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**The Notion of Space in Virginia Woolf's
A Room of One's Own (1929) and Assia Djebar's
Nulle part dans la maison de mon père (2007)**

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To all my family and friends

Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the notion of space in two literary works *A Room of One's Own* (1929) by the English modernist writer Virginia Woolf and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) by the postcolonial Algerian writer Assia Djebar. This comparative study of the two authors is done not in terms of characters and plot, but the focus is on the notion of space and how the two writers function in these spaces. The two works unite the ideas of space, both public and private. While both writers gain access to public space, they still feel confinement and exclusion from their own societies. Consequently, the mental space is exteriorized as a literary text, not only because they write their stories as women but also because the space of the written text becomes the site of women's definition and affirmation.

I) - Introduction

Space and gender are interdisciplinary fields of study. Spaces both public and private take on specific and varied gender meanings in modernity. After the universal suffrage movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the women's liberation movement of the mid- twentieth century, new ways at looking at history came out of the analysis to give birth to gender studies: women's studies and men's studies. Women's studies (developed out of a social movement, that of feminism) began with feminist challenges to established ideas of knowledge, which then led to the development of men's studies and to gender studies. In other words, feminism shows itself to be an ideology that challenges conventional thought.¹

While first-wave feminism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (usually positioned in the period from the 1860s to 1920s) focused mainly on suffrage, promoting women's right to vote and own property, second-wave feminism of the middle of the twentieth century (of the early 1960s) was concerned with issues of equality for women in the public and private spheres. In their message, feminists of this era incorporated the theories of social construction arguing the idea that what looks a natural order of things in our society was in fact created by society. The biological factors of gender, physical traits, genitalia, hormones and the like, do not fully determine behaviours, gender roles, social status, and male superiority. It is our society that forms these conventions.²

In fact, early work of second-wave feminism by such figures as Margaret Mead (1949, 1962),³ Simone de Beauvoir (1949, 1972)⁴ and Betty Friedan (1963)⁵ explained gender and gender difference in terms of a normativity imposed by males. Their works aimed to deconstruct the ways in which human society and behaviours were explained, and to show how the social and cultural organisation create the separate spheres of public and private⁶

(men were involved in the public sphere of society and women in the private). Feminists have stated on numerous occasions that they were excluded from the public sphere.

At the time when women were excluded from the elite literary world, Virginia Woolf emerged as a feminist representative of the age of modernism. She was aware that she was living in a period of great changes appealing to great changes in writing, too. Virginia Woolf argued against women's exclusion from education and knowledge creation (1928-1938) in many works such as *Orlando* (1928- 1998),⁷ *A Room of One's Own* (1929-2012),⁸ and *Three Guineas* (1938-1966).⁹ Her fictional and non fictional writings are concerned with space, both public and private. The psychology of space resonates through her writings. In her biography of Woolf, Hermione Lee has noted that: "the conflict between private and public [was] one of the main subjects in her writing life."¹⁰ The public sphere is closely linked to that of the private, and vice versa. Woolf used the word "public" mainly to refer to social life as opposed to the private writing space, but during the Great War, World War II, "public" denoted war events and "private" included also social life.

A further leading woman writer, Assia Djebar who is a representative of the twentieth and twenty-first century Algeria, expresses the need to struggle to break free from the traditional role as mute objects within a rigid patriarchy. In her novels she also explores the relationship between public and private spaces. She secured herself a form of private space essential to creative writing, the private place in which to retire and think. This advantage is considered necessary to one's development as a creative writer but was inaccessible to the majority of Djebar's Algerian sisters.

Virginia Woolf was born directly into the time of the suffrage movement and was shortly involved in it. In 1910, she participated in the People's Suffrage Organization and a

few years later, she was invited to talk about Women and Fiction. Her ideas were expanded and revised into *A Room of One's Own*.

A Room of One's Own has been considered as the first major work in feminist criticism. It was published in 1929, a year after the British suffragettes had been granted the right to vote on the same terms as men. The book is based on two lectures that Woolf gave in October 1928 to students at women's colleges of Cambridge University. It has a central message which states that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. She points out the importance of space and opportunity that have been denied to women. At the heart of the work she compares, contrasts reality, and extends treatment on the conditions that are necessary for a woman in order to realize the full potential of her creative and intellectual faculties. Woolf's biographer Quentin Bell argues that "...the key to emancipation is to be found in the door of a room which a woman may call her own and which she can inhabit with the same freedom and independence as her brothers."¹¹ A room of her own because a woman writer needs breathing space where she can revel in the knowledge of her identity as a person, as a woman and as a thinker.

Assia Djebar's works turn around Algeria. From *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (2002)¹² until her last work *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007),¹³ Djebar explores human relationships in the Algerian society. She depicts the lives of Algerian women who like herself have moved into the modern world by being allowed to study and go into the public space unveiled, and others who are cloistered physically and psychologically confined to closed spaces. Therefore, in her latest book *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (*Nowhere in the House of My Father*), published in 2007, Assia Djebar reflects a constant movement between silence and confession, a space of contemplation and meditation on herself and her past. We rediscover most of her autobiographical events that were previously

introduced in the work *L'Amour la fantasia* (1985).¹⁴ Her last text is like a journey back in time to memories of childhood, adolescence and those of a young adult. The text consists of three main sections that correspond to her slices of life, arranged in chronological order. The story begins in 1953, a year after the war of independence with a key life experience of the author-narrator that basically urged her to write the current text. This fact concerns Djébar's attempt to commit suicide when she was seventeen, a result of the devastating social effects of hate on women. Besides, the author is taken aback when she finds out that her access to public space thanks to the mastery of the French language excludes her from most aspects of the traditional women's world. It is as if when a woman needs to get access to space traditionally reserved for males, she first has to abandon the one reserved for females.

The works of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Assia Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) unite the ideas of space, both public and private. While both writers gain access to public space, they still feel confinement and exclusion from their own societies. Consequently, the mental space is exteriorized as a literary text, not only because they write their stories as women but also because the space of the written text becomes the site of women's definition and affirmation.

1- Review of the Literature

Virginia Woolf's and Assia Djébar's works have been subject of criticism. Within the framework of this research, I will focus on the most representative critics of Woolf's and Djébar's works with particular reference to *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007), but it is worth mentioning that I have found more criticism on Woolf's essay than on Djébar's autobiographical work and this is due to the fact that *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* is Djébar's latest and most recent work.

A Room of One's Own has been repeatedly reviewed and analyzed since its publication in 1929. In one of the earliest reviews, Arnold Bennett (1929), an early twentieth century British novelist, states that Woolf's essay is not a feminist work and reduces the essay's scope to a collection of thoughts on women and fiction. He also rejects the idea that Woolf's discussion of women and fiction may tend towards the political. For Bennett, Woolf's essay is much about women, a little about men and limits her endeavour to explain the differences between the sexes.¹⁵ It is good to note that at the period in which Woolf was writing, feminism was synonymous to the women's need and interest in voting. Thus at Bennett's time, the concepts "feminist" and "suffragist" were considered synonyms, but the fact that Woolf wrote "of the two- the vote and the money-the money, I own, seemed infinitely more important,"¹⁶ she was taxed for being indifferent about women's suffrage and was considered non- feminist.

However David Daiches, a literary critic who wrote an analysis entitled *Virginia Woolf* in 1942, responds to *A Room of One's Own* in the opposite way. Although Woolf's thesis is confined to fiction and does not show other aspects of society, Daiches believes that the idea is feminist and claims that the work is feminist –Universalist (1942-1979). This means that the work refers to all people of genius who have not had an opportunity to use it because of lack of money and privacy. He has also argued that Woolf's writing is fundamentally private in content.¹⁷ While Arnold Bennett claims that *A Room of One's Own* is not a feminist work at all but a simple study of men and women, David Daiches universalises Woolf's work claiming that her theory applies to all members of the lower class.

A further critic is Quentin Bell (1972-1992), Virginia's nephew, whose 1972 biography of Woolf remained the only authoritative version of her life for 25 years, because of his control over his aunt's unpublished writings. From the Bloomsbury point of view, he presents Woolf

as excessively private, unconcerned with the public domain. He figures her as being pathologically private (a state of madness) and thus afraid of exposing herself to the world. For Bell, Virginia Woolf was rather imprisoned within private space, and as an upper class woman, Virginia Woolf's emotional instability made her depend more upon her husband, Leonard Woolf.¹⁸ This argument leads to reduce and suspect Virginia's freedom since British upper middle class women had never been allowed to have money; it was their husbands who owned property and money and thus controlled the fully access to public space.

Most feminist scholars consider Virginia Woolf's essay as the first major achievement of feminist criticism in the English language (Gilbert and Gubar 1989),¹⁹ but Alice Walker criticised it for its exclusion of women of colour, and women writers who do not own themselves much less "a room of their own". These minorities do not have any means and cannot obtain the independence of a room of their own. They already exist outside of this room, outside of the space that Woolf reserves for women writers.²⁰

On the other hand, numerous feminists claim that *A Room of One's Own* is the single most important twentieth-century feminist text and renewed interest in attention to Woolf's text has grown in criticism, especially since the 1970s. For example, in *I Have Bought my Freedom: The Gift of A Room of One's Own* (1983), Patricia Joplin states, "It would be hard to find any major work of American feminist theory, particularly literary theory, that is not to some degree indebted to *A Room of One's Own*."²¹ Joplin then, confirms that most works of American feminist theory are indebted to Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*. The increased interest in Woolf's critical writing was vital to awakening awareness of her social thinking. Jane Gallop, in *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory*, calls Woolf's book "the founding book of feminist literary criticism."²² In fact, the renewed interest in Woolf studies

led feminist theorists to debate the possibility of feminine writing, a feminist theory that became later known as French feminism.²³

Moreover, modern women writers look to Woolf as a prophet of inspiration, in particular, at *A Room of One's Own* as an inspiring work. In America, Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1999), first published in 1977 then revised and expanded in 1997, was influenced by Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*. Although Showalter heavily criticised Woolf's analysis of women's literature and rejected her suggestion that the ideal writer should be androgynous in outlook; she later adopted Woolf's feminist argument to name her own. She defines Woolf's text with significance as a founding document of feminist literary studies and as the vital reference for every feminist literary critic.²⁴ Showalter considers that *A Room of One's Own* is a liberating private space from which the woman will gain access to public space through writing.²⁵

This is a short and succinct review of the most representative critics of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Concerning Assia Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007), Stéphane Bret (2012) states that it is a nice modest book which reminds us wisely that the way towards emancipation is complex and painful. Djébar's description of the long march toward freedom is magisterial.²⁶

A leading critic of Djébar's works that is worth noting is Clarisse Zimra. In *Assia Djébar: Nomade entre les murs ...Pour une poétique transfrontalière* (2005), she argues that Djébar's works should not be read in isolation, but on the contrary, they should be understood as a network of intertextual references. This means that each text engages in processes of projection and retrojection, picking up from earlier works constant thoughts and preoccupations to be explored in later works.²⁷ In fact, this can be, for example, noticed in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* that draws closer to *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985). The

two works do not differ a lot from each other. The writer has picked up episodes from the previous work and has reformulated it into a new one. Djebbar's last work seems then like a rewriting of *L'Amour, la fantasia* with the absence of the historical discourse.

Departing from the point of view that much more studies have been conducted on Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* than on Djebbar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, the latter has not received much criticism. To my knowledge, no study has put together the two works to show the importance of writing space and the relation of the two women writers to space. Hence, I assume that mine is -to my awareness- an original study dealing with a never tackled issue.

2- Issue and Working Hypotheses

The review of the existing literature on the two writers and their feminist position make it clear that they have not yet been put into perspective together. To my best knowledge, the critics have never attempted a comparative study between Virginia Woolf and Assia Djebbar with particular reference to *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007). Therefore, I propose a comparative study of the two authors not in terms of characters and plot, but my attention will be focused on the notion of space. What motivates my choice for the study of space is the fact that in literature it is very common to find research dedicated to the study of characters and plot, but little research has been devoted to writing space and the relation of women to space. My aim through this study is to shed light into this type of writing through the analysis of Woolf's and Djebbar's works *A Room of One's Own* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*. The rationale for choosing these two writers is to deal with affinity with reference to the notion of space which is a fundamental

notion for feminism and for women and indicate that space is at the centre of the concerns of the two writers.

To be more precise, I have noticed the influence of human experience on Djébar's writing as a source of inspiration. Her initiation in the process of self-discovery in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* aims to overcome her fear and bitterness. It is also a way to restart building a truthful self to mentally free herself of the heritage of ancient repression. While much of the criticism written on Djébar's work has treated her centring on women who strive to liberate themselves from the oppressive traditional family roles and social norms, scant attention has been given to the related aspect of space in her last work. Thus I suggest studying the ideas of space both public and private in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007) and how the two writers function in these spaces. In other words, I will try to study the aspect of space in Djébar's work in relation to Woolf's essay that tackles the matter of the conflict between private and public spaces and her emphasis on the private space as being vital to female creativity.

Moreover, I consider the need to show how Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* is about female awareness and how writing can offer the space to acknowledge it. The aim is to demonstrate how the concerns that Virginia Woolf raised and explored in her work eighty- four years ago remain major themes and motifs of current writers mainly in her emphasis on the conditions that are necessary for a woman writer to realize the full potential of her creative and intellectual faculties.

My main critical approaches in doing this are first based on biographical and historical considerations and on the notion that women's experiences with space has been shaped by their gender. Second, morals, beliefs and norms shape the way we are, such as personality identity and gender roles. Gender roles are the result of socialization because society shapes

us into our specific gender role that no one dares to break. As the main focus of my study will be on the aspect of space, I will adopt Jürgen Habermas's concept of public sphere.

Feminists are fighting to get things changed. They seek to change culture's social structure. In literature, feminist writers put in writing their own lives, telling their stories to show and share their experiences as women; this act of writing creates both the space and identity. As a matter of fact, autobiographical works are by nature subjective and some sociologists and psychologists (Berghegger, 2005-2009) have noted that autobiography offers the author the ability to recreate history.²⁸ Through autobiographical writing then, women create a literary space in which they reflect on the genesis of their literary creation.

My dissertation will be divided into three chapters, each dealing with the ideas of space. The first chapter will be devoted to the family social background in which I will provide biographical elements of both Woolf and Djébar and their early influences that contributed to their decision to become writers and gain the intellectual space among which the influence of the father was prominent. I will also supply this chapter with the confrontation of the traditional values and the two writers' social thought and their source of inspiration. The second chapter will concern the historical and the literary context that influenced both *A Room of One's Own* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*. The third chapter will be about private and public spaces in both Virginia Woolf's and Assia Djébar's works.

II) - Method and Materials

1- Method

As for methodology, I first need to theorize the concept of space, so I think it is suitable to use Jürgen Habermas's theory and discussion of the concept of the public sphere that is tackled in an immensely rich and influential book that has had major impact in a variety of disciplines, *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). The book was published in Germany, but was not available in English until 1989.²⁹ It is good to note that Habermas's concept "öffentlichkeit" is translated into "public sphere" in English, but most historians regard this concept as a "space". Second, I will use Elaine Showalter's *Toward a Feminist Poetics* (1979) as a reference work for it joins and completes Virginia Woolf's ideas. Showalter traces the history of women's literature and identifies three distinct stages in the female literary tradition. The first phase is about the writers who followed males' norms as women were not allowed to write. The dominant male traditions produced what Showalter calls the feminine stage (1840-1880). The second phase deals with women writers who protested against the male canons and values. Advocacy of women's rights resulted in the feminist phase (1880-1920). The third is the female phase (1920 to present) which is about the search for and discovery of the self.³⁰ This phase is important for my study because it will help me show that the themes and motifs of women writers are the same since Showalter (1981) suggests a diversity of experience that connects and unites women writers to each other over time and space despite the important differences of class, race, nationality and culture.³¹

Jürgen Habermas says, "We call events and occasions 'public' when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs."³² This perception of "public" becomes clear and obvious as to its common use in such terms as public health, public education, or public

ownership which are opposed to the notions of private health, private education, and private ownership. Before moving forward to the Habermasian approach to the public sphere, an introduction concerned with the distinction between the public and the private sphere should be provided to elucidate the sociological meaning of the public and private dichotomy because this distinction is of central importance in social thought.

Habermas has identified that the modern notion of public space emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries. He explains how the concepts of public and private space are Greek and Roman in origin. In ancient Greek thought, the distinction between the private and the public was used to designate the way in which society was divided into two different spheres, “polis” and “oikos”, which were separated from each other, but mutually dependent. The sphere of the “polis” described a public sphere based on open interactions between free citizens in the political realm, whereas the “oikos” sphere designated a private sphere founded on hidden interactions between free individuals in the domestic realm.³³ This indicates that in Greek city state, public life was strictly separated from home life. Political debate and the exchange of ideas were done in the market place (agora) and participation was only available to masters of households; women and slaves were excluded. Then Habermas discusses how this Hellenic public sphere was handed down through Renaissance architecture and preserved in Roman law that defined the private and the public.³⁴ After that, Habermas traces how the coffee houses emerged and declined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as places of debate, initially consisted of discussions of literature, pointing out their reliance on conversation and print as means of communication. He argues that the classical public sphere that emerged in England in the eighteenth century as the rise of newspapers and coffee houses, in which newspapers were read and discussed led bourgeois men to a habit of criticism, which in turn became a powerful political force.

Habermas characterizes the construction of the “public sphere” in the eighteenth century as being first of all political, then a “bourgeois public sphere” which consists of social spaces where individuals are gathered, putting aside social differences and enter into critical discussion and debate about the common good by using only their reason.³⁵ My interest lies in the second feature, bourgeois public sphere, because it meets and matches my need for the analysis of Woolf’s and Djébar’s works who, according to their backgrounds, were both members of a privileged social class and with a distinct literary heritage.

Although the public sphere was fashioned out of an ideal of universal access, recent scholars claimed that the bourgeois public sphere operated on exclusionary grounds. They raised issues related to gender, ethnicity, and property ownership. The public sphere conception involves the exclusion of the voices of certain groups from the public sphere, for example, it excludes women, subordinate classes or those who lack property or political rights, and ethnic minorities. My interest indeed, lies in those women writers who are in a way or another still excluded from the public sphere despite their belonging to the educated literary public. Anne E. Fernald (2006) noted that “Nancy Fraser pays special attention to the way that the public and the private are gendered to the disadvantage of women.”³⁶ Nancy Fraser (1990) declared about the fact that marginalized groups are excluded from the public sphere was obviously impossible to claim their inclusion; she claimed instead that these groups form their own public sphere that she tagged with the concept “counterpublics”.³⁷

2- Materials

It has been clear that the materials selected to study and analyze the ideas of space of Virginia Woolf and Assia Djébar concern *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007). I will supply this section with a brief summary of each literary

work by giving the important ideas of each chapter found in Woolf's essay and Djébar's autobiography. I will first start with *A Room of One's Own*, and then I will move to *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*.

A Room of One's Own is an extended essay based on two lectures delivered by Woolf at the two women's colleges of Cambridge University, Newnham and Girton in 1928. She was asked to talk about women and fiction, and that is what the book is all about. Its central message is that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she wants to write fiction. The body of the text presents the arguments underlying this claim, expressed through the voice of an imaginary character, Mary, who represents Woolf's own thoughts that are most of the time expressed metaphorically. The book is selected into six chapters:

In chapter one, Virginia Woolf introduces Mary who struggles about what to write on 'women and fiction'. For her, the title might mean women and what they are like, women and the fiction they write, women and the fiction that is written about them, or it might simply mean all the three are inseparably mixed together. However, the great problem of the true nature of women and the true nature of fiction let the narrator to come to a conclusion upon these two questions that women and fiction remain unsolved problems. At Oxbridge university a sequence of incidents leads the narrator to feel very upset. First, the beadle, a university guard warns her off the turf for the only reason that women are not allowed to walk on the grass. Second, a librarian bars her from a famous library. He explains that ladies are only admitted there if accompanied by a fellow of the college or furnished with a letter of introduction. She then remains outside, bearing the heavy weight of the feeling of exclusion. The chapter closes with the questioning of the safety and prosperity of the male sex and the poverty and insecurity of the female sex. It also reflects the effect of both poverty and tradition upon the mind of a writer.

In chapter two, the narrator remembers that visit to Oxbridge where the Luncheon and the dinner left a sequel and a thousand of questions suggested themselves. She wonders about men who spend their time in writing books about women while the latter do not write books about men. The narrator brings up the subject of her aunt who left her a legacy of a big sum of money at a time women were granted the right to vote. She notes that this inheritance is very important as it secures her freedom of being and thinking. The chapter closes with the prediction of the narrator of a better future in which women will cease to be the protected sex, and the gender division of labour will come to an end so as women will take part in all the activities of the public space that were once denied to them.

Chapter three is about the question of women in fiction versus women in history. The narrator contrasts women that are depicted in fiction with women all absent in history books. She comes to the point that imaginatively, the woman is of the highest importance, she dominates the lives of kings and conquerors, but realistically she is absent from history and completely insignificant. In the real life, just a few years before a woman could hardly read or spell and was the property of her husband. By the end of the chapter, the narrator imagines a story of William Shakespeare's sister, Judith. Her father loves her so much but leaves her no room for the development of her writing talent. So, she does the activity in secret, hides and burns her work because of fear. The narrator explains that Judith may have had the same genius of her brother but the hardships she would have faced forced her to deny it, not because women are not geniuses but because the patriarchal society imposes to conform to its social rules.

In Chapter four, the narrator argues that the talent of aristocratic women writers is disturbed by emotions such as fear, anger and bitterness. Consequently, their works show traces of disturbance. The narrator believes that for the period, only childless aristocrats with

understanding husbands are able to write literature. Men are feared and hated because they have the power to block women's way to what they want to do and exclude them from the circle of writing activity.

We learn in chapter five that women write as nearly as many books as men, dealing with various subjects that a generation before could not even touch. The narrator takes down a novel by a young writer called Mary Carmichael who writes as a woman but forgets that she is a woman. Carmichael's sentence 'Chloe liked Olivia' attracts the narrator's attention who considers the idea of the relationship that a woman can have with the same sex without an involvement of a male sex, and the women's interests and pursuits outside the home is a kind of a literary innovation for the period.

The last chapter opens with the narrator who watches through her window a young man and a young woman meeting on the street and then getting into the same taxi. This sight gives her a feeling of unity in which each mind has male and female elements. The narrator sums up the rest of the arguments in a sort of pieces of advice addressed to women. She recommends living in the presence of reality. She insists on the necessity to earn money and have a room of one's own to be able to write good books of all kinds because writing is good for society.

Nulle part dans la maison de mon père is the title of Assia Djebar's latest work, translated into twenty-four languages around the world. It was first published in 2007 in France by Fayard Editions, then in Algeria by Sedia Editions in Mosaic collection. The writer introduces a narrator, "Fatima", who belongs to an Algerian traditional bourgeois family and uses her to discuss all the stages of her life, childhood, teenage years, and adulthood. Accordingly, the book is divided into three main parts: - Eclats d'enfance (Outbursts of childhood), - Déchirer l'invisible (Tear the invisible), - Celle qui court jusqu'à la mer (The one who runs to the sea).

The first part is devoted to happy childhood memories. The writer revisits childhood with its pleasures, dreams, curiosities, and secrets. She describes her daily life with strong feelings and emotions, especially when she is out in company of her young and beautiful mother in order to pay a casual visit to the family. She dedicates a feeling of admiration to her father who is the only native in the village to access to the function of a teacher and whose attentions and cares are admirable towards the family. His quiet love to her mother brightens up the happiness of these early years. On the other hand, we learn that the loving father is immensely tough and rigorous. At the age of five, Fatima cannot even learn to ride a bicycle with the son of her father's colleague who lives in the same building because the father does not want his daughter to show her legs. The incident of the bicycle raises the daughter's awareness that her father is not as emancipated as she thinks. He is victim of the prejudices of the environmental group he belongs to. From then, Fatima will never ride a bicycle.

The second part deals with memories of adolescence. The narrator discovers a masculine universe that comes down to sense of modesty, moral codes and taboos, and a feminine universe where gossip and frustrations reign. Fatima manages to leave the village and escapes from its heavy atmosphere thanks to her admission in a boarding school where she makes friends, both Algerian and European. At the boarding school, she discovers the passion for books that she shares with her closest friend Mag. Her love for reading opens her eyes to the world and her imagination becomes surprisingly strong, vivid and fertile. However, she transgresses paternal strictness when Mounira, a classmate, urges her to encounter "Ali", face to face during a school rehearsal for an operetta to eventually go out together to have a long walk. The basketball stadium provides her joy and freedom of movement, a way to revenge the entire summer days that she spends locked up with other

females. The inhabitants of the old city are also closed up, but majestic parties, ceremonies, and dances transform summer into a rather joyful season.

In the last part of the book, the narrator passes her baccalaureate exam, so all the family leaves the village and moves to live in Algiers, the capital city. The mother gets rid of her veil and her look turns into a European one. Fatima enjoys walking in the wide streets of the city. She starts a secret relationship with Tarik who later disappoints her. Feeling desperate, Fatima aged only seventeen attempts to commit suicide.

Endnotes

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III) – Results and Discussion

Results:

My analysis of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Assia Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* has shown that both works are concerned with space, both public and private. The result has been achieved after having theorized the concept of space. I have relied on Jürgen Habermas's theory and discussion of the concept of the public sphere that is tackled in his influential book *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962).

The analysis has shown that Woolf's and Djébar's good family position in society and the possession of adequate intellectual level facilitated their access to the public space, relying upon Jürgen Habermas who argues that to access public space, "education was the one criterion for admission." The analysis has also revealed that the influences of the social and cultural environment forged the premises of the two writers' personalities and shaped their social thoughts. Accordingly, I have highlighted the situations that influenced the writers to produce such literary works. Besides, I have stated that space is important and I have demonstrated the ideas of space in each work and how the two writers function in these spaces. There are several kinds of spaces in Woolf's and Djébar's works: one space is academic, the other kind is imaginative, and the others are historical, memorial and emotional spaces. In all these spaces women are submitted to discrimination; they are excluded from all these spaces. So, Virginia Woolf and Assia Djébar are seeking for the rehabilitation of the private space because it is as important as the public one for women. In other words, I have come to the result that to access public space female writers have to control the private space because it is from the private space of writing that they will access fully the public realm.

Chapter One

Family Social Background and Early Influences

The family social background of both Virginia Woolf and Assia Djébar was of great help to them in gaining access to public space. Both writers come from bourgeois families and in terms of education, both of them benefited from unordinary family support in patriarchal societies which often excluded women from education. Despite the sufferings from oppressive rules of family traditions and social norms, the two feminist writers were lucky enough to benefit from the family literary heritage. The influence of the educated father helped them a lot in their creative activities; the atmosphere of the house was also intellectually stimulating to such an extent Woolf and Djébar developed an instinct for writing. They broke from the patriarchal traditions and expectations of their time to become writers. My aim in this chapter is to show that Woolf's and Djébar's good family position in society and the possession of adequate intellectual level facilitated their access to public space traditionally reserved for only "educated" men, like Jürgen Habermas who coined the concept "Bourgeois public sphere" to describe a space of institutions and practices between the elite. Some important biographical aspects of the two feminist writers are mentioned to try to understand what forged the premises of their personalities as women and give an account of the early influences that contributed to their decisions to become writers. The brief biographical accounts present facts that are relevant to the discussion.

To begin with Virginia Woolf, she was born in a highly cultured and educated Victorian family in London on January 26, 1882. She was the third child of Julia and Leslie Stephen to whom women's education was of great importance. Although Virginia did not go through a conventional school because at that time women were denied the formal education allowed to men, she was taught in their literate and well-connected household by her father who was a famous scholar and, among many literary occupations, was at one time editor of

Cornhill Magazine and the Dictionary of National Biography. He was a great friend of William Makepeace Thackeray, which meant that the Stephen's children were brought up in an environment filled with the influences of Victorian literary society. It was from her father that Virginia inherited her enthusiasm and love of literature and the freedom to think her own thoughts and follow her own pursuits. She was allowed access to her father's extensive library without any restrictions to observe his writing talent, so from an early age she was determined to be a writer. In 1897, she began her first diary and over the next several years she developed a strong admiration for women writers. Woolf used to be close to her father and learned a lot from him; for example, apart from being regularly in his immense library and get knowledge of the classics and English literature, she also acquired some simple and natural habits as the habit of walking through the parks, squares, and streets of London that later proved to be very helpful in her creative activities.¹ In addition to the influence that her father's work exerted over her, there were numbers of other early influences that contributed to Woolf's decision to become a writer. According to Pippett's biography of Virginia Woolf the first wife of Virginia's father, the daughter of the writer William Makepeace Thackeray, filled the home with famous literary books of that time including authors of novels such as George Eliot and Henry James who was a frequent guest of the family.²

Indeed, Woolf's family was relatively privileged with a distinct literary heritage that influenced Virginia a lot. Her father was a great friend of many other scholars and men of letters from intellectual aristocracy. This milieu was composed of a small number of families and most of them were intimately connected. The members of this group constituted the elite of the middle class with their high intellectual abilities and skills.³ Upon that point, Jürgen Habermas provides a capsule definition of this institution called "bourgeois public sphere" which consists of social spaces made up of an educated literary public: "The bourgeois public

sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public,”⁴ to form a new collectivity whose societal interconnectedness transcends the boundaries of their personal lives. Discussion of art and literature has been active among the bourgeoisie since the 18th century and according to Habermas this literary public sphere is a part of the bourgeois public. It was from this social and cultural milieu that Virginia Woolf had much of her experience of life and gathered much of the materials for her works.

Furthermore, some of the members of the intellectual aristocracy had formed themselves into a sub-group called Bloomsbury. Its principle members were men who had been educated at Cambridge and became Virginia’s friends through her brothers. After the death of her parents, Woolf moved with her brothers and sister to Bloomsbury square where they rented a house that became a literary club, founded by Virginia Woolf, and developed over time into an influential group of intellectuals. Quite early in her career, Virginia Woolf’s home became a literary and art centre. The members of this group provided one another with feedback and support; they lived in an artificial world of their own creation.⁵ In this context Habermas names the literary public sphere as a discussion site for art and literature and according to him it is a part of the bourgeois public sphere and it is apolitical. He goes on explaining that “the early institutions of the bourgeois public sphere originally were closely bound up with aristocratic society,” and the public who formed in all kind of art and literary spaces was bourgeois in its social origin.⁶ Although Woolf was at the centre of this group, she could keep herself detached from this social milieu. Like her father, she used the reality of the time and experience critically and creatively and this led her to a more mature interest in her world and its individual members. She drew on her personal awareness without rejecting altogether the heritage of literary culture that she got from her family.⁷ The Bloomsbury group was also significant to Woolf’s early career because it was there that she met her husband, Leonard

Woolf, a brilliant young writer and critic whose interest in literature, economics and the labour movement suited her well. The couple's relationship was more literary and intellectual than romantic. He gave her room to develop her skills, to write and work. The support of one another's writing resulted in the establishment of the Hogarth Press which published most of Virginia's work.⁸

Virginia Woolf's life was not all happiness, it was infused with subsequent tragedies; her mother passed away when she was in her early teens, her half sister died two years later, and her father suffered a slow death from cancer followed by the loss of her brother Toby in 1906. These deaths in the family led Virginia Woolf to several nervous breakdowns, but her father's death in 1904 provoked the most alarming collapse. She was tortured by periodic mood swings and associated illnesses. This instability affected Virginia's social life which made her develop pessimistic feelings, melancholia and despair throughout her life.⁹ Fortunately, her husband Leonard was always beside her and supported her during the tough days. He took care of her mental health and looked after her when she had a breakdown till her death in 1941. In this context, Ginsberg and Gottlieb described Woolf's husband as a "person who mothered Virginia Woolf's body, ordered her daily life and watched over her illnesses."¹⁰ Even though Virginia Woolf's husband, Leonard Woolf, strove to cope with her breakdowns and created the most favourable environment for her writing, she began feeling that she had lost her art; she felt that if she could no longer write, she could no longer fully exist. It was "a conviction that her whole purpose in life had gone. What was the point in living if she was never again to understand the shape of the world around or, or be able to describe it?"¹¹ After several attempts to kill herself, she eventually drowned herself into the River Ouse on March 28th, 1941. The frequent and severe mood swings that Virginia Woolf had experienced inevitably shaped her world view and her writing activity.

A quite similar representation of the family social background including the influence of the father can be discerned in Assia Djébar's past world despite the writers' differences in terms of geographical area, culture and society. Like Virginia Woolf, Assia Djébar was also born into a bourgeois family (in 1936). Djébar's family environment might seem very common compared to European Bourgeois families as it is the case of Virginia Woolf who was brought up in a typical Victorian household surrounded by domestic staff that attended to her needs exactly as the case of many middle- upper-class households in Victorian England, but one must note that it was quite unique in Algeria of the first half of the twentieth century. Most of the population at that time was rather poor, and Djébar's paternal family was a case in point. In her masterpiece, *L'Amour La Fantasia* (1985), Djébar says: "Je pris conscience assez tard de la pauvreté de ma famille paternelle."¹² Although the distinction between paternal and maternal lineage is made mainly in relation to the social position, Djébar's father had integrated the rank of intellectuals and had become a teacher in the French colonial educational system which granted him a certain privileged position that was reinforced when he married Assia's mother, a Moorish bourgeois: "Ma mère bourgeoise mauresque traversant l'ancienne capitale antique"¹³ As for the mother, the situation of fortune let her feel at ease because she was happy to remain socially respected and enjoy the privileged status of a bourgeois lady.

Elle [ma mère] se savait, dans la cité de Césarée où les rites andalous se déroulaient, immuables, jouir du statut privilégié de "jeune mariée", avec rang spécial pour trôner dans les fêtes de femmes, porter tant de bijoux précieux, perdus à présent. ¹⁴

Thanks to her father who believed that education was important, Assia Djébar was able to attend French school during the colonial period while other women of her age were cloistered at home. She enjoyed the unusual privilege of attending the institution where her father taught. The latter encouraged and ensured that his daughter received a formal education

ordinarily available to only boys.¹⁵ It was then from him that she got the access to knowledge; a double intellectual education: French and Kuranic without which she would never have become a writer. When she went to a girls' boarding school she discovered a passion for books and opened up her eyes to the world. The bookish years of European literature and thought were visible reference points of French influence that played an important role in her future career.¹⁶ Later on, she was admitted to France's exclusive Ecole Normale Supérieure where she extended her knowledge and escaped from the confinement of the women of her generation whose education was either denied or cut short according to the tradition.

Moreover, the acquisition of the French language and the experience of going to school allowed her dreams of love and freedom, gave her at the same time self confidence, liberty of movement, desire for self expression but set her apart and isolated her from the other veiled women of her family and excluded her from many aspects of traditional women's world.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was that mobility, that primary freedom of movement, of being able to come and go from indoors to outdoors, from the private to the public sphere and vice versa that procured Djébar an inspiration and opened her a way to literature. In other words, she would not have taken the path of literature without having wandered passionately and anonymously through the city streets as a passer-by and observer. Otherwise, how could she have found a source of inspiration and stimulation to do creative work?

In the same stream of ideas concerning Djébar's early influences, one should note that the colonial bourgeois milieu in which she comes from draws attention. She was influenced by the bourgeois way of life, customs and traditions. Her mother introduced her to the magic of female parties. This influence takes shape in her literary career and is mainly apparent in the two first novels *La Soif* (1957) and *Les Impatients* (1958) which similarly deal with the colonial Algerian bourgeois milieu and which were criticized by Algerian scholars as

being self-absorbed and bourgeois.¹⁸ Her double heritage of two languages and her bicultural journey has forced her to examine herself independently. In any case, Djébar writes fiction that mirrors her culture particularly from women's point of view: "Mon héritage, c'est d'une part les femmes de mon pays, de ma région, de ma famille dont je partage la voix que je dois amener dans mon livre."¹⁹ These women are not given the advantage of education to write their history and since Djébar is influenced by the multiplicity of oral, Arabic and Berber traditions, she uses them to portray the experience of being an Algerian woman and rises above the constraint of their situation to stimulate change.

The influence of social and cultural environment are not to be neglected, because no writer can escape such influences as he/she is the product of the age in which he/she is born and bred. To understand better both Assia Djébar and Virginia Woolf, we must have a clear understanding of the times in which they lived and worked, and what I shall really take interest in concerns the values of the times they lived in, the impact and the responses.

The nineteenth century history of French colonization in Algeria and the rapid industrialization of England by the last decade of the 19th century shaped the minds of people in these societies. In the history of both societies male values and virtues were celebrated while women were considered inferior because the general point of view was that women were naturally incapable of thinking and their role was limited to the domestic sphere; their fate was to find a husband and found a family. Soon after, in the first decade of the twentieth century, England knew the bitterest criticism of the Victorian way of life, especially concerning the family, education, the attitude towards women and towards the role they played within the society. The call for change was so loud that Woolf's period became subject to a big rapid social and cultural transformation in every sphere.²⁰ For instance, the blind faith in traditional values and traditional religious ideas led to a questioning of accepted social

beliefs, conventions, and moral order that ended up in giving way to scientific spirit and rationalism. Thus, the need for change inevitably affected politics, society, as well as art and literature. However, Djébar's era was still harsh and remained so for a very long time due to the impact of the oppressive colonial experience, a period that was marked by the enclosure of the Algerian society in fear of a total loss of its culture. This enclosure participated in the reinforcement of patriarchal codes.

In The Muslim culture, women are traditionally silent, resigned and submissive. They are expected to be obedient to their fathers and husbands. Men and women constitute two separate groups, each with its own attitudes and values and social interactions take place between members of the same gender. Furthermore, marriage is considered as a family matter and affair. It is not of personal choice, so it is up to the parents to arrange the marriages²¹ of their daughters in accordance to the family reputation, standard, status, and specially wealth. Similarly, Virginia Woolf, gives the same facts about marriage in England when reading Professor Trevelyan's *History of England* in her essay *A Room of one's Own*: "Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes..."²² Moreover, In Djébar's culture women are also traditionally invisible and any representation of the self is considered as a transgression. As a matter of fact, the writer's name "Assia Djébar" is not her proper name, her real name is Fatima-Zohra Imalayène, but in fear of family disagreement of her writing and subject matter, she herself took on a pen name when she published her first novel *La Soif* (1957) because in her society women do not write and do not expose themselves in public. ²³They should always remain anonymous because self-expression and self-assertion are forbidden for women. So, to spare her honourable family and particularly her uncompromising father any shame and embarrassment, Assia Djébar cut off her hair for press photos, changed her appearance in order not to be easily

recognized and adopted the pen name that she has kept ever since. Inspired from religion, she settled on the name “Djebbar” which suggests a strong meaning of praise to God.²⁴ Due to some misspellings, the name has become “Djebar”. At that stage, her career as a writer began: as a nationalist, she supported the Algerian independence movement and as a woman she has always contested her nation’s rigid patriarchal and opposed her culture’s repression of women.

Although the influence of Assia Djebar’s and Virginia Woolf’s fathers helped them take the first steps into the world of writing, they had some unhealthy effects on them as well. The fathers had very strong personalities by whom the two writers would feel overshadowed for years. Whenever it came to principles, the fathers were unpleasant and intolerant despite themselves. This was due to the strong influence of the social environments they were subject to (the strict traditional moral beliefs). However, after the death of the fathers, Djebar and Woolf felt freed from their shadows, frame of mind and ambivalence. Virginia Woolf said that if her father, Leslie Stephen, had not died when she was relatively young, she would never have become a writer.²⁵ In a journal entry from 1928 collected in *A Writer’s Diary*, Woolf wrote the following (long after his death):

Father’s birthday. He would have been 96, 96, yes, today; and could have been 96, like other people one had known: but mercifully was not. His life, would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books—inconceivable.²⁶

This also means that Woolf imagined that if she had lived under her father’s shadow for long, his life would have entirely ended hers. Similarly, if her father were still alive, Djebar would not have been able to write her last work *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* where she dared to criticize him. It was him, who had allowed her to study and gain access into the public space, but he was torn between tradition and modernity and this has had an impact on

his daughter's personality. Djébar was overwhelmed by the shadow of her father, his morals and judgements of his time. However, after his death, she has cracked the image of the idealized father to show his severity and harshness toward her in her last work:

Et son rôle de père? C'est dans ce rôle qu'il se présente. Malgré ses idées et sa foi en la Révolution française, assuré qu'il est des bienfaits évidents de l'instruction pour lui comme pour les siens, malgré cette stature, en qualité de "père"- en particulier vis-à-vis de la première fille- il redevient malgré lui ou sans le savoir gardien de "gynécée".²⁷

Both Djébar and Woolf were members of a privileged class position who had the opportunity to be women of leisure unlike many women of their times. They both gained access to public space and challenged the traditional institutions of their era. As a modernist writer, Woolf dismantled the meaningless institutions and values handed down to her from the past. She contributed to the development of literature by incorporating women's vision of life as an essential part in literary works. Djébar in her turn, being caught between two conflicting cultures: Algerian and French, she uses the colonizer's language and its subversive potential to restore women's rightful place in Algerian society as agents of social change and to inspire others to act. Though, Woolf's biographer, Hermione Lee, argues that "Woolf was a 'modern'. But she was also a late Victorian. The Victorian family past filled her fiction, shaped her political analyses of society and underlay the behaviour of her social group."²⁸ That follows that Woolf's Victorian upbringing influenced her ideas. For instance, Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, worked for reform of education and economic problems. Furthermore, her ideas were also influenced by discussions with family and friends who had strong political opinions that helped her evolve as a writer with political passions.²⁹ Yet, her aesthetics was influenced by her participation within the intellectual circle of writers and artists known as Bloomsbury group that declared in its manifesto that aesthetics and politics should be

separate.³⁰ As for Djébar, she is rooted in between cultures, both traditional and western. Her emergence from a traditional society during the colonial period and the way she was brought up within the family and mainly the colonial education she received influenced her outlook on life. Thus, the family past and the sociocultural environment of both Assia Djébar and Virginia Woolf are factors that participated in forging their personalities and shaped their own social thoughts that they engaged in over a long period of struggles for change.

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Chapter Two

The Historical and Literary Context

My aim in this chapter is to supply the background for Virginia Woolf's and Djébar's works so as to highlight the situations that influenced to the achievement of the two writers' respective literary works *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (2007). In other words, in this chapter, I will provide the historical and literary context that influenced both *A Room of One's Own* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*. I will first start with *A Room of One's Own*, and then I will move to *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*.

A Room of One's Own is a classic text of the feminist movement. It was written in a crucial time in women's history: the history of women's suffrage which was full of struggle and debate. In fact, shortly after the First World War, the women's movement saw renewed energy and focused mainly on the right to vote, known as suffrage. When the suffrage began, women called "suffragettes" went to extremes to win that right. To push forward the suffrage, militant demonstrations, suffrage campaigns, critical essays supporting women's legal and economic rights played an important part in accomplishing the purpose. Some suffragists went even on hunger strikes until the right to vote was eventually achieved.¹ It is very important to note that Virginia Woolf was involved in the suffrage movement. In 1910, she participated in the People's Suffrage Organization for women's social reform.² Her commitment influenced her motivation to use the issues of the time in her fiction and non-fiction as an advocacy for women's social progress.³ Many of the issues of the time focused on women's sphere and economic reform, opportunities for women in school and work, including job opportunity and fair pay. Woolf considered that economic independence for women was to come in the first position, followed with suffrage that would provide civil rights for women in the public sphere.⁴ Predominantly, women were excluded from private

activity on the pretext of their modesty and passiveness. So, Woolf made the exclusion of women from public activity as a central point of her preoccupation. Planning that women would meet in private discussion to voice their private concerns, she considered that this would help them start a movement of their own to announce their voices to the nation and to the world in order to be granted the rights that they deserved and that no one could deny them. There was intense debate of feminist intellectuals, “public discussion and press coverage of ‘the woman question’ was even more extensive.”⁵ In fact, Virginia Woolf proved her deep interest and advocacy of the woman question. She supported ingenious methods than street demonstrations and arrests. She could not have survived either physically or emotionally for other methods of resistance such as jail or starvation.⁶ Her will to activate successful reforms led her to use the issues of her time in her writings.

This nonfiction work *A Room of One's Own*, is a declaration of the feeling of the time for the women’s movement. As a constitutional suffragette, Woolf encouraged women writers by first exploring the nature of women in fiction, and then by incorporating ideas of the androgynous mind and individuality as it exists in a woman’s experience as a writer.⁷ The questions of women and fiction led her to connect gender and fiction with economics at a time when women had just recently received the right to vote and the right to own property. However, the concern of *A Room of One's Own* with its theme “women and fiction” was ineffective on the spot because it coincided with the economic world-wide crisis of 1929 (the Great Depression). The divergence of the event and the theme was significant.⁸ It was until the 1960s and 1970s, during the second wave feminism, that there was renewed interest in the issue of “women and fiction.”⁹

The book then, is an argument as well as an exposition. Its ideas and discussions have common characteristics with larger questions pertinent to women's history. The text is an

expanded treatment of issues that Woolf presented in two essays that she read in October 1928 to audiences at women's colleges, the Arts Society at Newnham and the Odtaa at Girton, which at that time were the only Women's colleges at Cambridge, in England.

Indeed, Britain's oldest and most well known universities are Cambridge and Oxford, dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They are made up of several colleges, and Cambridge's Girton College was the first to accept women students in 1869 and a year later, in 1871, Cambridge established Newnham College specifically for women, but women were not admitted as full members of the university.¹⁰ They were educated almost to the same level as men, but Cambridge did not permit them to be awarded degrees until 1944. Many female students suffered from the hostility of the faculty. They felt that they were not welcomed by the University and their presence disturbed a great many male students who at several occasions when women walked followed each of their steps mockingly.¹¹ This is a fact that demonstrates the males' persistence to stick to their opinion and uphold the exclusion of women from the public sphere during that period.

Accordingly, Woolf's speeches on the topic "Women and Fiction" were destined to women who were at that time forbidden to enter England's university system because of their gender. The lectures were thereafter compiled into the extended essay *A Room of One's Own* which was printed in 1929.¹² Within the work, Woolf uses the fictional "Oxbridge" University, an abbreviation of Oxford – Cambridge, and "Fernham" college that refers to Newnham College to denounce the supporters of male education in general and those of Oxford and Cambridge in particular,

The work is a mixture of historical and sociological facts and fictional hypotheses. Several incidents that Woolf recounts in *A Room of One's Own*, such as being driven from male-exclusive university turf, are drawn from her own experiences as a woman excluded

from men's territory which represents the public sphere. In the essays, Woolf approaches the literary canon as a male sphere from which women have been excluded. She calls for an expansion of the literary standards to include "room" for works by women. The title of the book is very significant for it refers to Woolf's belief that a woman writer needs privacy, space, and sufficient financial means to practise her writing activity, and in order to answer all the questions about women and fiction she invents the fictional college 'Fernham' and a fictional character with the use of the personal pronoun 'I' to refer to herself. Woolf involves herself through a female character "Mary" to whom she attributes thoughts which are her own to convey her opinion about her strong desire for female freedom and independence both financially and mentally (creative work). The latter idea about mental independence that concerns women writers joins Elaine Showalter's perception of Gender and literary history, for she has proposed a separate and independent purely female model in which the focus is on the way in which a woman's writing is distinctive in terms of nature, race, culture and nation. She claims that like the male writers, female writers too have their own tradition.¹³ As a result she has reconstructed the past of literary history of women into three distinct stages. The idea is that, through Woolf's influence, Showalter in her turn wants to free women from the male literary tradition and calls for the women's access to language so that they will be able to develop a cultural model of their typical writing. One may deduce that Showalter's appeal to the development of cultural model of women's own writing is a way to impose and affirm women's access to the public space.

To take slightly different view of the question, I would say that *A Room of One's Own* that was revolutionary for its time and a direct critique that challenges the conventions of gender division through English history and whose aim is to push males and females to reconsider the historic contributions of women writers, mainly focuses on women from Woolf's social

middle-class (a small number of privileged women like herself). Her idea of the importance of economical independence and the necessity of having a room of one's own to be able to gain intellectual freedom excludes certain women of other classes from taking part in the equal status between men and women that she argues for as exactly the same as Jürgen Habermas's public sphere that operated on exclusionary grounds concerning subordinate classes.

Concerning Assia Djebar, her works cover a period between 1954 and 2006. They illustrate key moments of Algerian history such as colonialism, the war of independence and the black period of the nineties. During colonization the Algerian people managed to maintain their culture, language and religion after a hundred and sixty years of occupation. However, the sharing of common history since 1830 led to great French influences. Algerian people adapted themselves to these influences mainly in the field of education, precisely women's education. The war of independence 1954-1962 and the tumultuous period of the nineteen nineties saw the emergence of numerous political parties that claimed the Right to self determination, such as the National Liberation Front (FLN), the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the Salvation Islamic Group (GIA).¹⁴ The FIS used the policy that banned completely women from the public sphere. To win the country's conservative political base, President Chadli Benjedid's government (1984) proclaimed officially a conservative family code in accordance to the Islamic Law.¹⁵ Benjedid's exclusion of women from participation of this code led to women's protests and demonstrations that gave birth to the emergence of the first seeds of feminist movement. The decree of the Family Code diminished women's legal rights and made the legal status of women insignificant and marginal. Women were discriminated in matters as marriage, divorce and inheritance.¹⁶ it was eventually amended in 2005, yet it is still unsatisfying.

Assia Djébar left Algeria in the nineteen eighties because of the oppressive circumstances for women, but due to the intimate family relationships that she kept there, she continued to visit the country regularly.¹⁷ In the 1990s, the explosion of violence shook the country. The bloody decade 1992- 2002 began with the assassination of the president Mohamed Boudiaf.¹⁸ During this decade, a movement based on static and literal interpretations of the Kuran imposed on the society an authoritarian political system which excluded all the other movements. Consequently, men and women became targets for assassination. Writers, artists, journalists, physicians, teachers, intellectuals and all educated people were attacked because they represented a threat to the newly oppressive Islamic group and its doctrine. This trauma has had an effect on Djébar's life and work.

Moreover, Djébar is culturally and politically devoted to her nation, but the increasing instability of Algerian society, the turbulence of the history of her country and her personal feeling of exclusion from the land she belongs to means that her writing too becomes disconnected.¹⁹ Djébar is obsessed by the need to understand her country, but she feels estranged, confused and distant from the cultural values of her own country, so "Algeria remains a focus, an object of desire throughout Djébar's corpus, but it is also a point of departure and excludes the writer more often than it grounds or defines her."²⁰ Djébar is in a quest of a land that is nothing but illusion; she creates her own home through the act of writing. Being separated from her place of birth, Césarée, the writer who is no more in Algeria revisits the place of her childhood quite often through imagination in her novels. In her last book she revisits not only her childhood, but all stages of her life in a fragmented work.

In fact, Djébar's novel *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* which was written after the death of her father represents the idea of no return to the ancestral land. Because her father

is dead, Djébar leaves his house literally and symbolically. She leaves the house of patriarchal domination with a lot of interrogations about herself. At the age of seventy- one, she has written a book in which most of the events have previously been introduced in *L'Amour la fantasia*. She recasts the events and recalls what happened when she was seventeen years old. She also brings to mind her earliest happy and tangled memories. It is an opportunity to question the past and find out what went wrong at a certain stage in her life. To do so, she goes back to Césarée and then to Algiers of the 1953, a year before the war of independence and tries to gather her memories in order to finally find out and understand the matter. She finally stops at her 'suicide attempt to trace the origin of this act.

Endnotes

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Chapter Three

Ideas of space in *A Room of One's Own* and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*

a) - Virginia Woolf's Use of Space:

Public and Private Spaces in *A Room of One's Own*

Virginia Woolf is known today as a leading twentieth-century modernist writer. Her diverse oeuvre includes novels, essays, short stories, letters, diaries, biographies, and literary criticism.¹ To put things in the right context, I would like first to highlight the function of an essay as a literary work since what I have under examination here, *A Room of One's Own*, is an essay by Virginia Woolf.

An essay is in fact a material text that exists as knowledge composed and constructed by writers.² Theodore Adorno noted in his influential piece *The Essay as Form*, composed between 1954 and 1958, that the essay functions as “an arena of intellectual experience” in which knowledge can be brought together, tested and complicated.³ The essay in general uses the first person narration and non-fictional content and it may reflect some aspects of its author and his/ her ideas, but sometimes the author and the narrator do not map fully and easily onto the author and the understanding of the work complicates the relationship between author and narrator despite the intimacy of the two roles. Feminist writers from Wollstonecraft to Woolf have often turned to the category of experience and the genre of essay that serve as key texts through which to consider feminist study of the nature of knowledge, in particular its foundations, scope and validity.⁴

A Room of One's Own is an extended essay developed from lectures that Virginia Woolf gave on “Women and Fiction” to students at Newnham and Girton colleges in 1928. Woolf's declaration that a woman must have “money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction”⁵ was the primary theme of the lectures which eventually became a book entitled

A Room of One's Own published in 1929. Woolf took on a battle against patriarchy to favour women's financial independence and their freedom of mind. The nonfiction work then, draws attention to women's need for private space and financial independence in order to live and work freely. Woolf uses symbols and images to convey her ideas of "a room of one's own".

The phrase "a room of one's own" refers to a self-isolated and intimate space where a woman can create artistically with a peace of mind and freedom from prejudices. The availability of a private space for a woman writer is a major requirement in order to be able to write professionally and earn a living from her creative writing to become ideologically independent of men and of society in general.⁶ Here, Woolf also uses 'a room' as a metaphor for one's inner space or interior thought to refer to a personal gendered private space.⁷ This brings to my mind the combination or the fusion of the concrete and the abstract. I mean by that the body, the thought and the room. To make that clearer I need to answer one question: where do our thoughts dwell? They, of course, inhabit within the space of the body of any one of us, so it seems logical that the body claims for a space or a place where to be safe to explore its thoughts and ideas and this safe space is nothing but a personal room. In this case "a room of one's own" becomes a statement about privacy and the ability to use a room as a place of comfort to write and think to accomplish and develop one's potential talent.

It is good to note that the idea of "a room" is also physical in Woolf's conception because what really motivated her to talk about a concrete room is linked to the patriarchal structure in the Victorian family homes that contained no room designated for a woman to call her own.⁸ Males enjoyed privacy in rooms such as a study or a billiard room that offered solitude, comfort and entertainment, whereas the rooms assigned for women, like the breakfast rooms and the drawing room were not private at all. They were a kind of shared

social spaces because they were central rooms where family, friends and guests gathered before or after meals.⁹ The need to possess a real room with a lock is related to Woolf's own experience at home when she was young. In other words, Woolf's advocacy of a "room" as a physical concept takes its origins from the lack of privacy she experienced when she was adolescent. For instance, Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, spent a great deal of time in his study which was his private space, reading and writing without interruption, but Virginia occupied a room that was not entirely hers.¹⁰ Family members entered whenever it pleased them, so the privacy could be invaded at any time and that was harmful to her emotional and mental well being.¹¹ This is then a reason why Woolf advocated later in her essay the necessity of a locked room; it was in order to get rid of interruption and influence of the outside world, "and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry."¹² Woolf explains that "a lock on the door means the power to think for oneself."¹³

In order to write, a woman needs not only a quiet physical space but must also find some quiet space in her psyche (peace of mind) from which she can create because creativity is a personal quality that we all have but experience differently. The human thought is just like a fisherman who lets down the fishing line¹⁴ "swayed, minute after minute, hither and hither, among the reflections of the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it, until- you know the little tug- the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one's line."¹⁵ The metaphor of the fish reflects "an idea" that may take time to emerge, besides, the fisherman and the fish symbolize a writer who fishes for ideas. It follows from this metaphor that literary creation needs quietness, concentration, meditation and patience exactly like a fisherman who wants to catch a big fish and waits patiently until the big surprise comes. However, being subject of endless interruption, women have no privacy. The literary works they compose tend to be fragmented. Their ideas are "the sort of fish that a fisherman puts back into the water so that it

may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating”¹⁶ This implies the frustration of a woman writer when she wants to explore and expand her ideas but no chance is given to her to do so. The space under the roof of the family confines women and leaves no room for a good artistic creation whereas men are allowed to pursue the wholeness of their activities either inside or outside the family.¹⁷

Throughout her work Woolf underlines the fact that women were treated unequally in her society who consequently produced less impressive writing works compared to men “thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of a writer,”¹⁸ female writers have a lack of a literary tradition due to the oppression and the dominance of the patriarchal world where only the words of men are seriously valued,

Indeed, since freedom and fullness of expression are of the essence of the art, such a lack of tradition, such a scarcity and inadequacy of tools, must have told enormously upon the writing of women.¹⁹

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf invents a fictional character called Judith, William Shakespeare's sister, to illustrate that even though Judith had been gifted with talent and genius as the same as her brother William, she would have been denied the same opportunities for the mere reason that she was a woman:

What would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderful sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably - ... to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin – Ovid, Virgil, and Horace- and the elements of grammar and logic... very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards,...Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous as imaginative, as agog to see the world as the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil.²⁰

This image represents Woolf who was denied access to formal education outside the home as was the tradition of sending boys to boarding school, to Oxford or Cambridge whereas the girls received their education at home. Woolf felt that it was an injustice that her father had paid for her brothers to receive formal education, but not for her.²¹ A woman then was denied access to education because of her gender. This inequality in the access to education generates the exclusion of women from the public space.

Moreover, Woolf evokes in *A Room of One's Own* the academic space which excludes women from academia. She mentions the exclusionary spaces of Oxbridge, the fictional university meant to suggest both Oxford and Cambridge, and the British Museum²² to stress on the fact that these obstacles are not restricted to one distinct region or another, but are extended throughout academia. Woolf encounters a Beadle both at Oxbridge as a university security guard who tells her that women are not allowed to walk on the grass and as an official at the British Museum who refuses her entry into the museum and into the library where literature in abundance inspires creativity.²³ The narrator is restricted to a narrow path on the Oxbridge campus because the grass is synonymous with men's area in society and she is refused entry into the space of men: "This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me."²⁴ The fact that only male students were permitted on the turf proves that the intellectual freedom was controlled by men, and women were refused entry into that space because men had been protecting their area for ages, "Scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession."²⁵ Woolf's feeling of her own exclusion is more apparent when she goes to the library to view Charles Lamb's manuscript. The Beadle tells her that she is not permitted entry into the college library unless she is accompanied by a fellow of the college or furnished with a letter of introduction. This

obstacle shows clearly the effects of an educational culture that restricts women from an intellectual exposure and their exclusion from the literary convention that is considered as a male space. Besides, the library “with all its treasures safe locked”²⁶ is like a fortress, a fortified place that is impenetrable for a woman in a patriarchal society. Woolf describes the library as a sleeping venerable university library that is locked within its breast to show males’ obstinacy in keeping women away from the public space. When she stands at the door of the library and tries to open it, she awakens and disturbs the settled peace of the library. This is in fact a way of showing females’ will and courage to express the need for change in the male world. Since Woolf experiences the injustice not to enter into a space considered the man’s one, she reacts against this injustice toward women and speaks out,

I refuse to allow you, Beadle though you are, to turn me off the grass.
Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt
that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.²⁷

Woolf’s harsh reaction towards the Beadle, who is “a symbol of patriarchy and the symbol of any man in society who sees it as his right to dominate women,”²⁸ is a message to incite other women like her who are excluded from the public space to fight against gender injustices. Woolf argues powerfully that “Literature is open to everybody,”²⁹ to raise female awareness that literature is not the property of men; everyone can have access to it even women. The theorist Jürgen Habermas argues that to access public space “education was the one criterion for admission- property ownership the other”³⁰ and “the issues discussed became “general” not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* to participate.”³¹ but unfortunately women of the past could not participate because they were denied access to formal education. In fact, patriarchal societies do not want women to participate in the public sphere that is why they restrict education for women, but Virginia Woolf understood that very early which led her to favour women’s financial independence

and to support the opinion “that everyone has the right to an education, that it should not be a privilege that only men enjoy.”³²

Turning back to history, Woolf finds so little data about women’s lives. In the British Library, she finds nothing known about women before the eighteenth century, “But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century.”³³ Consecutively, She wonders what the life of those women was like

I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write ; whether they had sitting - rooms to themselves ; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night.³⁴

While browsing one of the latest historical books, Woolf notices that History has scarcely mentioned women,

Occasionally an individual woman is mentioned, an Elizabeth or a Mary; a queen or a great lady. But by no possible means could middle- class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian’s view of the past.³⁵

Looking again at the library bookshelves, the latter do not contain books by women,

She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her.³⁶

From all what has been said, the point I want to get across is that women were excluded from history. Woolf compares the British library to a kind of museum by calling it the “British Museum” because the word museum is “the memory” that recalls “history”, and so, she mentions a memorial space in which she has noticed that women were literally absent; this is then another space which was forbidden to women. Although history neglected facts about women, Virginia Woolf decides to reconstruct their existence imaginatively, “let me imagine,

since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderful gifted sister, called Judith, let us say.”³⁷ Woolf creates an imaginative space within her work because imagination extends thoughts, and the ability to use imagination develops new and original ideas. In short, imagination boosts creativity.

In addition to the exclusion of women from history, Woolf talks about the vast amount of literature written about women by men, “women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of the time-..., among the dramatists; then among the prose writers.”³⁸ She states that women had no existence except in the fiction written by men and contrasts the idealized women depicted in fiction with women in history and their treatment by the patriarchal society in real life. Woolf says,

Indeed, if women had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as men, some think even greater. But this is women in fiction.³⁹

Woolf contrasts women depicted in fiction written by men with real facts,

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance ; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.⁴⁰

Thus, Woolf notes the imaginative importance, but also the practical insignificance of women in society. The line of reasoning is that a woman occupies a space, but through the indulgence of males because they use women a lot in their books. One cannot imagine a work where there is not a woman, and yet those women are not there in order to question the authority of

men but they are there in order to enlarge the dimension of men. Women have simply served as mirrors that reflected men's grandeur. Therefore, a woman has a homeland in imagination but not in fact because when looking at the history through the perspective of space women are not as central as fiction makes them, for those women are in fiction in order to magnify the males' space.

Women suffer from the constraints of the patriarchal society. To shed light on these effects Woolf uses her essay as a mirror to reflect society upon itself.⁴¹ She uses the metaphor of looking-glasses to reflect the mistake of men who insist on the inferiority of women and instead of having self-confidence they rather use superiority and power to rule over the inferior sex,⁴² "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."⁴³ The idea that Woolf comes to concerns the majority of men who want strongly to secure their superiority and power over women. However, those men have missed the point that many of them entered history because of this power and they would have never been self-confident enough to achieve what they did without the women in their lives, for without women's inferiority they would have ceased to enlarge, "That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge."⁴⁴ Going further, Woolf argues that the vision of the looking-glass is of high importance to men because it supplies them with power, strength, and vivacity. If the vision of the looking-glass is taken away, men may die: "The looking-glass vision is of supreme importance because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and man may die."⁴⁵ Here, one sees Woolf's ability to form images to sustain her main idea that women are not inferior to men. Woolf also wants to prove that a woman is not of a low intellectual capacity and is capable of high achievements, but due to male oppression she

had not been encouraged to think and create. As a woman herself, she manifests her skills at visualizing and thinking originally, which is a very subtle way to respond to those who believe in the inferiority of the female brain.

Instead of developing fear, hatred or bitterness toward men, Woolf encourages women to live freely to develop their genius and write as women write not as men do to find their own style to access public space through writing. What I intend to express is that Woolf states that women don't have to write in the same way as men because women see, feel and value differently from them. While male values are considered of higher importance in a male-dominated society, women feel angry and react against their inferior status. Therefore, their writing with anger breaks their capacity as writers, that is, writing in an artistic way. To create something complete, Woolf suggests an ideal state of mind for creativity that she calls androgynous mind. By an androgynous mind, Woolf refers to the unity of the mind to signify that a great mind will never be either purely feminine or purely masculine⁴⁶ because "Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine."⁴⁷ Woolf's aim is to offer both men and women the chance to write without the consciousness of their sex and to liberate women from prejudices of patriarchy on their sex;⁴⁸ "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly"⁴⁹ because a writer who uses the two parts of the brain equally helps the mind to be creative of great literature. The ideal room then is an androgynous room that gives feminine creativity all the expansion it needs. The unity of the mind is also pictured in *A Room of One's Own* through the image of an observer (the narrator) who watches out of a window a man and a woman in the street getting into the same taxi. Inside the taxi there is a feeling that this space is filled with peace and harmony:

The sight of two people coming down the street and meeting at the corner seems to ease the mind of some strain, I thought, watching the

taxi turn and make off. Perhaps to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind. Now that effort had ceased and that unity had been restored by seeing two people come together and get into a taxi-cab.⁵⁰

The observer of the street view is used to understand more one's life. A perception of the outside world from the inside of a room is an image that reflects what one cannot see in him/herself and thus helps the reader to open up his/ her eyes to the real world he/she is living in:

But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her.⁵¹

The central symbols that Woolf uses in *A Room of One's Own* are the importance of a room with a lock and the need of money. Each has a figurative meaning. For instance, the importance of a "room" refers to independence of women, the presence of a "lock" on the door represents women's privacy, her power to work and to think independently, and the need of "money" is the need of freedom to expand women's literary potential, boost the intellectual freedom and make creativity flow to impose oneself in the public realm. Women have to develop their writing if they want to be free and not discriminated. Finally, they have occupied one space which is private and the private space is as important as the public space.

b) - Assia Djébar's Use of Space:

Public and Private Spaces in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*

Assia Djébar is a postcolonial fiction writer. She takes up questions of how to open a space for being and thinking.⁵² She masters French language thanks to the encouragement of her father who was a French teacher during the colonial period, and so gained mobility and freedom to pursue her dreams as a writer.⁵³ She uses then the language of the previous colonizer to express her thoughts that contest the repression of women and transgress the tradition that confines women to the private space through writing. This act of transgression is an affirmation of an innate tendency toward self-expression.⁵⁴ According to Hafid Gafaiti, the woman who writes commits two consecutive transgressions, she first gains access to the space of men and then acquires power to act by the very act of writing, "The woman who writes carries out two simultaneous transgressions: she gains access to the world that men attempt to reserve for themselves, and she acquires the power to operate the sign instead of being its object."⁵⁵

Djébar's last work *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, previously introduced in *L'Amour, la fantasia*, constitutes a journey into the past to the present. It recalls the narrator's suicide attempt when she was an adolescent shortly before the outbreak of the Algerian war of independence. Djébar portrays a woman who has moved through two cultures, that of the colonizer and of the colonized, but feels exiled from both. She feels that she has no place in her homeland, no place in the house of her father.⁵⁶ "*Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* reformulates the writer's trajectory as a circular movement, circling back to episodes of previous works, in the attempt to achieve a more truthful self."⁵⁷

Even though Djébar's work is autobiographical, she speaks about the spaces she has gone through. In order to analyse the notion of space in the work *Nulle part dans la maison de*

mon père, I must precise that I will consider the narrator, Fatima, in the context of Djébar's own educational background because the work is autobiographical. This implies that the narrator, Fatima and the writer share the same characteristics. I will rely more on education (which is an academic space) because it is the main factor that helped Djébar's initiation into writing, which later promoted her access to the public sphere. The first steps that she undertook to school opened the way to education, movement and empowerment. At this point, Djébar was one of the rare women of her time to pass through the French school system in colonial Algeria⁵⁸ because the Algerians were considered to be less intelligent and less civilized than the French. Besides, the boarding school where Djébar went to was traditionally reserved for the progeny of the upper middle class (progeny of bourgeois families). *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* presents memories of school that center on Djébar's encounters with French language, French literature and the wonderful discovery of the power of her body while playing basketball.

Thanks to her educated father who was a teacher in the French colonial system, Djébar had the opportunity to go to the same school where he taught. Mildred Mortimer says that Djébar's father spared his daughter from cloistering and confinement but also broke her up from the women of her culture,

The day that Assia Djébar's father escorted her to school...he set her on bilingual, bicultural, indeed an ambiguous journey that freed her from the female enclosure but sent her into a form of exile away from the female enclosure but sent her into a form of exile away from the majority of her sisters.⁵⁹

French is the language of the public space, that is, the language of the male gendered public space that liberates the narrator Fatima and affords her the freedom of movement. Since French is the symbol of freedom and the source of mobility, or the ability to move from

cloistered walls of the home to the outside world which is the school, this later then becomes the privileged space away from patriarchal control. For example, when the narrator plays basketball in the school yard she feels immense freedom, “Cette cours...elle représenta pour moi un espace de liberté qui me paraissait immense.”⁶⁰ It is when she is in private that she is freer than ever, “mon plaisir, je le concevais le plus souvent solitaire.”⁶¹

Le stade, surtout. Là, et moi seule. Toute seule au soleil, en short ou quelquefois en jupe, je bondis, je m’élance. Sur ce stade, ma liberté m’inonde corps et âme, telle une invisible et inépuisable cascade.⁶²

When the narrator is all in movement, she discovers her autonomy and the power of her body

après un premier demi- cercle, ainsi courbée allant et venant d’un coté puis de l’autre, l’ultime effort s’épuisait dans un brusque jaillissement de mon corps vers l’azur, dans la détente des jambes , des hanches, des bras dressés vers le ciel soudain si vaste.⁶³

Beida Chikhi comments the free movement around the basketball as being a metaphor for writing. Her early experiments with the sport mirror the discovery of new aesthetic territories.⁶⁴

On the other hand, it is only through her father’s consent that the narrator can access the privileged space and the world of books that she loves so much. The father who offers his daughter the advantage to study because he believes in the benefit of education is the direct stimulus that sends her into the space of men (public space). However, he overshadows the freedom that enables the young adolescent to discover the physical movement and the sense of self-determination,⁶⁵

J’étais considérée comme une des meilleurs attaquantes : mais nul ne se doutait que, les matchs de compétition ayant lieu le jeudi hors du collège et souvent devant un public des deux sexes, lorsque j’y participais, j’étais parfois prise d’un sentiment de panique à l’idée de voir surgir inopinément mon père.⁶⁶

Thus, in fear that her father might see her wearing shorts spoils the joyful activity of her body.

Most of the weekends she finds an excuse in order not to take part in the basketball competition because she is afraid that her father might find out the transgression, that is, showing her legs in public. Despite the powerful authority of the father, the narrator wants to show a positive image of her father and spare him from being taxed as a “backward puritan” by her classmates and instructress. The narrator feels that she owes her father an extreme gratitude:

Les jeudis où je jugeais son arrivée probable, je préférais arguer d'une indisposition soudaine : ma peur était alors plus vive que mon plaisir, ou même que l'ivresse qui me gagnait lors de ces exhibitions... Une certaine crainte me saisissait : celle de risquer de révéler, devant toutes, la vraie raison de ma défection ; cette censure aurait fait paraître mon père comme un barbare, ou comme un puritain attardé. Imaginez la professeur se moquant de mon père : “Pourtant, lui, un instituteur !” aurait-elle ajouté, acerbe, je ne l'aurais pas supporté!⁶⁷

The narrator cannot dissociate herself from her father despite his frame of mind and ambivalence, but the suffocation caused by patriarchal power leads the narrator to search for an escape from their private home in search for another refuge. Here the father symbolizes the homeland that the narrator is fond of, but the devastating social effects of hate on women leads the narrator to attempt suicide.

Assia Djébar feels exiled and uprooted from the other women of her community. On the one hand, the formal education that she has received has given her self confidence and has reinforced her desire for self expression and liberty of movement. On the other hand the freedom that she acquired from her early age confines her in another separate space which is exile. Here she interrogates: “Pourquoi, mais pourquoi faut-il que je me retrouve, moi et toutes les autres, “nulle part dans la maison de mon père”?”⁶⁸ And so, Djébar gained a space and was forbidden another space, then, this space is very controversial for the writer.

Despite Djébar's great position in the literary world as a great writer in the French language she dared to inform us that she does not differ from the other women because she feels that a woman is still considered as a second class citizen in society. In her last work she has used the process of writing as a way to heal her emotional wounds. Through this process, Djébar tries to get rid of the heritage that cripples her creativity.

Endnotes

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- 4 Lokhart, 'Writing the Self: Gloria Anzaldúa, Textual Form, and Feminist Epistemology'.
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- 10 Ibid., 17.
- 11 Ibid., 27-28.
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- 14 Chia-hsing Chen, 'A Room of One's Own? On the Feminist spatial concept and strategy' *Hsiuping Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2 (2001): 106.
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- 17 Chen, 'A Room of One's Own? On the Feminist spatial concept and strategy', 106.
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- 20 Ibid., 54-55.
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- 23 Ibid.
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- 33 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 53.
- 34 Ibid., 53.
- 35 Ibid., 52.
- 36 Ibid., 52.
- 37 Ibid., 54.
- 38 Ibid., 50.
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- 41 Conrad, 'Virginia Woolf: Rooms, Relationships, and Writing', 35.
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- 43 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 28.
- 44 Ibid., 41.
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- 46 Elizabeth Wright, 'Re-evaluating Woolf's Androgynous Mind', *Postgraduate English* 14 (2006): 2-15.
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- 49 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 120.
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- 52 Julie L. Smith-Hubbard, 'Cosmopoetics and Politics: Were Those ' Unacknowledged Legislators of the World'' Actually Women?' *Forum on Public Policy* 1 (2008): 1.
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- ⁵⁶ Ana de Medeiros, 'Writing as Wounding and Healing in Djébar's Nulle Part dans la maison de mon père', *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 15 (2002): 277.
- ⁵⁷ Mildred Mortimer, 'Writing the personal: The Evolution of Assia Djébar's autobiographical project from L'amour, la fantasia to Nulle Part dans la maison de mon père', *Journal of Women's History* 25 (2013).
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- ⁵⁹ Mildred Mortimer, 'Entretien avec Assia Djébar, Ecrivain Algérien', *Research in African Literatures* 192 (1988): 202.
- ⁶⁰ Assia, Djébar, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2007).
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 204.
- ⁶² Ibid., 203.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 204.
- ⁶⁴ Connell, 'Movement, education, and empowerment in Assia Djébar's L'Amour, la fantasia and Nulle part dans la maison de mon père',
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ Djébar, *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*, 288-289.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 289.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 433.

IV) - General Conclusion

The notion of space in a society refers to both public and private, called also public/private sphere. The public space is reserved for men whereas the private for women. This distinction is due to gender roles. Therefore, the two spheres are not socially and culturally homogenous. The public sphere is dominated by males which engender the rejection of the females, consequently one sphere rules over the other which leads to the point that space is linked to gender. In other words, space and gender are interrelated.

The task that I have undertaken throughout the dissertation concerns the notion of space, that is, the writing space and the relation of women to space in two literary works that belong to two female writers, Virginia Woolf and Assia Djébar, who are from different generation and different geographical areas. Speaking about space is important because this notion is fundamental for feminism and for women. Space is at the centre of the concerns of the two writers; there are several spaces in Woolf and Djébar's works in which women are submitted to discrimination. And the two writers are seeking for the rehabilitation of the private space because the private space is as important as the public one for women. While Virginia Woolf is an English modernist writer, Assia Djébar is a postcolonial writer. She was only five years old when Virginia Woolf died but both of them experienced the same harshness of a patriarchal society. Both are representatives of their times who gained access to the world of men thanks to their education, but above all thanks to their fathers. It is good to note that Assia Djébar was allowed to receive a formal education at school whereas Woolf received her education at home because she was denied access to formal education outside the home. That is, although Woolf was a member of a privileged social class, she was an outsider to that class, and despite the literary background of her family, she herself did not attend any school and belonged to no public institution. The feeling not to belong to the male's world is the

same for the two writers; they both express the point that a woman is considered as a second class citizen.

Both Woolf and Djebbar fought against women's injustice and challenged the patriarchal society. However, there was one power they could not challenge until it weakened by itself, it was that of the real father. On the one hand, both Woolf and Djebbar gained access to public sphere thanks to the gifted father. On the other hand they are the same people who barred them the way to great creativity. Writers like Woolf and Djebbar know that they need to recover from the trauma they endured throughout their lives; this is why they encourage writing because the writing process is a way to heal the emotional and physical wounds and transform one's life. The act of writing also helps to achieve a level of self-awareness. Thus, writing is the only weapon with which women can counter the patriarchal society. Assia Djebbar's aim in *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père* tends to achieve a more truthful self (self awareness) through the writing space. Woolf's aim in *A Room of One's Own* is to have a private power space with which to control women's own lives. Though published eighty- five years ago the essay holds no less appeal today than it did before. The concerns that Woolf raised and explored in her work still remain major themes and motifs of current writers mainly on the conditions that are necessary for a woman writer to realize the full potential of her creative and intellectual faculties. Virginia Woolf and Assia Djebbar are inspirations for women to write, and those who follow in their steps challenge patriarchy with creativity.

The scope of the comparative study that I have undertaken can be enlarged to include other feminist writers from other parts of the world whose literary works are directed into the notion of space. In addition, the twenty-first century is an age of technology and globalization So, what is the current pressing need for women writers in such era?

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