and guidance through her adolescence. It also seems that, as a teenager, she was lost and needed some orientation and push towards better dreams and goals but received none. Therefore, we can understand that the absence of such a presence caused or deepened, to be fair, Ourdia's feelings of incompleteness and lack of confidence mainly when the mother was in the shoulder of her

³⁰This passage is originally italicized because it represents the narrator's stream of consciousness. The flow of the plot is interrupted by the protagonist's scattered thoughts and feelings.

son—supporting him through his various endeavours. In short, the adolescent girl needs her mother's support to overcome crisis experienced at that phase of development. The absence of the mother, in return, fractures more the young girl's self.

Ourdia's grudge or crisis is deepened by her mother's dependency on her. In other words, Ourdia does not receive the support she needs from her mother, in her adolescence, to assert her self—which jeopardizes her identity. But, she is required to fill her shoes—which burdens the teenager's process of self formation. Ourdia presents this reality as follow: *"Mothers, at least on this southern shore [...] every mother searched for a defence, for a rampart in the face of her eldest daughter's silhouette or of the youngest one"* (p, 34-35). That is, mothers share their burdens with their daughters which eventually pull them back from pursuing their identity quest. This exposes us, again, to the role and responsibilities that are outlined for the female as a matter of her sex—to be a carer and responsible.

The mother-daughter relationship defines a big part of the girl's identity. In patriarchal/colonial milieus like in the case of our protagonists', this relationship causes more damage to the colonial girl's identity. In fact, De Beauvoir contends that the mother-daughter relationship is complex: "The daughter is for the mother at once her double and another person, the mother is at once overweeningly affectionate and hostile towards her daughter" (p,285). Ourdia's mother seeks refuge in her daughter when it comes to house chores, yet she murders her to protect her husband's honour. This duality in relationship is what De Beauvoir describes above. In fact, she adds that the mother "saddles her child with her own destiny: a way of proudly laying claim to her own femininity and also a way of revenging herself for it" (p, 285). It becomes apparent that the mother, feeling vulnerable, tries to make of her daughter a supporter to overcome her inferiority; she tries to turn her daughter into a copy of her. She teaches her into housekeeping and motherly roles (looking after her siblings). That is, the mother escapes her destiny through her daughter. She seeks the daughter's support and

sharing of tasks. This is what Ourdia portrays in the previous passage. The mother expects from her young or older daughter to alternate roles i.e. the daughter carries burdens and responsibilities in place of her mother—and here her cycle of development is again interrupted by these odd responsibilities. That is, Ouardia's self questions are paused by the new roles attributed to her by her mother.

Ouardia's identity, for instance, is governed by her relationship to her mother. She implicitly demonstrates that her identity—and the identity of many girls—is oppressed by their mothers. Along the same lines, De Beauvoir explains that the daughter is the mother's unique opportunity to stand as a sovereign being. Therefore, she exercises authority over her (p, 285). She pressures her to act in conventions. She even rids herself of some tasks and throws them on her daughter. In this sense, the young girl is deprived from her childhood, and she walks into the adult world. Therefore, she reaches adolescence as an adult. De Beauvoir depicts the young girl as "a child overburdened with work may well become permanently a slave, doomed to a joyless existence" (p, 289). This long-term exercise blinds the girl from seeing dreams and ambitions bigger than the ones settled for her. Najwa, waiting for marriage, is a good example of this. She cannot think of another future or fate for herself apart from wifedom. In other words, the girl fails to disassociate herself from her mother and societal thinking what Piaget describes as *egocentrism*—which consequently disturbs the young girl's identity formation.

A later incident explains more why Ourdia reproaches her mother for not supporting her. When Ouardia—as observed in the previous section—is seen with a man in public, and walled in by her father as she brought disgrace, the mother does not side with her daughter nor calms the father. She, on the contrary, feels guilty for not giving the father a son to revenge the betrayal. Those repressed feelings of culpability mount inside the mother until she decides to put an end to them. In fact, what happens is, to the narrator, shocking:

After this, Ourdia obtained permission to go out on the terrace every night [...]

At bedtime on eighth day, Ourdia stood at the angle of the terrace railing, the figure of a pow. The silent, fearful, calloused mother. Ingenious, too. She slipped right by. In a flash, breathing heavily, she pushed her daughter over, threw her into the abyss (p, 44).

Again, we can see that the mother is Ourdia's first oppressor. In lieu of consoling her daughter for losing her academic career, she immerses in her inferiority complex. As a consequence, she projects 'her failure'—not bearing a boy—on Ourdia and ends her life. This incident makes us understand that the mother accepts social conventions dictated upon her daughter and herself, and she thus raises Ourdia in the shadows of her inferiority and complexes.

Looking back at Najwa's mother's request to take care of Omar, we can infer that mothers are the first to indoctrinate the feminine vocation into their daughters since childhood. Najwa's mother says: "you're the girl, you're the quit, sensible one. Look after Omar" (p, 13). It is obvious that Najwa was taught to be a carer and a house holder. Another observation from Najwa demonstrates how harsh mothers can be on the girl, on the one hand, and how lenient they can be with the boy, on the other hand. This in itself disturbs Najwa's gender identity and raises more self-questions. She describes the interaction between her mother and brother and says: "They laugh; there is an ease in their relationship, a carelessness I did not notice between mother and daughter" (p, 88). It becomes conspicuous that these differences of interaction makes Najwa feel inferior to her brother. We can also comprehend that she craves for the same warmth and relaxedness from her mother. This also implies Najwa's need for her mother in her adolescence and early adulthood—which presumably she did not have. It is therefore logical for the young girl to develop an Electra complex where she envies the boy for his perks. Najwa's mention of 'ease in their relationship' reinforces

the idea that girls are pressured since childhood to conform to societal conventions and act as per their gender role as opposed to men.

Najwa's identity crisis is provoked by 'gender privileges'—as I call it. Her mother's differentiated treatment and plans place Najwa in the middle of existential questions where she is the other and her brother is the subject. In this context, De Beauvoir asserts that this feminine role attributed to girls—and in our case Najwa—is not a biological datum but is rather a destiny imposed upon the girl by her mother first and foremost (p, 284). She states that women respect their sons' autonomy and maleness, yet they are determined to fit their daughters into the female world (p, 284). Therefore, they teach them to renounce their autonomy to become an object. That is, to please the man, the woman needs to express dependency to his being. In fact, in *The Witch of the Middle Ages*, Jules Michelet points out that “one of the disadvantages that weigh heavily upon women is to be left in women's hands during childhood” (qtd. In *The Second Sex*, p 285). De Beauvoir, in the same context, adds that only girls raised by their fathers can escape the defects of femininity; they are taught to be strong, independent and outgoing. However, “custom is opposed to treating girls like boys” (p, 285). That is, aunts, mothers, grandmothers will always counteract the father's influence. To sum it up, mothers are the little girl's first oppressor, and this is what De Beauvoir calls as the “feminine servitude.” It should be noted, though, that mothers' behaviour towards their daughters reflects centuries of indoctrination. Thus, women became their own oppressors and their daughters' as well.

Najwa and Ourdia fail to disassociate themselves from experiences with their mothers. Therefore, they develop fractured and immature identities. Najwa lives through the “feminine” projects outlined ahead for her. She does not resist the identity dictated upon her nor does she seek to embrace a new one. Her mother's death, however, breaks her chains of feminine servitude which ironically does not set her free. Lost, in the wake of the future,

Najwa struggles to locate herself in a foreign environment (London)—without her mother—thus, she experiences a more severe self-estrangement. That is, the breaking of the mother-dependency causes more damage to Najwa’s identity as she cannot define herself outside her gender role and identity. We will look further into this in the coming chapter. Ourdia, on the other side, is aware of her inability to adopt an independent self without her mother’s contribution. That is, she too fails to separate herself from her mother and lives in her shadows. In short, these two protagonists—due to the identity manipulation practiced on them since childhood—are unable to define themselves outside social borders. It is true that questions of the self and the other are raised, but their passive identity dominates the crisis.

Unlike Najwa and Ourdia, April is separated from her mother at the age of five, and thus she does not experience this daughter-mother conflict of identity. It should be pointed out that April’s life was governed by female figures. Accordingly, we shall inspect how the foster-mother and social workers substitute—if ever—the mother’s influence on identity formation. Additionally, we shall compare the protagonists’ identity experiences with a biological and foster mother.

4. The Role of Family in Building April’s and Cheryl’s Identities in Colonial Milieus

Most of April’s identity crisis is caused by the separation from her parents. It is noteworthy to mention that the absence of her mother’s role—before this separation—fragilized April’s identity. She often looked after Cheryl on their parents’ drinking days; she would prepare sandwiches for her sister and herself and set off to the park. That is, at the age of five, April was already assuming her mother’s maternal tasks i.e. she was burdened with the feminine vocation earlier than it should. April describes her mother on her sober days and how she would clean the house, bake and so on. She recounts: “If she was really happy she would sing us songs and at night she would rock Cheryl to sleep. But that was one kind of

happiness that didn't come often enough to me" (p, 11). The aforementioned statement displays April's need for her mother and home notion. In fact, she concedes that "to prolong that mood in her [mother], [she] would help her with everything, chattering away in desperation, lest [her] own silence would push [the mother] back into her normal remoteness (p, 11). It can be observed that the deficiency of the mother's presence created feelings of incompleteness in April. She lamented her mother's absence and not her father's because she needed a feminine presence to nurture her gender identity as per Chodorow. The latter argues that the little girl needs her mother to define herself (p, 7). In other words, April—in this incident—chooses to take upon herself motherly tasks just to have her mother's presence and to enjoy a temporary feeling of belonging and containment.

Separation from family leads April into introversion and precipitate self-denial subsequently. She depicts the influence of this breakup and enunciates: "Most of my misery, however, was caused by the separation from my parents" (p, 19). It is conceivable that this separation weighed not only on April's childhood but also adulthood. That is, this separation had everlasting effects on the child's self. As a matter of fact, it had a leading influence on her identity formation. April needed family to validate her ethnic identity, and she needed her mother to endorse her gender one.

Experiences at the orphanage generate April's first self-questions about good and bad. That is, unlike the park incidents where she compares between white and Native, at the orphanage she queried whether she was a good person or not. We have contended earlier that a child—as per the theories of the whole child development—is not supposed to undergo such existential questions at this age. This again demonstrates the effect of environment on self perception. April narrates her first experience in the following way:

I figured out what the different nuns wanted and avoided many scoldings. My parents had never strapped us and I never had to think about whether I was bad

or good. I feared being ridiculed in front of the other children, I feared getting the strap, I feared even a harsh word. When I was quietly playing with some toy, and somebody else wanted it, I simply handed it over. I longed to go over to Cheryl and talk and play with her but I never dared across that invisible boundary (p, 19).

The conclusion that can be drawn is that April develops a passive identity as a means of self protection. She is aware of her vulnerability which leads to a self-alienation. It is important to note that the orphanage experience introduces a new element of confusion to April's identity—questioning her morality. At the park, her identity crisis revolved around ethnicity, and at the orphanage the crisis affected her self-image. This results in a social withdrawal and introversion.

The Dions experience—first foster home—undoes the damage caused to April's identity at the park and in the orphanage. The counter effect of both experiences restores April's positive self image. At the Dions, April lives in harmony with her Aboriginal identity due to the positive support she receives. In other words, the Dions' environment tolerates April's identity which permits an evolution of self. This entourage helps April—temporarily—transcend the crisis developed in earlier stages. But, the next negative foster experience puts her back in the same position—inferior and in denial of her heritage—which again reinforces our hypothesis that environment impacts our protagonists' identity formation.

The DeRosier experience trembles April's self image. In fact, her foster family not only affects her self-perception, but it also makes her question her attachment and love to her parents. This conflict of thoughts prolongs April's identity crisis and butchers any opportunity to accept her heritage. We can observe this clash of identity in the following statement: "I felt torn in different directions and often changed my mind regarding my parents" (p, 53). It is clear that April's sense of belonging and family identity were troubled by her unstable views regarding her parents. Sometimes, she would question the life she

would be leading if she was not separated from her parents. She says: “so what if we were poor and lived in slums. Being together would be a million times better than living on this horrible farm” (p, 53). We can observe that April, by instinct, seeks out her parents and feels incomplete without them. We can also see that social status does not matter to April if she lived with her parents while she has previously stated that she aspired to be rich, to be like the white kids. Her new orientation—becoming white and rich—is triggered by her separation from her parents. The society’s influence on April’s self image and perceptions can be noticed in her feelings towards her parents: “Other time, I would remind myself that my parents were weak alcoholics who had made their choice. And then I would loathe them” (p, 53). This shift of views perturbs April’s self development and identity establishment as she is contained between these paradoxical viewpoints. This self-unsettlement is further deepened by religion. At the Dions, April learns to pray and that God is the supreme power and governor of life. Yet, when she finds herself defeated at the DeRosiers, she even questions her ‘catholic’ identity: “What was the sense of praying to a God who didn’t care about me either?” (p, 53). This amalgam of conflicting ideals and beliefs sets April to abandon her Native self. Accordingly, she declares: “On Cheryl, it was still the question of how I was going to live as a white person with her around” (p, 53). At this stage of her life, April resorts to a denial of self due to the absence of family presence/ support.

We can say that if April had a normal family life (or childhood), she wouldn’t have had to question herself and what her future would be like. In Other words, this crisis of identity wouldn’t have occurred at this early stage of her life. Erikson and Vygotsky stress the role of interaction and feedback on the child’s development. That is, those early experiences at home influence the child’s early self-image which, in return, determines what their adult identity would be like. This is exactly the case for April. Her early interactions and

home experiences were hostile towards her Native self which eventually results in self-denial.

Cheryl, on the other hand, has healthy foster home experiences which boost her confidence and encourages the establishment of a healthy self. When encountered with racism—in school mainly, Cheryl defends her heritage because her family life nurtured her Native pride, and it motivated her to know her own history. This is reflected in her exchange with April: “Mrs. MacAdams says we should be proud of our heritage. You know what that means? It means we’re part Indian and part white. I wish we were whole Indians” (p, 45). It becomes conspicuous that Cheryl’s first foster family is behind her pride and clinginess to her heritage, contrary to April. That is, the positive foster experience influenced Cheryl’s identity formation. Thus, we can affirm that environment incites or hinders the establishment of a reconciled identity.

When April discovers the truth of her parents (drunkards), her identity ceases to resist and self-denial emerges. The reality overwhelms the little girl who consequently fully internalizes prejudices attributed to her people. To her, her parents overturned white prejudices. Then, typifying that category of aboriginals, urges April’s self denial to protest:

I could pass for a pure white person. I could say I was part French and part Irish [...] And when I grew up, I wouldn’t be poor; I’d be rich. Being a half-breed meant being poor and dirty. It meant being weak and having to drink. It meant being ugly and stupid. It meant living off white people. And giving your children to white people to look after. It meant having to take all the crap white people gave. Well, I wasn’t going to live like a half-breed. When I got free of this place, When I got free from being a foster child, then I would live just like areal white person (p, 48-49).

It is clear that April’s identity denial matured when she learned the truth about her parents. That is to say, her native identity was hanged on to that little window of hope (her family

does not categorize with ‘bad’ aboriginals), and when that window shut down, self-denial emerged and April became more determined to adopt a white identity.

The fate of April’s native identity (denial and demise) can be comprehended through Erikson’s observation. In *Childhood and Society*, he asserts that early experiences shape the child’s perception of the world and of themselves. That is, early interactions govern the young child’s thought throughout their life. Erikson puts it this way:

Childhood provides a most fundamental to basis for human exploitation. The polarity Big-Small is the first in the inventory of existential oppositions such as Male and Female, Ruler and Ruled, Owner and Owned, Light Skin and Dark, over all of which emancipatory struggles are now raging both politically and psychologically (p, 376).

This is exactly what happens to April. Her early experiences reject her being and heritage and idealize the white person’s position and power in society. In this regard, she lets herself being exploited by the inferior-superior binary. Moreover, in the absence of a nurturing family environment, April’s identity becomes a victim of racism in Canada.

Even in denial, April experiences neurotic episodes—to borrow Fanon’s term—in her process of asserting the white identity. She moves between loving and disowning her parents, between acknowledging Cheryl as a sister and hiding this reality from her acquaintances. This polarity of thoughts is a social construction; April is congested with white prejudices. Actually, Fanon affirms that the Negro child—and in our case the Native one—feels detested by an entire race for being black, and thus, experiences neurotic episodes; he affirms that “nothing is more traumatizing to the young child than his encounters with what is rational” (*Black Skin White Masks*, p 89). That is, the environment makes prejudices appear as ‘rational’ which the child—and here April—eventually cannot escape. We can also understand that April’s fluid identity and shift between spaces is the outcome of racism.

Cheryl is April's anti-thesis. In the wake of racism, she embraces her Métis identity and champions her heritage. In other words, Cheryl's outer environment does not affect her self-image, or to be precise, she does not let prejudices tarnish her self-perception. She delivers a number of speeches about Indian history—Louis Riel, The Buffalo hunts, etc.—to her class as a means of promoting Indian heritage. The young girl shows much pride and confidence that surprise April who says: "I wondered how [Cheryl] ever had the courage to stand up in front of her class and give the speech. I would never have the courage" (p, 75). This is indeed the influence of the MacAdams on Cheryl. They boosted her pride of her Native identity which equipped her to stand against chauvinistic behaviours. April, on the contrary, is bullied at the DeRosiers, and she is constantly reminded of the reality of her parents. The girls conflicting identities perfectly illustrate the role of family and effect of environment on self-definition.

Cheryl is April's anti-thesis not only in embracing her indigenous identity, but also in being tolerant to her sister's self-denial. In parallel, April's quest of a white identity involves deserting her Native looking sister. The strength in Cheryl's identity permits her to cope well with her sister's refusal. We thus can say that Cheryl's identity is mature and reconciled with all surrounding identities. This again surprises April who says: "she had just accepted me the way I was in silence. I wished I could do that whole part of my life over again. She was such a giving, unselfish person. What was it that made her like she was and me like I was?"(p, 111). We can understand that Cheryl's strength of character also raises self-questions in April i.e. Cheryl provokes April's identity crisis. Moreover, this shows that April is conscious of her denial and, deep down, she wishes she could embrace her Métis self; yet she is unable to face racism. Another thing that can be observed is the impact of family rising on the child's personality and identity. As stated in earlier sections in this chapter, childhood upbringing either fosters the development of a healthy self or causes self-destruction and crisis. April

and Cheryl are a very good example of this. April rejects who she is as a result of her entourage, and Cheryl embraces her identity due to support from her surroundings.

Family is sacred to Cheryl who even when she uncovers her father's reality, does not renounce him. Despite the damage he causes to her identity (because of him, she submits to prejudices), she still acknowledges him as a father and she supports him instead. This incident, another time, surprises April. She confesses: "How was it she had the natural family instinct? I had instincts only for self-preservation, pushing anyone away from me who might hurt me. I was a loner" (p, 221). Again, this illustrates the difference in upbringing and its impact on identity and personality development. Cheryl was treated as a family member in her foster homes. That is, she had affectionate relationships in those homes which nurtured her being. April, on the contrary, is treated as a maid and is made inferior which, in return, fractured what was left of her self-image.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that family upbringing highly affects one's self-concept and identity. These early experiences govern the child's thought from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. We could see how the absence of family fragilized April's identity, and how foster experiences generated a self-denial. On the other hand, foster homes substitute family for Cheryl—for their positive nature—and enable an establishment of a proud native identity. In a nutshell, family presence could cover up external prejudices. In earlier sections, we closely looked at the impact of mother's influence on Najwa's and Ourdia's identities. As April is separated from her biological mother, we shall inspect the effect of female figures on April's gender identity. In other words, we shall see if these feminine figures can substitute for the mother's role.

4.1. April's Identity between a Villain Mother and Female Influence

April's foster mother cripples her self-image. On the first encounter, Mrs DeRosiers sets racial boundaries that deepen April's identity crisis. She consistently calls her foster

daughter ‘half-breed’ which makes April shrink back into the passive self she developed at the orphanage. We can notice this effect as follow: “I wasn’t a half-breed, just a foster child, that’s all. To me, half-breed was almost the same as Indian” (p, 39). It is clear that the foster mother’s presence has destructive effects on April’s identity. She smashed what remained from April’s identity after the park and orphanage experiences. That is, this experience creates further damage to the little girl’s identity as she was treated as a maid vis-a-vis her foster siblings. April has before and after school chores in exchange of her keep— even though the Aids office paid her expenses. Additionally, she is threatened; if she disobeys orders, “the strap will do the rest of the talking” (p, 39). Fearing to be humiliated at the orphanage, April consciously develops a submissive identity. The physical threat here reinforces her passive identity. That is, April shows more passivity than at the orphanage to protect herself.

April’s identity is not only affected by interactions with her foster mother, but also with her foster sister. The latter performs her mother’s role in her absence. That is, when Mrs. DeRosiers is away, the DeRosiers daughter becomes the new oppressor. Maggie was as villain as her mother. She would keep an eye on April, give her orders to humiliate her and calls her names—such as dirty and half-breed. April describes her feelings when puppeted by Maggie along these lines: “Helpless fury built up inside of me but I was alone there, unsure of what my rights were, if I even had any” (p, 41). We observe that female figures at the DeRosiers damaged April’s self-concept and contributed to her self-denial. It is important to mention that April’s experience at the DeRosiers are marked by interactions with the two female characters only. In this context, De Beauvoir describes women’s undermining of otherwomen as their inability to organise themselves into a unit (p, 18). That is, instead of sticking to one’s gender and supporting women from different ethnic and class backgrounds, women support the male paradigm and thought instead. To put it differently, women are their first

oppressors. That is, in place of bonding and sympathizing with April, the DeRosiers females project their inferiority complex (to men) on April and her likes.

The villain mother continues to fragment April's sense of self by consistently calling her prejudiced names. Furthermore, she involves her children in demolishing their foster sister's identity by mocking April in front of them. The most devastating incident to April's self is when Mrs. DeRosiers asks her children to be thankful for not having parents like April's who "were too busy boozing it up to even come to visit [their child]" (p, 47). This news weighed heavily on April's identity. In effect, at first, she refused to believe that her parents missed their visit for alcohol; but when the DeRosiers bullying sustained, April submits and accepts her parents' reality which costed her Aboriginal heritage.

Prior to that incident, the dream of a family reunion balanced April's self in times of crisis. That is, the hope to reunite with her family urged April to momentarily mute/overcome external prejudices. Accordingly, she, at the end, defends her parents to keep that image sane. This is a preview of the discussion between her foster siblings and her:

"Sick?" Boy, what a dummy you are. But then half-breeds and Indians are pretty stupid, aren't they? Maggie said maliciously.

"Yeah. Your parents didn't know how to take care of you. They just know how to booze it up," Rick added. And then they started mimicking drunken people and talking to each other with slurred speech, laughing at intervals.

"NO!" I screamed (p, 47-48).

We have previously discussed how racism is internalised in children's thought through media, literature and society. This exchange is a good illustration of how children adopt chauvinistic behaviours towards their acquaintances from adults in the family. From this quote, it becomes evident that what the DeRosier kids thought mattered more to April—as they are of same age—that is why she receives it badly and runs towards the unknown. Most

importantly, losing this hope murders April's aspirations of a better future and results in a fractured identity and self-rejection.

Despite April's weak Native identity, she still believed "there must exist some good half breeds" (p, 46) like Cheryl, her parents and herself. This belief comes from the difference between their appearance and house compared to other natives'. That is, April never classified her family with Native people. Thus, when she finds out about her parents reality, she murders her aboriginal identity. In other words, her exchange with the DeRosiers kids about her parents' alcoholism breaks her hopes and faith of 'good Native people', and thus she passively surrenders to white prejudices. She declares: "I could run all I wanted but I couldn't run away from the truth" (p, 48). Before this incident, April never questioned the goodness or Nateness of her parents. On the contrary, she resisted toxic orphanage and foster experiences through her hopes of a near-future family reunion. Thus, when the DeRosiers kids act like her parents when they are drunk, she is devastated. She voices her feelings as follow: "So, that's why you never got any better. Liars! [...] You told us, 'Soon April; soon, Cheryl. We'll take you back home as soon as we get better. You never cared about us" (p, 48). Here, April disconnects herself from her parents and cuts any remaining ties with her heritage. In fact, she blames her parents for her fate: "because of you, I'm stuck here. I hate you both for lying to us. I hope I never see you again" (p, 48). This detachment from family marks April's quest of a new identity: White.

It becomes clear that April was trying to escape prejudices attributed to her heritage through her parents. However, they typify 'white' prejudices which strongly impact her self-perception (all Natives are the same). That is, she submits to these pejorative connotations and accepts that Aboriginals are backward, alcoholics and irresponsible. Her saying 'she could run all she could, but she couldn't run away from the truth' demonstrates that she was faced with a 'truth' that was constructed in her mind by society, literature and media—

Indians and Métis are bad. It also reflects April's final resistance and thus submission to stereotypes attributes to Natives in general and women in specific.

Female figures continue to tear apart April's self-image. In addition to Mrs. DeRosiers, Mrs. Semple (the social worker) condemns the Raintree sisters for being Native girls. This is observed in the 'Native Girl Syndrome' speech when the police find April and Cheryl after escaping the DeRosiers house:

and you girls are headed in that direction. It starts out with the fighting, the running away, the lies. Next comes the accusations that everyone in the world is against you. There are the sullen uncooperative silences, the feeling sorry for yourselves. And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away or you can't find or keep jobs. So you'll start with alcohol and drugs. From there you get into shoplifting and prostitution and in and out of jail. You'll live with men who abuse you. And on it goes. You'll end up like your parents, living off society...Now, you're going the same route as many other native girls. If you don't smarten up, you'll end up in the same place they do. Skid row! (p, 66-67).

We can see that Mrs. Semple, as well, alienates April, and above all, she places her within the Native category the little girl always escaped. This generates more inferiority in April who does not find refuge even in her social worker. It is clear that April, in all directions, did not have any positive intake from women—except Mrs. Dion—which resulted in a double alienation: society condemning her for being a Métis, and women patronizing her for being a girl of Native origins.

We have observed how female figures, in April's life, are villain. In lieu of being more understanding and supportive, they tormented her identity more with all the labels they attributed and added to her character. We, hence, can say that like Najwa and Ourdia, April's gender identity was not attained. On the contrary, April's identity witnesses another crisis based on gender and race.

5. The connection between the Adult identity and childhood crisis: The Case of Najwa, April and the Oran, Dead Language protagonist

In the previous sections, we have demonstrated how Najwa underwent a healthy childhood, and hence, a ‘temporary’ successful self-development. She however experiences belated identity crises triggered by exile and its consequences—father’s death sentence, mother’s passing away to cancer, brother imprisoned for drug dealing in addition to the family social degradation. That is to say, Najwa’s adult identity crisis is not a result of unsolved crisis in her childhood and adolescence—like in the case of April and Djébar’s protagonists, but it is rather evoked by losing position in society and moving to a new environment. In other words, the crisis she endures—especially the gender one—at adulthood is provoked by being displaced from her childhood entourage. In Sudan, Najwa enjoys a comfortable life, and her identity is traced for her by her parents which slaughter any crisis from emerging. When she loses these privileges (stable atmosphere and family life), she suffers her first identity crisis in London. That is, the new environment generates self-questions.

April and the multiple protagonists in Djébar’s *The Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry* do not overcome the crises evoked in their childhood and adolescence stages of development. Therefore, they fail to establish healthy self-images and identities in their adulthood. That is, their earlier stages crises transcend into adulthood and impede identity formation. It becomes evident that the final identity is related to previous stages of life and development.

The protagonist in *Oran, Dead Language* perfectly illustrates the effect of childhood experiences and crises on identity formation. As discussed earlier, French colonialism perturbed the girl’s process of self-definition in her childhood; she shifted between detesting and longing to move to France. We can further observe the impact of these childhood experiences on the protagonist’s identity through the blooded plaques on her parents’

necks³¹. She speaks of receiving the plaques and says: “I touched the blood that had dried on the two numbers that had been chosen for them at the morgue. I took these plaques with me when I left the city at the age of eighteen. I keep them on me these days, for my return”(p, 20). We have seen how the protagonist restores to quieting her mother country to France “asa negation of people, of places, of things” (p, 14). Here, she keeps them for her return to Algeria and the other self she voluntarily left behind (she is conscious she cannot escape her childhood crises and the other self). We can understand that the child’s traumatizing experiences are always present in the background compromising the person she is as an adult. In *The Life Cycle Completed*, Erikson asserts that the adult’s identity results from the varying self-images in childhood and their evolution in adolescence (p, 68). This applies to the protagonist whose conflicting identities are the outcome of the self-images in childhood.

On the other hand, we can observe the relationship between the adult self and the child identity through April’s confession. She opens up her story by describing how childhood experiences handicapped her evolution of self. To be more precise, she discloses how memories from her past interrupted her process of self establishment. She accounts: “MEMORIES. SOME memories are elusive [...] Others are haunting. You’d rather forget them but they won’t be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there, too” (p, 9). It is clear that April’s childhood and traumatic memories contained all her attempts of a self-reconciliation, and through them she could never escape her heritage. She adds: “I always felt most of my memories were better avoided but now I think it’s best to go back in my life before I go forward. Last month [...] I celebrated my twenty-four birthday. That’s still young but I feel so old’ (p, 9). It becomes conspicuous that April’s unsolved crises from her childhood and adolescence restrained her from adopting a healthy self as an adult. She spent her entire life caught up in memories from the past. She tried to forget unpleasant

³¹ During French colonialism, when Algerians passed away, they would put metal plaques on their necks with numbers to count the total of martyrs.

experiences, but never succeeded. Erikson affirms that the “the reliability of young adult commitments’ largely depends on the outcomes of the adolescent struggle for identity” (p, 67). This explains why April was unable to move forward with her life with unsolved teenage and childhood crises. That is, her earliest crises transcended into later stages which hindered an establishment of a final identity.

Conclusion

Erikson and Vygotsky argue that children develop their first self-image through social interaction with family, friends and culture. We have seen that Najwa’s privileged life enabled her to develop a positive self-image. April, on the other hand, gets involved in negative exchanges which results in self-denial and rejection of her heritage. Whereas the anonymous protagonist in *Oran, Dead Language* is caught up between two clashing identities—Arab Algerian and French—each taking place depending on circumstances. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn is social interaction contributes to children’s sense of self. That is, the nature of exchange either encourages the establishment of a healthy self—Najwa—or generates an identity crisis—April and the anonymous character in Djébar’s work.

As per Erikson, identity is a recollection of childhood identifications in addition to how society defines one (*The Life Cycle Completed*, p 67). The absence of family (support) in the lives of April, Tounsia, Ourdia and the *Oran, Dead Language* protagonist, fragilized more their self-concept. In other words, family nurtures the young child’s perceptions of themselves and helps them overcome social prejudices. That is, family helps the child validate their identity and overlook rising crisis. We can also observe this through April and Cheryl. The sisters live opposing family experiences. The positive foster family life enables Cheryl to assert her Native identity in the face of racism; whereas in the case of April, her foster experiences stir up her identity crisis and encourage self-denial.

On the basis of Ngugi's cultural colonialism and Fanon's psychology of the oppressed, we have proved how April's identity was undermined by Canadian history and society. We have also demonstrated how colonialism depersonalised the Arab identities in Algeria and Sudan and substituted them with colonial ones. In the wake of these experiences, the three protagonists fail to locate themselves within their society and struggle to adopt an identity of their own. That is to say, colonialism generated an early identity crisis in our protagonist through education, literature and morals. The latter altered our protagonists' process of self-definition and introduced more complex existential questions that could not be surmounted due to their cognitive capacities.

De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* helped us examine the effect of society and female figures on the young girl's identities. We have witnessed how our protagonists' societies set women as the second sex, after men. We have also evidenced that the girl's upbringing mainly by her mother, female teachers, aunts, etc. indoctrinate more feelings of inferiority. That is, the girl feels inferior to her brother and her mother, and in the case of the three protagonists', and to the white person or colonizer i.e. she is triply displaced. Thus, she fails to establish a healthy gender identity.

Erikson, in *Childhood and Society*, describes adolescence as a "*moratorium*" between childhood and adulthood, and between ethics learnt by the infant and the morals to be developed by the grown up (p, 236). It is conceivable that the stages of development are intertwined each nurturing from the other. Therefore, the female child's final identity is a progression of identities and crises from childhood and adolescence. In fact, Erikson stresses that each stage of development is characterized by a crisis that needs solving for a successful transition into the next stage. From what we have seen, Najwa, April and the multiple protagonists' in Djébar's work fail to solve their crises. Consequently, these crises continue to develop into adulthood. That is, the identities they embrace are fragile, fragmented and

unstable. In other words, the protagonists are caught between different identities and crises. In this way, we shall examine how these crises are solved, if ever, in adulthood and how the protagonists put an end to their sense of in-betweenness and achieve a unitary self.

Chapter Two:

Women's Triple Displacement: April's, Najwa's, and Isma's Identity between Acceptance and Regeneration

Introduction

In *The Dilemmas of Human Identity*, Heinz Lichtenstein asserts that society is influenced by the “stable” identities of its people. Therefore, when a good portion of individuals does not fit in the cultural roles, they undergo a crisis of identity, which in return engenders a catastrophic change in culture. He emphasises that early formed identities are fragile, and that “loss of identity is specifically a human danger, and maintenance of identity is a specifically human necessity” (p, 77-78). In the case of our protagonists, they represent minority individuals vis-a-vis the governing culture. That is, their identity crisis does not directly impact society, but they need to assert themselves to be integral of their environments. In this chapter, we shall examine further how society continues to alienate the protagonists throughout their identity quest.

Charles Taylor, in *The Malaise of Modernity*, argues that self-identification is “worked out in a kind of “dialogue” with those to whom one is closest and with those whom one regards as most important” (p, 252). In other words, identity is influenced by human relationships. In this same context, Nancy Chodorow endorses this statement, in her *The Reproduction of Mothering*, pointing out that across her life, the female defines herself through social relationships. Henceforth, questions of belonging and merging of the self are substantial, and the ego and the physical boundaries remain flexible (p, 6-7). This implies that women undergo fluid identities consistently changing through relationships. In the previous chapter, we have examined how social interactions and environment shape identity formation in early years. In this chapter, we shall examine how adult relationships affect self-definition.

We will also inspect how unsolved crises from childhood and adolescence, as seen in the former chapter, evolve and are dealt with in the process of identity establishment.

Erikson, in *Identity Youth and Crisis*, explains that feelings of displacement and in-betweenness in young adults urge them to “overidentify with the heroes of cliques and crowds” (p, 132). This, in return, results in a total loss of individuality. He stresses that most of the teenage and young adult love is purely a means of self-assertion and definition. Moreover, Erikson claims that young women, according to his inner space³² theory, look for a man through their adolescence to identify themselves and thus feel fulfilled. On the light of this, we shall see how men impact Najwa’s, April’s and the multiple character’s—in Djebbar’s—identities.

Judith Kegan Gardiner, in *On Female Identity and Writing by Women*, claims that “female identity is a process” (p, 252). That is, the later—in comparison with the male identity and maturational complex—is “less fixed, less unitary and more flexible” (p, 253). In other words, the female identity is prone to change which mostly fallouts in crisis. In *The Second Sex*, Simon De Beauvoir discloses that women, made passive from birth, find it difficult to overturn their “womanly destiny” and assert an identity and future of their choice. Consequently, they express subjugation than to achieve autonomy. In this direction, we shall inspect the fluidity of the protagonists’ identities. We shall also study their means of self-definition—as autonomous beings or object to men.

Erikson, in *Identity and the Life Cycle*, argues that the resolution of identity crises results in an ultimate unitary self and irreversible role patterns (p, 111). This means that escaping one’s self-confusion extends the crisis only and does not solve it. Therefore, it is

³² Erikson’s “inner space” can be regarded as an extension to Freud’s Electra complex. Freud argues that females develop a “penis envy” in the Phallus stage, and therefore, fail to develop a successful gender identity. Erikson, on the other hand, claims that young girls learn to accept their ‘inner space’ and role as a child bearer and mother, and accordingly, assert their femininity and role in society. Consequently, being left ‘empty’ becomes the girl’s biggest fear as her gender identity is related to her womb-role.

compulsory for the protagonists to resolve their crises to be able to define themselves. In this way, we shall see how Najwa, April and the multiple protagonists in Djébar's come to terms with their crises and stop escaping their identities.

1. The Contribution of Love to April's, Najwa's and Isma's Adult Selves

In the midst of their identity crisis, our protagonists experience liminal moments where they try to develop a third space to survive external threats influencing their selves. In fact, in *The Location of Cultures*, Homi K. Bhabha explains that liminality is “an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (p, 6). That is, despite the uncertainty and confusion that characterize the liminal space, the individual learns to adopt manners to survive and overcome their identity crisis. From this perspective, we shall analyse the protagonists' liminal moments and their tools of fleeing this zone of non-belonging.

April's childhood and adolescent identity is strongly affected by her foster experience at the DeRosiers. Her Métis identity is mocked, and hence she shrinks into an introverted self. The foster mother incites her children to bully April for having irresponsible parents—to deepen the girl's grievance and patronize her more. Thereby, the DeRosiers children use their mother's bigotry arguments to torment April who, in retribution, grows more passive and decides to live as a white person when she grows older. April's foster siblings deny her from having non-racist experiences at school by continuing to spread rumours and bullying her on the school bus and lunch time. Accordingly, April retrieves into an inferior role in face of the surrounding white supremacy. Through her childhood and teenagerhood, she fails to overcome these feeling of inferiority which heightens her identity crisis. But, she establishes a third space (disguising her Aboriginal identity in adulthood) to soften her frustration and to surmount her time at the DeRosiers.

April's passive identity is overturned when appreciated by a boy at school. His admiration temporarily reconciles April with her Native identity. Peter (the new handsome

student) not only influences April's self-image, but also controls the classmates' perception of the Métis heritage. We can observe his impact on April's school life and identity in April's words: "Maggie, [the DeRosier child], had not been openly hostile towards me. I knew she felt that way because of Peter's friendship with me and not with her. It had even made me smug and more sure of myself" (p, 76). Peter's approval of April wins her "provisional" new friends as well. Moreover, her environment, thanks to him, starts to show some openness and acceptance to the Métis girl i.e. the Native girl is rarely bullied on his sight. For this reason, the protagonist for the first time feels proud and acceptant of her being. In other words, April restores her self-image through Peter. That is, she approves her Métis identity only through his approval and admiration of hers.

April's identity feeds on Peter's validations. That is, she depends on him to assert her Native identity. We can say that 'love' is a tool April relies on in her liminal moments to overcome her inferiority complex. In fact, Fanon, in *Black Skin White Masks*, asserts that genuine love will remain unreachable, for the woman of colour—and here the aboriginal woman, before any feelings of inferiority are disposed (p, 28). That is, the colonized woman (April) cannot develop a successful relationship before containing her inferiority. Fanon makes his point through examining Mayotte Capécias' *Je Suis Martiniquaise*. He analyses her work alongside with confessions from black Martinican females and concludes that black women seek the white man's love to escape their negritude (p, 28). April indeed illustrates the validity of such an observation. She continues to suppress her Aboriginal identity into adulthood (after the peter effect vanishes) and seeks ways to pass as a white person. In fact, the Peter experience directs her towards marriage—espousing a white rich man—to escape her inferior Métis identity. To her, marrying a white man will unchain her burdened destiny.

Marriage disguises April's self-denial. It temporarily mutes her identity crisis. Most importantly, it entitles her to 'borrow' a white identity. This is visible through April's

feelings about her marriage from Bob Radcliff (a white rich man): “We were married on July 25, 1969 [...] from that moment; I wouldn’t have to worry about changing the spelling of my name because it was now legally April Radcliff” (p, 110). As a child, April dreamt of changing the spelling of her family name to pass as a French white person, and thus mask her Native identity. Marrying Mr. Radcliff grants April power, title and supremacy. Accordingly, she starts her ‘whitening’ journey.

April’s opportunism to embrace the superior identity (white) is justified by Fanon who categorizes women of colour into Negress and mulatto. He clarifies that the first is fixated on one goal: to turn white, while the second not only aspires to become white but is also reluctant to slip back (p, 38). This justifies why April dreams of marrying a white man; it is her best opportunity to disguise her native heritage eternally. Cheryl would always jeopardise April’s new identity (due to her Native appearance). Hence, marriage will disinherit this part of her identity and authorize her to pass for a white person in public. As a matter of fact, this comes in line with Erikson’s statement that love is an instrument of self-assertion and definition for the young adult. That is, April, through marriage, wants solely to identify herself with the dominant group.

Isma’s—Djebar’s *Burning* protagonist—relationship with Omar illustrates the male influence on the female’s identity and self-perception. The protagonist suffers a monotonous marriage where she develops a passive identity; she does not see herself outside wifely duties. But when she starts working with the Somali musician, her identity surfaces back; her ambitions and beliefs crawl back too. First and foremost, her passive identity disappears and her attention neglects social dictations. This is clear through the following passage: “When I was with him, I never for a second thought, “How does he see me?” Almost as if I weren’t visible. I was all attention, my gaze focused...” (p, 54). It is clear that the protagonist searched for her self-image in the eyes of the other—her husband’s and society. Nevertheless, in the

company of Omar, Isma does not feel the need for a self-validation. She is so absorbed by his eloquence, work and traits, and thus, her urges and needs—to be approved—vanish. Omar’s character brushes up Isma’s identity and changes her perception of things i.e. ‘his attention’ is the instrument she utilizes in her liminal moment to achieve an independent self.

The overturn in Najwa’s life brings instability and loss of self. In London, she is caught up between Arab and Western ideals. She is also confused by her new social role—a lower class citizen. Moreover, the destruction of her family invites neurotic disorders. That is, in London, Najwa’s adult self experiences an identity crisis and she is unable to place herself within the new environment and circumstances. Correspondingly, when she meets her lover from Sudan—Anwar—she holds onto him despite the grievance³³ he imprinted on her. She voices this as follow: “He gave me hope that I would not be in limbo for long, that I would not be without a family for long” (p, 156). It is observable that Anwar is merely a utensil to overcome her sense of displacement in the metropolitan city. That is, Najwa sees Anwar as an exit from her identity crisis.

In exile, Najwa defines herself through Anwar. This association with him permits her to survive her identity crisis. Thus, she develops a new passive identity directed by Anwar. We can notice the following through Najwa’s rationale behind lending her heritage money to Anwar to complete a PhD at the London School of Economics. She says: “I did not think I could sit in class and write clever things. I would not be good at it. Anwar always said I was not intellectual” (p, 235). It is evident that Najwa’s self-perception is inspired from Anwar who patronises her and puts her into an inferior role. This decision, in fact, comes after Aunt Eva (a family friend) recommends a degree completion for a better future for Najwa. Yet, the latter chooses to pursue a maid career because Anwar shook her self-esteem and confidence. He made her believe that she is unapt to think or engage in the intellectual world. That is, the

³³ In Sudan, Anwar led the students’ movement against the Sudanese regime, and most importantly, he condemned her father and accused him of corruption in public.

protagonist surrenders to the male figure here and embraces the inferior role and identity he projects on her.

April, Isma and Najwa engage in relationships with men to assert their identities and repress their crises. In other words, they establish these relationships in an attempt to overturn their inferiority complex and achieve superiority. In this context, De Beauvoir ascertains that the adolescent girl aspires to identify herself with the male community seeking to attain superiority through love (p, 609). In other words, the adolescent girl or young adult targets men who embody male superiority to overcome her inferiority. Fanon also points out that the woman of colour picks out males that are superior to her—white—to annul her inferiority (p, 39). Mr. Radcliff represents white male supremacy on all levels. Thus, by identifying herself with him, April feels superior and powerful. At this stage of her life, her inferiority complex is reversed and her white identity is established. Omar, on the other hand, enjoys a certain prestige that lures Isma into capturing his heart. Via his reciprocated admiration, the woman recuperates her identity and relinquishes her passive self. To Najwa, Anwar is superior by virtue of his intellect and ambitions. Hence, she engages in a relationship with him to create a home-like environment in Western London, and to contain the crisis she endures in exile. Consequently, she reconnects with her identity from Sudan through him and experiences some stability.

Our protagonists do not really achieve mature identities through men, but they rather lose themselves in these relationships. That is, they unconsciously trigger their gender inferiority in their association with men. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, in her *Reinventing Womanhood*, argues that women do not construct a self since they “need never undergo an identity crisis” (p, 103). She affirms, however, that women possess an identity that is lost in marriage; “the price of wifehood is abandonment of self” (p, 178). This explains why Najwa’s self is dissolved in front of Anwar. She is unable to disassociate herself from him. In

other words, she escapes her self-confusion in following his commands and accepting her ‘feminine’ role. The same thing applies to April who willingly abandons her identity in her matrimonial commitment. Isma, as well, loses her individuality before the artist, and is aware of her invisibility in his presence. In a nutshell, the three protagonists choose to identify themselves with men to sustain their identity crisis. Nonetheless, they experience momentary stable identities before the crisis surfaces up once more. This is again because earlier crises were not fully addressed.

April’s ‘white’ identity is achieved through her marriage to Mr. Radcliff. Her new identity gives her access to the white world that always rejected her being. She, accordingly, could blend into the white community in the different receptions she was invited to as part of the Radcliff family. Yet, Cheryl’s presence at the Radcliff Christmas reception rejuvenates her older crisis. Most significantly, it made April notice her incompatibility with her husband. In this context, she says: “Suddenly, I felt so empty. So alone. Funny I should have felt that way when Bob was right there beside me” (p 122). It is conspicuous that April fails to establish a solid self because of her unsolved crises from childhood and adolescence. Thus, her marriage covers up the crisis for some time, before it continues to grow again. In other words, marriage puts a temporary bandage on April’s identity complex, and it does not cure her crises. In fact, after divorce, April confesses to Cheryl that she was mistaken of her feelings towards her husband. She says: “I really thought I loved him when I married him” (p,135). This reinforces Erikson’s and Fanon’s arguments that love/marriage is an instrument of self-definition for the inferiorized woman.

In her marriage days, April’s white identity experiences frustration. She questions who she really is outside her commitment to Mr. Radcliff. She declares: “I found myself again in the position of envying [Cheryl]. She had a reason for being. She was her own person. I merely existed” (p, 124). We can observe that Cheryl—as an anti-thesis—continues

to threaten April's (new) identity. That is, the protagonist is unconsciously inspecting her white identity against her ethnic one. We can say that when April attains her white supremacy, she still remarks its fragility through Cheryl's solid Métis identity. April adds: "Comfortable and surrounded by socially prominent people. But I felt that I really didn't belong. That feeling grew worse as the months went by" (p, 124). We can understand that April's identity remains fluid despite its new cover. That is, the white identity was not successful, and this is why Erikson insists on solving crises from prior stages for a successful identity in the subsequent stage.

Najwa, on the other hand, experiences episodes of self-consciousness throughout her love affair with Anwar. That is, her stability (identity wise) is interrupted by questions regarding who she really was. This can be seen in the following passage: "At times, there would be a moment of clarity, a moment with no sound, no touch and I would wonder, staring at a strand of my hair clinging to his pillow, what I was doing, how had I gone that far"(p, 176). This again projects that the male presence only masquerades the identity crisis for a short period before it bursts out another time. That is, Najwa thinks she derives her identity from Anwar, while she only seeks shelter during her displacement. Despite being manipulated by him, her conservative Arab self raises questions about the person she has become, and thus, the crisis develops further.

As adults, our protagonists define themselves in relation to men. That is, they establish identities dictated upon them by men, they are involved with, to escape crises generated earlier by family and environment. In this regards, Carolyn G. Heilbrun contends that successful females are "male-identified"; yet, she denounces such an identification and describes it as a failure because a woman should not "take her identity from her man" (p, 46). Indeed, our protagonists take their identities from their man. But, it should be noted that childhood experiences nurtured dependency habits in Najwa's, April's and Djébar's

protagonists selves. Thus, when they break free from men's influence, they again experience self-confusion episodes. Accordingly, they strive to define themselves through new entities—women. In this regard, we shall examine how women affect each other's identity.

2. April's, Najwa's and Isma's Triple Displacement through Same-Gender Relationships: The Effect of Female Characters on the Protagonists' Adult Selves and Crises

Our protagonists' identities—at adulthood—are undermined by other female figures. Women surrounding April, Najwa and Djébar's characters set 'class' or 'ethnic' boundaries which makes our protagonists very conscious of their position and inferiority. In this respect, De Beauvoir claims that women are inferior for two virtues. First, they willingly express subordination to men (which we have evidenced earlier). Second, they do not stick to their own kind. She describes this as follow: "If [women] belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with man of that class not with proletarian woman; if they are white their allegiance is to white men, not to Negro women" (p, 18). That is, for women to achieve autonomous selves, they need to support their fellow women regardless of their race, religion, or orientation. Against this background, we shall see how some women trigger more instability and confusion in the selves of our protagonists.

April's white identity is troubled by her mother in law's comportment. Mrs. Radcliff maintains a superior position to April who mimics her for approval. In effect, April's self-perception in this new milieu is affected by interactions with Mrs. Radcliff. April describes their first encounter like this: "I felt Barbara Radcliff's disapproval of me from the very start" (p, 112). This unbalances April's identity who, as a result, commits social gaucheries because her attention was centred on "what [Mrs. Radcliff] thought of [her]" (p, 113). It becomes clear that, in this new environment, April defined herself through her mother in law's perceptions i.e. her identity depended on the validation of Mrs. Radcliff. As a matter of fact,

the two ladies spent lots of (formal) time in each other's company. Mother Radcliff taught April social manners, took her shopping and to beauty salons, but always maintained a distance. April observers: "We never did become close, never joking and laughing together. Her laughter seemed reserved only for those on her social level" (p, 113). It is obvious that April seeks the approval of her 'white mother' in her process of asserting the new white identity. Nevertheless, Mrs. Radcliff builds a wall between them because of the white-native hierarchy which perturbs April's self definition.

Mrs. Radcliff governs April's new identity. In other words, April submits to her mother in law's commands whilst establishing her white identity. It is noteworthy to mention that April's submissiveness results from childhood oppression. She states: "I suppose because of my childhood, it was easy enough for me to play second fiddle to a woman like Mother Radcliff, even to the point of allowing her to run our lives" (p, 113). It is conceivable that the chauvinistic experiences from April's childhood (especially her encounters with women) taught her into a passive role—to always accept being inferior. In other words, women in April's childhood nurtured this passive and submissive identity. When she encounters Mrs. Radcliff, her past crisis is rekindled and she acts accordingly. As soon as Mrs. Radcliff meets Cheryl and sees how Indian looking she is, she convinces April of not allowing her sister to the party not to upset their guests. This again puts us in front of mother Radcliff's superior practices over April who on the other hands submits. In other words, April forbids her sister from mixing up with the white community out of inferiority, and because she aspires approval and integration from her mother in law.

April's new identity continues to be undermined by white women around her. Mrs. Radcliff approves of Heather Langdon (a family friend) which affirms to April that she can never attain the same 'white' superiority—disposing of her Native heritage. In fact, April's admiration and feelings of inferiority to Heather can be observed along these words: "I

wanted to fashion myself after her so much because she so enjoyed living. She lived by her own approval, not of others” (p, 123). It is clear that April envies Heather for the person she can never be—independent and confident. Moreover, we can understand that April is aware of her dependency to others in defining herself; yet she stands helpless. In a nutshell, in this white entourage, April feels inferior to two white women which mutilate her identity formation (the white identity is never fully achieved).

April’s identity is further fractured with suspicion. She questions Heather’s relationship to her husband which intensifies her confusion. Furthermore, her mother in law’s closeness to Heather distresses April and threatens her ‘white’ identity. In fact, she overhears Mrs. Radcliff justifying her disapproval of her as follow:

Didn’t you notice her sister? They’re Indians, Heather. Well, not Indians but half-breeds, which is almost the same thing. And they’re not half-sisters. They have the same father and the same mother. That’s the trouble with mixed races, you never know how they’re going to turn out. And I would simply dread being a grandmother to a bunch of little half-breeds! The only reason I can think of why Bob married her after knowing what she was was simply to get back at me. Well, I had my doubts as to how serious he was with you because of days like today (p, 126).

It becomes crystal clear that Mrs. Radcliff disapproves of April for her heritage, and she never really counts her as a family member. This places April back in the starting line where she is a Native girl in the Canadian community. But, this time she is inferior to other women as an adult (a woman Vs. woman inferiority unlike in her childhood). April finally becomes conscious that her white identity plan cannot work with her heritage in the background. In other words, these women—especially Mrs. Radcliff—deepen April’s identity crisis and inferiority complex. This is exactly what De Beauvoir denounces: women alienating other women for the differences in their heritage or ethnicity.

Before shrinking back into an introverted self, April protests and reacts to her mother in law's condemnation. Her identity agitates in front of Mrs. Radcliff's preferences (she prefers a love affair, to her son, with a white woman than a lawful marriage with a native one). In this context, April addresses Heather saying: "Bob's mother would rather have a person like you, a hypocrite, and adulteress, as her daughter-in-law, rather than risk a few grandchildren who would have Indian blood in them, well, that's beyond my comprehension"(p, 127). It is ironic how a well-off woman would approve adultery (which was socially condemned at that time) and not a woman of colour. Being Aboriginal, to Mrs Radcliff, is a worse sin than infidelity. This is what De Beauvoir describes as women's full subjugation to male paradigms (blindly adhering to social convictions) and not their own gender (supporting other women in their struggles of self assertion). In this case, we can say that April is doubly alienated against her ethnicity and gender. She is inferior to the white community for being Native, and she is inferior to white women for being a Native woman.

As adults, Cheryl continues to impair April's identity. Her confidence generates envy and feelings of inferiority in April who could never mute or resist people's prejudices. Whilst the Canadian history curriculum was very anti-native, Cheryl chooses to write about the Indian heritage, something April could not comprehend. She expresses this as follow: "How come all this mattered to Cheryl so much? Did it help her accept the colouring of her skin? Was that why we thought so differently? That and her superior intelligence? One had to be intelligent to find this kind of thing exciting"(p, 78). It is evident that April sees Cheryl superior to her in that Cheryl is brave while she is passive. She talks further about this paradox in character and says: "She was so fearless. Me, I was a coward and I knew it. Cheryl never worried about what other people thought about her. Only what she thought about them mattered. Cheryl was that stalk in the field of grain which never bent to the mighty winds of authority" (p, 121). Moreover, April admits that Cheryl's openness about

her life was also patronizing as she kept her plans and denial feelings secrets. In this way, we can say that April is triply displaced by white men, white women, and Cheryl (for being an unfaithful Métis to her heritage). That is to say, April also struggles to locate herself within the Native community due to her conflict between denials of the Aboriginal identity and pursue of the white one.

Najwa, on the other side, feels inferior to successful Arab women around her. Her self-image is undermined *vis-à-vis* their accomplished selves. She mostly feels unequal to her employer who ironically comes from the same place as her—Sudan. Najwa wishes for identification with Lamya who puts a barrier by virtue of the social hierarchy. The protagonist pictures this as follow: “She will never treat me as her equal. I had hoped to come close to her or at least get her to chat with me like her mother did” (p, 116). We can understand that Najwa, desperately, sought Lamya’s approval. That is, she needed her to nurture her identity and shadow it. However, the employer distances herself: “I know that she will never do that [get close or chat]. She will always see my hijab, my dependence on the salary she gives me, my skin colour, which is a shade darker than hers. She will see these things and these things only; She will never look beyond them”(p, 116). This illustrates how Lamya inferiorizes Najwa and revokes her identity crisis. This employer-employed relationship reflects how women from the same cultural backgrounds—Muslim, Arab, and migrant—undermine their peers for the existing social differences. “My skin colour, which is a shade darker than hers” demonstrates that even within the same ethnic groups racism exists, and it is mostly founded on intellectual and financial achievements. In other words, Najwa’s identity endures moments of non-belonging amidst Arab and Sudanese women in London.

The Najwa-Lamya relationship reflects colonial influence on self-perception. Lamya—owing to her intellectual level—feels superior to Najwa who is of the same gender

and origins. Najwa, in return, is aware of this hierarchy. Thus, she shrinks into her inferior role. In fact, Fanon explains such an attitude among man of colour as an outcome of the white man's acculturation. He explains that the Antillean Negro who studies, lives, or goes to the army in France sees himself superior to the Senegalese Negro because, to him, he is more civilized and hence closer to the white man (p, 15). This applies to the relationship between Lamya and Najwa. The first sees herself entitled to look down at Najwa because she is not as educated and successful as her. That is, Lamya sees herself as an equal to white people in the exile by virtue of her education (pursuing a PhD in economics in London). On this ground, Najwa is viewed as an inferior and not an equal. In this context, we can say that Najwa is undermined by the Western society for being a black Arab Muslim, and then by Anwar for being a woman, and finally by Lamya for coming from a lower class. That is, Najwa is triply displaced and alienated. In other words, her adult identity is tormented by inferiority complexes placed upon her by the three different parties.

Lamya makes Najwa rethink her past. She makes her speculate an identity she could never develop. That is, Najwa questions her self-image and life if she was as successful as her employer. She voices her thoughts in this way: "What would life be if I were like her; professional, capable and mobile, not bogged down? 'Envy devours your good actions like fire devours fuel,' the Prophet, peace be upon him, said. I know it but I still do it, I still yearn for what others have" (p, 205). The conclusion that can be drawn is that Lamya makes Najwa very conscious of her position and status in society which enlarges the self-confusion she inherits from her adolescence and witnesses in her adulthood. Moreover, the closing sentence reflects Najwa's belief that she can never be equal to other women like Lamya. That is, she oppresses her own identity from evolving.

Doctora Zainab, Lamya's mother, is another female character who makes Najwa feel little and less of herself. It should, however, be noted that the inferiority complex Najwa

endures is not provoked by Doctora Zainab; but, it is rather internalized by our protagonist who, by virtue of the social differences, surrenders to her inferior role. Najwa compares herself to Dr. Zainab stating: “She must be no more than ten years older than me—even though I feel she is older. If I feel younger it is because I have done so little”(p, 71). Again, we can see that the protagonist feels undermined by her peers and fellow successful women—in this instant by Doctora Zainab. Thus, she acts within the social freedom attributed to her by her inferiority. Thus, her identity does not transcend those borders.

Randa, Najwa’s best friend, causes more damage to Najwa’s self. The latter maintains a superior position with Najwa (after her social deterioration) which consequently numbs our protagonist’s identity. It is important to note that back in Sudan; the two young ladies were inseparable. They shared the same hobbies and interests. But, prior to the political coup d’état, Randa moves to Edinburgh to major in medicine. In asylum, Najwa holds on her relationship to Randa to overcome the evils of migration and social degradation. However, Randa’s new behaviour (superior) frustrates Najwa’s identity:

What do you want to specialize in?

‘Skin’ she said.

I knew there was a technical term for ‘skin’ but she hadn’t used it because she thought I wouldn’t understand it. ‘Why don’t you become a gynaecologist? It would be nice to deliver all these cute babies.’

‘It’s nothing like that, Najwa. ‘Gyna is one of the toughest specialisations.’ She had never talked down to me back in Khartoum but now she was in a prestigious university and I had a disgraced father’ (p, 133-134).

It becomes conspicuous that the arrogant tone in Randa’s exchange shakes more Najwa’s self-esteem and concepts. She did not expect to be undermined by her own cousin and best friend. That is, her only ties with her past now make her feel displaced. In other words, Randa’s patronizing of Najwa results in more confusion and inferiority.

In *Burning*, Isma is undermined by her mother in law (her husband's grandmother as his parents died when he was six). Lalla Salma patronizes Isma by her strong character and influence on Ali. This threatens Isma's status and position as a wife which generates a crisis of identity. We can observe Isma's feelings towards Lalla Salma along these lines: "I was afraid of this robust woman of the mountains: Her yellow eyes, her flaming red hair, her round and fresh, wrinkle-free face, and especially, her exemplary piety. She's worked all of her life behind her loom, five hours a day, almost to end: up to the final month." (p, 59). We can read between the lines that Isma viewed Lalla Salma as a stronger and better woman than she is. But, she feared her not for the sharpness of her personality and traits, but in that she would not leave room for her in Ali's life. In other words, the mother in law jeopardizes Ali's love and need for Isma who in return cannot define herself outside her wifely duties towards her husband. That is, Lalla Salma's presence shadows Isma's role as Ali's life partner which confuses the wife about her identity and position.

Lalla Salma gradually displaces Isma's position to Ali. The husband, through the years, introverts into his work and visits to his mother which generates feelings of displacement and non-belonging in the wife. This can be noticed in Isma's feelings every time they visited Lalla Salma in summer: "When we'd go up, it seemed as if I was disturbing old Salma and Ali's private time" (p, 59). Then, she adds: "Every summer we go to this village in the mountains. They haven't really adopted me up there" (p, 61). It becomes apparent that the relationship between Ali and his mother engenders Isma's sentiments of non-belonging. We can also understand that in Lalla Salma's presence, our protagonist is invisible to her husband which perturbs her wife identity. Moreover, we can decipher the mother in law's disapproval of Isma. It should be pointed out that the mother is not welcoming of Isma due to her origins. That is, Lalla Salma looks down at Isma because she comes from the city. To her, urban women are not as qualified as rural females. In this way,

Isma experiences a double alienation (inferior to her husband for being a woman and inferior for the rural woman for being a city girl).

April's, Najwa's and Isma's adult identities are unconstructively influenced by leading female figures in their lives. The latter generate another gender inferiority complex—and this time to women themselves—in our protagonists' identities based on class and status. In fact, what our protagonists endure is a representation of a worldwide phenomenon amidst the female community. Kelly Valen, in her *The Twisted Sisterhood*, ascertains that women are their own worst enemies. Her book is based on results from a survey answered by more than three thousand women from different countries. She highlights the paradox in the female relationships and how women assist and sabotage each other. In fact, she claims that even when all women expressed their need and dependency on female presence in their lives, the majority still articulated wariness towards other fellow women. Moreover, she scrutinizes how women suffer bullying from other women—teachers, bosses, colleagues, etc—while they should comprehend well the female struggle. This is what April, Najwa and Isma experience. They need female figures to assert their identities in the midst of their crisis, but they are patronized instead for the existing social and ethnic differences. That is, our protagonists' crisis is heightened by the same-gender inferiority complex practiced upon them by powerful women surrounding them. Thus, April, Najwa and Isma fail to overcome their crisis and liminal moments.

Najwa, April and Isma do not find refuge in either the same or opposite gender, and thus, their crisis is maintained. Najwa and Isma live in duality between two countries, two cultures, and two social roles which again expands their self-confusion. April, on the other hand, lives as an outlander in her native land. That is, she shifts between the negative labels attributed to her race and the achievements of her own people—through Cheryl's letters and accomplishments. In this manner, she gets trapped between two selves: a self that is reluctant

of her Native identity and a self that is tempted by Cheryl's proud aboriginal identity. Since the three protagonists shift between two spaces in their process of self-definition, it becomes essential to inspect how 'home'³⁴ either settles the crisis or extends it. In other words, we shall examine how environment influences the protagonists' adult selves.

3. 'Home' and its Manipulation of Isma's, Najwa's and April's Displaced selves

The unnamed protagonist, in Djébar's *Non-Return Returns*, shifts between two spaces and identities. Her identity moves between Algeria and France. She identifies herself with France; yet she cannot dispose of her Algerian experiences. She opens her story saying: "Comings and goings, returns, round trips, slow returns. Count them in a fit of energy or discount them as circles of melancholy. Going back to the homeland, to the earth, to my father's earth" (p, 33). We can understand that the protagonists' travels between Algeria and France trouble her identity and create confusion. She is unable to define 'home'. In other words, these experiences displace her initial home; but, she is not fully established in the new one. It is noteworthy to mention that the protagonist escapes the femicide and intellocide in Algeria in the 1990's which privileges France over Algeria. Thus, Paris partially terminates the protagonist's fears and hallucinations. She justifies her migration as follow: "Going away would return me to myself. Far away, a foreigner at last—the fruits and the pulp of being foreign, a foreigner even to my memories and my future. Vacant, nascent. To leave" (p, 34). It is evident that migration, in this context, is a means of escaping one's identity crisis in an attempt to assert a reconciled self. The protagonist endures a clash of identities triggered by the two spaces she moves in between which hinders the establishment of a final self. The conflict of identities can be located in this passage (that comes after the first quote analysed in this paragraph): "Established again, Immersed again. And again the desire for departure

³⁴It refers to country and family.

gnawing at me” (p, 33). We can see that she feels established in Algeria and yet she wants to leave again. This illustrates her decisiveness and self confusion.

It should be noted that the title of the short story is the protagonist’s nickname. In actual fact, the protagonist establishes it for herself. “Non-Return” reflects her intentions of a complete abandonment of country, past and old self. Nevertheless, she returns to her country and even chooses to teach the history of Algeria at university. That is, her identity remains nostalgic to its first home which confuses the protagonist’s new self. The late 1980’s perturbs ‘Non-Return’s’ identity. Thus, the clashing ideals and the juxtaposing Arab-Western identities urge her to leave. At the end of the short story, she mockingly says: “Non-return returns” (p, 44). This represents the protagonist’s sarcastic tone for going back on her decision—never returning. In other words, the protagonist thinks she can mute her Algerian heritage in the metropolis of Paris, but she fails to disassociate herself from Algeria which fractures her identity.

Though Najwa has been raised between Khartoum and London—and in a very western fashion, she struggles to locate herself in her new environment. That is to say, Najwa fails to assert her identity in London despite the familiarity of culture and environment to herself. We can perceive her confusion in this short exchange with Anwar: ““So you’re now celebrating Christmas. You’ve become a true citizen of London.’ I laughed with him. ‘I don’t know what I’m becoming.’” (p, 151). It is clear that Najwa is unable to reconnect with her past experiences in London. Her identity is also unable to relate to this part of her life. Moreover, London becomes a foreign land to Najwa in her new circumstances which consequently incites identity confusion.

Najwa, simultaneously, clings to her Muslim convictions which deepen her identity crisis. In London, she shifts between her Arab Sudanese identity and a westernized one, and hence she fails to embrace one unitary self. Her quarrel with Anwar over fasting is very

illustrative of this. While having lunch, Najwa learns from her lover's flatmate that Ramadan has started which horrifies her. Anwar starts to tease her by inspecting the reason behind fasting—"to lose weight?" (p, 231). Najwa, in return, admits that it is partly it, but she still clings into it as a means of attachment to her older 'home' and self. The conversation takes this direction:

'So why don't you fast any other time of the year, why this particular month?'

'Because it is the month of fasting, that's why. Everyone is fasting.'

'But we're in London now,' Kamel said. 'People in London don't fast.'

'We've always fasted.'

'Really, your whole family?' Anwar and Kamel shared a smile.

'Yes,' I said. 'In Khartoum all my family used to fast.'

'I didn't. Did you Kamel?'

'No. Ameen did though.'

'Well, I don't see why I shouldn't keep it up when I'm here.'

'But what's the point if it's a community activity?'

'It's part of our religion' (p, 231).

It is indeed obvious that 'fasting' is just a social convention, to Najwa, that keeps her connected with her past and mother country. She does not fast out of religious convictions but to feel that she belongs to a certain community. Therefore, we can say that by fasting Najwa tries to reserve what is left of her Sudanese identity in London. In other words, she adopts Western norms for integration, but at the same time she does not want to let go of all of her Arabism which brings forth an identity crisis for the incompatibility between the two worlds, ideals and identities.

Najwa's identity crisis bursts out in London. The sudden change in her environment and mode of life—falling from an upper-class citizen to a migrant and a maid status—unsettles the protagonist's identity. Consequently, she dwells on her memories and initial identity to survive these changes. Yet, her new entourage—Western—reinforces the Western principles she has grown up with (speaking English, wearing short skirts instead of tobes, etc.), and

effaces the traces of Arabism, and thus a big part of her identity, which triggers more the crisis. In Sudan, Najwa is taught into her feminine role and identity—passive and dependent to men. In the U.K, she observes women—Arab and Western—different to her being in their ambitions and way of identifying themselves—independent from man. In this way, she feels her displacement and yearns for a return to her home country; she says she wishes she had “a country that was familiar, reassuring background [...] A country [she] could leave at any time, return to at any time and it would be there for [her], solid, waiting’ (p, 165). We can see that Najwa fails to locate herself in the London community, and thus restores into an identity crisis. Again, we can observe the effect of environment on identity development.

Najwa’s identity settles down to a Muslim self in her early forties. Her Arab ideals supersede the western ones which permit her to abandon her liberal side and breaking free from Anwar. That is, at this stage of her life, Najwa pursues an identity of hers—this identity is neither influenced by society or Anwar. To achieve a reconciled self, Najwa reconnects with her Arab identity through spending lots of time at the mosque. Thereafter, she starts her first job as a maid for Lamya. Najwa engages in discussions with Tamer—the employer’s brother—about religion mostly, which makes her question her new identity. She describes her feelings while on the sea-saw watching the baby girl as such: “For a brief moment I am not sure who I am, the Najwa who danced at the American Club disco in Khartoum, or Najwa, the maid Lamya hired by walking into the Central Mosque one afternoon” (p, 111). It is apparent that even in her new identity, Najwa still experiences episodes of confusion, and this is mainly due to unsolved crisis from previous stages as per Erikson.

Najwa restores to a Muslim identity aspiring to find answers to her confusion. She finds serenity in this new self, but still endures some crisis. We can observe this in her address to *Allah*: “Explain to me why I am here, what am I doing. Explain to me why I came down in the world. Was it natural? Was it curable?” (p, 240). The protagonist escapes her

identity crisis first through customs and ties to her past like fasting, and second through Islam. But, she cannot bury her confusion forever unless she attains self-acceptance. That is, Najwa never recovered from her social degradation which results in a fractured self.

On the other hand, April's identity crisis is aggravated by the reality of her parents. The truth burdens April's self and impedes it from setting on one identity. This is reflected in the following passage: "I felt torn in different directions and often changed my mind regarding my parents. Sometimes I would think of the life I would have been leading if we were all together" (p, 53). It becomes conspicuous that April, here, alludes that she would have had different ambitions, than becoming a white person, if she were still living with her parents. That is, she would have hung on to her Aboriginal identity, had she had the family entourage. Then she continues: "Other time, I would remind myself that my parents were weak alcoholics who had made their choice. And then I would loathe them" (p, 53). The separation from family widens April's self-denial. Moreover, their reality motivates her more to abandon her heritage. Accordingly, she expresses: "On Cheryl, it was still the question of how I was going to live as a white person with her around" (p, 53). We can see that despite April's strong determination to become white, she still questions how different her life would have been if she had a stable childhood. Therefore, her unsolved childhood crisis governs her adult identity which is unstable and fluid.

Cheryl's new self (alcoholic) destabilizes April's Native identity. In this manner, the parents' reality and Cheryl's distance April more from her Métis self. That is, April's self-denial reaches its climax after these revelations. Yet, April invites her sister to the Indian Pow Wow³⁵ in an attempt to make her reconnect with her old proud Aboriginal self. April goes to the celebration with the same prejudices regarding her own people. She tells: "I had gone

³⁵Powwows are celebrations that showcase Indigenous music, dances, regalia, food and crafts. Commonly hosted by First Nations communities, powwows are often open to non-Indigenous and Métis and Inuit peoples alike. Read more here: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/powwows-editorial>

expecting to feel embarrassment, maybe even contempt” (p, 166). However, the ambiance there alters her perception and makes her, for the first time, live a positive Native experiences. She expresses her surprise as follow:

I was impressed by all the sights and sounds. It went deeper than just hearing and seeing. I felt good. I felt alive. There were stirrings of pride, regret and even an inner peace. For the first time in my life, I felt as if all of that was part of me, as if I was part of it. It was curious to feel that way (p, 166).

We can observe that being surrounded with positive images of Indians and Métis people arouses sentiments of pride and belonging in April. She even remorse her denial of identity in this Pow Wow context. She sits around a bonfire and does not take part in the open-ended discussions. She explains this as follow: “I was occupied with enjoying my own realization” (p, 166). It becomes apparent that April connected and reconciled with her heritage in this atmosphere. But, returning to her normal life (white community) brings back self-rejection and disownment.

April’s Native identity escapes again by exiting the Pow Wow. That is, she embraces her aboriginal identity momentarily in the midst of the positive Native entourage. But, she confesses to Cheryl that she fears that this reconnection with her Native heritage will be destroyed by images of drunken Aboriginals on her way to work. This Pow Wow experience captures April’s mind which eventually produces identity confusion. She says to Cheryl: “It’s like having two worlds in my life that can’t be mixed” (p 167). That is to say, After this bonding with Native heritage, April developed positive concepts about Métis people (that shall encourage her to adopt herself), but at the same time she cannot forget about white condemnation of Natives. Thus, she finds herself in the middle unable to locate herself between these two worlds. We can say that the Pow Wow experience temporarily anesthetizes April’s identity crisis, but it does not fully contain it due to her unsettled childhood complexes. Indeed, when April resumes her old life, she restores to her old

perceptions: “I returned to working part-time but the scenes I saw on my way to and from work on Main St. gradually made that weekend’s emotions disappear. I remembered my original evaluation of these people” (p, 173). We can interpret that childhood prejudices and experiences outgrow April’s identity. Her older crises are evoked which renew her denial of the Native heritage.

The Pow Wow experiences marks April’s evolution of self. For the first time, she admits to Cheryl her self-denial. That is, her conscious self starts to develop towards a mature self. Cheryl on the other hand tells her sister: “To deny [your heritage], you deny a basic part of yourself. You’ll never be satisfied until you can accept that fact” (p, 167). In response, April asks her sister how she manages to maintain a positive self-image with all the surrounding racist images. Cheryl answers that it is through faith in her dreams of a better future for natives and Métis people. At this moment, April confesses that the source of her crisis dates back to the park days. She tells Cheryl: “When we lived with our parents, I used to take you to the park. The white kids will call the native kids all sorts of names” (p, 167). This demonstrates how April, at the age of five, started noticing racism and ethnic discrimination. That is, her self-image and sense of belonging were evoked at an early stage by kids her age. She adds: “If they had let us, I would have played with the white kid. Never the native kids” (p, 167). This declaration or preference comes from how the Native kids’ image was constructed by the white children in the park. Accordingly, April wanted to associate herself with the superior group of children. In fact, she justifies her choice as follow: “To me, the white kids were the winners all the way. I guess what I feel today started back then” (p, 168). It is evident that April’s crisis—as an adult—goes back to her childhood crisis and experiences.

It becomes conspicuous that April’s adult self-denial is an evolution of her childhood crisis. In fact, childhood prejudices affected April first then Cheryl because the sisters were at

different developmental stages as per Erikson, Freud, Piaget and Vygotsky. Cheryl was only three and in the stage of discovering her basic functions and senses, while April was in the midst of locating herself in her society. Moreover, the girls get placed in two different types of foster home: tolerant and non-tolerant to natives which nurtures the sisters' identities. In fact, April defends her position by adding: "It would take an awful lot for me to be able to change what I've felt for a lifetime. Shame doesn't dissolve overnight" (p, 168). That is, April, deep down, is conscious that accepting her heritage is inevitable for a successful self establishment, but she resists it.

The Friendship Centre³⁶ experience pictures and locates April's liminality. At this centre, we can observe the protagonists' tools in containing her crisis and working towards—at least a provisional—Native identity. Wanting to save her sister from la debauch, April gets involved in Cheryl's indigenous community activities. So, she agrees to accompany her sister to the centre. There, she meets an old lady whom she detests at first sight for her very native and old traits: "I waited for her to take her hand away. I looked at her questioningly but she didn't say anything" (p, 174). Thereafter, April gets captured by the old lady's gaze for the wisdom she could impart in her eyes. Moreover, by looking her into the eyes, April experiences a strong spiritual presence she never felt before. She then shares her feelings with Cheryl who tells her that she should be honoured for the old lady is an "Elder". Cheryl also reports that she told this elder that April's vision was clouded, but once it clears it will do well to Métis people (p, 175). We can understand that April re-lives the same positive experiences from the Pow Wow through the old lady at the Friendship Center. In other words, from the Pow Wow experience onward, April's Native identity starts to surface and grow for the first time.

³⁶Friendship Centres provide culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people living in urban centres and have become a place for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together, to share traditions and to learn from one another. Source: <https://www.nafc.ca/en/friendship-centres>

At this juncture, April faces her self-denial and tries to discover her future perception of the Native heritage—which leads to a self-acceptance and paves the way for a Métis identity to be established. She questions herself and says: “When my vision cleared...Would it ever? And would it mean that someday I would come to accept those Main Street people” (p, 175). We can understand that April questions the possibility of accepting her Native self and heritage. In fact, she deems it impossible. Yet, she declares; “If I’d had such a grandmother when I was growing up, maybe I wouldn’t have been so mixed up” (p, 175). Here April is talking about the old lady at the Friendship Centre. That is, if she had a confident strong grandmother, her self-concepts would have never been shaken. Again, this ascertains that family plays an important role in the adult’s final identity. If April had a stable family life, her crisis would not have defeated her. Moreover, it is clear through April’s words that she is aware of her crisis and that her identity shifts between two selves.

4. Self-Acceptance and the Containment of (Childhood) Crisis: April’s, Najwa’s and Isma’s Tools of Identity Establishment and Re-generation

In London, Najwa is lost and unable to locate herself within the new environment. Hence, she engages in a love affair with Anwar to maintain her balance and define herself. This same Anwar led riots and manifestations against her father’s regime and even publicly accused him of corruption and bribery. Yet, she restores to him in asylum because he refreshes her memory of her stable past. Through him, she embraces a Westernized Arab identity that is very fluid. Eventually, she allows him to abuse and patronize her because of the inherent passivity from the identity nurtured in Sudan. Throughout this relationship, Anwar makes Najwa feel inferior to him. Although, she completed a BA in business, he still convinced her she was no intellectual and no smart. But, still he consulted her to correct his articles and essays. Moreover, he teased her Arabism and hypnotised her into her liberal Western way of living. In the end, when she asks for an engagement, he shocks her saying

that he “didn’t want his [Najwa’s father’s] blood flowing in his children’s veins” (p, 133). Consequently, Najwa cuts ties with him and finds herself in the mosque i.e. the trauma guides her towards adopting a Muslim self.

April, on the other hand, gets married to Bob Radcliff to assert the white identity she always dreamt of attaining. She indeed changes her name from April Raintree to April Radcliff to reflect her ‘white’ identity and new class. This new life brings her VIP invitations to prestigious white people events and celebrations. April enjoys herself at first but then undergoes a period of emptiness and self-questioning. She therefore realizes that wealth and whiteness are not enough to bleach her memory and dark past (crisis and struggles). Thereafter, she starts comparing herself to her sister and how fulfilled she is. In this way, she comprehends that she is not happy in this white self and white world either which intensifies her crisis.

On the other side, Isma marries Ali—a paediatrician—out of love and embraces the social identity destined for her. That is, her satisfaction comes from shadowing him and fulfilling his needs (seeking validation). The husband is often consumed by his work and trips to his village. As De Beauvoir and Fanon express, the woman seeks a companion she sees superior to her and by charming his heart, she attains her superiority. The absence of feelings of superiority drives Isma towards Omar—the Somali musician—whom she sees senior to her on a linguistic and artistic level (Isma is a France teacher at university). However, feelings of guilt and confusion blur her vision and she stands unable to choose what path to cross and what identity to embrace.

Najwa takes her Muslim identity from women at the mosque who teach her how to wear hijab and how to pray. The comfort she feels in the company of other women inspires the protagonist to build her identity through successful Arab and Muslim females. Lamya, in this context, symbolizes the successful working Arab mother abroad. Thus, Najwa wishes to

build ties with her, but Lamya sets a wall instead. She maintains an employer-employee relationship with Najwa and makes her feel she is inferior to her by virtue of the social and financial status. This being said, the protagonist's self-confusion expands as she views herself inferior to even women from the same ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Cheryl's identity displaces April throughout her childhood to early adulthood. Cheryl's assertion of the Native heritage exposes April to her self-denial and rejection of self. This ultimately triggers feeling of inferiority towards Cheryl. This inferiority is intensified when Mother Radcliff disapproves of April for being a Native woman. Cheryl's consciousness tries to stop the marriage (calculating the possible outcomes), yet the sister sees it as a sadist act. Indeed, Mrs. Radcliff maintains a social and ethnic distance from April which hinders a successful establishment of a white self. Accordingly, April endures a severe identity crisis where she struggles to locate herself within the Canadian community. This sentiment of non-belonging is heightened by the mother-in-law's acceptance of a mistress (which was a taboo at that time) and not a respectful Métis wife. This leaves April with only images of successful Aboriginal women (the Elder at the Friendship centre and the many women she met at the Pow Wow) which helps in the resolving of the Native crisis, and thus an acceptance of self.

Isma, on the other hand, feels inferior to Lalla Salma which disrupts her identity assertion. This inferior-superior pattern is established based on origins. To Lalla Salma, country girls are better wives and mothers than city girls. Against this background, she patronizes Isma and puts her in an inferior role to her and all village women. In fact, Isma feels this inferiority more through the relationship between Ali and Lalla Salma. Her husband expresses more respect, admiration and obedience to his mother which Isma realizes she will never have. In this manner, the same-gender discrimination pushes Isma into a crisis of identity.

Living in between two cultures, makes it difficult for Najwa to stick to one identity or to settle in her new environment. In other words, she struggles to embrace a hybrid identity because of the clashing ideals between the two worlds. The same thing applies to *Non-Return Returns*. She is in constant shift between her Arab and French identities which are very anti of each other. Therefore, it becomes challenging for her to attain stability when being in milieu. April, on the other hand, is in constant denial of her heritage and questioning of herself—by comparing herself to Cheryl. Accordingly, even when she manages to embrace a white identity, she continues to question who she really is. The experiences of the three protagonists—love, female identification, and home—awaken their consciousness and guide them towards self-acceptance. In this regard, we will look closely at the protagonists' epiphany moments and what final identities they establish.

4.1. The Evolution of the Muslim Identity in *Minaret*

Najwa allows Anwar to abuse her in an attempt to settle her crisis and locate herself in the new environment. Since she is constantly displaced by the two clashing cultures present in her life, she finds herself borrowing Western and Arab ideals subjectively. In this way, she commits adultery which hunts her on her days of consciousness, or precisely when the Arab identity rules over. Najwa gets driven by Western modes of life in London; accordingly, she does not observe the holy month of Ramadan, and she mistakenly eats in daytime. As we have seen earlier, fasting is only cement that keeps the protagonist connected to her country and Arab Muslim self. In this sense, the 'non-fasting' incident provokes morbidity in Najwa. Looking for reassurance, she instantly asks Anwar to propose next time he visits Khartoum, but he turns her request down. Here, Najwa realizes that she embraced a self she is not, just to mute her crisis and to please Anwar. Therefore, she decides to decline her Western ideals with moderation.

Najwa's new identity clashes with Anwar's presence. That is, her Muslim self rejects the secularism brought in by Anwar, and it hence impedes a successful formation of a Muslim identity. Accordingly, Najwa gradually distances herself from him until she decides to never be involved with him again in any form. She describes her inner state after she receives a call from Anwar asking her to "come over"; she narrates: "When I put the receiver down, when I walked bare-footed back to the bedroom. I felt a kind of peace. I lay in bed and fell deeply asleep. When I woke up I had a shower, but it was not an ordinary shower, it was like starting afresh, wanting to be clean, crying for it" (p, 237). We can witness Najwa's resolution of crisis and self re-generation. Here, Najwa succeeds in separating her identity from Anwar—she no longer defines herself through him. Unprecedentedly, she settles for a self she chooses for herself.

Although Najwa is Muslim by heredity, her consciousness troubles her with guilt for the sins she commits. This is in fact because she grew up around servants who pray, in addition to students who wear hijab and pray in the university halls. These morals and ethics were in the background of Najwa's identity and were only rekindled by the consecutive emotional shocks. She accounts:

It was becoming clear that I had come down in the world. I had skidded and plunged after my father's execution and through my mother's illness, when I dropped out of college, then after Omar's arrest and through my relationship with Anwar. That process took so long, was mixed up and at times gave the illusion of better things (p, 239).

It becomes clear that the hardship in Najwa's adult life does not leave room for her to recover from one traumatic experience before she embarks on another. In other words, deceptions trigger an identity crisis and shake Najwa's self-concepts and identity. Yet, her self-realization lightens her thoughts and guides her towards an establishment of a Muslim identity that is acceptant and in harmony with her past and present.

Najwa, unable to digest her betrayal of social contracts, lets Anwar govern her life and identity. She even tries to silence her convictions and troubled consciousness through the secular identity he imposed on her. We can observe this in her confession about escaping her culpability through Anwar's reassurance; she says: "He had been wrong, the guilt never ever went away. Now, I wanted a wash, a purge, a restoration of innocence. I yearned to going back to safe with God" (p, 242). We can understand that even when Najwa admitted that fasting was partially a diet, and when she never prayed, she still wanted to be safe with God because the Muslim identity was nurtured throughout her childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. It only was not strengthened by her elite entourage. Thus, she finds comfort and refuge in it in adulthood.

Islam has always been part of Najwa's identity; but, her western upbringing in Sudan masks and obstructs a Muslim identity from emerging. This is clear in the following observation by Najwa when she hears the call for prayer on her way back home from the British Club: "The sound of the *azan*³⁷, the words and the way the words sounded went inside me, it passed through the smell in the car, it passed through the fun I had had at the disco" (p, 31). We can see that Najwa was leading a Western lifestyle that was ignorant of her religious identifications. To put it differently, her clubbing and alcohol obscured her religious beliefs. Yet, in this incident, the call for prayer invades her Western self and "it went to a place [she] didn't know existed. A hollow place. A darkness that would suck [her] in and finish [her]" (p, 31).

This first experience with religion happened after an evening at the British Club. Omar was drunk, and thus Najwa had to drive. The twins decided to leave the club at dawn. For the first time, the protagonist—despite the excessive smell of liquor—was captured by the call for prayer and could literally connect with her religion. However, these religious instincts

³⁷The Muslim call for prayer

were repressed by Najwa's Western-like life. On another occasion, she narrates how her female university classmates awakened the same religious intuitions every time they prayed. She describes this as follow: "I envied them something I didn't have but I didn't know what it was. I didn't have a name for it. Whenever I hear the *azan* in Khartoum, whenever I head the Qu'ran recited I would feel a bleakness in me and a depth and space would open up, hollow and numb"(p, 134). It is obvious that the Muslim identity was always part of Najwa's life. Moreover, it is the identity that always promoted serenity and stability.

After redemption, Najwa still fears the embracement of the Muslim identity. She is not certain that she is ready yet to enter this phase of her life. This is portrayed through her hesitation to go to the mosque. But, she chooses to go in the end. When she enters the mosque, her eyes meet a teenager reciting *SuretAr-rahman*³⁸. She is moved and touched. Accordingly, she says: "I wished I were like her, good like her. I wanted to be good but I wasn't sure if I was prepared" (p, 237). It is clear that, here, Najwa is unsure whether the mosque is the right place for her and whether she was ready for such a commitment. Najwa goes on narrating her first experience with praying and how inappropriate her clothes were (calves and back showing). Yet, women, at the mosque, made her feel comfortable and brushed away her embarrassment. The protagonist depicts this female entourage as such: "I liked the informality of sitting on the floor and the absence of men. The absence of the sparks they brought with them, the absence of the frisson and ambiguity. Without them the atmosphere was cool and gentle, girly and innocent" (p, 242). First, it is noteworthy to mention that Najwa's depiction of men here reflects what Anwar's presence brought and caused to her life and self. Thus, here she feels free of all the dependency she previously expressed towards him, and most importantly she is happy. In fact, the positive encounters with these women at the mosque reinforce Najwa's willingness to cut all her ties with Anwar

³⁸A Chapter from the Muslim Holy book

and assert a Muslim self. Through them, she realizes she can surmount her identity crisis on her own. She can be her own person, independent.

Najwa's new self shows resistance to Anwar's manipulations. The Muslim identity develops feelings of equality to Anwar in Najwa, and in this manner she does not allow him to influence her decisions anymore. This is clear in their exchange about Najwa's engagement in mosque activities; he replies: "It's a phase you're going through. You're not like these people, you're not one of them, you're modern" (p, 243). In the past, Anwar would have implanted doubt in Najwa, but her new convictions helped her establish a strong self. Thus, she was able to refuse him an offer and challenge his views. This is how conversation between the two develops:

'I've changed, Anwar.'

'No, you haven't. You are just imagining.'

'In the mosque I feel like I'm in Khartoum again. It's the atmosphere, the way people...'

You're wrong. There's more to Sudan than Islam.' (p, 244).

It is very evident that, at this stage, Najwa is having a self-reconciliation. She asserts control over herself and life and does not allow Anwar to influence her decisions nor her perception of herself. That is, she is in the process of establishing her final identity. It is also apparent that this Muslim identity was forged in Sudan i.e. Najwa has more motives to embrace it—reconnect with her past and heritage.

Anwar challenges Najwa's Muslim identity, but the latter—for the first time—resists and sticks up for her position. He questions her faith and says: "If everything you hear in the mosque is correct, your beloved aunty Eva will go to hell because she's not Muslim" (p, 244). Najwa bursts in tears but does not surrender. She expresses that she prefers to repent and ask forgiveness. She also states that she does not want to live a life where she does not even know that Ramadan has started (p, 244-245). Accordingly, she takes another step

forward in her process of self-assertion. She decides to wear the Muslim head scarf. She tries it on and looks at herself in the mirror: “I didn’t look myself. Something was removed, streamlined, restrained; something was deflated. And was this the real me? Without the curls I looked tidy, tame; I looked dignified and gentle” (p, 245). We can understand that Najwa still had some doubt about hijab, but still admired the image of her: dignified and gentle. She then adds: “Which made me look younger? Scarf or no scarf? Which made me more attractive?” (p, 245). Here, Najwa realises that she is not ready yet for such a step but would still want to look gentle and dignified. Eventually, she wears it a couple of days later.

In Islam, Najwa finds her real self. Like a building that needs foundation to be strong, and that takes some time to rise up, Najwa starts setting her core concepts and principles in the mosque. That is, Islam is her foundation. Yet, she needed time to rise up and be ready to engage in meaningful relationships as per Erikson. In this way, Najwa learns that a Muslim identity is what she wants. Her remorse of past sins can be tracked as follow: “Sometimes the tears ran down my face. I sweated and felt a burning along my skin, in my chest” (p, 247). This feeling of guilt embodies Najwa’s self-consciousness and regeneration of a Muslim identity. In point of fact, despite her regrets, she describes how much relief and tranquillity she experiences after such realizations (Islam is her main identity): “This was the scrub I needed. Exfoliation, clarifying, deep-pore cleanse-words I knew from the beauty pages of magazines and the counters of Selfridges. Now they were for my soul not my skin” (p, 247). It is apparent that Najwa is in harmony with her new self. She is also confident and strong. Yet, her past (sins) trouble her consciousness, and is often captured by the past. Therefore, she wishes to go on pilgrimage to start afresh with God and herself.

Najwa’s Muslim identity is, again, endorsed through love. That is to say, love helps Najwa attain and accomplish her final identity. In her forties, she falls in love with Lamya’s brother—Tamer—for his piety and the humbleness in his address to her. Tamer returns

Najwa's feelings and demonstrates readiness to settle down regardless of the twenty-year age gap. His presence reinforces the Muslim identity in Najwa in that she identifies more with his ideals and principles—contrary to Anwar who undermined and manipulated her identity. Moreover, Tamer helps Najwa transcend her inferiority complex by treating her as an equal to himself and his mother whom Najwa sees superior on financial and intellectual levels. A very short illustration of this is when Doctora Zainab purchases non-halal chicken. Tamer protests to Najwa: ““Why didn't you stop her?” Does he imagine that his mother and I are on equal terms?” (p, 206). While Najwa has always felt inferior to successful Arab/Muslim women around her, being directly compared to one of them lifts the gender inferiority that dominates her identity at this stage. That is, Tamer thinking that Najwa should have objected to his mother's shopping puts the protagonist in an equal and thus powerful position as his mother. Consequently, Najwa surmounts her gender crisis (through love and Tamer).

As a migrant, Najwa shifts between Western and Arab identities until she settles into a Muslim self. Yet, she questions her Sudanese belonging i.e. her language and beliefs are not typically Sudanese which incite inquiries about the ethnicity of her new identity. She therefore asks Tamer for answers: “Do you feel you are Sudanese?” (p, 110). The latter replies that despite his Sudanese origins, he never lived in Sudan and that his education and upbringings are Western which makes him feel more of a Westerner. He also affirms that he masters English better than Arabic. Accordingly, he asserts: “So I guess no, I don't feel very Sudanese though I would like to be. I guess being a Muslim is my Identity” (p, 110). Like Najwa, Tamer lives through different countries, and thus different cultures. But the British customs predominantly affect his identity. The difference is he is aware of this cultural influence and adapts what is necessary and best for him—English language. On the other hand, he keeps his religious beliefs and principles. Thus, he stands as a Muslim living in the

West using English as an instrument of communication only, and not as a means of cultural adoption.

Tamer inspires Najwa on how to develop a third space in London, and hence affirm her Muslim identity. His Western Muslim identification guides Najwa towards a containment of crisis and a regeneration of self. That is to say, he helps her negotiate between both spaces: Western and Muslim/Arab. Accordingly, she manages to establish a third space and a final identity consistent with this new environment. This can be perceived in her answer to Tamer about her new identity: “I feel that I am Sudanese but things changed for me when I left Khartoum, Then even while living here in London, I’ve changed. And now, like you, I just think of myself as a Muslim” (p, 110). We can clearly see that Tamer inspires Najwa to embrace ‘Muslim’ as a final identity. This does not mean that Najwa’s Muslim identification is inspired from Tamer, but he projects the impossibility of ‘proclaiming a pure Arab identity’ while they were both raised in Western contexts and manners. In other words, the best way to preserve the Arab identity abroad is to keep its very essence—Islam.

Towards the end of the story, Najwa’s identity recovers from the crises triggered by patriarchal and same-gender inferiority. We can see this in her selflessness and maturity of decision regarding Tamer. Doctora Zainab offers Najwa a cheque to leave Tamer; yet, Najwa tries to convince the mother to change her son’s university major for his own best and not to lose him which eventually Doctora Zainab does. In other words, Najwa here detaches herself completely from ‘male-presence’ and does not fear being alone, she rather thinks objectively about Tamer’s best instead of hers (marrying him and strengthening her Muslim identity). As a matter of fact, Najwa accepts the cheque and decides to go on pilgrimage for a fresh start with God and in her new self i.e. her identity reaches maturity and completion at this stage. It is important to mention that the capital also helps Najwa in asserting her final identity. Most of her crisis is characterized by her social degradation, and money here gives her back power

and confidence. That is, her crisis related to money and social status is contained as well which permits a successful identity formation.

4.2 The Rising of the Metis Identity in In Search of April Raintree

As discussed previously, April's marriage confronted her with her crisis and the impossibility of embracing a 'white' identity. Her new family (Bob and Mrs. Radcliff) defies her 'new' identity, and most importantly they expose her to her self-denial. In other words, April realises that she cannot mask her Native heritage, and she will never attain the white superiority. That is, even marriage, she figures, will not grant her equal status to white men and women. This is exactly what Fanon ascertains in that the white man loves the black woman for the sensual pleasure—that the white woman does not provide—and yet never considers her as an equal nor treats her with respect (p, 29). Indeed, Bob likes April, but marries her to get back on his mother and then cheats on her with Heather i.e. she is an object to him. In view of this, April, for the first time, generates feelings of despise and hatred towards the white race which marks the start of a self-regeneration journey.

Like Najwa, money contributes in April's containment of crisis. As a child, April associates the white superiority and power with money; therefore, when she receives a generous divorce settlement, despite losing the white status, she still feels powerful and in a certain manner not inferior. That is, money helps her surpass her inferiority to a certain extent. However, she puts her self-quest on pause by staying in Toronto for few days before moving to Winnipeg. In short, she decides to stay in Toronto after her divorce until she becomes ready to move back to Winnipeg and her Aboriginal fate. Winnipeg here symbolizes her Native heritage and Toronto represents the white dream. This transitional phase is however interrupted by Cheryl's admission to hospital. Thus, April leaves Toronto and embarks on her journey of self-acceptance.

April's acceptance of the Aboriginal identity is disrupted by Cheryl's new identity. Cheryl's encounter with her father³⁹—at adulthood—displaces her Native identity and generates a confusion of self. In other words, at this phase, Cheryl experiences the prejudices April endured in childhood and consequently rejects her Métis identity. Moreover, she helplessly accepts these connotations attributed to her race, drops out college, quits her job at the Aids Office, dates a pimp and becomes a prostitute and an alcoholic. That is, she goes down the 'Native Girl Syndrom' projected by her social workers. Cheryl's overturn of identity delays April's self-acceptance. In fact, April finds herself questioning her ability of accepting her own sister if she were to be one of those Native girls on Main Street. She declares: "What if she were an alcoholic? How could I accept that?" (p, 135). Here, we can understand that Cheryl's new self is undermining April's assertion of the Native identity and acceptance of self.

April's self-denial disappears through the rape incident. This traumatic experience faces her with the Native identity she has always tried to escape. It is noteworthy to mention that this incident takes place when April goes to Cheryl's boyfriend's house to collect her belongings. There, she is forced into a car and raped by three white men. In the end, a case is placed in court against the assaulters, and like Najwa, April tries to escape the rape incident through ritual baths to cleanse herself from the smell and flesh of the rapists. At the same time, she fixates on one detail: the assaulters calling her squaw⁴⁰. She ponders saying: "Why [had they] kept on calling me squaw[?] Was it obvious? That really puzzled me. Except for my long black hair, I really didn't think I could be mistaken as a native person" (p, 161). We can see that at this stage April still identifies herself as non-Native, and her self-acceptance is

not fully accomplished. But, then she corrects herself and states: "Mistaken? There's that

³⁹ Cheryl finds out that their father was alcoholic, and he in fact pushes her to become one and obliges her to support him financially. This image of him shocks Cheryl who always idealized him and pictured him as a noble Native man like those she read about in Native history books.

⁴⁰ According to the Cambridge dictionary, it means a Native Indian/American woman—especially a wife. But the word is considered offensive by many. Historically speaking, squaw meant a Native prostitute.

shame again. Okay, identified”(p, 161). This statement reflects the paradox in April’s identity. She, on the one side, refuses her Native status, and on the other side, she is aware of her denial. This struggle however marks April’s journey of self-acceptance and regeneration of Métis identity.

On trial day, April learns that Cheryl has become a prostitute which massacres her identity quest. This news burdens April’s Native identity and generates one final crisis. She expresses her astonishment as such: “Shock waves went through me [...] I sat there shivering. My own sister? Champion of Native causes. A whore?” (p, 182). We can see that the truth weighed heavily on April especially when Cheryl has always impressed her with Native speeches and pride. The latter has also displaced April’s feelings towards her sister: “I didn’t know how I felt towards her” (p, 183). We have previously seen how Cheryl’s strong Native identity inferiorized and influenced April’s; thus here when this overturn of identity occurs, April’s perceptions of Cheryl get perplexed. This confusion of feelings develops into reproach. April blames her sister for the rape incident and says: “[I am] a victim of my own sister’s folly” (p, 183). This is because she realizes she was mistaken for Cheryl i.e. the rapists were after her sister. Here, April meets her Native reality that she will never be able to escape. The rape trial makes her comprehend that despite her fair skin, she will always remain Native in the essence and origin. It is true that this incident in particular impedes April’s assertion of the Native identity, but it also forces her to accept her heritage.

April relies on her skin colour in her process of establishing a white identity, but the rape experience ends this endeavour. She finally grasps that her Métis identity is inevitable and inescapable. We can see this through her angry tone as follow: “[I am] another victim for being native. No matter how hard I tried, I would always be forced into the silly petty things that concerned native life” (p, 183). This reveals April’s social victimage. She pleads society guilty for her destiny and identity and does not shoulder her part of the blame—resistant and

resilient to her own heritage. In other words, April accuses society for the failure of her white identity. At the same time, she is confronted with reality: there is no other identity than Métis for her.

In the court room, April's acceptance of the Native heritage and identity matures. The Défense Counsel again patronizes April and accuses her of prostitution behaviour to discharge the rapist. Because she is Native and they are white men, she is put into this inferior guilty role. The latter offends April and enlightens her thinking. She fathoms what "squaws" must have felt and why the majority would drop their cases: for the judging looks and staring eyes at the court. She even wonders what justice the whole trial would bring to her own gender and people (p, 184). From then on, April's vision starts to clear, her consciousness is awakened and her perceptions are changed. This indeed helps her to understand Cheryl's change of behaviour and identity. It should be noted that April's discussions with Roger about Cheryl's current situation reinforces April's new perceptions and empathy towards Native women.

Like Tamer, Roger brings balance back to April's life. That is to say, he too helps April accept her Native heritage and establish an Aboriginal identity. In fact, he urges her to abandon the rape story to successfully move towards a final balanced self. We can observe this in the following exchange:

"Do you like feeling sorry for yourself?"

"I don't feel sorry for myself [...] I just know how I feel inside. I feel dirty and rotten and used. I'll never be what I was before. I'll never be the same. Can't you understand that?" (p, 163)

April, as a child, has always described native children as dirty, and in some instances, she even used the word 'rotten'. The rape incident makes her identify herself with natives—something she avoided her whole life. That is, for the first time, she is literally forced to feel that she is native from the inside. The bullying in school nurtured hatred to her race, but the rape story

made her live those images. Thus, she is incapable of overcoming this social degradation as she describes it (p, 163). Gradually, April accepts her fate and moves towards self-acceptance through Roger's help and the rape trial.

We have seen how family nurtured the sister's identities, and we have also contended and evidenced that the Raintree sisters undergo their process of development in different directions. Cheryl experiences a delayed crisis at adulthood and with the absence of her sister's support, her Native identity is revoked. This is clear in Cheryl's reaction to April's acceptance of her new reality: "You turned your back on me a long time ago. You think I don't know why you married Bob? It was to get away from me, that's why" (p, 192). It becomes conspicuous that if April remained active in Cheryl's life, she would not have turned into a 'Native girl from the Main Street'. In fact, prior to the rape trial, Cheryl shrinks into her new self and is ashamed of her reality, but April's reaction at the court deepens Cheryl's crisis and inferiority. Cheryl states: "You heard what they said in court and I saw what you felt when you avoided looking me in the eyes" (p, 193). We can understand that Cheryl's state was aggravated by April's judgements. Indeed, after this exchange Cheryl resorts to more drinking to forget her image through her sister's eyes.

The Raintree sisters swap identities, at the end, due to the change of environments and circumstances. Roger supports April through and after her rape trial which encourages her to assert her identity. On the other hand, Cheryl's father and boyfriend force her into alcoholism and prostitution, and thus, an abandonment of self. As a matter of fact, April challenges Cheryl's new identity and questions her alcoholism which causes more damage to Cheryl's self. Yet, she justifies her deterioration of self to April with the change of environment (her father pushing her to drink and her boyfriend to prostitute). Throughout their childhood, Cheryl dreamt about family reunion and pictured her father as a Native hero like Louis Riel. Yet, when she meets her father, he fractures her dreams and pride in the

Native heritage. He even takes all her money and demands for more. Additionally, Cheryl learns that her mother jumped off the Louisiana Bridge due to her separation from her daughters and due to Ann's (their baby sister) death. These new circumstances and new environment result in an abandonment of self and identity from Cheryl's side which again reinforces our position regarding the influence of environment on identity formation.

April's attempts to help Cheryl restore her Native identity—after the trial at the court—displaces Cheryl more and pushes her to leave home. Like Tamer helps Najwa adopt positive images about herself, Roger does to April. He continues to nurture April's identity which eventually leads to a successful establishment of a Native identity. In fact, he also

helps her overcome her crisis and insecurities. This can be seen in his justification of Cheryl's behaviour: "You've both pulled in different directions. Cheryl has identified with the Indian people and all the wrongs that have been done to them. And you, having identified with the white people, well, she's taken everything she's felt on you" (p, 205). Again, at this point, April becomes more aware of the bridge she has laid between Cheryl and herself when she embarked on adopting a white identity. This also explains Cheryl's accusations to April of turning her back to her. That is, it troubled Cheryl to know that her own sister did not want to identify with her (as seen previously), but she still repressed these feelings and let her sister carry out her endeavours. When April looked down at her, she no longer could pull herself up because she confronted a reality she was escaping through drinking. That is, Cheryl becomes aware that she is now one of the Main Street girls her sister always despised.

April becomes Cheryl's antithesis, but unlike April, Cheryl fails to control her inferiority, and thus she commits suicide. This in itself, we presume, reflects the impact and contribution of the Raintree sisters in each other's identities. In spite of April's rejection of the Native self, Cheryl has inspired pride and strength which later on feed April's Aboriginal identity at adulthood. April, however, rejects her sister's Nativeness since childhood in

addition to her new self after the rape trial which murders any opportunities of a self regeneration for Cheryl. As a consequence, she jumps off the Louisiana Bridge like her mother. Cheryl's identity crisis is captured in the following journal entry:

Sometimes I can't help it, I feel like April does, I despise these people, these gutter-creatures. They are losers. But there is a reason why they are the way they are. Everything they once had has been taken from them. And the white bureaucracy helped create the image of the parasitic natives. But sometimes I do wonder if these people don't accept defeat easily..." (p, 215-216).

We can see that Cheryl, despite her championing of the Native cause, experiences moments of instability with her heritage after meeting her father. That is, she represents the struggle of Métis people who thrive to assert themselves in racist Canada before 1982. It also speaks of the circumstances that led to the demise of Aboriginals i.e. the continuous reforms of the constitution constrained the Native identity from evolving and developing.

This journal entry promotes April's Native consciousness and validates her acceptance of self and marks the re-emergence of her Métis identity. Cheryl's inner struggle and suicide reconcile April with her heritage and identity because she finally looks at the Native crisis from an objective perspective. She comprehends that the reality of her people is a social construction and not a personal choice which develops positive links with Aboriginal heritage. Moreover, Cheryl's "I do wonder if these people don't accept defeat easily," insights resistance and fighting for the Native cause. We assume that the sisters swap even missions at this stage, and from here April's assertion of the Native identity and cause surfaces.

April's Native identity shows resistance to white prejudices with the suicide incident. It should be noted that at this stage April's self is no longer displaced by societal prejudices as it reached maturity and surmounted the childhood crisis. We can witness this in her response to the following statement by a Canadian witness of Cheryl's suicide: "Those

Indians are always killing themselves. If they are not shooting each other on the reserves, it's this holy jumpin' Jesus Christ" (p, 209). In earlier stages, such declarations would guide April towards a denial of self and a white identity, but here she holds onto her Native identity and shows awareness of the Metis struggle. She affirms: "What did he know? Someday, maybe, I could explain to people like him why they did it" (p, 209). It becomes conspicuous that here April transcended her childhood identity crisis and established a Native identity. It is also clear that her consciousness matured and she is acceptant of the Aboriginal heritage.

April's Métis identity manifests more after Cheryl's suicide. Her acceptance of the Native heritage and people becomes more apparent. This is clear in April's address to a bottle of alcohol she found among Cheryl's possessions: "I hate you for what you've done to my sister! I hate you for what you've done to my parents! I hate you for what you've done to my people!" (p, 214). We can see that April does not remorse her sister neither her parents for their alcoholism and social deterioration, she rather places her anger on the bottle of alcohol. In other words, she understands that alcoholism is a path lots of Natives have chosen to escape the reality dictated upon them by white people. It is noteworthy to mention that when the Raintree parents miss their family meeting with their daughters, April disowns her parents. She states: "I realized that moment that I had stopped thinking of [my] parents as Mom and dad and it was hard for me to refer to them as Mom and Dad now" (p, 91). Notwithstanding, when she regenerates her identity, she renews ties to her parents and shows acceptance of them. That is, she reconciles with herself and heritage. We can observe this in the following statement: "I felt anger and bewilderment. Not at Cheryl or anyone else. Mostly I guess the anger was for me. For being the way I was. Because it had caused Cheryl to feel so alienated from me" (p, 226). It is clear that April realizes the consequences of her long-lasting self-denial and overcomes feelings of inferiority from her childhood. Here, she

truly believes that the white identity is no superior for the damage it inflicts upon Natives. Thus, she asserts her Native identity, and in place of Cheryl, she champions the Native cause.

Cheryl continues to feed April's Native identity even after her death. She contributes in her self-acceptance and containment of identity crisis. In fact, she passes this inheritance—like in her childhood—through a letter and her son Henry Liberty Raintree. In other words, Cheryl pushes April to confront her internalized inferiority, and to reconcile with the Native heritage i.e. she becomes the new Cheryl who is proud and advocate of the Native cause. She says in her letter: “April [...] dream my dreams for me. Make them come true for me. Be proud of what you are, of what you and Henry Lee are.” (p, 227). In her life time, Cheryl has championed the Native cause, and even attempted to overturn the negative Native image imprinted in the Canadian mindset. Cheryl's suicide and legacy evokes April's consciousness and she becomes aware that she transcended her inferiority complex. She remembers that she has previously “used the words “MY PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE” and meant them” (p, 228). She adds: “The denial had been lifted from my spirit. It was tragic that it had taken Cheryl's death to bring me to accept my identity” (p, 228). It is clear that Cheryl's suicide—and April's feelings of guilt—were the last drive towards her self-embrace. That is, the traumatic experiences from the divorce, to the rape and suicide incidents awakened April's Nateness and guided her towards a regeneration of self. Along these lines, the book ends as follow: “Cheryl had died. But for Henry Lee and me, there would be a tomorrow. And it would be better. I would strive for it. For my sister and her son. For my parents. For my people” (p, 228). We can see that the protagonist finally succeeds to surmount her childhood crisis and decides to embrace her original identity: Métis.

It is important to examine April's relationship with Roger pre and post the rape trial in addition to Cheryl's death to judge how successful her final identity is as she had a tendency defining herself through others especially men. To start with, April describes

Cheryl's dating of a white man—which she ardently refused in the past—as follow: “If anyone could change a woman's mind about things, it was a man” (p, 102). It is obvious that April acknowledges patriarchal superiority and admits women's submission to men. She condemned her sister's relationship due to the compatibility of white principles and the Native ones. Roger is also a white men, and in this manner we shall inspect how applicable this is on April and Roger. That is, we shall scrutinize his influence on her self-definition.

Prior to her marriage, Roger has always displaced April at the Law firm (workplace). The two rivalled, yet April has felt undermined in his presence and often questioned herself. That is, Roger made April very conscious of her Nateness and position in society which patronized her. She resists his defiance through dating Professor Jerry McCallister. In other words, she asserts superiority through her white intellectual boyfriend. April's relationship captures her inferiority complex and dependency on the other in her establishment of self. Before, we proceed further with her relationship with Roger, it is noteworthy to examine an incident she experiences with Jerry.

April's relationship with Jerry is governed by the ‘Native Girl Syndrome’ speech. Fear controls her decisions and adult life. At first, she refuses to engage in a relationship with this professor and says: “I held back. Good girls didn't do that kind of thing. Furthermore, and more importantly, if things got out of hand and we went all the way, there was the risk of getting pregnant [...] that was my worst fears” (p, 104). The fear of being pregnant originates from Mrs. Semple's speech. Throughout the novel, April makes referenceto this speech that shaped her female identity and life. Here, we can witness a crisis from childhood that governs the adult life. The protagonist does not want to engage in a relationship because she was told, as a child, that natives get pregnant, do drugs, shoplift and drink. Getting pregnant without marriage would mean, to April, that she is entering la debauch. Thus, she puts an end to it to eliminate any chances of being identified as Native.

As analysed above, Marriage—to April—was a way of self-assertion and realizing the ‘white’ dream. It was also a means of overturning Roger’s superiority and power over her. Indeed, April gains a temporary superiority that is terminated by divorce. Both April and Roger meet again at the Law Firm (where she goes to finalize her divorce papers). But, here, the man shows empathy and even pressures April to overcome the rape episode. Most importantly, he supports her to overcome her self-rejection. When Roger learns about Mrs. Radcliff’s chauvinistic position towards Indians, he double checks with April if she was really Indian. The conversation flows as such:

“No. I’m... a Métis.” I had to force those words out.

“And from the way you say that, I gather you are not proud of it.”

“I’m not. It would be better to be a full-blooded Indian or full-blooded Caucasian. But being a half breed, well, there’s just nothing there.” (p, 156).

April goes on describing how Métis people are reduced to nothingness in Canada. At this stage, she also sides with the white community in discriminating Natives i.e. she blames Aboriginal people for their demise. We thus can understand that her alienation is an outcome of the Canadian acts that denied Métis people from their rights and put them in a lower position than Indians. That is, April all her life was living in between: not a full Indian nor a full Irish person (as per her parents’ origins). She could never establish a third place, and thus restored towards a white identity.

Roger directly guides April towards her self-acceptance. He also encourages her to abort her self-denial. In this context, he states: “I’m not going to tell you to be proud of what you are. Just don’t be ashamed” (p, 157). Roger’s superior position—as per April—permits him to intervene in April’s identity formation and dissolving of crisis. He forbids her from internalizing her inferiority complex and reliving traumatic experiences that hinder the establishment of her Native identity. In fact, April restores to ritual baths—after the rape incident—to ‘allegedly’ murder the assault memories in her head. But, Roger challenges her

beliefs and accuses her of self-inferiority and crisis. Thus, when she goes through her episodes of reliving these traumatic experiences, she remembers Roger and ends her bath: “I realized Roger would think I was just wallowing in my self-pity so I shut off the tap and stormed back into the kitchen” (p, 190). We can see that he makes April reflect on her behaviour; she confesses: “It was true that I had come to look forward to those ritual baths. I enjoyed killing them over and over again in my mind. But, really who was I hurting by it?”(p, 190). It becomes clear that Roger has led April towards her epiphany moment, and through him, she manages to put an end to these baths and hence the rape incident and the crisis associated with it. Without his confrontation, she would have never been able to face her crisis. This can be confirmed in April’s statement a year later: “It was almost a year after the rape. Roger had succeeded in making me feel good about myself again” (p, 194). This demonstrates Roger’s positive influence on April and his contribution in her identity formation.

Roger not only helps April assert her Native identity, he also directs her towards reconciliation with Native people for a successful establishment of self. This can be seen in his interpretations of Cheryl’s change of behaviour: “I’d say Cheryl has a very low self- image right now. Drinking helps wipe out that image. And she can’t let herself become sober because it hurts when she’s sober so she drinks again” (p, 205). We can see that Roger works as April’s consciousness. In other words, he provokes her to understand Aboriginal people and see through their circumstances. Again his superior position, directs April towards an acceptance of the Native heritage, and thus her identity starts to re-emerge.

April gradually moves towards a final identity. We have examined how she comes to terms with her Métis identity, and we have had some insights about her female identity. Thanks to Roger, the protagonist reconciles with her gender crisis. As we have seen earlier, April feared relationships with the opposite gender, but towards the end, she allows Roger in

her life. She describes her first moment touching him as follow: “I squeezed his arm and shook it, pretending anger. It was the first time I voluntarily touched him” (p, 194). This came when April learns that Roger lied to her about having an *Ojibwa*⁴¹ brother to make her believe he understands her situation. This small physical contact shows April’s readiness to engage in a successful relationship and ability to commit—as per Erikson and Freud. That is, now that she overcame the crisis, she is able to engage more as an adult with her surroundings. Like Jerry, April has constantly pushed Roger back during their dating period, and that’s because she was not over her confusion yet. In fact, we can trace her gender reconciliation through her statement about Roger: “I laid my head on his lap, reassured. It felt so good to be near Roger. It seemed hard to believe I had held him away for so long. I would have been completely content, except for Cheryl.” (p, 205-206). It is clear that at this stage April surmounted the Native Girl Syndrome crisis and engaged in a successful adult relationship.

Najwa and April, to a certain extent, undergo the same experiences in their process of self-assertion in their adulthood. They both endure life changing events. Najwa’s father is sentenced to death by the Sudanese government, her mother dies of an illness in London, and her brother is taken to jail for drug involvements. She then commits adultery and is abused by her partner. April on the other hand suffers from her failed marriage—racism. Then, she finds out that her bright sister has turned into prostitution. Moreover, she is mistakenly raped by people who were after her sister. Finally, she learns about her mother’s suicide, and her baby sister’s death, and finally Cheryl also jumps off the bridge. These traumatic experiences awaken the protagonists’ consciousness and allow a resolution of childhood and adolescence crises (April’s denial of Métis identity and Najwa’s passivity and feeling unequal). It is also

⁴¹ A member of a large tribe of North American Indians found in Canada and the U.S., principally in the region around Lakes Huron and Superior but extending as far west as Saskatchewan and North Dakota. Source: dictionary.com

important to highlight the male role in such a resolution. Tamer helps Najwa reconcile with her gender identity by treating her equal to women she considers superior. Roger, on the other hand, encourages April to adopt positive images of herself and to open up to her own heritage. Accordingly, she develops an understanding towards Native people's alcoholism and drug addiction, and thus, she frees herself from the Native girl syndrome. In this way, Najwa chooses to use the money she gets from Doctora Zainab for pilgrimage and start afresh, whereas April utilises her divorce settlement to buy a house and start her own business. She is also ready to involve, for the first time, in an adult relationship without fears and inferiority. In short, both protagonists transcend their crisis and regenerate final identities.

Isma and the *Non-Return Returns* protagonist, in Djébar's novellas, fail to embrace a unitary self. They are stuck between two clashing identities/languages. In other words, the linguistic division and circumstances in their country impedes them from transcending their self confusion and establishing a unitary identity. In this way, it becomes necessary to scrutinize this (linguistic) struggle to locate the source(s) of crises. That is to say, we shall inspect how language influences and interferes in our protagonists' process of self-definition post-independence and in the 1990's.

5. Linguistic Pluralism and the Algerian Identity in *Burning* and *Non-Return, Returns*

The identity of the *Non-Return Returns* protagonist is influenced by the colonial experiences in Algeria and the 1990's extremism. Both experiences perturb the protagonist's identity and place her within two opposing spaces. At the height of war, she moves to France to pursue her higher education studies. Upon independence, she chooses to return to her mother country to teach the history of Algeria at university. However, the corrupted independent society intrigues rejection to one's culture and identity. Accordingly, the

protagonist starts considering a move back to France. We can witness the beginning of this desire in the following monologue: “I was saying, “rooted again”? I watch my legs as they slide into sturdy denim, or when I’m alone, when they are totally naked under my African toga. So are these my roots?” (p, 35). This reflection takes place, one morning, before setting off to work. *Non-Return Returns* projects how her dressing—modern—is condemned by male gazes in post-independent Algeria, mainly in the 1990’s. That is, she is displaced in her own country, first for being an independent woman—working, and second for not wearing the veil.

The Extremist wave in the 1990’s threatens the protagonist’s identity and sends frustration. This makes the protagonist cling into her ‘francophone self’ in the face of condemning extremism. In fact, she describes her feelings of anxiety every morning before leaving her apartment as such: “[My feet] become feverish, their rhythm accelerating so I can cross the threshold—all thresholds. I must go out. I go out into the keeling city. Onto the swaying streets. Into the onslaught of catastrophe, all the way, to the end, so close, so far...” (p, 35). Threshold here represents intense male reactions towards the female’s dressing manners. Keeling describes the collapse of the Algerian society as a cultural degradation. During the war of independence, Algerian women had to abandon the veil in order to be able to participate in revolutionary actions. Therefore, upon independence, lots of Algerian women appeared without hijab. Yet the rising of the extremist wave directed attention towards non-veiled women and denounced them for dressing in a ‘french’ manner. That is, women were threatened and attacked for choosing not to wear the veil which undermined their identities and independence. This is what the protagonist alludes to by saying “the onslaught of catastrophe.” This imposition of ideas and language frustrates the protagonist’s identity and guides her towards the French tongue and ‘Western’ mode of life as per the GIA.

In a nutshell, the two quotes demonstrate the duality and instability in the Algerian identity, and how it becomes difficult for Arabic-educated and French-educated Algerians, in post-independence, to co-exist in harmony. Moreover, it demonstrates how challenging life is for non-veiled females who are in constant fight against patriarchy, or to be precise, extremist groups by the rise of Islamist groups in the late 1980's. The protagonist represents Algerian individuals who went to the colonial school, during colonialism, and grew up around churches and French ideals. Upon independence, most of these Western ideals were deeply rooted in the mentality and psyche of this generation (dressing style and communicative language mostly). That is, French becomes an integral part of their identity. Forcing them to comply with the Arabisation policy in the 1970's onward, means asking them to abandon a part of who they are—which is impossible. Resistance, then, starts and tension builds creating two groups of Algerians: Arabophones and Francophones. Thus, it becomes impossible for the *frenchified* Algerian to survive in this atmosphere. This justifies the protagonist's consideration and urge to leave; she feels unfit in her home country and more fit in the foreign lands i.e. the linguistic clash pushes francophones towards France where they can keep their identities and express themselves freely in the French tongue.

Non-Return Returns describes her identity crisis and confusion in modern Algeria in the following terms: “There, an insidious weaving—a risk of suffocation, of semidarkness, of being holed up. The desire to go out, out” (p, 33). It becomes clear that the new standards in her home country negate her own being and ideals, and thus there is the risk of losing oneself, to be strangled. Against this background, the protagonist decides to leave. Yet, she cannot dispose of her Algerian side. We can see this in the following passage when she decides to leave:

After being so pressed, then retreating, the desire to leave—angry or, on the contrary, joyous—would be awakened in me, as soon as the following morning.

To leave it all behind, to go before any notion of returning could present itself. To get a return ticket, of course, just in case. And to save some money (p, 34).

We can say that despite her decision to depart, she is stuck in-between. “Angry” reflects her attachment to her country and being sorry for its fate. That is, she would have wanted to stay and not immigrate. “Joyous” shows the other side of her that longs to abandon the new Algeria she is not accustomed to, the Algeria that is hostile to her own identity. “To get a return ticket” highlights more this confusion. She made up her mind, but still purchases a return ticket because Algeria is not finished for her. It becomes conspicuous that languages make the protagonist shift between two spaces: Algeria and France, and she cannot settle on one identity due to the linguistic clash that pressures her to abandon part of her identity.

Isma, in *Burning*, is also caught between two clashing selves and identities. As we have seen previously, she teaches French at the Algiers university. During that period, the 1990’s, there was a considerable rise in Arabophone elites, and thus anti-Western sentiments grew bigger. It is important to mention that this disapproval of the continuing presence of the French language, mainly, in Algeria is due to the positions and hireability of Francophones at the expense of Arabophones. Moreover, it results from the opposing Western and Arab ideals. In this way, Francophones (teachers, writers, etc) and women who promoted Western modes of living (speaking and working in French) were targeted by Islamist groups (Evans, p133).

The protagonist, raised in colonial schools and occupied Algeria, embraces much of the Western ideals like not wearing the veil, speaking and teaching French, and advocating women’s rights in Algeria. This implies that her ‘Arabism’ is kept alive only through her entourage—living in an Arab country. Thus, Isma is targeted by extremist groups. Yet, she hangs on to her Westernized identity, but disguises it to protect it. This can be read as follow: “Will they find out that... I’ve changed my neighbourhood, my appearance, that I’ve varied my style of dress, my name, my way of wearing glasses, of inflecting my voice, modifying

even my accent, the rhythm of my dialect?” (p, 45-46). We can understand that Isma alters her name, accent, dialect and clothes to look more Arab as a protection of self and to reserve her identity. This modification she embraces implies that she is Western-identified and not the opposite. She lives with a western mindset and ideals in an Arab country. That is herself and her environment are not compatible i.e. she is displaced and she struggles to survive in Algeria with her contaminated identity.

A later observation shows that Arabic is also integral of Isma's identity. We can observe this as follow: “My voice, slow, came out somewhat cold. Fortunately, it spoke French, a language in which it knew how to disguise everything—to veil, to tame, to be tamed—and so to chat in a neutral tone. In my dialect, on the other hand my voice—the same voice—would get carried away” (p, 50). Here, the protagonist is describing her first interaction with the Somalian musician—Omar—who fascinated her with his work and intellect. Isma says that she controls her emotions through her French tongue and pours her heart out through her dialect. This demonstrates the duality in her identity that is both influenced by Arabic and contaminated by the French language. That is to say, both languages are part of Isma's identity, and she uses languages subjectively to survive extremism in Algeria and to negotiate between spaces.

In prior sections, we have seen how the protagonist's crises were triggered by male dependency and hegemony. Najwa, once she made up her mind about leaving Anwar and asserting her dependency, takes a long bath to exfoliate and cleanse herself. Whereas April depends on ritual baths to bleach her memory and wash the trauma the rapists tattooed on her soul. Isma, in the same way, desires a long shower to wash away her dependency on her husband. She narrates: “That day, I remember, I was tormented by a vague urgency to go to the hammam that very afternoon [...] Essentially I wanted to purify myself” (p, 68). This decision came after Lala Salma's death. Ali, after being emotionally absent for a long time,

returns to Isma, returns after his mother's death. However, Omar changes her perceptions, and she realizes it is not living in the shadows of another woman or man that she wants. She decides she wants to be independent. Thereby, Isma overcomes her gender crisis but fails to surmount the linguistic one.

Conclusion

As children and teenage girls, the protagonists experience some crises that impede the establishment of a successful identity as adults. April suffers the prejudices of being a Métis in Canada, and therefore opts to take advantage of her light skin and pass as a white person. Najwa is raised in an elite entourage. Therefore, she enjoys some superiority, but is made inferior in front of male presence, mainly her twin brother. In this way, she develops passivity and grows up judgemental of all what she does, which disturbs her integration in the asylum. Isma lives in a patriarchal society and is taught into a feminine role since childhood. Accordingly, she develops a certain complex towards her gender and fails her marriage. Herself and Non-Return are raised by French ideals that are later eradicated and replaced by Arab customs and principles. Consequently, the ladies experience a linguistic trauma, and thus, identity crisis.

To quote again Erikson's statement, a final identity and successful integration in society depends on the resolution of crises. He also argues that "identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration (*The Life Cycle Completed*, p 69). That is, an identity is achieved through the integration of different components: relationships, significant identifications, defences and roles. Moreover, Taylor, Chodorow and himself argue that female's identities are achieved through social relationships i.e. identification with men. That is, the woman takes her identity from men. De Beauvoir, however, overturns this position and stresses that civilization puts women into their passive role for it sets men superior.

April indeed surmounts her inferiority complex through her marriage to Bob. Nevertheless, when she achieves her goal, her attention centres around areas of life she neglected—like being happy and thriving. Therefore, she feels more inferior to her own sister. That is, the crisis is not solved. The latter is heightened by her mother's in law patronizing treatment. She then discovers that she is merely—her marriage—a tool of getting back at Mrs. Radcliff who prefers a mistress to a “half breed”. Here, the crisis surfaces again and despite the deception and discrimination, April does not abandon her dream: turning white. Yet, the rape incident, Cheryl's reality and death put the protagonist face to face with her fears and crisis. This means traumatic experiences opened April's eyes about the reasons why Natives are drunkards—they were put down by the white society. Being more aware and receptive helps the protagonist accept her Aboriginal heritage and self. The role of Roger in all of this is being an intermediate. He exposes April to areas none of the white people did before. In other words, he shows comprehensibility that incites developing a positive perception towards one's image. In this way, we can say that yes the protagonist achieves her identity through social relationships—relationship with men and women—but traumatic experiences have the lion's share over this.

Najwa, on the other hand, is made inferior to man by the feminine servitude. She is passive and acts according to societal expectations. In London, surrounded by independent women, she questions herself and a crisis emerges. Accordingly, she fails to integrate herself successfully, and even takes bad decisions: lending money to Anwar to complete a PhD and who never returns the money and dropping out college to work as a maid because she needed to feel she is part of a family. Moreover, Najwa's crisis is intensified by the clashing of Western and Arab ideals i.e. she struggles to locate herself in between the opposing cultures. Losing her mother to illness and her brother to jail maintain feelings of instability in Najwa. In this way, Anwar becomes her refuge to escape her feelings of non-belonging. However,

falling in taboos provokes Najwa's consciousness and she then realises that 'Muslim' is the identity she wants to embrace. Her identity does not reach a maturity instantly for feelings of inferiority generated by other Arab Muslim women. Tamer, here, puts her on the same level of women she sees superior, and hence, she reconciles with her gender identity. Again, traumatic experiences call forth directly self-acceptance and social relationships—including men—are mere instruments.

Non-Return Returns and Isma are raised in colonial schools and at the height of colonialism. They grow up in Algerian homes and French streets. That is, lots of the French influence was inflected on their identities and culture. In the wake of independence, they fail to dispatch of the French ideals that were imprinted upon themselves. Thus, they live in constant shift between identities emerging subjectively. Isma, on the other side, is made inferior by her mother in law for being a city girl which adds another dimension to her identity crisis. Only through another man, she decides to unchain the patriarchal societies that hinder her from being her own self. Yet, she fails to adopt a unitary identity that is either Arabophone or Francophone.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that yes women tend to seek their identification from the other be it men or women. It is also important to stress that they lean towards men more than women for the feminine role and passivity they are taught into since childhood. However, in the case of our protagonists, the social relationships bring more confusion to their identities. That is, they surmount their crises on their own. In other words, the resolution of crisis and establishment of a final self needs to come from within. Traumatic experiences change the protagonists' perceptions and thus they decide to face their crisis in a step towards self-assertion. Willingness and acceptance of oneself enables them to engage in successful relationships and not the opposite. Put differently, it is not through men that they manage to identify themselves, it comes from them which enables them to generate a healthy identity.

This is exactly what happens to the protagonists. Their relationships before the crisis resolution fail, which proves that they do not get their identity from men. But, when they accept themselves, the relationships they engage in are successful. That is to say, social relationships boost confidence and positive self-images, but do not solve the crisis. It is therefore erroneous to say that women are male identified.

Ironically, most often, women undermine and patronise one another. This doubles the female alienation and extends their identity crisis. Accordingly, chances for women to assert themselves through other fellow females are low. The protagonists in the studied novels are put in inferior roles by successful or powerful women in their societies. Thus, the gender crisis they undergo as children and teenagers—unequal to their brothers and enslaved by their mothers—is deepened. Only when they set themselves as subjects that they reconcile with their gender identity. This observation reinforces our hypothesis that the self does not necessarily need another—social relationships—to identify itself. Identity formation results from a series of events and deceptions that forces the protagonists to look within themselves for a final identity.

As much as trauma can endanger identity, as seen above, it can generate self-consciousness that leads to acceptance and self-regeneration. The protagonists' triple displacement forges strong selves and leads to unitary stable selves. In other words, the final identity our protagonists'—April and Najwa mostly—embrace is solid and unfluid.

Chapter Three

Writing the Minority Female Cause: Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Political Stances and Orientations

“This is the modern female voice...young, fresh, diverse, challenging, uninhibited”

—Rachel Cusk⁴²

“One cannot read this moving account of the two sisters without feeling their terrible anguish, bewilderment and anger as they try in their different ways to live in a society that frequently rejects and abused their parents and ancestors. The story is a tragic one, yet its final outcome is one of affirmation and bitterly won resolve.”

—Margaret Laurence⁴³

“From time to time, we hear about books that supposedly tear away the veil from the lives of the Arab women. I don't know anyone who has done this with more intelligence and passion...than Assia Djebbar. That murmur beneath her images soon begins to sound like a roar.”

—Alan Cheuse, *All things considered*⁴⁴

Assia Djebbar, Beatrice Culleton and Leila Aboulela received much attention throughout this century for the novelty in their writings. Djebbar is best known as women's voice in Algeria, while Culleton is famous for her Native discourse narrative, whereas Aboulela portrays the female Muslim/migrant Diaspora. As the reviews demonstrate, these authors are mostly studied and identified as feminist writers. But, are they really feminists? In other words, are these minority writers writing to champion the female cause or are they writing as a means of political resistance? From this standpoint, we shall look into these minority writers' works and inspect whether they defend the female cause and identity or write for a greater perspective—their countries.

⁴²The quote is taken from Aboulela's *Minaret* book cover. Rachel Cusk is Canadian-born novelist who is known for her advocacy of females' rights, and thus, women's writing. It is noteworthy to mention that she is a winner of many prizes such as Whitbread First Novel award (1993) and the Goldsmith Prize (2018).

⁴³ The quote is from Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* book cover. Laurence is a Canadian novelist and short story writer. She is considered as a major figure in the Canadian literature for being a founder of the Writers' Trust of Canada. Moreover, her writings project women's striving for self-assertion in patriarchal societies.

⁴⁴This is a review extracted from Djebbar's *the Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* book cover.

Margery Fee writes, in *Deploying Identity in the Face of Racism*, that Culleton's novel "rejects Whiteness or Nativeness as simple, clear-cut identities" (p, 217). To her, the book also criticizes individuals who claim to have an identity. In *the Problem of "Searching" for April Raintree*, Janice Acoose undermines Culleton's ability to reflect the Métis voice. She however acknowledges its role in shedding light on identity formation and cultural imposition on Métis people, and females mainly, through her main protagonist—April (p, 229). Agnes Grant, on the other hand, expresses opposition to Acoose's view that the book fails to voice Métis matters. She argues, in her *Abuse and Violence: April Raintree's Human Rights (if she had any)*, that Culleton's novel helps Aboriginal people find their voice in the Canadian literature. Most importantly, it projects abuse of women, and thus, it reminds female counterparts that misogyny is blended with racism (p, 238). On the other hand, Helen Hoy contends that Culleton's novel is "a duplicitous (a multiplicitous?) book. It both invites and disrupts notions of the real and of the self, of authenticity and of identity, of truth" ("*Nothing but the Truth*": *Discursive Transparency in Beatrice Culleton*, p 289).

Beatrice Culleton, on the other side, expresses in *the Special Time* that In Search of April Raintree was her scriptotherapy. She wrote the novel to find answers to questions regarding her family. She raises question about her identity, about being separated from her parents at an early age, about being mistreated, etc. Against, this background, the present chapter endeavours to demonstrate that Culleton writes as a means of political resistance. She writes to demonstrate no matter how hard native people, and precisely females, thrive to survive and overcome racism in Canada, they are put down, they are destroyed.

Susan Taha Al-Karawi and Ida Baizura Bahar, in *Negotiating the Veil and Identity in Leila Aboulela's Minaret*, view Aboulela's novel as in iconic representation of the migrant Arab Muslim female conflict over forming a modern yet religious self. Their work inspects the positives and negatives of being a "veiled" Muslim in Britain. They also assert that only

through the veil that Najwa succeeds in establishing a Third place, and thus, establishing a final identity—a Muslim identity. On the other hand, in ‘*Displaced*’ *Muslim Women in Monica Ali’s Brick Lane and Leila Aboulela’s Minaret*, Sherine Fouad Mazloun rejects the position that categorizes Aboulela’s work as ‘*halal*’ fiction and focuses on Muslim women’s triple displacement: for being females, Oriental and Muslim. She concludes that diasporic Muslim women achieve a final identity through fusing Islamic principles and secular humanitarianism. Ulrike Tancke, in “*Original Traumas*”: *Narrating Migrant Identity in British Muslim Women’s Writing*, ascertains that *Minaret* reflects the struggles of migrant Muslim women to define themselves in foreign cultural environments. He highlights that women’s failure to connect with their origins results in trauma, and hence, females become trapped between trauma, origins and the new culture.

In *And My Fate Was Scotland*, Aboulela confesses that moving to Scotland affected her very much. She says: “ [I] moved from a religious culture to a secular one and that move was the most disturbing of all, the trauma that no amount of time cure, an eternal culture shock” (p, 189). That is, the change in environment impacted lots of Aboulela’s writing. Yet, the present research probes into the question of identity through a postcolonial perspective. It endeavours to demonstrate that much of the identity crisis the protagonist undergoes in London is a reflection of patriarchal and colonial effect. In other words, the present chapter attempts to evidence that Aboulela not only writes to champion the Muslim female cause in the Occident, but it also denounces patriarchy and mourns the effects of colonialism on the Arab identity, with much focus on the female figure.

Peter Hitchcock, in *the Long Space*, claims that Assia Djébar’s writing is a portrayal of Algeria’s history and horrors. He also stresses that Djébar’s *the Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry* speaks the silenced tongues of women in post-colonial Algeria (p, 210). Lindsay Moore, on the other hands, writes in *Assia Djébar (1936-2015)* that the collection of short

stories is a backlash against the 1990's civil war characterized by misogyny and intellocide⁴⁵. She asserts that Djébar expresses, through her novel, the impossibility of writing an Algeria without blood. That is, the horrors of the black decade shape most of Djébar's writing in the seven novellas. In *Edward Said and Assia Djébar: A contrapuntal Reading*, Mildred Mortimer suggests that Djébar's novellas denounce violence committed against Algerian women with much focus on the 90's. On a different note, Julija Sukys writes, in *Language, the enemy: Assia Djébar's response to the Algerian intellocide*, that *the Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* is a reaction to the genocides committed against Francophone Algerian intellectuals. Thus, the collection reflects the conflicting powers and wretchedness of the post-colonial Algerian society.

Assia Djébar, in *the Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*, discloses that she writes the Algerian women in her novellas; she dreams in them, she remembers in them (p, 13). That is, she projects the hardships of being a woman at the height of the civil war. Thus, she cries their cries and writes their fears and struggles. In this context, she argues that whatever approach she takes to depict these women, their blood "will not dry on the tongue, no matter what tongue, or rhythm, or words are finally chosen" (p,13). The championing of the female cause is very apparent in Djébar's words. Yet, the present research aims to demonstrate that *the Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* not only speaks for silenced Algerian women, but also speaks for a silenced country i.e. the chapter endeavours to show that Djébar mourns the Algerian Identity in general.

This chapter starts with a brief examination of the writers' bibliographies to manifest their ideologies and positions. Thereafter, we shall inspect the circumstances and context in which the books were conceived, and finally it shall reveal Aboulela's, Culleton's and

⁴⁵It is a blend of two terms: "intellectual" and "genocide", and it refers to Algerian intellectuals being targeted and assassinated during the black decade.

Djebar's resistance through writing. This shall be achieved through the investigation of symbolism in the three novels.

1. Aboulela, Culleton and Djebar: Political Stances and Biographies

1.1. Locating the Muslim Diasporic Self in *Minaret*

Aboulela was born in 1964 in Cairo—Egypt—to an Egyptian mother and a Sudanese father. She however was raised and lived in Khartoum—Sudan—until 1985. She went to the Khartoum American school and then to the Catholic Sisters' high school. Thereafter, she attended the Khartoum University and earned a bachelor's degree in economics. Aboulela's primary and tertiary education were Western led which justifies her enrolment in the London School of economics in 1987, and later her settlement in the U.K. Despite her specialization in economics, Aboulela chose to pursue a career in writing that was triggered by her move to Aberdeen—Scotland—in 1990. She lived between Indonesia, the UAE and Qatar, but later decided to return to Aberdeen in 2012. Aberdeen or Scotland in general shaped most of Aboulela's writings for it evoked her Muslim faith and revived her past in Sudan.

In an interview with the Guardian, Aboulela submits that Jean Rhys's *A Voyage in the Dark* "haunts everything she writes." She feels identified with the migrant female protagonist who struggles to find her way in Britain. In a later interview with Claire Chambers, She stresses that Rhys's novel influenced her *Minaret* (*An Interview with Leila Aboulela*). Moreover, she admits that Tayyab Salih's writings, especially *The Wedding of Zein*, exercise a great influence over her productions. She says Salih's works bring a live vibrant picture of Sudan, and through his writings she remembers and reconnects with her Sudan, and hence past. This in fact explains the Sudan presence in Aboulela's works. She writes Sudan, its reality and complexions in her fiction. In this way, we shall shortly examine, later, Sudan's history of colonialism and its impact on Aboulela's writings.

In the same interview with Chambers, Aboulela reveals that she was raised in a secular entourage which discouraged her from wearing the veil. She recognizes her surrender in front of her liberal, left-winged friends who denounced *hijab*. She expresses that in her own country she never felt free in the presence of such figures. Yet, like her protagonist Najwa, she admired university students wearing the headscarf. Ironically, she declares that she first wore the veil in Britain in 1987. There, she felt free from all societal stereotypes and judgments. In this regard, Aboulela set the Muslim faith as a central theme in her writings. She writes for Muslim women in and outside the Arab world, with much tribute to migrants. She also writes Sudan, writes colonial effects and patriarchy. In this context, we attempt to project Aboulela's resistant tone in her *Minaret*.

1.2. *In Search of April Raintree*: Writing the Native Female Reality

Culleton, born Mosionier, is a Métis writer who was born in Manitoba, Canada, in 1949. Like her protagonists, she grew up in different foster homes and was separated from her parents and siblings at the age of three. That is, she hardly had any stable childhood experiences with her own family. She attended the St. Charles Catholic school, and then Gordon Bell high school, and later the George Brown college and the Banff School of Fine Arts. At this period, the Canadian society and curricula were very anti-aboriginals i.e. her education was very Canadian-centred and it exercised hegemony over her Métis self.

Inspired by her own misery, Culleton published her first novel—under her husband's family name—in 1983 to attribute homage to all Métis who lost themselves, dignity, properties, and history. Her work was widely read and well received by white and Aboriginal audiences. In this way, she revised *In Search of April Raintree* for school and university usages. *April Raintree* was devoid of all the abuse scenes—mainly the raping of the protagonist. From here, Culleton became representative of Aboriginal writing in Canada. Her

novel opened doors for her to work as a publisher of Pemmican⁴⁶ whereas she was working as a bookshop keeper prior to her achievement. After divorce, like April, Culleton renounces her husband's name⁴⁷. Then, she resolved to pen write in her family name. Accordingly, all her proceeding publications were under the Mosionier name. It is of a crucial importance to mention that Culleton's most works were destined to children like *Spirit of the White Bison* and the *Little White Rat*. This dedication reflects the writer's process of providing Aboriginal children with a history of theirs written by themselves—an unbiased history unlike the Canadian history books she grew up reading in her schools.

Culleton's childhood experiences shape most of her writing. She applies a counter-discourse approach in her writing where she sensitizes the white people about their wrongdoings. She writes back to the empire. She pens the Aboriginal history from a Métis perspective. Moreover, she justifies the vulnerability and decline in the Native community. As a woman, Culleton portrays the difficulties of being a native woman—violence and abuse—in the Canadian society. We can see that her writing is primarily influenced by her past and second by her gender.

1.3. Anti-colonialism and Anti-patriarchy in *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*

Born Fatma-Zohra Imalayène in 1936, Assia Djebar was brought up in Cherchell, Algeria, until the age of seventeen. She attended a primary colonial school (studying in French). Then, at the age of ten, she joined the boarding Quranic School in Blida where boys outnumbered the two girls in class. Afterwards, she was the only Muslim in her high school in Algiers. This justifies Djebar's migration to France to pursue her higher education for her

⁴⁶ Pemmican publications were established in 1980 as a Métis publishing house as Canada's method of reconciling with aboriginals. That is, the house encouraged Métis and aboriginal writers to publish their own stories. The house also welcomed works by non-aboriginals, but that speak of the Native struggle in Canada prior to the 1980's.

⁴⁷In the West, even after divorce the woman/man can keep their spouse's names unless they express the opposite. To change it to the maiden or former name, the person in question needs to apply for a change in name and the procedure usually takes some time (few years).

entire schooling was French. Moreover, her father was a French teacher. That is, she was overtly exposed to French than her two mother languages: Arabic and Amazigh (Djebar is an Amazigh in origin). She therefore attended the *École normale supérieure de jeunes filles*⁴⁸. It is worth mentioning that Djebar was the first Muslim Algerian woman to be taught in France's most prestigious schools. She also obtained a B.A and a Ph.D. in history at the Sorbonne and the Montpellier III University respectively. Nevertheless, during her school years in Algeria, Djebar, in support of the Algerian Students' movement, protested against the French rule which resulted in expelling her for two years. From there, her father sent her to France to continue her studies.

Djebar witnessed the evils of colonialism which nurtured her patriotism and anti-colonial sentiments, and thus, she aligned with the FLN. In this context, at the age of twenty-one, she published her first novel *The Mischief*⁴⁹ in 1957 followed by *The Impatient Ones*⁵⁰ a year later. She talks of the contribution of women in the war of independence. At the same time, she projects the tyranny of the French colonizer in Algeria. Djebar's political voice became more apparent in the productions following her first two novels. As she continued to write, her political stances stood up as anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal.

Djebar broke many stereotypes and was the first Arab woman to be awarded the Frankfurt Book Fair Peace Prize in 2000. Then, she was the first Arab woman to be elected for the Académie Française⁵¹ in 2005. She was also elected for the Noble Prize for five times. In total, Djebar earned five significant awards⁵². It is significant to mention that her post-

⁴⁸ Also known as *École normale supérieure de Sèvres* (1881-1940), which is today the *Center International d'Etudes Pédagogiques* (1945-to present day), was the French institute of higher education for training girls to become Secondary teachers. It was France's most elite educational institutes.

⁴⁹ Which is in French *La Soif*

⁵⁰ *Les impatient*

⁵¹ The French Academy, the most prestigious institute of literature in France. It is comprised of forty elected members, and Djebar was the fifth woman ever to become part of the institute.

⁵² She won five award, in addition to the one mentioned above. She also won the Franco-Arab Friendship Prize, for *L'Amour la Fantasia* in 1985, Neustadt International Prize for Literature for her contribution to world literature in 1996, the Marguerite Yourcenar Prize in 1997 and the International Prize of Palmi in 1998.

independence works (novels and movies) not only continued to spit out the colonial horrors during occupation, they also manifest its aftermath and the chaos it generated in the post-independent Algerian society. That is, it highlights the divisions that split Algerians and blindly led them into a sanguinary civil war. Djébar's later works speak of the hardship of being a woman post-independence. Again, her political stances present themselves as anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal par excellence.

2. Contextual Material: Circumstances Occasioning our Corpuses

2.1. Internal conflicts in Sudan and the Post 9/11 Islamophobia through *Minaret*

Minaret was composed in 2005, in the U.K. The story talks of a Sudanese female who gets exiled in London, and whose social economic class deteriorates from being elite in Sudan to being a foreigner and a maid in Britain. Najwa struggles to locate herself in the metropolis of London. Her weak Muslim values and western-like manners constantly clash which trigger feelings of in-betweenness and non-belonging. At first, the protagonist adheres to her boyfriend's liberal and Western ideals. However, her Arabism⁵³ often shakes her orientation and beliefs. Eventually, she restores to a Muslim identity.

In the *Boarders Global Interview with Leila Aboulela*, Olatoun Gabi Williams investigates Aboulela's reasons for writing. The author narrates that her PhD failure and homesickness—after moving to Britain—were the biggest drives behind commencing writing and shifting career from economics. She stresses that her works, merely *The Translator* and *Minaret*, are connected and attached to Scotland. The clashing of the Sudanese and Scottish civilizations made her more aware of the cultural differences and thus her displacement in the new environment. She also expresses that her attachment to her roots

⁵³I used Arabism because the Muslim values Najwa worried about were more like social conventions like fasting. She would fast because this is what the Sudanese society would do in Ramadan and not because she believes in it.

compelled her to write her country, and to write the world between the two cultures she is stuck in.

In the same interview Aboulela articulates that the West's ignorance towards her mother country and religion heightened her feelings of loneliness and non-belonging. That is because Sudan and Islam constituted her identity and personality, she had an urgent need to constitute herself in writing (p, 3). Moreover, the rise of Islamophobia post 9/11 motivated Aboulela to overturn prejudices directed towards Muslims. She tells Chambers that she purposefully chose a non-political position for her protagonists in *Minaret* to demonstrate that not all Muslims are extremists nor interested in politics. She adds that she wanted to project Islam as a faith, and how important it is to Muslims to nurture their souls (p, 15). Coming from a science-oriented career, Aboulela first thought about writing articles and non-fiction to denounce the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments at the heart of the Western society. She however 'didn't have the talent for doing that'; being a bookworm however placed her well in the diction world, and thus, she became a writer (Gabi-Williams, p 3).

The political instability in Sudan in the late 1990's and early 2000's is also present in Aboulela's writings. Najwa's father is overturned, taken to jail and then hanged for treason and corruption. The students' movements at university, riots and the *coup d'état* are other illustration of the anti-government movements that were rising in Sudan. In 1959, the Sudanese government introduced a number of measures to Arabize⁵⁴ the Christian south which consequently created tensions. By October 1962, a civil war was waged between the North and the South and riots continued until the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. The violation of the same agreement in 1982 culminated uprisings in the south. Living conditions in the southern part of Sudan continued to deteriorate, yet resistance never ceased until the

⁵⁴The Arabicisation movement is founded on the spread of Islam. That is, the government first and foremost focused on the Islamization of the Christian population in the south before the Arabicisation of its systems and schools.

Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. In fact, the Darfur conflict in 2003 pushed for the signing of the CPA between the government and the rebels.

Southern Sudan was unprivileged by governmental laws and policies that favoured the Arab North to the Christian South. Accordingly, many died of famine. Others fled to the north or Ethiopia to survive. People in power were corrupted elites who championed the Islamic cause to work their personal cause, which Aboulela and the Sudanese intelligentsia disapproves. Accordingly, we will examine in the next section of this chapter how Aboulela overturns the pro-government and riots in Sudan in her *Minaret*.

2.2. A Rise of a Métis Consciousness: the Struggle of Being a Non-Status Citizen in *In Search of April Raintree*

In Search of April Raintree was first published by Pemmican in 1983. A year prior its publication, the Constitution Act of 1867 was revised, and thus, Métis people were recognised as one of Canada's Aboriginal people. In the period between 1867 and 1982, Métis people were denied from rights of land and status which resulted in decay at the Nativeside. The wretchedness of Aboriginals is illustrated through April's parents' alcoholism. It is also portrayed through girls on the Main Street, and dirty children visiting the Raintree family. In fact, Métis people lost the rights they secured to themselves through negotiations to be included in the Aboriginal people of Canada. Accordingly, the Manitoba Act of 1870⁵⁵ and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885⁵⁶ denied Métis people from all remaining rights,

⁵⁵This act recognized Manitoba as Canada's fifth province, and it alleged to secure rights for Métis people. Eventually, the empty promises pushed half breeds towards the North-West territories, and their numbers considerably dropped out in a decade from 82% in 1870 to 7% in 1886. This act also promised to create a Métis provinceto protect the rights of its big aboriginal population. However, half breeds could not acquire their land rights until a complete and thorough surveying of the land (which lasted for around three years). Moreover, they were granted scrips authorizing them 64 hectares of their lands, which were later cheated out and this they lost their lands. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 also favoured the settlement of white people at the expense of Métis by giving land to those who occupy it. Read more: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-act>.

⁵⁶ Louis Riel led Métis people to rebel against the Canadian government that denied them from their farms and land rights. The rebels started after peaceful negotiations and petitions that met refusal. At the end, all riots

including being “forced to deny the name of Métis” (Joe Sawchuk:1978, p 70). This misfortune and disenchantment were cascaded through generations until the 1982. That is, Culleton lived through the prejudices and labels attributed to her own people.

The 1960’s witnessed a rise of a Métis consciousness in Canada. Together, L’Union National Métisse and Jean Lagasse proposed the reconstruction of the Métis identity to remedy the grievances caused by the different constitutional acts of Canada. Accordingly, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) and the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA) came to birth to advocate the establishment of a positive Métis identity. In 1967, the MMF “promoted Métis solidarity as one solution to the identity crisis that rapid post war changes in trade and technology had occasioned among Native people in Canada” (Smulders:2006, p79). Moreover, in 1980, it encouraged and sponsored publications that promoted positive images and identity of Native people. Accordingly, the Pemmican Publications were established by the MMF to give Métis people a voice.

Before the establishment of the Pemmican Publications, Métis writers were edited out before printing. That is to say, Native writers had to have their works scanned by white people houses of publications, and if works express anti-white sentiments or represent a counter-discourse, they do not get published. Luckily, by the 1980’s the Pemmican was established and two years later Métis people were recognised. Thus, Culleton’s work did not face any white resistance and was not edited. In this way, *In Search of April Raintree* stands as the first book that voiced the reality—naked truth as Hoy describes it—of the Métis struggle in Canada.

In *The Special Time*, Culleton confesses that her sisters’ suicide—Vivian in 1964 and Kathy in 1980—pressed her to write her first novel. She states that at the age of twelve, she

were contained i.e. the rebellion failed. Eventually, Riel was hanged and lots of half breeds were jailed and prosecuted for treason. The Métis uprising heightened the white people’s disapproval and hatred of Native people. Accordingly, Métis were put down for an eternity. Read more:

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-rebellion>

believed that she could solve all the world's problems if she puts her head into it. However, her sisters' suicide compelled her to find answers regarding her own family and why her beloved sisters put an end to their lives. Accordingly, in 1981, she started her journey of writing her very first novel. Here, we can say that Culleton writes as a means of self- discovery and reconstructing her heritage. We shall see how resistance is maintained in Culleton's work in the upcoming sections.

2.3. The De-Frenchification of the Algerian Identity and the Rise of Extremist groups in *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*

Assia Djébar was in France the whole time she started scribbling *Oran, Langue Morte*⁵⁷ which is known as *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*⁵⁸ in English. A year later, in 1997, her novel was published and was well received by international audiences. This collection of short stories comes in context. Djébar was overwhelmed by the news she kept receiving from Algeria about the bloody civil war.

Upon independence, Houari Boumediene, the second Algerian leader, followed an anti-French doctrine. He thus sought to "Arabize and de-frenchify the school system" by first declaring Arabic as the first and administrative language instead of French, and second by bringing teachers from Egypt and Syria (Kepel: 2002, p 163). In this manner, by the 1970's, an Islamicized Arabophone intelligentsia started to rise. The later expressed strong opinions and oppositions towards the Francophone elite. This is mainly because, despite the overturning of French as a language, highly paid positions were French speaking (Evans: 2007, p 95).

By the early 1980's, Arabophone youth's frustration grew bigger as they faced reality: the job market requires French speakers. Giles Kepel, in his *Jihad: the Trait of*

⁵⁷the English translation of this title is *Oran, Dead Language* which is the first novella in Djébar's work. She choose to name her collection of short stories after the first one.

⁵⁸Tegan Raleigh, the translator, chose this title for the English version from Djébar's afterword that starts with a quote from her *So Vast the Prison*, where she writes the tongue's "blood does not run dry, it simply dies out".

Political Islam, explains that this frustration is a result of an inadequate educational system that Arabized its youth and did not qualify them for the *frenchified* job market (p, 158). That is, the Arabicisation policy failed to provide its Arabophones with jobs. Accordingly, by the late 1980's, this same youth joined Islamist groups and centred their attention and forces against Western-like women (Evans, p 132-133).

In 1989, Arabophone masses established the Islamist Salvation Front (FIS)⁵⁹ as the Islamist political party. The later championed the implementation of *Shari'a*⁶⁰ laws and the continuing reinforcement of Arabic in schools, administrations and job markets. Due to the frustration of many Arabophones, the FIS won the elections in 1991 against their National Liberation Front (FLN) counterpart. Yet, the FLN overthrew the FIS which triggered tension and heightened anti-western opinion⁶¹. Consequently, Extremism rose in the 1990's and genocides were committed against Francophone teachers, intellectuals, politicians and even writers.

Djebar's novellas carry lots of the massacres of the 1990's. They also carry some of the war and post-independence events. In fact, the collection can be read as a historical account of the post-independent era in Algeria. It is however important to mention that the stories are told through female voices and protagonists i.e. they are narrated from a female perspective. They stress the complexity of being a woman in the 1990's Algeria. In the afterword of *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*, Djebar argues that she writes in the name of women, for "the generations-old one of women who are masked, prevented from seeing and being seen, treated as "things"" (p, 215). She adds that she writes to the fears of her Algerian sisters with a defiant sharp tongue. Thus, we can locate Djebar's resistance in

⁵⁹Prior to this, Algeria was a unilateral country led by the FLN as the only party.

⁶⁰Islamic laws.

⁶¹The FLN was viewed as a pro-French party by the FIS for its elite were Francophones and were children of the colonial school.

her writing. Along these lines, we shall examine how the Algerian writer challenges the circumstances and situation in her country through her novel.

3. Aboulela's and Djébar's Employment of the "Veil" in Constructing Female Identities Vs Culleton's utilization of "Hair" in Reflecting Female Métis Identity

In *A Dying Colonialism*, Frantz Fanon explains that people's manners of clothing themselves up makes them distinctive. In the Arab world, the veil, being worn by many women, characterizes the Arab society (p, 35). That is, the veil is like any other traditional clothes. It represents a culture of a given group. Yet, the Muslim veil is seen, by the occident, as a symbol of oppression and degradation. She, who wears it, is condemned backward, submissive and dominated. Despite the antiquity of the veil—in old days, it symbolized high social positions in ancient Greece, Byzantium and the Balkans (El Guindi, p 149; Ahmed, p 55; Kahf, p 29)—it was never viewed negatively until it became associated with the Muslim faith. Ironically, it has also been associated with the Christian and Jewish faith—that came before Islam—and yet it was positively perceived. In fact, Christian nuns are respected for their faith and dressing, and this respect is visible on the movie industry, books, literature and so on.

As per Shalaby, Al karawi et al, Aboulela's narrative endeavours to demonstrate that Muslim women "are not muted personas nor are their identities simple products of patriarchal norms (Hassanpour and Ruzy: 2012, p 925). This chapter hypothesizes that Najwa does not wear the veil in Sudan, despite deep admirations, due to patriarchal impositions— she is expected to live as a Westerner in her elite entourage, and the veil does not match with her standards i.e. it symbolizes humbleness, invisibility and lower social classes. Djébar, on the contrary, aspires to overturn patriarchal chains through not wearing the veil. Moreover, one of her characters chooses to take off the *hijab* and is thus seen in public unveiled. On the

other side, hair in Culleton's work represents the Native pride. April and Cheryl grow their hair long, and scenes of it being cut, represent abuse, exploitation and extermination of their selves and heritage. In this context, we shall examine how the three writers challenge prejudices undermining their protagonists—and women they are advocating their rights—and deconstruct stereotyped female identities through positive images of women they construct in their novels.

3.1.1. An Anti-patriarchal Approach and Self-assertion in *Minaret*

In *Negotiating the Veil and Identity in Leila Aboulela's Minaret*, Taha Al-Karawi and Baizura Bahar argue that Aboulela uses the veil as a symbol of traditional Islamic culture. It also symbolizes the struggles of maintaining one's faith in a non-Muslim environment. Moreover, they claim that the veil pictures the security and insecurity of being a female Muslim abroad. We can say that this can be portrayed through Najwa being assaulted on the bus by some youth Londoners who pour some liquid on her and address her as "you Muslim scum" (p, 81). This is the insecure side of being a veiled Muslim in a Western country; a woman is subject to bullying and assault. On the other side, Najwa feels part of a community, home, and connected to Sudan through her veil and faith. That is, the veil enables her to connect with her past and regenerate a reconciled identity.

Nadia A. Shalaby, in her *Counter-narratives of Muslim Women in Aboulela's Minaret*, argues that Aboulela tries to overturn such images through her veiled characters in her novel. She primarily aims to demonstrate that the veil symbolizes faith and educational merits, and success does not depend upon that. Accordingly, Lamy and her mother, Doctora Zainab, are highly educated females. Um⁶² Waleed and Shahinaz are other veiled women who are graduates, housewives and mosque students/lecturers. On the other hand, there is Najwa who is a graduate as well but is a lower-class citizen in London, and works for a

⁶²An Arabic word meaning 'mother of' in this context.

successful young veiled woman. These multiple characters overturn positions that claim that veiled women are uneducated and backward. All the veiled females in the novel strive to achieve something: Lamya is completing a PhD in London, Doctora Zainab teaches at university in Egypt, Um Waleed is a lecturer at the mosque, and Shahinaz, after raising her kids, is willing to resume her higher education studies.

To overthrow the “submissive-dominated” prejudice, Aboulela chooses for her character to wear the veil when she is ready and even when Anwar expresses strong opposition to such a decision. Here, Najwa demonstrates that the veil is rather a symbol of independence and freedom. She wears the *hijab* to break free from Anwar and because it makes her feel protected and rooted (belonging to a community). That is, Aboulela argues, through the veil in her novel, that the Muslim woman chooses to wear the veil because she is convinced and not because she is pressured by the phallocentric society. It is unquestionable that some conservative Arab societies (such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar) pressure females, before or at puberty, to wear *hijab*. Yet, in other less conservative societies, women are talked through the value of *hijab*, encouraged to wear it but not pressured. Aboulela in her novel projects an adapted version of the second society. Nobody talks Najwa through *hijab*. She however embraces it when her beliefs are strengthened and when her identity becomes Islamic-oriented. In fact, we can say that Aboulela’s story with *hijab* inspires Najwa. She always admired *hijab* but never managed to wear it under the supervision of her friends and family. Thus, once moved in the U.K (independent from her Western-like circle), she wears the veil to satisfy her personal desire. Similarly, Najwa, at university, expresses respect to females in *tobes* but never thinks of wearing it due to the Western influence governing her life. Yet, when she chooses to embrace the Muslim identity in London, she wears *hijab* as a means of self-assertion and belonging to her Sudanese community.

In Sudan, Najwa is raised in an elite Westernized family. She grew up around women in high heels, skirts, wearing makeup, going to the gym, etc. She went into American schools and clubs. She travelled to London on holidays. She was fed Western values and mode of living. That is, if she came from a more conservative family, she would have been wearing *tobes* instead of Western clothes. We can say that Najwa is a production of the society/family she was raised in. Despite that she was affected by Azan at dawn, she never prayed back in Sudan because none of her family members prayed. Although she envied girls in *tobes* at university, especially when they prayed, she never thought of wearing one. The conclusion that can be drawn is that patriarchy, in Najwa's case, is being expected to dress, speak and behave in certain ways—Western ways. In Khartoum she is a reflection of her entourage and not her own person. Being puppeteered through her childhood into adolescence and adulthood, Najwa experiences a loss of self in London when she loses her privileges i.e., she is “no one” without her materialistic possessions and status. Only the veil and Islamic faith helps her to embrace a solid self at the end.

Again, it is important to mention that embracing the Muslim faith and wearing the headscarf is Najwa's first decision. That is, no male influence had a middling over her choice for the first time in her life. In Sudan, she lives by the standards and societal expectations laid for her by her family. In London, she lives under Anwar's shadows. Only when she finds her path and identity in Islam that she becomes her own person; she becomes an autonomous being free from all phallogocentric engagements and roles. Therefore, the veil symbolizes freedom, independence and serenity.

Aboulela exhibits another function of the veil: it clears all differences. That is to say, veiled women, regardless of their origins and social backgrounds, are similar and equal. The veil masks all the differences that come with status and material comfort. Najwa describes a Muslim Indian as follow: “This one looks Indian, as if the hijab had made me forget she was

Indian and now she is reminding me— in the sari with her flowing hair and jewellery” (p, 186). It is clear that hijab veils the woman’s ethnicity and only her Indian dressing that projects it to the surface. Najwa describes a number of women in their female gathering at *Eid El Fitr*⁶³ and how different they look without hijab. She then describes the veil as a uniform. She says: “It is as if the hijab is a uniform, the official, outdoor version of us. Without it, our nature is exposed” (p, 186). We can understand that the veil here symbolizes a protection of privacy. This implies that *hijab* respects and safeguard’s women’s lives and identities contrary to Western dominant paradigms picturing the *hijab* as a means of oppression and subjugation. Accordingly, Aboulela overturns negative Western connotations of the Muslim headscarf.

In her first days in London, Najwa accounts the flirting of some builders while she passes by in her short skirt. Months later, after wearing the veil, she takes the same road. But, the same builders do not react nor comment on her body. She narrates: “The builders who had leered down at me from scaffoldings couldn’t see me anymore. I was invisible and they were quiet” (p, 247). Aboulela, in her interview with Chambers, clarifies her intentions of using the word invisible. She states that the word was negatively perceived as a sign of being marginalized and ignored, while she meant that hijab covers up Najwa’s figure and avoids her the hassle of being sexually harassed. That is, invisibility, here, has a positive connotation. It becomes conspicuous that the veil symbolizes, as we have seen, independence, protection and rootedness. In other words, we can say that Aboulela uses the veil as a medium of self-assertion, protection and social engagement in the exile. She aspires to demonstrate how important and vital is the veil for migrant women in the diaspora—as it enable them to preserve their individuality—and thus she aspires it would be looked at this

⁶³ The Muslim feast after Ramadan, the holly month of fasting. Muslims celebrate the day by wearing their best outfits, exchanging cakes and visiting family and friends.

way from Western perspectives. In other words, Aboulela displays how the headscarf enables women to practice their faith peacefully and uninterrupted by male domination.

3.1.2. The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry: Resistance or Rebellion?

Assia Djebar, in *Blood Does Not Dry on the Tongue*, refers to Francis Ponge's description of the pink colour of the sky at sunset in Blida in 1945. He says "I felt it was a pink that resembles the pink colour of the Algerian women's ankles. This is one of the only bits of their skin you can see" (p, 3). At that period, Algerian women would either wear *haik*⁶⁴ or *melaya*⁶⁵, depending on where they come from, to cover themselves up when they set foot in the streets. Protagonists in Djebar's novellas do not wear the veil which represents her opposition to patriarchy and cultural impositions on women. She states in the same article that her collection of short stories is an account of women's daily struggles in Algeria in the 1990's. She claims that intellectual women became victims for their independence, and yet these same women, veiled or unveiled, strive to survive the dangers every day. They do not lock themselves up, they go on with their lives and "their hearts in knots" (p, 2). She wants to show that women are autonomous personas who can lead their lives and make their own choices.

To understand the significance of the veil to the Algerian identity, we shall refer to Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*. The later argues that, during occupation, the *haik* demarcated the Algerian society (p, 36). That is, the *haik* or the Algerian woman was sacred. Women were to be protected, not to be seen nor to be accessible by any men that are not *mahram*⁶⁶, let alone the colonizer. The French administration, on the other hand, realized the immense value of the veil and sought to "unveil" Algerian women to destroy its men.

⁶⁴It is a large white wrap that women in Algiers and its surroundings used to wear to cover their whole bodies. Only one eye and the heels of the woman show. It is also the equivalence of the veil or hijab.

⁶⁵It is a large black wrap that women in Algiers and its surroundings used to wear. It is also the equivalence of the veil or hijab.

⁶⁶Pronounced "mu'hreem" in Arabic. In Islam, a mahram means a man who's closely related by blood to a woman and whom she cannot marry e.g. father, brother, uncle, grandfather, nephew.

At first, French officials aspired to build an army of Algerian women that would turn against their fathers, brothers and husbands. They attempted to lure women into the foreign values, and thus “wrenching [them] free from [their] [holly]⁶⁷ status”; this would have meant asserting power over man and a total dismantling of the Algerian culture (Fanon, p 39). The colonizer wanted “to make the Algerian ashamed of the fate that he metes out to women” (Fanon, p 38). When this endeavor failed, Fanon reports that the colonial administration changed policy to violating women’s privacy in their houses:

If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the man keep them out of sight” (p, 37-38).

We thus can say that the veil represented Algerian men’s power and virility. Women, in this way, represented their strengths and weaknesses. He who covers his woman up is respected, and he whose wife shows up without veil is ashamed. It is therefore important to stress that prior independence; all women went out in *haiks* or *melayas*.

Women, autonomous beings, on the other hand hang on to their *haiks* and *melayas* as a means of resistance to colonial attempts to unveil the Algerian female. However, in the wake of war, the veil was voluntarily taken off by some women who joined freedom fighters in their war of independence. That is, these women chose to be identified as French and non- Algerian for a freedom of movement and accessibility to French milieus. These same women transported letters between *Mujahdeen*⁶⁸. They also participated in the bombing of French- frequented places. Indeed, taking off the veil gave them privileges to easily fight the colonizer without being suspected. From here, women started to abandon the haik, and gradually certain women chose not to wear the veil after independence.

⁶⁷As I said earlier women were (and still are in the most regions of the country) sacred. Men in the family were overprotective of their women, and her—the woman—being exposed to everyone meant shame, lack of virility and manhood! This is why the colonizer aimed to “unveil women”

⁶⁸Freedom fighters

Laurie Corbin, in *the Other Language, the Language of the Other in the Works of Assia Djebar and Helene Cixous*, contends that the veil, in Djebar's work, has dual paradoxical meanings. It symbolizes a protection and reservedness, and at the same time it symbolizes "a shroud that stifles the women who are required to wear it when they leave their homes" (p, 817). In fact, the protection that comes with the veil can be seen through many protagonists in Djebar's novellas who feel assaulted by male gazes for not wearing the veil. That is, wearing the veil gives them freedom to move around the city without being watched or noticed. On the other side, the suffocation comes with being locked in doors not to be seen, and later by being killed for being identified as a Westerner during the 1990's civil war.

As mentioned earlier, Djebar purposefully chooses her characters to be "unveiled" in post-independent Algeria as a mechanism of resistance to patriarchy—or to be precise patriarchal extremism. The unnamed protagonist in *Non-Return Returns* describes her alienation as follows: "I am alone in the crowd. Without a veil and, I believe, invisible. As I walk, I grow more confident. They have eyes—the boys, the fathers, the little old men. They are blind. I am a shadow" (p, 35). This portrays men's treatment of women who chose not to wear the veil: to be ignored and reduced to nothingness. The same character describes her mother and herself as liberated women. She then goes on depicting her mother's strong character starting with that it has been ten years "ever since she's been officially going out without a veil" (p, 36). We can see that this mother defies the phallogocentric society by taking off the veil. This act challenges oppressive rules that endangered women's freedom and safety in the 1990's. In fact, the mother contests more extremism through driving, going shopping, paying the bills, handling bureaucratic affairs, and so on (p, 36). Here Djebar rejects the patriarchal/extremist sentence imposed on women to stay in their apartments, cover themselves up, obey rules, and remain silenced for eternity. She wants to show that like men, women have the right to aspire and dream. They can also be independent and perform—

to a certain extent—the same chores and responsibilities as men. Djébar’s bold character does not refute religion, but it rejects extremism rising from behind. That is to say, taking off the veil manifests the mother’s denial of the extremist beliefs that rose with the Arabisation policy and not Islam. In other words, Djébar disassociates the veil from extremist beliefs in this context, and she presents it as a social obligation or convention. That is to say, she shows the veil as a custom dictated upon women—during the 1990’s civil war—and not as a faith component.

Isma, in *Burning*, illustrates patriarchy through her descriptions of male looks. She accounts her experience with Omar, the Somalian musician, and how rain compelled them to seek shelter in a Café. She says it “was filled with men only. I felt the looks of groups seated at neighbouring tables” (p, 69). She then adds: “Here, I was the only woman among them all” (p, 70). This experience demonstrates the discomfort women are put through in public places. They are meant not to frequent places that were culturally ascribed “male”. Yet, Isma confronts extremist patriarchy by setting foot in a male-only Café. It is true that she feels uncomfortable, but she does not give them the chance to put her back into her feminine role where she is meant to be home or somewhere that is women-dominated (salons, grocer’s, etc.).

In *Edward Said and Assia: a Contrapuntal Reading*, Mildred Mortimer maintains that Atyka, in *The Woman in Pieces*, is threatened to be killed for not wearing the veil (p, 64). However, the protagonist continues to be seen unveiled in public. It is important to highlight that Atyka is a French high school teacher. Eventually, she is shot in the heart and slaughtered in class in the presence of her students who hid under the tables as requested by the extremist groups. The latter invaded her school in military like uniforms and accused her for teaching obscene scenes to young learners. Ironically, Like Shahrazad whose story Atyka was teaching, she gets assassinated. Moreover, like Shahrazad tried to make her night every

evening after narrating her story, Atyka wonders everyday whether she would be able to finish her story before she is assassinated. Indeed, her life comes to an end before her story does. Djebbar, through this murder, projects the absence of support to women during the 1990's. None of the school administrators nor police or military officers came for the rescue (Mortimer: 2015, p 64).

At her last breath, Atyka continues speaking; she wants to finish her lesson.

Accordingly, she passes away reciting parts of the tale. Omar, a student, takes over and finishes the story. The remaining students get on their chairs and follow in such horrible circumstances with their teacher swimming in her blood. Atyka's perseverance to finish the

story symbolizes women's dedication and resistance until the last breath. That is, Djebbar wants to affirm that Algerian women—and specifically herself—shall not give up on their cause until life chooses otherwise. Omar, taking over, portrays the fruit of Atyka's work i.e. there is a generation that is willing to walk the extra mile for the preceding generation. We can see that 'not wearing' the veil led to violence (assassination of Atyka) and a traumatic

experience (for students). Here, Djebbar portrays the tyranny of extremist groups and patriarchy in the 1990's, and she challenges it by making her character unveiled and bold in her movement. The message she wants to spread is that women shall not give up out of fear; they shall not allow themselves to be abused. They choose their fate instead. In both cases, the ending is tragic. If they accept to embrace those extremist views, they become suffocated and puppeteered (living as a dead person). If they choose to abandon the scarf, they are murdered. In both ways they are dead, so better die for a cause of their own—as per Djebbar's.

In *Annie and Fatima*, Djebbar makes a different reference to the headscarf. Annie, a French mother separated from her daughter at an early age, travels to Kabylie to see her nine-year-old Fatima. Upon arrival, the mother is surprised to see her own flesh “in a black chador that falls to her shoulders” (p, 136). Fatima's first words question whether Annie was her

French mother as per her classmates' rumours. Annie, on the other hand, confirms it and requests to see her daughter unveiled. She wants to see Fatima's hair, its type, colour and length. Yet, the little girl expresses a strong objection. Fatima represents the Arabophone generation that was raised post-independence as a means to obliterate French presence in Algeria. Yet, the French contamination remains integral of the Algerian one. As a matter of fact, Fatima and Annie personify this relationship and cultural/linguistic contamination. Fatima holds on to her veil but cannot deny the French blood that runs in her veins. Here, Djebbar exposes the rush or the irrationality of the Arabicisation and de-frenchification policy that tries to dismantle a part—linguistic—that is imbedded in the Algerian identity. In other words, the Algerian community post-independence is linguistically contaminated and this contamination is impossible to be eradicated.

3.1.3. “Shearing the Hair”, an Assault on the Métis identity in *In Search of April Raintree*

Elder Mike Pinay claims in, *A First Nation's Perspective on the Importance of Hair: Part 1*⁶⁹, that hair is part of the Aboriginal identity. It connects Native people with their land and spirituality, and it is cut only as a sign of mourning (after the death of a beloved one). On the other hand, Cecily Hilleary, in *Native Americans, Canada's First Peoples, Fight to Keep Long Hair*⁷⁰, argues that hair has a special significance in the Native tribes of Canada. It symbolizes strength and pride. She contends that Canadian officials, in the late 1870's which coincides with the constitution act, started “an assault on tribal hairstyle”. Accordingly, foster children and residential school students were obliged to cut their hair up. This enables us to compare the Muslim veil to the Native hair as they both reflect identity and are sacred.

Grant writes that “cutting hair is found to be a key part of rituals of cross-cultural domination all over the world” (p, 242). That is, dominant groups followed an approach of

⁶⁹A video documentary

⁷⁰An article from the VOA news website.

shearing the hair to defeat their subordinates. She adds that hair symbolizes April's power of resistance. Being conscious of the above, Mrs. DeRosier cuts April's hair as a punishment to her running away with Cheryl. Grants emphasises that Mrs. DeRosier and April might not be aware of the symbolism of "shearing hair". Yet, the foster mother humiliated her foster daughter by cutting her pride out—her hair.

Despite being ashamed of her heritage, April is proud of her long black hair which is very native. In fact, she describes it as her "crowning glory" (p, 60). When Cheryl confronts and challenges her history teacher about the truthfulness of Canadian history books regarding the Native cause, she gets the strap and is expected to apologise which she refuses to do. Eventually, Mrs. DeRosier is called by the school administration, and at night she cuts Cheryl's hair as a punishment. April is disturbed to see that nothing was left of her sister's hair. She says: "Cheryl's long hair had been her pride and glory" (p 59). Fury mounts April who then decides to stand up for her sister. She storms into the kitchen and yells at Mrs. DeRosier. Consequently, the foster mother attempts to cut April's hair, and for the first time April resists and fights back. However, when Mrs. DeRosier threatens to separate the sisters if April does not surrender, April yields. She narrates: "In the end, I, also, went back to our room minus my own crowning glory [...] There I was the big, protective sister going out to avenge the humiliation of my little sister and I came back, myself properly humbled" (p 60). It appears evident that hair represents pride and glory for native people. That is, it is an important part of their identity. Cutting it by others is a mechanism of domination and a sign of social degradation.

The Raintree sisters experience "the shearing of the hair" earlier in their lives when they are first placed in an orphanage. April accounts their experience with Mother Superior: "She looked through our hair for bugs, she told us" (p, 18). This practice reflects stereotypes ascribed to Aboriginals. They are dirty, backward, uncivilized and certainly bugs would live

in their long hair. That is to say, the hair is negatively perceived by the white Canadian society. April is frightened by Mother Superior's treatment and does not voice her thoughts. She tells: "I didn't say anything, even when she started cutting off my long hair" (p, 18). The last phrase projects April's clinginess to her hair at a young age. In fact, it invited self-questioning. We can see this in the following lines: "I sat there, wondering if that was now to be our fate, wondering how I could put a stop to this" (p, 18). Cutting the hair symbolizes inferiority and being dominated. Here April realizes that her life, or to be precise the life of Native people as she uses "our fate", is governed by white people. Shearing her hair is one way of making this inferiority physical and noticeable to the eye.

April is relieved to see that some hair was left after the shearing experience at the orphanage. Again, this illustrates the importance and significance of hair to the Raintree daughter. Yet, length is very important to Aboriginal people. We can see this in April's description of her hair upon meeting Pierre at the Dions: "only Pierre asked about my hair which was still ridiculously short. Of course, I was very shy and I couldn't look them in the eye" (p, 24). It becomes conspicuous that long hair gives Native people strength and pride. Accordingly, shearing the hair has a psychological effect on April who is uncomfortable and shy around other people.

We have learned in the previous chapters that April rejects her Métis identity. Yet, she keeps her long hair which is very illustrative of her origins. We notice this in her interior monologue after the rape incident. She states: "Except for my long black hair, I really didn't think I could be mistaken as a native person"(p, 161). That is, April is incapable or reluctant to abandon her heritage, and thus, keeps an important carrier of it: her long hair. We can also say that keeping a long hair represents Native people's resistance against white supremacy. Moreover, it reflects that April's subconscious clings to her Métis identity otherwise she could have died her hair or cut it short to be fully identified white.

It is clearly visible that Culleton uses hair as a symbol of resistance in her narrative. Cheryl who is proud of her heritage grows her hair long, and even April who is in denial of her Native identity keeps her hair long. This demonstrates that hair remains the only physical mechanism of resistance of Aboriginals in Canada. Non-status Natives were denied the right of land, status and even being raised by their parents. That is, nothing was left for them. Accordingly, this minority grows its hair long to maintain its Métis identity. That is why hair is very important to April and Cheryl.

Aboulela utilizes the veil as a symbol of autonomy and protection. Unlike Western depictions of Muslim women as backward and uncivilized, her characters are intellectual and running their lives independently in London. Lamya, for instance, is pursuing her PhD without a husband in London i.e. she is free from all patriarchal chains. Hijab also unites Muslim women and clears all differences between them. Accordingly, a Muslim female's identity is strengthened through her head scarf, and not the opposite. Djébar's characters, on the other hand, are not veiled as a mechanism of resistance to extremist beliefs. They are also highly educated women who mostly teach French. Despite the strong possibility for being killed for teaching French and not wearing the veil, the protagonists set foot in the streets unveiled "defying the danger" with their gaze" (Djébar, p 212). That is the veil symbolizes oppression and misogyny in the Algerian society at that decade. Thus, Djébar's characters resist the male-dominated society to survive. Hair, in the case of Culleton, symbolizes strength, pride and resistance. The Raintree sisters keep their hair long to preserve what is left of their Métis existence in the Canadian society. The dominant group, in return, cuts Native people's hair to subdue and humiliate them for hair is the only thing white oppressors could not take away from Aboriginals. In this way, Culleton uses the "hair" as Aboriginal women's resistance to the White paradigm. In contrast, "sheering" it represents white people's means of subjugation and annihilation of the Native heritage in Canada.

4. The Employment and Significance of Male Figures in Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Narratives

Corrupted Anti-government Champions and the Clashing of Identities in *Minaret*

Interviewed by the Guardian, Aboulela expresses her admiration of Aramah's *the Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. As a matter of fact, she stresses that the book deserves a wider readership for the messages it sends and the morals it teaches. The unnamed protagonist, in the novel, depicts the decay and corruption post-independence in Ghana through undesirable descriptions of people. Koomsons, for instance, is a corrupted government minister who made his way up the ladder through bribery. The nameless narrator, who is the only character with morals in the story, describes Koomsons' breath as rotten menstrual blood. Unpleasant imagery and scenery is sustained throughout the novel to portray deterioration upon independence. In effect, the newly established government is as egocentric as the white colonizers'. Strangely enough, the citizens express support to the newly established regime regardless, or to be precise oblivious, of the damages they are causing. The protagonist highlights that only people who maintained their morals, like himself, went through hardships. This is not what Aboulela illustrates in her work. Yet, she demonstrates the fragility, instability and corruption of the Sudanese government through Anwar.

Shalaby claims that Najwa's and Anwar's political discussions either in Sudan or London reflect "the lack of directions of parties opposing the government in Sudan" because the arguments are futile and unsolid (p, 7). Moreover, opposition parties are overthrown by new opposition parties. That is, after the overturn of the government, new opposition parties overthrow the other opposition parties accusing them of corruption and dishonesty (p, 8). Accordingly, the country's situation does not get any better due to the constant upheavals.

Indeed, Anwar seeks asylum in London after the establishment of new opposition groups. Paradoxically, he always criticized Najwa for being Western in her manners and language. Yet, he sought asylum from a Western country. This undeniably reflects the hypocrisy and double standards in the anti-government group that overturned her father's regime, and her life consequently. That is Anwar is no good than her father, if he really was corrupt. This is the adapted version of Armah's; the new government is as corrupt as the colonial one.

Shalaby also contends that Najwa's romance/affair with Anwar, in London, is affected by the political instability in their homeland. Anwar wins over Najwa's "proposal"⁷¹ request by affirming that he is "not making plans until this [new] government falls" (Aboulela, p 233). Moreover, Shalaby stresses the immorality of Anwar through his acceptance to take a loan from Najwa, the daughter of the man he always despised (p, 7). That is, Najwa sponsors his PhD studies and he never pays back his debts. This experience illustrates Anwar as a cadger whose political opinions are formed to serve his personal interests. Again, that is to say, he is no better than Najwa's father. Accordingly, Aboulela demonstrates that the opposition groups are not essentially ethical themselves (Shalaby, p 8).

Anwar also represents the Northern Sudan officials who sought to Arabize and Islamize the Southern part which they have condemned Western and disloyal. Still, they spoke English and maintained pro-Western regimes. In Khartoum, Anwar leads anti- government campaigns in Arabic, and mocks Najwa for speaking English. Yet, he is liberal; he neither prays nor fasts. His speeches at university embody the hatred and policies enacted by Northern Sudan against the South. In London, however, Anwar strives to better his English. He also publishes his articles in British journals. Moreover, his status is maintained

⁷¹She asks him to ask her hand from her uncle when he visits Sudan over summer holidays.

by the Western administration. That is, he is protected in the asylum by the people⁷² he denounced in his country.

Anwar, on the other hand, drags Najwa further from her Arab ideals in London just to work his own interests. She loses herself in him, and in return, he tries to convince her that this is a very natural thing to do. Moreover, he attempts to make her believe that she was brainwashed to trust that “adultery” is a sin. Accordingly, Najwa walks towards a more Westernized identity in London, and Anwar keeps abusing her physically and emotionally. She corrects his articles—despite him thinking she is not intellectual enough. He also slips and literally tells her that he does not want to have the blood of her father running in his children’s veins” (p 233).

We can see that Anwar portrays unethical Sudanese men who abuse their mother country and their women. Through him and Omar—who betrays his mother and sister and steals things from them to buy drugs—Aboulela demonstrates the decay in the Sudanese society caused first and foremost by men. Men violated their mother country and brought deterioration and backwardness to its land. They also put down their women and denied them from having a personality, ambitions and dreams of their own.

Paradoxing Ideals in the Algerian Identity in the 1990’s

Djebar sums up the violence and chaos in Algeria in the 1990’s through a fifteen- year-old student. Naïma, the protagonist in *The Attack*, is married to Mourad, a French teacher whereas she teaches Arabic in high school. Mourad risks his life by challenging and writing against the extremist groups in a widely read newspaper, and thus, is threatened by Islamist groups⁷³. Eventually, he is shot down, on the sight of his wife, by a sixteen-year-old in public while he was on his way to purchase his daily newspaper. The teenage boy shakes

⁷²In Sudan, Anwar opposed the government not only for corruption but also for its pro-Westernism.

⁷³I am using Islamist groups as these are the terms used by Djebar. However, the correct description of these groups is Extremist groups or *Irhab* (in Arabic).

after his crime and runs away. At night, Naïma thinks that the murderer could have been any of her students being in their age. Tormented by her thoughts, she decides to realize Mourad's last wish by submitting his latest article to the house of publication.

When the mourning period is over, Naïma resumes her teaching. After a test day, one of the students objects to the teacher's marking and tells her that half a point is missing. The teacher responds: "Eighteen? You have eighteen and that's not enough?" (p, 93). The fifteen-year-old student is provoked by the only French word, "Eighteen", in the sentence, and reacts in a shocking manner to the teacher. She describes him as follow: "Suddenly, the boy who's around fifteen, stands up and with his head turned partially toward the others, snaps back, "Do we have a teacher of French or of Arabic?" (p, 93). At this moment, Naïma recalls the shooting of her husband and understands that this generation has been brainwashed to hate anything that is French. Here is how she reacts: "I react, protest, I stand up to him passionately. In reality, it wasn't just the young man and his refusal of this French word that I felt up against!" (p, 93). It becomes clear that the teenage boy represents the indoctrinated Arabophone wave that was raised post the 1970's to hate their Algerian brothers and sisters who spoke and promoted the French tongue. The boy also symbolizes patriarchy for the crimes and assaults were men-led and Westernized Algerians were on the head of the wanted list.

The incident between the teacher and the student highlights the irrationality in the Islamist movement that denies French as an integral part of the Algerian identity. Naïma responds to the students' agitation as follow: ""Yes," I mock bitterly. "You can't tolerate a foreign word, a simple word? What country do you live in? What kind of future do you want?" (p, 94). When, Naïma says here "what country do you live in", she wants to shed light on the reality of the Algerian culture, identity and society. A hundred and thirty years of French occupation makes it inevitable for the two cultures to merge—Algerian and French.

That is, the Algerian identity endures an everlasting French contamination—in terms of language and systems—and denying the rootedness of the French language in the Algerian's self is a denial of one's identity, and later, a source of conflict and riot. Naïma adds: "I am an Arabic teacher of course, but Mourad was the best French teacher in the country" (p, 94). This marriage between the Arabic and French teacher symbolizes the marriage of the Algerian and French culture. Again, denying the French component of the Algerian identity is not advancing the country any further this is why Naïma says "what kind of future do you want" (p 94). For a successful Algerian identity, there should be a reconciliation between Algerian Arabophones and Francophones which would foster the establishment of a reconciled post-independent Algerian identity.

Domestic Abuse and Self loss: the Aboriginal Reality through Culleton's Narrative

Fee argues that Culleton idealised the Raintree parents for Cheryl to demonstrate in a later stage how deep truth hits Cheryl and consequently destroys her life. That is, Cheryl's suicide and moral decay is a result of knowing the reality of her parents—alcoholics (p, 222). Fee reports that Cheryl confesses to April that one of the reasons she became a prostitute was to provide their father with money (p, 222). Along the same line, Smulders maintains that Culleton nurtures an illusionary image of Henry Raintree in Cheryl's psyche which robs Cheryl of her Métis pride and thus herself image collapses. She also adds that Cheryl's journal "charts the pressure within as well as without the Aboriginal community that coerce to Métis women into the victim's role" (p, 95). Smulders therefore suggests that Cheryl is a victim of incest and Henry Liberty Lee is the outcome. She asserts that Native men project their powerlessness on their own women which is very illustrative of racial oppression and domestic abuse (p, 95).

What Culleton tries to show is that not only the white (sic) community, as coined by Heather Zwicker, is responsible for the degradation and decay on the Métis side; Native people are also held accountable for this social deterioration by first allowing themselves to be abused, and second by abusing their own people. At the very beginning of the novel, April describes one of the medicine days where many people would visit her parents' house, and two scenes are worth analysing in this context. She describes a man that she meets on her way to the toilet in the middle of the night:

One man, though, who was half sitting up against a wall, grumbled and shifted and I saw that his pants were open. I knew that I should hurry but I just stood there watching and he played around with his thing. Then he peed right in my direction. That made me move back out of the room (p, 12).

We can see that April, here, was prone to abuse, and that the irresponsibility and carelessness of her parents would have been the main cause. In other words, she was not protected in her own home which partially justifies the Children's Aid taking away kids from their parents. Here Culleton wants to emphasise that the fractured identity caused at childhood is not merely the white society construct. If Native people restrained themselves from becoming alcoholics, the national ward's arguments would have been weakened⁷⁴.

After the shocking incident, April rushes towards her room, on the way, she finds her father, in his clothes, asleep on the kitchen's floor which she does not understand (why is my father sleeping on the floor and not in his bed?). This accordingly triggers the little girl to move towards her parents' bedroom. There, she is surprised to find her mother "bare-naked and kissing a strange man" (p, 12). The mother of course yells at her daughter and sends her away. April expresses that the list of events puzzles her, she thus, forgets about her biological

⁷⁴Most of foster children were taken from their families because their parents were alcoholic or drug addict. That is, if native people weren't condemned alcoholic, their children wouldn't have been taken from them easily. In the case of April here, Culleton shows the evils of alcoholism on children; it can bring them sexual abuse.

needs and tries to understand what happens but fails. The protagonist narrates that few days later a woman visits them. Then, an argument starts between the two grown up ladies in the house: the stranger lady and her mother. According to her, the lady pushed her mother around while she called her terrible names. Surprisingly, to April, her father “watched them and laughed, and even egged them on” (p, 12). The child’s confusion mounted and she expresses her bewilderment as follow:

I just knew that Mom shouldn’t have kissed someone else; my Dad shouldn’t have slept on the floor; that old man shouldn’t have played with himself and then peed on the floor; and right now, Dad ought to be trying to protect my Mom, not finding the whole thing amusing (p, 12-13).

Here we can observe that April is partially blaming her mother’s cheating on her father. In fact, it sounds like the father purposefully slept on the kitchen’s floor for his wife to have this affair. Knowing that the family lived on the welfare money and that the medicine days usually come after receiving the aid, it makes it look like that Henry prostituted his own wife for money the reason why he laughs instead of getting angry when the wife of the stranger man comes to confront Mrs. Raintree.

Later in her life, Cheryl meets a bad native man—Mark DeSoto. The later becomes her boyfriend, and later her pimp. He prostitutes his own woman for money—to pay the rent, get drugs and purchase alcohol. Mark also abuses Cheryl physically. At the beginning, of the relationship, she refuses to prostitute herself, but ends up accepting after she meets her father who, in turn, takes advantage of his own daughter. When she meets her father, Cheryl expresses her emotional shock as follow: “All my dreams to rebuild the spirit of a once proudnation are destroyed in this instant. I study the pitiful creature in front of me. My father! A *gutter-creature*” (p, 217-218). We can observe that Cheryl’s self-image, identity and ambitions are destroyed upon her encounter with a father she always idealized. Here, Cheryl

feels betrayed and abandoned for she realizes her childhood is an outcome of irresponsible drunken parents. When she learns about her mother's suicide, she is more devastated and more convinced that the horrors April witnesses at the DeRosier, mainly, are triggered by careless parents. In fact, Cheryl not only resents her father for abandoning them but also for her mother's suicide.

Towards the end of the novel, Cheryl hits la debauch. She too becomes *a gutter-creature* and one of the stereotypical Native girls on Main Street. The judgemental looks on her sister's face heightens her depression. Accordingly, the two sisters undergo constant quarrels—after the rape trial—until Cheryl decides to voice her feelings for the first time. She shares her discoveries about their family and how their parents simply gave up on them by sticking to booze. She also, as suggested by Smulders, informs her sister that her father is partially responsible for her prostitution. She says: “Dad took all that money from me. He didn't know where it came from. He didn't care where it came from” (p, 198-199). It becomes conspicuous that Henry Raintree abused his daughter by snatching away all her income. He also abuses her by not caring about the source of income i.e. he does not mind if his daughter earns money out of prostitution or bootlegging, what counts is, end of the day he has money to get booze. This can be clearly seen in Henry's rage and protest when Cheryl tells him she has no money to give:

What do ya mean, you don't have any? You got enough to go drinking but you can't spare your poor pa any? Did that bum you're shackled up with tell you not to give me anymore? You're just as bad as your ol' lady was, you know that? A lazy no good for nothing. Running around all the time, living with bums. I need some money. I need groceries and I got to pay the rent. Now I got nothing, just cause you couldn't hang onto a simple job” (p, 224-225).

It is obvious that alcohol governs the father's life who becomes egoistic and abusive of his own flesh. This in fact reinforces the idea that he prostitutes his own wife and then daughter especially when he compares Cheryl to her mother. That is, the strange men in his bed was his plan, and thus, way to earn money. The daughter-mother jumping off the Louisiana bridge also strengthens this hypothesis as Cheryl does the same thing as her mother.

There is no closer tie than a father to a wife or a daughter, yet the native men (Henry and DeSoto) in the story oppress and exploit their own family⁷⁵. That is, the Aboriginal male figures in the novel symbolize self-oppression and domestic Native abuse. Culleton demonstrates how the Native female identity is shattered by Native men at the first place. The Raintree children are first displaced from their family house because the father did not know how to protect his own house. Accordingly, April experiences a horrible childhood and hence grows to despise her heritage and Native self. At adulthood, Cheryl's pride and Métis identity are destructed by her abusive father. Henceforth, she becomes an alcoholic, rejects her identity and commits suicide. Here, Culleton stresses that the self-loss on the female side is firstly caused by close male figures. And as society is patriarchal, women shall struggle to assert their own selves.

5. Aboulela's, Culleton's and Djebbar's Literary Mechanisms of Overturning Male Paradigms and Advocating the Female Cause

The Centrality of the Muslim faith in Najwas's identity: the Usages of Minaret in Aboulela's Novel

Aboulela chooses Minaret as a title to her novel and uses the word only three times in the entire work which makes it interesting to analyse. As we have read earlier, many scholars classify Aboulela's work as a Muslim narrative or "Halal fiction" as described by Peter Morey in *"Hala Fiction" and the limits of Postsecularism: Criticism, Critique and the*

⁷⁵We can use the term family to refer to DeSoto and Cheryl as they lived together for a considerable period of time, and in the west partnership (no civil marriage) is considered as a committed relationship (family).

Muslim in Leila Aboulela's Minaret. The later argues that Najwa develops some confidence and self-consciousness throughout the novel, and that the evolution of the protagonist's identity "destabilizes the tactic assumptions of that mindset in a way that could be deemed postsecular" (p, 12). He stresses that Aboulela achieves the aforementioned through "narrative tropes that have cross-cultural resonances" (p, 12). Against this background, we shall examine the symbolism of minaret in Aboulela's writing.

The writer uses the time shifting technique to narrate Najwa's story, or to be precise, to show how the protagonist's identity shifts back and forth between a Western and a Muslim identity. In the very first page of the novel, Najwa mentions the minaret and says: "I look up and see the minaret of Regent's Park mosque visible above the trees. I have never seen it so early in the morning in this vulnerable light" (p, 1). The second mention of the minaret comes towards the end: "We never get lost because we can see the minaret of the mosque and head home towards it" (p, 208). The minaret is lastly mentioned in the final part of the novel as follow: "Now, I look up to see the minaret of the mosque above the trees. I might not see it again from this particular angle" (p, 269).

The first mention highlights the presence of a Muslim diaspora in London and that is mostly obscured. Like the minaret of Regent Park that is covered up by trees, is the Muslim community; it is existent and it is part of the Londoner population. Yet, it is ignored and not acknowledged. Aboulela's example not only represents the Muslim diaspora in London, but in the West as a whole. On the other hand, the height of the minaret, opposite to the trees, symbolizes the elevation of Muslim values at the heart of its believers. No matter how hard they are put down, discriminated and abused, they still rise above and hold on to their principles. The visibility of the minaret at such "vulnerable light" also embodies racist and Islamophobic feelings post 9/11. Narrow-minded and anti-Muslim people are blinded to see or believe that not all Muslims are terrorists. Thus, they refuse, or it is difficult, to change

their perceptions. Whereas, unbiased people tend to see through the stereotyped media (the tall trees in the example) the reality of the Muslim/Arab nation.

In the second quote, the significance of minaret reinforces the beforementioned assumption that Muslim beliefs are solid and deep-rooted. Here, the minaret symbolizes the guidance the Muslim faith provides to its followers. Like Najwa and Tamer who will find their way home just by following the minaret, Muslims, precisely, abroad will manage to assert themselves and their identities abroad. That is, Muslim values are prone to change and are challenged by Western values overseas which results in a loss of self or identity crisis. Nevertheless, Islam offers guidance and orientation; it brings a Muslim back to themselves.

The last quote reinforces the hypothesis that Western media and mediums are biased. Najwa says: “I might not see it again from this particular angle” (p, 269). “This particular angle” illustrates that the minaret can be seen from different angle, and so are Muslims in Western eyes. That is to say, Western sentiments towards Muslims are subjective. The West adopts prejudiced images of Arabs/Muslims to serve specific goals or personal interests. Another point is worth mentioning, although the Gulf is Arab and Muslim par excellence, yet it is perceived positively and that’s due to the interests and relations between the West and that particular part of the world. Ironically, Arabs and Muslims in other countries are terrorists again to serve personal interests. This is another meaning that the minaret symbolizes in Aboulela’s novel.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that “minaret” is Aboulela’s literary device to first indicate that the Muslim faith is what keeps a Muslim or an Arab in harmony with themselves in exile. That is, Islam enables Arabs and Muslims to preserve their individuality abroad. Contrary to the prejudiced views, it does not pull people back from civilisation, it rather helps them achieve a wholeness and serenity like in the case of Najwa. She is governed by society in Sudan and by Anwar in London. Asserting Islam helps her become her own self

independent from patriarchal and societal obligations. It is also important to mention that minaret is originated from the Arabic word “*manara*” meaning the light house. That is, despite the infrequency of this word in the novel, Aboulela chooses it to be the title to also signpost the Arab presence in her work. The novel is written in English, and mostly takes place in London and minaret here therefore brings forth the masked Arab identity.

Henry Liberty Raintree: Hopes for a Better Future for Aboriginals

At a young age, April decides to embrace a white identity as a result of chauvinistic treatments. Changing the spelling of her name, she thinks is necessary: “Raintree looked like one of those Indian names but if I changed the spelling to Raintry, that could pass for Irish” (p, 48). Beatrice gives her protagonist a family name to imbed native roots in her character. Contrary, Aboulela and Djébar both did not give their protagonists any family names. That is, the family name has no significance or does not add any value to their productions. Whereas, the family name makes it impossible for April to escape her Native identity. In this way, the title illustrates that the identity quest in the novel is for a Native one and not any other identity. Moreover, giving her protagonist a family name symbolizes the rootedness of the Aboriginal problem. April takes her parents’ and grand grand parents name which implies that she lives the problems and the inequalities experienced by a whole family and generation.

Cheryl, on the other hand, names her infant Henry Liberty (Lee) Raintree and says: “Having pondered on what to call you, my sweet child, I’ve decided on Henry Liberty Raintree. May you grow up to be all your grandfather is not” (p, 221). Fee argues that Cheryl’s death symbolizes life, as according to her she’s April’s native side, by dying she passes on her Native pride to her sister. Henry Lee on the other hand reinforces April’s Métis identity as she adopts and mothers him (p, 224). Aubrey Jean Hanson, on the other hand, in “*Through White Man’s Eyes*” Beatrice Culleton Mosionier’s *In Search of April Raintree and*

Reading for Decolonization, contends that Henry Lee offers April a new future and reinforces her self-acceptance (p, 26). Despite the absence of any evidence of a better future for the two Raintrees, April's redemption and embracing of Aboriginal heritage marks decolonization and readiness for resistance (p, 27).

Cheryl voices her wishes that her son shall grow and be nothing like her father. This makes us also understand that Henry Liberty means free from all bigotry and discriminatory behaviours. Cheryl hopes her son grows in a healthier and a friendlier Canadian community that respects the Métis heritage. She hopes her son grows not to be an abusive husband nor father. We therefore can say that Henry Liberty Raintree symbolizes hope for a better future for the Aboriginal society. Although, the ending can be tragic for Cheryl's suicidal, yet April, who was in denial of her identity throughout the novel, is assertive of her identity and is willing to mother her nephew. This illustrates the development of Métis consciousness and Aboriginal people's readiness to reconcile with themselves and assert proud identities in the face of racism. In other words, Culleton wants to say that the death of bright aboriginal people, like Cheryl, is hurtful and can be destructive. Yet, it does not mean the death of a whole heritage, resistance and hope for a brighter future.

The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry

This short collection was first published in French as *Oran, Langue Morte*. In *A Brief Conversation with Assia Djebar*, Djebar tells Daniel Simon that most of the facts in her novellas are true and that she is attached to them for they stand as a living documentary (p, 15). In the Afterword, she explains that like Francis Ponge in his "soap" text⁷⁶, she writes to cleanse the "intellectual toilet" i.e. the brainwashed Algerian youth mostly. To further understand this inspiration, it becomes necessary to scrutinize Ponge's concept. He says: "For the intellect's ablutions, a little bit of soap! Well wielded, it suffices. Torrents of plain water

⁷⁶Ponge wrote the Soap text in the midst of German occupation where he was captivated and holed up with his family in France. The shortage in soap inspired him to come up with his famous soap text.

cannot remove the dirt from anything. Nor Can silence. Nor your suicide in the blackest water, oh absolute reader!” (qtd in Djebbar and Humphries, p 14). It becomes conspicuous that soap hints that the rigid mindsets cannot be changed easily, it requires the efforts of rubbing and chemicals to kill the dirt residing in them. Inspired by these lines, Djebbar concludes her afterword by confessing that she writes to touch this “absolute reader” whom she aspires will take over the flame and continues to resist the murdering taking place in Algeria in the 1990’s.

Leonard R. Koos, in *Djebbar, Assia. The Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry*, clarifies that Tegan Raleigh, the translator, has changed title for a better reception and vocalization of the issues and problems raised in the novel. He argues like the French language has its properties; English has its polysemantic assets as well. Accordingly, Raleigh relied on his translation skills and expertise to derive a title, inspired from the afterwords’ epigraph opening quote from *Vaste est la prison* (p, 59), to unmask culturally hidden implications and attract a wide readership. In this way, the translator puts Djebbar’s political stance at front through his title. It becomes clear for the “absolute reader” that the novel narrates facts and realities that can be heavy on the heart and the mind. The reader can also understand that the novel is a means of political resistance to the civil war in Algeria in the 1990’s.

Oran, Dead Language

Oran, Dead Language is the opening novella of Djebbar’s collection of short stories. It also comes within the first part entitled *Algeria: Between Desire and Death*. Koos reports that a number of critics view Djebbar’s title as an attempt to recreate Arabic and Amazigh rhyme and literature; it also mirrors women’s sufferings, oppression and silenced tongues in North Africa (p, 60). We aim to demonstrate that Djebbar’s title presents the duality of the Algerian identity that lost lots of its Arabism throughout a hundred and thirty years of French oppression.

Koos eloquently summarizes the short story as a woman's recalling of the horrors of colonialism during occupation when visiting her native home town thirty-three years later (p, 59). The nameless protagonist recalls the murdering of her parents during Algeria's war of independence. She describes how colonialism ended her childhood at the age of ten by taking away the lives of her parents. She recalls and narrates how she said farewell to her mother's body: "I let her. I wanted to be dead. Asleep or dead, like my mother. "Maman!" I called her by the French "Mamam"—she who was assassinated by the French" (Djebar, p 15). The last verse of the quote illustrates French attempts to obliterate the Algerian identity. France sought to elevate the French language and culture at the expense of the Algerian ones. Accordingly, the teaching of Quran and Arabic were banned in schools, and later Arabic was permitted with conditions. Mosques were turned into churches and military barracks. Therefore, before the turn of the century, France exercised a linguistic hegemony and cultural imposition over Algeria. It is then illogical to expect such a long lasting and deep-rooted implementation to be overturned or dismantled overnight.

"Maman" here reflects the linguistic hegemony embedded in the Algerian identity. "she who was assassinated by the French" (p, 15), illustrates the helplessness or despair of restoring the Algerian identity. In fact, the protagonist mourns her mother only, and in French, which symbolizes the extermination of the Algerian identity by French colonialism. That is, the mother represents Algeria in this case. It is important to mention that the protagonist's mother escapes French threats to France for temporary political refuge. At that time, the aunt becomes the mother whom the protagonist calls *Mma*, meaning mother in Oranian accent. We can see that the biological mother is called Maman and the adoptive one is called *Mma* and this in itself reflects the duality in the Algerian modernity. This can be seen in the following exchange between the protagonist and a maternal cousin:

“SO which one is the real mother for you: ‘Mma’” indicating my aunt, who suddenly looked uneasy, “or ‘Maman,’ as you say,” pointing toward the distant horizon, in the direction of my heart’s beloved, my absent fairy.

“...Both of them are my mother.” (p, 23)

It becomes clear that the ten-year-old protagonist, born during colonial period, is a production or a blending of two cultures: French and Algerian. That is, her identity projects the marriage between two civilisation and demonstrates the interwovenness between the two. In other words, the protagonist is an exemplification of the Algerian identity raised during and post-independence; it is both French and Algerian.

If we break the title *Oran, Dead Language*, we have “*Oran*” which is an Algerian city, and we have “*Dead Language*” which implies a loss or forgetting of a language. Therefore, when we combine the two meanings, we understand that the protagonist, or Djébar, points out that she lost her mother tongue i.e. Arabic. In fact, Djébar was criticized for writing in French and her title symbolizes the linguistic disability of Algerians born and raised during colonialism. That is, her title reflects the success of the French plans to exterminate the Algerian identity. It is worth mentioning that Djébar gives her protagonist no name to stress the ambiguity of the Algerian identity that is claimed to be Arab, and yet uses lots of French words in its own dialect. Here Djébar challenges positions that declare Arab as the unitary of the post-independent Algerian identity. She cleverly demonstrates how the Algerian tongue has been erased during occupation.

Non-Return Returns

Another time Djébar chooses no name for her protagonist. The unnamed teacher returns to Algeria, after years of self-exile in France, to teach French at the Algiers university. The double standards in the modern Algerian culture urges her to leave for a non-return. Ouardia’s story symbolizes this incompatibility at the heart of the Algerian society. The

university students is seen talking, in public, with a man and the news reaches her family house. “Disgrace” becomes her father’s new chant. The mother whom we would expect to sympathise and stand by her daughter’s side, pushes her off the roof to kill her feelings of guilt that she could not have a boy for her husband to avenge his disgrace. Ouardia’s death echoes in the city, and hastingly the teacher leaves:

The story, woven from mouth to mouth in the circle of the new tellers, hemmed
me in, tore me apart, urged me away.

Tomorrow I’m buying a return ticket. Return?

Non-return returns (p, 44).

We can understand that the change in Algerian standards post-independence are too heavy to digest by the teacher who was raised in a French-Algerian society. During colonialism, as seen above, the veil started to disappear, and it became a necessity for survival. That is, by independence lots of women chose not to wear the *haik*. However, by the 1980’s, with the rise of Arabophones and Islamists, the veil surfaced again, and women started to be enclosed and oppressed, which is beyond the teacher’s comprehension.

Ouardia’s story reflects patriarchy and misogyny in modern Algeria. The man who is seen in public with the young lady is not judged or socially punished, but the woman is. She is cut from university and is forbidden from setting foot in the street. Eventually, she is murdered by her own mother because she brought shame to her father. Ouardia represents all women killed by their fathers or brothers for being seen or involved with other men; whereas, the same men in picture get away with their doing. This reflects the one-sidedness of the Algerian community that condemns women for their wrongdoings and tolerates male mistakes. It should be noted that Djébar resists this patriarchy by non-conventional and liberal characters in other novellas in the same collection. The nameless teacher can also embody resistance for she is liberal in her not wearing the veil, teaching French when French

teachers are targeted, and choosing to be single and autonomous.

If we look back at the quote above, we understand that “Return?” is an ironic rhetorical question that reflects the teacher’s position towards her mother country. It illustrates that the ties between the protagonist and her country are cut. She therefore does not consider a return to a land whose norms and principles suffocate its own people, mainly women. “Non-return returns” embodies the teacher’s intentions of not returning to Algeria after moving to France. Yet, she returns to teach French, but then is culturally shocked and Algeria becomes a dead cause for her. In fact, “Non-return returns” is a nickname the protagonist mockingly attributes to herself. On another side, this can be seen as Djébar’s response to critics about her residence abroad. She moved to France to pursue her studies, then returned upon independence to teach history at university, and thus experienced the inadequacies of the Algerian society. In this way, Djébar remained in an exile while raising and championing women’s causes in Algeria.

Armand Karim and Ouardia Louise

Armand Karim and Ouardia Louise are the two narrators in *Félicie’s Body*—the closing novella of the collection. Sukys claims that Félicie gives her eight children bilingual names to sustain the duality of their identities: French and Algerian (p, 120). She adds that Félicie’s children reject their “hyphenated identities” as “Choosing sides has become a necessity since it is the only way to remain whole” (p, 120). In this way, Sukys highlights the rigidity of the modern Algerian society that does not tolerate or support shifting between languages and identities. Indeed, Djébar wants to highlight the inadequacies and irrationality of modern Algeria that denies a vital component of its identity: the ashes of colonialism.

This malaise of being in-between is what Edward Said describes in his *Out of Place: a Memoire*. He starts his novel by arguing that families invent their children, give them names, shape their characters and fates, and even pass on to them languages. Said vocalizes

his frustration and says: “there was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world of my parents and four sisters” (p, 1). He then confesses that it took him fifty years to feel less uneasy with the paradoxical combination of his name: Edward, an English name, and Said, and Arab family name (p, 1). Language is another ingredient that heightened his self-questioning. He narrates that Arabic and English co- existed in his life, and both felt like his mother tongue, yet neither is (p, 2). These binaries were behind Said’s feelings of being out of place. This same experience is lived by Armand and Ouardia who are invented by an Algerian father and a French mother. That is, like Said, they grew up with names that negate each other, and two languages in the background conflicting for dominance.

Armand Karim and Ouardia Louise feel the duality of their names, each, like their siblings, struggling to maintain a unitary wholesome identity. Armand voices this frustration as follow:

But you see us divided, each with our two first names, our two countries (which to disown, which to adopt?), our two religions absent or in the background, our two ages as well (always children for you, the mother, even though we are well into adulthood), each of us staggering differently through bitterness, uncertainty, or hope (p, 159).

We can see what Sukys describes as a necessity to remain whole. It seems impossible for Félicie’s children to live with double cultures and languages. In other words, their dual identity becomes a burden they cannot live with. Eventually, they all stick to one side either Arab, and thus remaining in Algeria, or French and hence moving to France.

Ouardia, on the other hand, reflects her parents’ “invention”, to use Said’s words, as follow:

Why didn't they call me Louise or Louisa? Louisa would be better, because it reflects both of them, the French mother and the Algerian father [...] with the eight children, they each had to see their offspring from their own side, in his or her language and in their religions, because what's a first name, if not a matter of religion? (p, 169-170).

We can observe that the duality in Ouardia's identity is a production of her parents' inclinations, cultures and beliefs. This in itself reflects how colonialism imprints the modern Algerian identity that is essentially Arab—by virtue of independence—but remains carrier of French heritage from a century and thirty years of occupation. Ouardia interprets her double heritage as such: "It's as if when we were born you told us, there, you've got two sides, two faces.." (p, 171). It becomes clearer that Félicie's children reject this duality and would rather want to choose one side. In this way, Armand and Ouardia represent the Algerian identity post-independence that is ignorant and in denial of the inherent French heritage.

The Algerian father chooses Karim as a first name to his first son, and the French mother chooses Armand as a second one. However, at adulthood, names are inverted and thus Armand becomes first. This is because he chooses to leave Algeria to settle in Paris. That is, he chose the French identity. Along the same concept, Ouardia chooses to stay in Algeria and clings onto her Arab identity. Yet, all Félicie's children have nicknames: Titi for Armand and Kaki for Ouardia and others. Nicknames here represent the new or modern Algerian identity where the French and Algerian cultures are fused. That is to say, Mohamed and Félicie (representing Algeria and France respectively) will not see their children from their sides only as stated by Ouardia, the nicknames deny parents of their ownership and accordingly they become observant of the homogeneity of both cultures in their children. From this perspective, we can say that serenity and balance can be achieved through a negotiation of cultures. This is what Djébar alludes to. Djébar resists positions that disclaim the presence

and integrity of French culture in the Algerian identity post-independence. Armand and Ouardia are an embodiment of the identity crisis caused by the denial of the French culture and the imposition of Arabicisation in modern Algeria. In other words, the separation of Félicie's children portrays the divide in the Algerian culture which in return generates trouble—like when the eight children fought where to bury their mother's body.

Using Arabic words to Pin up the Arabic/Muslim Identity

Writing in English and living in Scotland made many critics question Aboulela's Arabism especially when she went to American and English schools back in Sudan. The later expressed in interviews and through her novels her deep attachment to her mother country and how Islam was the companion through hardship. Using Arabic words like *azan*⁷⁷, *tobes*⁷⁸, *hajj*⁷⁹ and *surah*⁸⁰ are Aboulela's hints that Islam and Arabism remain at the heart of her works, and hence her identity. In other words, despite her probable incapability of composing a work in English, Aboulela contests positions that condemn her Western by using Arabic terms as marks of her Arabism. She also challenges views that question the Arabism of the English-speaking population. She wants to show, through her work, that English is an instrument of communication, and that heritage and identity are not effaced by Western languages. In fact, she starts her novel by *Bismi Allahi, Ar-rahman, Ar-raheem*⁸¹.

Aboriginal language erased

Unlike Aboulela, Culleton does not use any Native words, yet she uses very few Native names like Louis Riel. This highlights the evils of the Canadian constitutions and acts that led to the complete disappearance of the Aboriginal language. The names on the other hand represent all what is left from that language—only names. In this way, we can say that Culleton chooses to make her novel completely accessible for non-Natives, by not using

⁷⁷Call for prayer

⁷⁸Is the national dress for women, mainly married, in North Sudan, and it covers all their body and hair.

⁷⁹Muslim pilgrimage

⁸⁰A chapter of the Qu'raan.

⁸¹ In the name of God the Merciful (all Quranic chapters start with this phrase).

Aboriginal words, to reach a great readership, and thus, a well reception of her message: the damages the Canadian society has been causing for Natives.

Writing in French: a Commodification or Championing of the Algerian Culture?

Hafid Gafaiti, in his *The Blood of Writing: Assia Djébar's Unveiling of women and History*, explains that the attack on Assia Djébar for writing in French is due to her refusal to be muted and manipulated by the Writers Union⁸², and not because she writes in French. That is to say, she refused to obey instructions that called for a rewriting, or to be precise “to falsify the modern history of Algeria” (p, 814). Moore, on the other hand, argues that despite the popularity and triumphs of Djébar's works (that led to translations in different languages), her works are not translated in Arabic, and thus, not fully accessible to her own people (p, 252). Corbin reports that French frees Djébar from patriarchal constraints and at the same time endangers her own being for the arbitrary movements that condemn Francophone Algerians (p, 814). Djébar, in return, states that she tries to restore the past through French. She also endeavours to fuse the Arabic and Berber oral traditions with the French language to recreate female identities and accounts (qtd in Gafaiti, P 814). It becomes conspicuous that choosing to write in French, even after studying classical Arabic, is Djébar's mechanism of resistance to patriarchy and anti-French positions in Algeria. Yet, Arabism and *Algerianism* are at the heart of her works. All her works revolve around women's concerns in Algeria, in specific, and the situation in Algeria, in general. Names and places are also mostly Arab and Algerian. Most importantly, she utilizes some Amazigh and Arabic words like *harki*, *Mma*, *hammam*, *seroual*, *Lala*, *Izuzu uliok*, and some others to demonstrate the hybridity of the Algerian identity that is triply populated: Amazigh, Arab and French. In writing in French, then, Djébar champions Algerian matters and do not commodify them.

⁸²In the 1980's the government encouraged and sponsored Algerian intellectuals to rewrite the history of Algeria. This accordingly gave birth the the Writers Union.

Tuberculosis: an Infected Aboriginal Identity

Like Armah in his novel, Culleton utilises negative imagery and descriptions to demonstrate the degradation of the Native life in Canada. The first negative imageries are attributed to her parents who are vulnerable on sickness days—what she thought is a sickness is alcoholism. On medicine days, the family house is in chaos and dirty. The people, mainly children, who visit are dirty looking and smell badly. Acoose contends that Culleton uses such disturbing conditions to reveal how poor conditions affect the Métis identity (p, 230). She stresses that Tuberculosis (TB) is a literary device Culleton uses to show how Aboriginals were forced to relocate and how the move impacts their identities. The Raintree family enjoys an independent live in a Norway house. However, when they move to Winnipeg, they become reliant on the welfare, and most importantly, they become alcoholics which denies them from raising their children later. Along the same lines, Jeanne Perreault claims, in *In Search of Cheryl Raintree, and Her Mother*, that TB is a literary device that brings to the surface “the social and physical realities facing many people of Native heritage” (p, 261).

The negative imagery and TB in specific symbolize Canadian effects on the Native identity and reality. TB signifies how the Aboriginal heritage and identity were diseased and tarnished. As TB is contagious, the sufferings of first generations are cascaded to the subsequent ones. That is, their misery is contagious and well spread; it affects the whole race. With these symbols, Culleton challenges Canadian positions that blame Natives for their demise and degradation and she then points finger on them. We can see that this is another form of resistance Culleton uses to counter the white narrative. TB makes Henry lose what is left of his status, and thus, he loses his daughter, and the family’s life gets wasted. If it were not for TB, the family would have remained in the Norway house, and probably would not have reached this level of deterioration.

Fatima and Annie: a Marriage of Cultures, a Hyphenated Algerian Identity

Fatima and Annie opens Djébar's *Between Algerian and France* (the second part of her collection). The protagonists are a French mother and a Franco-Algerian daughter. The father and husband meets Annie in France, settles there and starts a family. Due to the contrasting ideals, the marriage fails and leads to divorce. Annie wins the case of adoption; the father kidnaps his daughter and heads to Algeria, and in the Kabyle he starts his life with Fatima. After years of separation, Annie takes Amazigh lessons—as she assumes her daughter speaks only Kabyle—in preparation for her meeting with her nine-year-old daughter. To her surprise, Fatima speaks French in addition to Arabic and Amazigh. Yet, the little girl comes in black abaya⁸³ and declines her mother's request to see her hair.

Annie symbolizes French culture and Fatima symbolizes the Algerian population after independence. Like Annie who learns Amazigh to communicate with Fatima, the Algerian culture lends some of its customs and words to the French culture (e.g. the use of Algerian words in the French *largo* nowadays). On the other hand, Fatima is a daughter of a French mother and an Algerian father which is the case for modern Algerian generation. The mother, France, lives abroad but still inherits some of its traits to its daughter, Algeria. Ironically, Fatima clings on to her scarf and refuses to reveal her hair, which symbolises her clinginess to the Muslim faith, yet she expresses her obsession to the French language by addressing her mother in a foreign tongue to show off. This schizophrenic identity portrays the complexity and hybridity of the modern Algerian identity that is both French and Arab but is in denial of its *frenchification*.

⁸³ a long piece of clothing that reaches to the ground, covering the whole of the body except the head, feet, and hands, worn by some Muslim women. Source : Cambridge Dictionary.

Félicie's Body: Franco-Algerian Identity Post-Independence

Even after Mohamed's passing away, Félicie chooses to remain in Algeria, and considers Oran her native city. In fact, when kidnaped by Algerian offenders on independence day, fearlessly she confronts the kidnappers and denounces leaving the country. The calligraphy on the necklace around her neck brings the assaulters to their sense. To be precise, *suret El-Fatiha* does (on the necklace). Thus, she returns to her husband and eight children. Mohamed and Félicie's marriage symbolizes the wedding of the Algerian and French cultures during colonialism, and the outcome is double-named children (carrying French and Arab names, religions and cultures) who represent the Algerian generation post-independence. That is, the modern Algerian identity is both Arab and French, and this is undeniable. Félicie's hold onto Algeria post-independence reflects the rootedness of the French culture in the Algerian one, which makes it impossible to detach the two (the kidnap incident). Moreover, she later wears a necklace with a Quranic chapter on her neck while she remains faithful to the Christian faith (during colonial time, she goes every Sunday to the church in Algeria). The necklace signifies religion, and Félicie represents the mother, in this case, we conclude that Djébar wants to demonstrate that the modern Algerian identity carries lots of French culture in its traits. Furthermore, most Algerians are Muslim by inheritance and not by faith. That is, the war against Franco-Algerians is not faith related, it is merely politics. It is waged to serve personal interests. To sum up, Djébar resists and rejects positions that claim Algeria to be Arab and Muslim only. She highlights through her work that the modern Algerian identity is both French and Algerian par excellence.

Conclusion

Aboulela is best known as a Champion of Muslim causes abroad. She is also identified as a feminist. It is unquestionable that her work addresses issues of Muslim women

in the diaspora. Yet, it also denounces patriarchy and Western positions that consider the veil as a symbol of oppression and uncivilization. Aboulela demonstrates that the head scarf is rather a means of liberation and autonomy. She also emphasises that it does not restrain women from advancing on professional levels. This overturn is achieved through successful veiled women like Doctora Zainab, Lamya, Wafa, and many others. Aboulela projects that Muslim women like others strive, achieve and succeed. That is to say, the veil is a symbol of religious faiths and not a reflection of merits and intellect.

Minaret presents the Western world with another version of wearing the veil. Women choose to wear it out of belief and not because it is imposed on them. This is illustrated through Najwa deciding to wear the veil even when Anwar expresses strong opinions. She wears it when she reconnects with her Muslim faith and feels mostly in serenity and in harmony with herself. The scarf not only enables her to achieve a stable mature identity, it also reconnects her with her past and Sudan. This personal choice reflects an anti-patriarchal position as in Sudan and in London, Najwa is compelled, by male characters, to embrace a Western-like identity. Accordingly, when she wears the veil, she brings forth her identity, choices and assertion of self. Moreover, this category of women chooses to wear hijab to escape male harassment and gain a freedom of movement outside. Thus, we can say that Aboulela uses the veil as a symbol to overturn patriarchy that dictates on women what to wear and how to behave and which identity to embrace. She challenges this position by also making her characters stronger on their own, in the absence of man.

Another important function of the veil is clearing difference. Aboulela cleverly tells Orientalists that the Muslim hijab if it does anything to women, it clears difference; it makes them equal. It is like a uniform that masks physical appearances and social backgrounds. In this way, the veil strengthens women's solidarity and reinforces their relationship. Here, Aboulela demonstrates that the veil gives the Muslim woman more privileges in that it does

not make her feel less to any other fellow Muslim woman. Against this background, we become confident to say *Minaret* turns negative prejudices and stereotypes attributed to Muslim women.

Aboulela also rejects male domination and corrupted politicians who led Sudan to its demise through, mostly, corrupted Sudanese male figures. Anwar, for instance, despises Najwa's father and leads anti-government campaigns against him. Yet, he takes advantage of his daughter: physically and financially. Najwa, here, symbolizes Sudan. Accordingly, we can say that Aboulela denounces the male domination that exploits her mother country and women. Through her writing and depictions, she resists this reality in Sudan.

Aboulela preserves the Arab and Muslim identity in her English written work through the use of Arabic and Muslim words and expressions. Second, she chooses *minaret* as a title to her novel despite its infrequencies in the novel. The Arabic words represent marks of the Arab identity that is not affected by the Western language. That is, it is not the English language that makes the protagonist, or Aboulela, miss out their Arabism. *Minaret*, on the other hand, reflects the elevation of Muslim principles that function as candles that light the way for lost Muslims in the exile. That is to say, Aboulela shows that Islam helps Muslims, especially abroad, to pull themselves together and achieve mature identities.

Djebar challenges patriarchy and the extremist movement that have risen in the 1990's. She chooses for her characters not to wear the veil and demonstrates the consequences of such an inclination. They are either constantly harassed or they are murdered. The female protagonists are aware of their fate, yet they hold onto their positions. Djebar demonstrates the irrationality of these extremist groups that permit themselves to assault women, specifically, for not wearing the veil and for teaching the language of the other. The irony is these terrorists were raised by female teachers and instructors, but still murder them. The murdered teacher(s) symbolizes the mother country that was being

assaulted by its own sons. Moreover, Djebbar highlights the boldness and achievements of its characters to reflect how competent women are regardless of their clothing styles. Finally, the student who takes over his murdered teacher represents hope for a better future. It represents a raise of consciousness, solidarity and awareness. In this context, Djebbar brings to surface the evils of extremist groups and projects their unreasonableness. They were either raised during or after colonialism by colonial teachers or frenchified parents and teachers. Nonetheless, they are in denial of the integrity of the French culture and language in their identity. In fact, the hiring of teachers from Syria and Egypt post-independence represents the linguistic disability of the Algerian nation that was unable to teach its alleged first language. It becomes clear that Djebbar challenges the double standards and denial of extremist Arabophones in the 1990's, and accordingly she reflects the reality of the Algerian identity. It is both French and Arab, yet both parties are in constant struggle which hinders the establishment of a reconciled identity and Algeria.

Djebbar relies on teachers in demonstrating the duality of the Algerian cultures, merely because education, as stated by Nelson Mandela, is the most influential weapon one can use to change the world. The incident between Naïma and her fifteen-year old student highpoint more the clashing ideals in modern Algeria. The student pounces on the Arabic language teacher when she uses a French word: "dix-huit". With bitterness, the teacher questions the student's consciousness and rationality. She says: "You can't tolerate a foreign word, a simple word? What country do you live in? What kind of future do you want?" (p, 94). In this sense, the marriage between the French and Arabic teachers symbolizes the blending of the Algerian and French cultures. The student's impulsive reaction signifies the lack of thorough thought and consideration before launching an Arabisation and de-frenchification campaign post-independence. The poor governmental planning led to the waging of war and hatred between Algerians. Finally, the student's response to the French word illustrates the denial of

the ever-lasting presence of the French culture after 1962. The Arabic teacher's French uttering is a simple example.

Throughout her collection, Djébar attempts to raise awareness by stressing the effects of a hundred and thirty years of cultural imposition and linguistic hegemony. In *Oran, Dead Language*, she mourns the death of her absolute Arabism and Oranian tongue, and thus, demonstrates the effects of cultural indoctrination on the Algerian identity. In *Non-Return Returns*, she speaks of the hypocrisy of the extremist groups and patriarchy that condemns women and reduce them into nothingness. In *Félicie's body*, she reflects the duality of the Algerian identity through the eight children with double names. She also projects the identity crisis the Algerian nation has been undergoing due to the imposed denial of the integrity of the French culture. Finally, she writes her novel in French to narrate the sufferings of Algerians, and women in specific. The conclusion that can be drawn is that Djébar does not write to only champion the female cause post-independence. She also writes to call for a reconciliation of identity and acceptance of the French reality and its presence and importance to modern Algeria. That is, without an acceptance, Algeria will continue moving reverse current, and things will not advance nor get any better.

Culleton uses hair as a symbol of resistance to Canadian stereotypes and prejudices. That is to say, long black hair remains the only physical mechanism of resistance by Aborigines. She demonstrates how the Canadian constitutions and acts smashed the Native heritage and identity through the sheering of hair to humiliate Natives. In other words, the hair becomes the only element that makes Aborigines distinctives as an ethnic group, and thus, it is the only instrument of solidarity. Thus, by sheering the hair of proud and non-proud Métis, Culleton reflects that even the brightest Aboriginal figures have minimum chances to survive in Canada. She also throws light on how the Native heritage and identity were inflected by the white community through Henry's TB and poor living conditions on the

Aboriginal side. Culleton shows that the long black hair is the only remaining trait of the Métis identity. The composition of the novel in complete English with the absence of Native words—which marks writings of the diaspora—demonstrate the extent of the obliteration of this ethnic group and its heritage.

In Search of April Raintree also reveals the role of Aboriginals in their demise. Through Henry Raintree and Mark DeSoto, Culleton exhibits how oppression and inferiority starts in the Native camp or society. Because of the parents' alcoholism, the Raintree sisters are placed into foster homes and April undergoes an unstable childhood. Cheryl experiences positive childhood experiences which nurture her pride and Métis identity. Yet, at adulthood, she undergoes the Native girl syndrome because of her father and partner. The partner insists his woman to do some prostitution work for money. The father, as well, pushes her to get money for him regardless of the source. Cheryl's evolution throughout the novel stresses that no matter how hard Native people strive to survive and acquire positive self-images, society compels them to behave as per the labels attributed to them. Henry Liberty Raintree, on the other side, reflects Culleton's hope for a better future for Aboriginals. His adoptive mother, April, reaches a reconciliation with her identity and is willing to do something for the Native cause. This reconciliation reveals the raise of a Native consciousness at this era. On the other hand, April has Roger's support, a white Canadian male, which Culleton hopes would become the support of Canada to Aboriginal people.

Culleton's novel centres around the lives of two Métis sisters. Yet, she does not speak for the female cause only; she speaks for a whole nation. The evolution of the sister's opposing identities reveal that Natives were made to decline and disappear by Canadian constitutions. Moreover, Aboriginals contribute in their marginalization by taking negative connotations attributed to them and behaving accordingly. The absence of support and solidarity between Native men and women also demonstrated the wretchedness of this ethnic

group. Accordingly, Culleton resists all factors leading to the demise of the Native heritage and projects how Aboriginals are condemned to fail no matter how bright or successful they are.

Conclusion

The first chapter focuses on identity formation and crisis from childhood into adolescence. It utilizes a number of theories to outline this trajectory of development. It also locates the origins and contexts of identity crisis. It finally highlights that the colonial child, and our protagonists in this case, does not follow the same trajectory as normal children. In other words, the colonial and patriarchal contexts alter children's process of development, and thus, call forth complex self-questioning. That is, the colonial child experiences crisis superior to their cognitive abilities (crisis that should happen in later stages).

Freud's psychosexual theory purports that children's earliest identity crisis is gender related. Thereafter, more complex questions emerge such as position and status in family and society. However, our protagonists question their position in society before they undergo the gender identity crisis. We, therefore, can say that environment (circumstances and context) influences identity formation and evolution. That is, the protagonists' development is perturbed and adjusted to fit in the new environments. This also means that they were stripped from experiencing a normal and stable childhood which, in return, affects their self-images and concepts in adolescence and adulthood.

Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, contends that colonialism generates feelings of in-betweenness, and accordingly the colonized is caught between identity crisis and regeneration. His observation comes from studying the adult colonized. Yet, in this instance, April, Ourdia and Tounssia, as children and teenage girls experience the same struggles as adults. Again, this stresses that colonialism brings forward complex questions of self and identity. Therefore, their development, as per the Whole Child Development theories, is interrupted and altered. Ngugi, on the other hand, in *Decolonizing the Mind* asserts that colonialism governs people's self-images during occupation and post-independence. This implies that the colonized's identity and self-concept are influenced by imperial powers.

Najwa, in this way, seeks colonial elitedom, as described by Fanon, by speaking English and behaving in Western manners, whereas April absorbs chauvinistic connotations and hence rejects her heritage. The nameless protagonist in *Oran, Dead Language*, despises French powers for murdering her parents. Yet, she flees to France as a negation of places and people. It becomes clear how the three protagonists live between two conflicting spaces which generate their identity crisis.

It should be highlighted that language and literature “were taking [the colonial children] further and further from [themselves] to other selves, from [their] world to other worlds” (Ngugi, p 12). That is, besides the racist interactions (in the case of April) and clashing environments (in the instance of Najwa and Djébar’s characters) that invite a self- confusion, language and what it carries of culture, extends this struggle and pulls children into opposing directions. These experiences are unique to the colonial child which evidences that they do not follow the normal trajectory of development as they experience complex existential questions at an early age. The normal child, on the other hand, is saved the whole trouble.

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights that children can achieve certain tasks with the support of adults or experts. His theory also stresses the importance of social interaction to children’s growth and development. April grows without loving parents which hinders the emergence of a solid primary self. Moreover, her interactions with her peers and adults are hostile towards her heritage resulting in introversion and denial of Aboriginal identity. In *Oran, Dead Language*, the protagonist lives most of her early years without parents (who flee Algeria to France for political asylum) and eventually she loses them at the age of ten. Despite the support of her aunt, the unnamed character fails to adopt a primary self, and she is in relentless shift between two identities and cultures. This, however, does not apply to Najwa; she experiences a stable childhood, but embraces an

identity imposed upon her by psychologically indoctrinated parents. Piaget, from a different perspective, emphasises the importance of children's experiments with their environment to discover and locate themselves in society. Most importantly, his *egocentrism* concept argues that children fail to disassociate their thoughts and themselves from others. This means April, Najwa and Djebbar's characters are unable to locate and separate themselves from society, and thus think and behave accordingly.

April and Djebbar's characters move from childhood into adolescence with unsolved crisis. That is, the crisis expands and gets even more complicated in the subsequent stage of development. As per Erikson's theory, unsolved crisis impedes development in consequent phases as well as maturity in terms of relationships. Najwa, however, continues her life with her passive and imposed identity and role. At teenagerhood, April, Najwa Ouardia and Tounssia experience a delayed Electra complex, and thus undergo a gender identity crisis. In this context, Freud asserts that unsolved crisis from this complex haunts the girl into adulthood. Again, this means if the crisis remains unresolved, the development is interrupted in the following stage of development.

Erikson, in *Childhood and Society*, argues that women's anatomical arrangements confine them to a role of bearers. That is, fears of being left empty lead to submissiveness (370). Simon De Beauvoir, on the other hand, places the blame on society, teachers and parents (mainly mothers) for women's dependency and submissiveness (284). Najwa, Cheryl, and Non-Return Returns support De Beauvoir's statement. Driving on her own as an emancipated young woman, Najwa is uncomfortable with her independence and expresses need for her brother. She also sees marriage as the only fate awaiting her. This is because she was taught into a passive, dependent and submissive role. Cheryl, on the other side, thinks of herself independently and thrives to achieve her personal goals. Non-Return Returns hits the thirties without getting married and marriage is off her priority list. She runs her own life the

way she wishes and that is because she was raised to liberal parents and most of the time in a liberal environment: France.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the colonial context calls forth complex existential questions leading to identity crisis. The duality in environment—living between two opposing cultures and ethnicities—generates self-confusion that fails to be solved at childhood due to the supremacy of these questions (cognitively speaking). Language heightens the protagonists' identity crisis for it keeps feeding them cultures that are foreign and anti to their beings. Not only do April, Ouardia, Tounssia and the nameless character in *Oran, Dead Language* experience a troubled cycle of development (triggered by colonialism), they lack family support essential to their growth as per Vygotsky's ZPD. Consequently, the protagonists hit puberty with unsolved crisis from childhood. Thereafter, the Electra complex is triggered by unfair treatments of mothers or female figures towards the opposite gender. Mothers, in our context, widen their daughter's crisis by expecting them to adhere to social norms and conventions, and by championing male and patriarchal thoughts that can deem their daughters (feminine servitude). The confusion from childhood alongside the gender frustration in teenagerhood delay the establishment of a healthy identity. This is what Erikson describes as the adult's reflection of self-images in childhood and adolescence (*The Life Cycle Completed*, 68). That is, Najwa's, April's and Djebbar's protagonists reflect unsolved crises from childhood and adolescence in their adulthood.

The second chapter inspects how unresolved crisis from childhood and teenagerhood affect the identity quest and formation in adulthood. It also endorses the hypothesis that the protagonists are triply displaced which complicates their search of identity. Accordingly, it studies the protagonists' interactions with male and female figures to highlight the impact of these groups on minority females. In this context, the chapter utilizes Erikson's and De Beauvoir's concepts to carry out the research.

Love is an instrument the young adult utilizes to assert and define themselves as per Erikson. Women aspire to come to terms with their identity crises through marriage. That is, they seek to derive their identities or embrace the desired ones through man, and this is what we described as unconditional love. In fact, Fanon, describing black women, says that love cannot be achieved with feelings of inferiority. In other words, if the woman carries feelings of inferiority—and thus unresolved crisis—her intentions in a relationship are to define herself and reach a certain balance i.e. she uses men to transcend her complexes. This is valid in the case of our three protagonists who embark on emotional journeys to overcome their inferiority complexes. In this context, women, and our protagonists in specific, reach a certain stability and serenity; yet, it is not eternal. As the crises are not directly addressed but are rather escaped through marriage/love, they surface up again.

In childhood and adolescence, as we have reported above, mothers oppress their own daughters and chain them to their feminine vocation. At adulthood, women continue to cause more damage to other women by establishing a certain hierarchy. April, Najwa, and Isma are undermined by other female figures in their lives which stretches out their identity crisis from earlier stages in life. Thus, they return to a state of in-betweenness and self-questioning. Our protagonists would have probably been able to come to terms with their crises, had they positive experiences with the same gender at adulthood. The wounds from their mothers and society are deepened by interactions with other women. We therefore can say that women are their most ardent enemy. They incite their daughters (in early years) to submit to men, they subjugate to society and then again oppress other women they are superior to. It implies that the fluidity and fragility of the female identity is directly tied to the female community and beliefs.

In childhood, language and literature, mainly, enclose our protagonists between two opposing worlds where ideals negate one another, therefore generating a sense of in-

betweenness and non-belonging. As adults, these liminal moments are nurtured by migration (only in the case of Najwa and Djébar's protagonist) and dual cultures. In other words, the protagonists fail to establish a third place where both cultures can co-exist. In fact, the impossibility of such a practice complicates the crises even more. April, on the other hand, continues to pull away from her Métis identity which extends the crisis, because it is unescapable to dispose of her heritage. In the first chapter, we have demonstrated how family/ the home entourage is important for children's development. Our protagonists, especially April and Djébar's characters, suffer lack of support in their early years and teenagerhood, a lack that perturbs their balance and identities. As adults, they develop (a natural) independence from their families. Yet, they seek approval and guidance from the surrounding milieu. The complexity of the Algerian, Canadian and Sudanese environments (two conflicting cultures) develops further the childhood crises. We thus can say that adult identities mirror the childhood experiences and environments. That is, the adult identity crisis is partially a social production emerging from childhood.

Childhood experiences develop some dependency in the three protagonists. Thus, as adults, they depend on other people to form their identities. First, they attempt to define themselves through love or marriage. Yet, their relationships fail to answer their questions and fulfil themselves as the crises remain unsolved. Thus, they turn towards female figures on the hope to adopt a positive self-image from their own gender. But, when they are patronized for their social background, they shrink further into inferior and submissive roles. Traumatic experiences force the protagonists to face their insecurities. Consequently, a self-consciousness develops and the self-regeneration journey starts.

Once self-acceptance is achieved, the crises are resolved and the protagonists are ready to engage in mature adult relationships. In this way, they regenerate selves independent from others. However, it is important to highlight that the fragility of their identities with

unresolved crises—prior to their self-acceptance—make them prone to be abused and used by other men. When the crises are cleared, men, on the contrary, reinforce and support the establishment of a healthy self. In fact, the final identities April and Najwa adopt have always been nurtured throughout their childhood and adolescence. They have only been muted and repressed by circumstances. April's Native identity is cultivated by Cheryl's speeches on Native people, and Najwa's Muslim self is nourished by the servants and university students whom she has seen praying. To conclude, traumatic experiences and the duality of the protagonists' environment cloud their vision and impede an establishment of a solid healthy self until a consciousness develops. By the end of the three novels, April and Najwa reach maturity and serenity. Djébar's characters, however, transcend only the gender trouble and remain struck between the Arab and French identities.

Our minority female writers champion the female cause and project the crisis and confusion minority women undergo be it in their homelands or abroad. This projection is clearly seen throughout the plot and the various experiences they engage in. However, these authors not only write to advocate women's causes, they also write to resist systems and ideologies in their native countries. They aim at overturning prejudices and unreasonable practices, and this is mainly achieved through symbolism.

Djébar speaks for the muted Algerian women, but also speaks for her country. She resists positions claiming that Algeria is solely an Arab country. She projects the deep rootedness of the French culture in the modern Algerian identity, and also stresses the impacts of such a denial on the identity and country. She thus calls for a reconciliation for a better Algeria. Minaret demonstrates that Muslim women are independent personas and the veil can be their own choice. Moreover, she highlights that the veil is neither a means of oppressing women, nor a symbol of backwardness. She also overturns patriarchy that governs women's lives and causes lots of damage to their selves. Another important aspect Aboulela

projects is the reality of post-colonialism, corrupted regimes and their exploitation of Sudan. Like Djébar, she denounces the interest-driven governments that endorse laws to promote personal interests regardless of the harm they generate (nation wise). Culleton, on the other hand, writes the Native cause with much focus on the female experience. Yet, she demonstrates how a whole nation was put down by Canadian constitutions and acts. In other words, she reveals how Aboriginals were made unprivileged and how the Canadian government centred its efforts around the demise of this ethnic group regardless of their achievements. That is, Aboriginals are condemned to fail and hence disappear (distinction of this group). Culleton also sheds light on the contribution of Native groups to their demise. She thus aims to raise awareness and reach a reconciliation between white and ethnic groups in Canada.

The symbols the three writers utilize also illustrate the fragility and fluidity of the protagonists' identities due to the nature of the environments they were raised in. In other words, the bigger picture of their countries highlights further the complexity and instability of the protagonists' environments which highly exacerbates their crises. This means that the unstable milieus makes it difficult for Najwa, April and Djébar's characters to adopt unitary solid selves as they have to constantly adapt and adjust to fit in int heir environments.

Boundless articles examine Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*; yet very few PhDs examine this canonical work that made its way to the high school Canadian curriculum. In this way, the existing PhD theses either compare Culleton's work with other Native works to locate the Native trouble (like in Ken Derry's thesis) or examine the dual marginalization of Aboriginal women (as in Prabhadevi, M's Thesis). In both cases, the theses give very little attention to Culleton's work. Our present research does not only examine the work throughout the three chapters, it also covers more aspect than Nativeness and women's

trouble. It examines the Native crisis from childhood into adulthood and also highlights the role of Native people in their own demise—in addition to the impact of white chauvinism.

Aboulela's early publications, mainly *The Translator* and *Minaret*, established a new literary tradition: Muslim/halal fiction. Accordingly, lots of attention was directed towards these two works. PhD theses, in this context, focus on the representation of Muslims in Great Britain, migrant experiences (with much focus on Muslims), Islam and feminism, and veiled experiences. It is conspicuous that these works focus on the adult Muslim/migrant experiences. This thesis, however, inspects the evolution of identity from childhood. In other words, the culmination of crisis in the *Mahjer*⁸⁴ is also a reflection of unstable environments in Native countries. That is, our work demonstrates how the fragility of home milieus results in fluid identities abroad. To reiterate, the early environment generates the crisis, not only the diaspora.

The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry captured scholars' attention right after its publication for it represents the unspoken reality post-independence, mainly in the 1990's. In this way, a considerable number of articles and interviews were carried out. However, no PhD research was completed on Djebbar's work. Consequently, the present thesis is the pioneer in conducting a research on this collection of short stories. It examines the evolution of identity from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. It also studies the effects of patriarchy and Arabicisation on identity crisis. Moreover, it projects the long last impact of colonialism on the modern Algerian society.

Our research mostly contributes to the fields of comparative/world literature as it compares between three works from three different cultural backgrounds: Algeria, Sudan-Britain, and Canada. Furthermore, Culleton and Aboulela's works are composed in English

⁸⁴Arabic: المهجر-romanized: al ,**mahjar**, one of its more literal **meanings** being "the Arab diaspora"

while Djébar's work is written in French as *Oran, Langue Morte*, and translated into English as *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*. This research can also be located within postcolonial works as the three writers adopt important postcolonial matters (reality post-independence and resistance to political regimes in home countries). The project the impact of colonial and post-colonial environments on identity formation and stability. Finally, it can also be seen as a good contribution to gender studies as it scrutinizes works of minority female writers through female protagonists. In this regards, our research is of crucial significance across the three literary fields.

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