

## Postcolonial Trauma in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*

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### Abstract

This study discusses traumatic effects of colonialism upon characters in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956). Colonialism damages the psyche of the colonized, causing them a lot of emotional and mental pain. This traumatic pain makes the colonized easy victims of inner weakness and violence. The life of the colonized is worthless, making some of them helplessly accept their intolerable life as it is while others find counter violence a way to reduce their tension and misery. As a result of experiencing massive losses, characters in the novel show different signs of trauma; they seem overwhelmed by a sense of loss, violence, denial and confusion. With feelings of self-inferiority instilled into their minds, the colonized become programmed to accept the superiority of their oppressors. Losing faith in the power of their native language to express themselves, they use their colonizers' language and copy their lifestyle. Moreover, the racism and dehumanization experienced during years of colonization lead to a breach between the colonized and their social and moral values. This state of estrangement in the life of the colonized undermines their self-confidence and their sense of identity. Loss of strong meaningful connections with native origins makes them submissive or even victims of self-dehumanization and aimlessness. With no hope to turn the tide, colonialism may result in considerable distortion in the social structures and values of the colonized, affecting their personal attitudes and their relationships with the world around them.

**Key words:** World literature; Postcolonial trauma; Symptoms of trauma; Kateb Yacine; *Nedjma*

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### INTRODUCTION

Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956; trans. 1991) closely relates major setbacks Algerian citizens experienced during the colonial era and continued to experience after the end of that era and its aftermath. Yacine perspicaciously delves into the psyche of a nation trodden down by oppression, poverty, and despair. In fact, Yacine himself had his own share of post-colonial legacy. He was arrested in a demonstration and imprisoned without trial, which showed him colonial injustice. During his imprisonment, his mother's psychological health deteriorated (Yacine, 1991, p.xix). The tragedy with its personal and national dimensions finds vivid expression in his narrative. Yacine's writing style expresses the tragedy of violence and mass killing that the Algerians suffer from. For Yacine, Algerians are exposed to a circular trap of violence:

I met Brecht (whom I admire) but we mostly argued. For him, tragedy was no longer justified, since tragic situations offer no way out. This is partly true. For me, tragedy is driven by a circular movement and does not open out or uncoil except at an unexpected point in the spiral, like a spring. [. . .] But this apparently closed circularity that starts and ends nowhere, is the exact image of every universe, poetic or real. [. . .] Tragedy is created precisely to show where there is no way out, how we fight and play against the rules and the principles of "what

should happen," against conventions and appearances. (Qtd in Finburgh, 2005, p.117)

Different features of *Nedjma* illustrate the circularity of the Algerian life. For example, the end of the novel echoes its beginning. Nothing is clear for the Algerians. No connections can be easily established between premises and conclusions. This uncertainty makes the colonized move aimlessly. In the West, using linear writing style, which is based on clear progression from premises to arguments and conclusions, reflects a tendency towards clarity and predictability in their relations and life. Under such conditions people find it easier to set goals and take action to achieve these goals. By contrast, the colonized in different parts of the world suffer from loss as everything in their life is part of the unknown. They feel like being in the dark lacking solid foundations to start on. Their past is distorted by the colonizer, and their present offers little hope for the unpredictable future. As a result, the colonized start operating in a vicious circle. All they can do is waiting for others to help them in their struggle against their oppressors or find a substitute government to make the change they aspire for.

## 1. SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA IN NEDJMA

*Nedjma* addresses various signs of postcolonial trauma such as fear, indifference, denial, despair and isolation. The novel manifests this trauma in the public sphere and explores the private trauma experienced by its main characters. The four men in the novel live in a state of anarchy. The catastrophic events have caused them psychological or emotional trauma, which according to Jackson (2006) results after "intense fear, physical or mental stress or distress, or threat to one's life...or even witnessing violence" (p.231). Different characters suffer from detachment, one of the consequences of colonization. Distortion has damaged the cities and the villages as well as the social composition. The colonized find themselves struggling with different symptoms of post-traumatic disorder. They experience sleeping difficulties, confusion, social isolation, and anger. At the same time, they find it difficult to narrate their past as in Rachid's case who "could no longer tell what he was thinking from what he was saying" (Yacine, 1991, p. 232).

The traumatized usually suffer from severe sadness and a sense of loss in every aspect of life. Considering colonial violence and the damage it causes, it is no wonder to find traumatic symptoms in the behavior of colonized nations. For instance, the colonized have a desire for weeping. They also show signs of helplessness, alienation, denial, and thoughts of committing suicide. Trauma conveys situations in which positive feelings such as hope, trust, and safety are absent. Human beings usually suffer and their lives become intolerable when negative feelings like fear, anxiety, and uncertainty take hold. Traumatized people usually suffer from loss which makes them

very sad. Rachid feels "like a piece of broken pottery" (Ibid, p.234) which conveys his sadness and feelings of worthlessness. When a piece of pottery is broken it usually shatters into pieces. The difficulty of reassembling its fragments suggests the challenges involved in overcoming psychic trauma. Abdallah, a deserter and the master of the *fondouk* where Rachid stays, knows very well the deadly effects of the pipe, but he thinks it is the only medicine for their gloomy hearts. Such victims have strong bodies and they do not suffer from physical problems, but they feel very weak and helpless. They do nothing except sitting in dark places, waiting for a piece of bread to eat. They may try to escape their tragedy by using drugs or telling others the story behind their trauma.

In the novel, the four young men are addicted to drugs and alcohol, "night of drinking and fornication; nights of rape and burglary, fights in every city we went to; fights in hallways and on terraces; fights in procuresses' houses" (Ibid, p.129). Rachid is a traumatized person; he knows that his friend and fellow traveler is the killer of his father. Rachid also suffers a lot in jail, and he bears witness to many killing crimes and oppression for his people. He is the eyewitness for human suffering and injustice. At the end of the novel, Rachid appears sick with fever, "As for Rachid, if he talked to me at all (feverish words, outbursts followed by sullen silence), it always seemed to be against his will" (Ibid, p. 127). His fragmented speech tells of a fragmented society exhausted by colonial atrocities which kill their desire for life and render them like dead bodies. Rachid tries to cope with his painful memories, so he has his own corner in the hotel, under the influence of alcohol and hashish, waiting for his death on the balcony of the *fondouk*, "in a cloud of forbidden weed" (Ibid, p. 224). The following sections provide a detailed account of postcolonial trauma symptoms showing in different characters in *Nedjma*.

### 1.1 Sense of Loss

Algerians seem to have limited choices in reconciling and coping with their massive losses including loss of land, loss of hope in a better life, as well as loss of freedom and peace. Their helplessness and despair make them indifferent to whatever further losses or misery they may encounter. It takes no long to realise the indifference and hopelessness of major characters in the novel which starts with Lakhdar running away from prison without caring about consequences such as legal prosecution or returning to prison again. He and other Algerians seem to have nothing to lose "Lakhdar has escaped from his cell. At dawn, his shadow appears on the landing; everyone looks up, indifferently. Murad stares at the fugitive. 'So what, they'll get you later.' 'They know your name'(Ibid, p.15). Like many people in colonized countries, Lakhdar does not have any identification documents, "'I don't have any papers.'" (Ibid, p.15). Hiding such documents is an attempt to avoid prosecution. Wandering without

documents representing someone's identity is a critical issue since nobody can travel from one country to another without a passport.

On the other hand, the person might get the necessary documents but be banned from moving freely. Natives can be forbidden from travelling abroad unless they have permission from colonial authorities. They can also be banned from moving from one city to another, or from one village to another inside their own country. Such limitations are frustrating as the colonized start to feel their countries are like big jails for them. Thus, to move from one place to another, the natives use fake names or move secretly. They sometimes use long, dangerous ways to avoid colonial restrictions. When Rachid wants to go with Si Mokhtar on pilgrimage, he tries to travel using a fake passport which belongs to another person, "phony passport, but with another name, another birthday, all thanks to the good offices of an unemployed navigator who had agreed to sell him the certificate" (Ibid, 146). In addition, the natives are unwelcomed or rather denied access to colonial areas which differ from native towns. When the young Rachid wanted to play with some youngsters in one of the colonial settlements, Albert told Luigi, "No gangsters, no Arabs in the garden, Papa says" (Ibid, p.292). Settlements are more developed and cleaner than native areas. Fanon (1967) describes the settler's town in the following terms:

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. (p. 30)

The paradox that Fanon talks about is very clear in the novel. That is, while the settlers enjoy living in big houses with gardens, the native people live in rent rooms. The four young men share a small unfurnished room that they rented from a settler woman. The room is in a bad condition with water leaking from the ceiling.

The novel depicts big losses. For example, the loss of family and cultural identity makes the natives confused and unable to make up their minds. They feel uncertain about the course of action they need to take. They can never be sure about the value of their deeds whether they act peacefully by accepting reality and keeping silent, or they otherwise express their dissatisfaction by protesting and rejecting everything. According to Fanon, the colonial power tends to ruin the life of the colonized and make them feel inferior with a strong desire to imitate the colonizers who appear like models having the power to shape history. Fanon explains, "the violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has

ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life" (Ibid, p.31). The colonizers plan to undermine the natives' confidence in their culture and turn them to bodies without souls or shadows without value.

Colonial empires rob the natives of their land and fortunes. They put their hands upon the native lands and their most precious resources. The colonizer expropriates the land obliging the starving and unemployed colonized to sell their lands to be able to survive and support their families. Fanon draws attention to the value of land which provides the colonized with worthiness, "For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land which will bring them bread and, above all dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with the dignity of the human individual" (Ibid, p.34) To achieve their goal, the colonizers mistreat the colonized; they "freely arrest him, beat him, starve him" (Ibid). Every piece of land in Algeria is dominated by the French and "the ancestral soil seems to melt away under the feet of the new-born" (Yacine, 1991, p.261). The next generation of the colonized Algerians do not recognize the virtue and the value of their fathers' lands. Their defeat has destroyed them. They want to get rid of their affront "chiefs discovered they were rich in money and jewels, but frustrated; certainly they felt the offense, yet in their retreats they had not kept the taste for the battle that was denied them" (Ibid, p. 136).

The colonial power intends to dissociate the natives from their religion, language and lands. Like many other colonized people, Algerians lose some of their faith as the spiritual bond becomes weak. In the novel, the Algerian women start to change their clothing style, uncovering their faces which they used to cover for many years. Wearing wide hoods is shown as an excuse for shying away from Algerian traditional clothes. Without being criticized, the young girls in the hospital take off their veils and their headdress as if they are in Europe. Rachid says when he strolls with Si Mokhtar in the hospital: "a clinic he dragged me to one morning, among the nurses- he knew them all; 'not one is European,' he had told me once, 'and they would all be veiled if the doctor and I hadn't picked them out of school or got them away from their parents..." (Ibid, p.139). These young nurses copy other people's lifestyle. Their fascination with Western culture makes them dress up like European women without heed to their own religion and culture. The nurses also change their way of speaking, using French dialect to communicate with patients.

*Nedjma* shows the way colonizers spread vice among native women who sell their bodies to the colonizers, "notaries' wives crossed the sea in the other direction and surrendered themselves in gardens up for sale" (Ibid, p. 136). Many married women commit adultery and fail to

recognize their children's real fathers. Defying religious teachings, a huge number of Algerian women get married to French men. In the novel, the four young men fall in love with Nedjma, the daughter of a French woman, whose father is unknown. The four young men's fathers were with her mother in the cave when she became pregnant with Nedjma and Rachid's father got killed. Nedjma was adopted by an Algerian woman who married her to her brother Kamel. The phenomenon of incest is spread all over Algeria as Mustapha claims: "we have always married each other; incest is our bond" (Ibid, p. 249). Incest is seen as a way to preserve tribe unity.

Men in the novel do not fare better than women. According to Rachid they pretend to have virtue: "I surprise him [Si Mokhtar] in the vilest debauchery, he the paragon of virtue, according to his friends? ... his eyes gleam at the vision of some new lechery... icy mouth melting under the captain's kisses!" (Ibid, p.109). Most men are polygamists. Many women are victimized by monumental polyandry. Men moved and left their children behind without regretting it: "clandestine wives had left him in doubt...they had annihilated or concealed the harvest" and "the product of his crimes would always be secret" (Ibid, p.130). Si Mokhtar was the fourth suitor for Nedjma's mother, a victim of violence raped by men in the cave.

The colonized seem to have religious faith but they practice their religion as a daily routine devoid of spirit. Oppression, poverty and homelessness have killed the spirit of faith in their hearts. Winell (2011) explains,

With PTSD, a traumatic event is one in which a person experiences or witnesses actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. Losing one's faith, or leaving one's religion, is an analogous event because it essentially means the death of one's previous life – the end of reality as it was understood. It is a huge shock to the system, and one that needs to be recognized as trauma. (para. 2)

The colonized may lose interest in their religion's doctrine. Even pilgrimage seems to lose its meaning and spirit as people start to take the journey for the sake of trade. During the pilgrimage, Si Mokhtar drinks alcohol, "he secretly wallowed a tumbler of eau de Cologne when he felt he was losing his faith" (Yacine, 1991, p.149), and many pilgrims go to Mecca for business as the man on the ship claims: "Ah my father, how innocent you are. Half of those who come here have nothing but business in mind; it's a kind of annual fair under God's protection" (Ibid, p. 160). The French people pretend to know about Islam more than Muslims do: "While Madame, her bare feet sticking out of her green mules touched up with satin,..., sucking on a long cigarette holder, referring to Islam with a catch in her throat, as she might have spoken of a dressmaker or a grocery she was annoyed with" (Ibid, p.149). The aura of superiority engulfing the colonizer makes resisting colonial distortion of native culture a hard

task. Only well-informed and educated people can meet the challenge. Otherwise, colonized nations can be easily humbled by such distortions which may destroy their religious and psychological integrity. Religions provide guidelines to help people in their life, and religious teachings make people spiritually strong. Lacking such guidelines and loss of connections with religion affects a person's self-image, sense of identity, and behavior.

Another problem the colonized people face is the loss of strong connections with their native language. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) explain that "One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language" (para1). The colonizers change the educational system to make their language dominate the native language as "The imperial education system installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all 'variants' as impurities" (Ibid). *Nedjma* highlights the domination of French language over Arabic. In the novel, many educated people such as the nurses use French instead of Arabic to communicate with others. This strategy allows them to make social distance and to cut any undesired kind of communication. Even those described as schemers by the natives are Arabs, but they avoid any "conversation in the mother tongue" (Yacine, 1991, p.96). To emphasize the superiority of the colonizer's language and culture, the colonizers avoid using the language of the colonized in most colonized countries. In the novel, Rachid's father "had taught in the medersa a long time before being discharged" (Ibid, p.208). Teachers of Arabic are not allowed to teach it in their schools. Many of them suffer from poverty and unemployment.

Families in the novel are traumatized by colonial violence. Many of them suffer from the death or loss of their members, and many natives are born orphans: "Kamel... had an incontestably noble father who died without making an appearance in town" (Ibid, p.90). Parents lose their children in the demonstrations; "they substitute their eternal dramas for our childish expectations" (Ibid, p.127). They feel that they are failures, "until the hecatomb where their old, glory-laden failure lies" (Ibid, p.128). Women who lost their children suffer from mental illness as Rachid's mother who lost her mind. She moved with her two daughters to live in a farm. Traumatized women who lost their children have become helpless and lost their emotions as well as their sense of life.

The colonized lack basic human needs. To tighten their grip upon the colonized, colonizers keep them busy with getting their daily bread. Such strategies leave no time for the colonized to have plans for a better future. Their weakness makes them easy victims incapable of resisting their oppressors. Fanon (1967) portrays this image saying, "The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town

wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs” (p.30). Failure to meet basic needs thwarts the ability of the colonized to progress toward a higher level of needs. Thus, rather than progress and better life, one finds suffocating poverty and frustration.

The colonizers use buses and planes with Algerian steel and oil while the Algerians go barefoot as the vendor told Mostafa (Yacine, 1991, p.107). They do not have good services in their country. Men do not even have money, so they sell their important things to buy what they want. They also sell other personal belongings like clothes or even eyes. In the novel *Lakhdar* “has sold most of his school clothes” (Ibid, p. 301). Struggling with despair, Algerians “are sick at heart, the wretches smoke their last butts” (Ibid, p.19). Having no achievements, they feel lost and wait for death. They have no dreams to live for or hope to achieve. According to Freud (1930/2010), a traumatized person finds out that “reality is too strong for him. He becomes a madman, who for the most part finds no one to help him in carrying through his delusion” (p.4480). These traumatized people find their reality intolerably distressing. They become unwilling to face reality. Caruth (1996) claims that “post-traumatic stress disorder reflects the direct imposition on the mind, psychically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control” (p. 85); so those traumatized people seem to suffer both physically and mentally.

The traumatized victims suffer from psychological disorders; many of them cannot sleep well due to what they have seen or experienced. Many of them witnessed violence including the killing of their family members, sons, and daughters, “for years she’s had trouble sleeping, like the cow she keeps awake at night with her ghostly presence” (Yacine, 1991, p.20). The emotional shock and anxiety expectation of being attacked or killed create a state of sleeplessness. The colonizers dehumanize the colonized and treat them as animals, which creates a sense of dignity loss. The four men in the novel are traumatized. *Lakhdar*, *Murad*, *Rashid* and *Mustapha* prefer a violent death to a miserable life offering nothing of significant value. They rather expect further losses, and they constantly feel afraid of being punished by the colonizers who may kill their family members before their eyes. Separation always lurks on the horizon for them, and they are sure that their separation is a must. Every one of them goes his own way in a different direction in order to survive after their countrymen betray them. This separation means the loss of easy connections with family, society, land, and normal life. This state makes them deprived of safety as a result of such loss.

The convicts are traumatized by the colonizer who put them in prison in the dark, with no hope of getting out of their cells. “Mother the wall is high! Here I am in a ruined city, this spring” (Ibid, p.55). Their suffering has started since the Romans, who were followed by Napoleon III, then the French, so there is no hope for

them to be free. The colonizers deal with them as slaves, “all prison guards, and we play the slaves roles, in the same prison, near the lion pit, and the sons of the Romans do guard duty with rifles on their shoulders” (Ibid, p.56). The colonized can only expect bad luck. They do not believe that good things will happen to them. They can have nothing unless they get the colonizers’ permission; “the sun shines for us only off the guards’ visors, off the barrels of their rifles, until twenty years’ labor are over” (Ibid). They keep little hope to be free even if it will take a long time: “I’ll be free when I’m forty, I’ll have lived my sentence and my age twice, and maybe when I’m forty I can have my twenty years free, Mother the wall is high!” (Ibid).

No laws are enforced to assert the rights or protect lives of native citizens. Lack of legal protection only adds to and accentuates their vulnerability and losses. Yacine shows the miserable passive role imposed on the colonized due to power inequity. Oppressive colonial systems tend to treat the colonized as merely passive recipients of orders with no rights to make their own decisions. The colonized people lost their rights in an unjustifiable way, reflecting the tyranny of colonialism. The colonizers aim at devastating the native identity by making them follow the orders given to them, even those orders that cost them their life. Fanon (1967) says that the colonizers make the natives “bent double, more dead than alive, exists interminably in an unchanging dream” (p.39), forcing them to be stuck in their places, “and not to go beyond certain limits” (Ibid, p.40). They want to dominate the natives by making them feel inferior. Spivak points out the way the colonizers appear superior while they make the colonized feel inferior. In this regard, she explains, “He (the European agent) is worlding their own world, which is far from mere un-inscribed earth, anew, by obliging them to domesticate the alien as Master,’ a process generating the force ‘to make the native see himself as other” (Qtd. in Parry, 2004, p.20). In the novel, the foreman keeps giving orders and the workers have to obey without objection. The workers do not have value according to the foreman who considers them as numbers. Some workers died without being noticed. Surprisingly, in return for this injustice, the colonized are requested to treat the colonizer respectfully as with *Amezian* who shows his respect for the foreman after the foreman’s attack and hitting *Rachid*.

The colonized cannot show their sympathy to their friends who have been beaten by the colonizer. If there is someone who faces trouble with the colonized, they pretend to see nothing as they seem busy working. After the quarrel with *Monsieur Ernest*, the men cannot argue or say anything; instead they return to their work: “all the men immediately start to work, without fumbling or arguing over the tools” (Yacine,1991, p.63). The natives’ sense of identity has been devastated by oppression. They are afraid of showing their true feelings as well as

sense of being free: "I took the pamphlets. I hid the life of Abed- el- Kader. I felt the force of the ideas. I found Algeria irascible...I left with the pamphlets. I buried them near the river" (Ibid, p.71). The colonized do not lose hope that someone may come to rescue them. However, they do not express their hope, which makes them doubly traumatized.

The notion of time is not important for the traumatized. They do not care for time as their sense of life is lost. They just cope with living in a continuously distressing way. People exposed to bad conditions of life such as loss of an intimate person, killing or injuries and daily struggle suffer from depression. Depression makes the traumatized feel worthless, hopeless and helpless. For them, there is no difference between being in prison or free. Those traumatized people even do not know the dates as a result of torture and imprisonment in the dark for days and nights. They get desensitized to everything. A description of Lakhdar reflects his trauma in "nothing affects the heavy anger of the oppressed creature; he doesn't count the years; he doesn't distinguish men, or roads" (Ibid, p.266). The only road he can distinguish is the one that leads "to rest, to death" (Ibid, p.266). All these memories are recalled after a period of belatedness, passing through latency, and getting regained when Lakhdar was taken for the second time to the prison and the handcuffs were put on his hands. "Lakhdar sees himself in prison even before getting there; he is in a cell with a sense of having been there before; the last ray of light from the sitting sun makes his absence felt the road that is gray now and narrow; here Lakhdar recovers the vanished atmosphere of his first arrest" (Ibid, p.69). Lakhdar suffers from despair for he lost hope of being free. Nothing is clear for him like the narrow grey road. His mind becomes unable to think, recalling only bad memories.

The novel shows the way different necessities are unattainable for the colonized. One of these necessities is justice. In its absence, people are victimized by lawyers and judges; the judges are deceitful, the lawyers are bluff, and the court is a place for fraudulent and dishonest transactions. Ameziane is a traumatized person who suffers from physical as well as psychological scars. "Ameziane unties the rope he uses for a belt and shows an infected scar at the small of his back" (Ibid, p.59). Torture left a physical scar on Ameziane's body that does not heal with the passage of time. It is very clear on his body, and he keeps showing it to other people to show the barbarity of the colonizers. Ameziane's father trial left a psychological scar which made him suffer all his life long. The trial cost him all his money and lands. As for his mother, she paid everything she owned. They are obligated to ask French lawyers for their cases, who keep them having hope for the last moment," I thought they were telling each other papa was innocent" (Ibid, p.61). The reality which the colonizers hide to the last moment

comes, "Condemned to death,"(Ibid) which is the easiest punishment for the colonized people to be wiped out.

## 1.2 Violence

The relationship between colonizer and colonized is not based on civilized human interaction; The colonizers come from other countries to impose their power over the native people and their land. As a result, the colonized suffer from violence, subjection and exclusion. *Nedjma* shows different kinds of violence in the encounters between the two sides. Violence is also manifest in encounters among the colonized themselves.

Fanon (1967) claims that the colonizers come to the natives' land with different kinds of weapons to frighten the natives, dominating them and getting rid of them, killing with weapons such as tanks, rifles: "In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines" (p.31). Those "brand new American guns" (Ibid, p.76) are used as a means to keep the colonized afraid and under control. Technology contributes to keep unequal power relations between the colonizers and the colonized. The novel reflects an awareness of the inferior status of the East regarding scientific development. This awareness creates a negative self-image, which enables the West to dominate the East easily. The major thing that the colonized suffer from is violence which appears in the novel in different forms. The first one is colonial violence. The colonizers massacred a whole city that they could not control by force, "The Nadhor was put to fire and sword, military judges were appointed; a little later, the chief males of the tribe had their heads cut off, all on the same day, one after the other... other young men who had grown up in the terror and the confusion began to leave the Nadhor secretly so they could establish themselves incognito" (Yacine, 1991, p.169). The French put the corpses of the two French people who were killed in Nadhor in the mosque to show the hostility of the natives' religion. Silencing the natives is intended to make them feel weak. The accident is used by the colonizer "in order to destroy the tribe's resistance and prestige" (Ibid, p.168). Another way to control the native people is dividing the tribes into smaller units, and spreading fear in the other tribes. According to Fanon (1967) that "For them [the colonized] ...every attempt to break colonial oppression by force is a hopeless effort, an attempt at suicide because in the innermost recesses of their brains the settler's tanks and aeroplanes occupy a huge place" (p.49). In the novel, after the accident of killing the two French people, "the tribe's ruin was completed their work of destruction by separating the sons of Keblout into four branches, for administrative convenience" (Yacine, 1991, p.186).

Being extensively exposed to violence makes the colonized commit violence without being aware of its results. Fanon (1967) asserts that "the native... is ready for violence at all times" (p.29). The violence the

colonized people are exposed to affects them, making them traumatized and thinking of revenge. When Murad sees Richard and his bride attack the maid, he cannot understand the accident and he becomes angry and aggressive. He attacks Richard and hits him. The colonized try to emancipate themselves from the colonial tyranny. Because of their resistance, many of them are sent to prison or killed. They are usually accused of committing illegal acts such as riots or promoting dangerous ideologies. To avoid punishment, one of the characters in the novel hides the leaflets relating to Abed AlQader's thought of colonization. According to Fanon (1967), "the native's muscles are always tensed" (p.41). The colonized become aggressive and ready to attack anybody as a result of severe punishment and humiliation which await the native workers. Lakhdar thinks of hitting Suzy, "Then all he can think of is hitting her, seeing her on the ground, maybe picking her up and hitting her again- 'until she wakes up, a sleepwalker falling off the roof, with all her superstitions, risking death without having realized that a world exists" (Yacine, 1991, p.27). This aggressive thinking can be seen as a response to colonizers' bad treatment.

Colonial oppression and violence seem to seep into the psyche of the colonized who may practise violence against their fellow citizens for no apparent reason. Rachid's stabbing his friend is an example. Murad and Rachid are friends and they share the same room but Rachid wounded him, using Murad's knife without fighting or having problems before. Fanon (1967) explains colonial violence pervading the life of young people: "the youth of a colonized country, growing up in an atmosphere of shot and fire" (p.45). This makes bloodshed familiar for the colonized who may get involved in it whether intentionally or unintentionally. Murad is a double traumatized person:

I know who is Rachid is now. The friend who comes back to me in prison, to wound me with my own knife, Rachid who was my friend, the friend of my brother, who then became our enemy though he was still living in my room, he who followed us, Lakhdar and me, to the yards... (Yacine, 1991, p.56).

Murad's meditation indicates the role of colonialism in disrupting relationships among the natives. Peace and stability may give way to misapprehensions and suspicions. In addition, the colonized suffer from internalized trauma. The traumatized people are charged with violence which is not restricted to other people or friends, but it reaches family members. Brothers keep fighting as enemies, they try to kill each other if they have a chance to do so "the two brothers went to threatening each other, picking fights and finally actually fighting... The two brothers terrorized the whole neighborhood... And then the two brothers met... Actually, they began quarrelling as if they were both to be left for dead" (Ibid, p.219). The mercy and love between family members are lost. Their mother becomes mad as a result of what

is happening between her sons. The whole people in the village watch them quarrelling without interfering.

### 1.3 Denial

The colonizers' treatment of the colonized victimized the latter. As they do not accept their bitter reality, the victimized try to block external suffering from their awareness. Thus, they resort to the strategy of denial. According to *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, denial is "an ego defense mechanism that operates unconsciously to resolve emotional conflict and to ally anxiety by refusing to perceive the more unpleasant aspects of external reality." The colonized employ denial in different ways, such as lying, not admitting that something happened or justifying things to reduce the harm, blaming others and minimizing the painful event or its effects. Sadock, Sadock and Ruiz (2009) define denial as a "Defense mechanism in which the existence of unpleasant realities is disavowed; refers to keeping out of conscious awareness any aspects of external reality that, if acknowledged, would produce anxiety" ( p.1499). Sadock's definition indicates victims' evasion of "external reality" or tendency to escape trauma by detaching themselves from it in the hope of avoiding the discomfort and negative feelings connected with it. Referring to the ego defenses against a painful or traumatic past, in a related line of thought, Freud claims that there are "two dynamic quantities- for our present purposes... 'the instinct' and 'the resistance'" and they struggle with each other. Freud (1925/2010) explains:

in the first place the ego was obliged to protect itself against the constant threat of a renewed advance on the part of the repressed impulse... on the other hand, the repressed impulse, which was now unconscious, was able to find means of discharge and of substitutive satisfaction by circuitous routes and thus to bring the whole purpose of the repression to nothing (p. 4206).

The mind pushes unwanted feelings or harmful memories into the unconscious mind. The repressed thoughts which cause anxiety are kept hidden as a kind of resistance relieving these repressed thoughts.

Burkey et al (2013) define four kinds of denial: They are denial of facts, denial of awareness, denial of impact and denial of responsibility (p. 79). Denial of fact shows in Aissa and Bozambo mother's case. Their mother avoids going home by saying that she is "sure to find the body of her children on the doorstep"(Yacine, 1991, p.220). As a result of fighting among the brothers, the mother expects to find the body of one of her children, so she tries to stay away of her house. Denial of fact is also clear in the case of F... and her friend Mne. F... . They deny the colonizers' crimes and project their crimes upon the colonized. They feel disgusted by the colonized; "My god they stink! Mne. F...: Please! I feel like being sick as it is!" (Ibid, p.308). The two French women cannot stand the dead bodies of the Algerians. They confirm that they see a lot of dead bodies but those they often see are "not Arab" (Ibid).

Denial is clear in the behavior of other characters in *Nedjma*. For example, Lakhdar refuses to accept the reality that he is going to prison for the second time. When the policeman pushes him, he says "I couldn't believe it; my ears were like sieves, choked with explosions; I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that so many things had happened" (Ibid, p.69). Lakhdar finds it difficult to accept reality, so he denies his past experience and his present, and he avoids thinking about them. Denial can also be noticed in Rachid's behavior. His shock may be the reason for his inability to talk about his life except when he is delirious or under the influence. Also, as a traumatized man he cannot understand the harm of drugs. Rachid tries to hide Si Mokhtar's reality and the things that he knows about the events that took place in the cave. He tries to justify to himself his feeling in the hospital by considering it as unreal and illusion. He avoids thinking about being a companion of the person who killed his father, and he cannot even tell what he thinks about. Rachid denies his awareness by using weeds and alcohol. While he takes a corner on the balcony of the *fondouk*, there are others "ten or twenty men of all ages, silent dreaming, scattered along the balcony, deeply intoxicated" (Ibid, p.224). These men want to escape or be unaware of things they face to reduce their trauma effects. Denial manifests the damage that affected the colonized.

#### 1.4 Confusion: Uncertainty and Ambivalence

The colonized are repressed. If one of the natives resists the colonizer, all of the village will be affected. They are all afraid of collective punishment or colonial revenge. Women and children suffer from all sorts of agony and misery. So, all of them stand against anyone who does anything against the colonizer: "By now the whole village is cursing you..." (Ibid, p.40). Colonial policies create internal conflicts and disputes among natives to make the life of the colonized more complicated and burdensome. The natives get so accustomed to this despicable life and the oppression they encounter to the extent that they lose hope and interest in changing their lives for the better.

Life under colonial rule is a source of much perplexity. When the natives express their anger or defend themselves, they can be perceived no more than trouble-makers or peace-breakers disturbing the stable life of their fellow citizens. On the other hand, working with the colonizer makes them traitors. The situation creates a state of chaos and anarchy created by the colonizers. When it comes to Algerians and the way they are fragmented, they more or less serve the colonizers no matter when, where and how. They never dare to raise a question. Moreover, they blame each other when any of them does something that disturbs the colonizer. They are weak and act weaker, which enables the colonizer to rule them the way he wishes. According to Fanon (1967), "at times this Manichaeism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly it turns him

into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms (pp.32-33). The mentality of the natives is programmed to accept dehumanization and inferiority. In the novel, Mahmud asks Lakhdar "Which donkey? You or me" (Yacine, 1991, p.264). They feel that they are humiliated by everything around them. For Lakhdar the sound of Monsieur Ernest shoes seems to humiliate him "and the exasperating, ridiculous, humiliating noise her father's new shoes make" (Ibid, p.66). The way that the colonizer deals with animals is better than that they deal with the natives. Lakhdar says "We were locked up in the heart of the police station, in the hayloft. A sheep, a real sheep bounding around the loft" and the corporal treated that sheep in a better way than the human" (Ibid, p.70).

Committing suicide is a way for the colonized to get rid of their pain, poverty, and torment. As a result of depression, "a whole family committed suicide here" (Ibid, p.86). Everything around them reflects their agony "a river in agony" (Ibid, p.88) and their dark life, "the darkened sea" (Ibid, p.88). The people feel that they are isolated and defeated. *Nedjma*, a character representing Algeria says,

I shouldn't go out... A whim would be enough... A trip... Starting all over again... Not giving myself to a man, but not alone the way I am... They've shut me up to defeat me, isolated me by marrying me... Since they love me, I keep them in my prison (Ibid, p.89).

All along the novel *Nedjma* is wondering in silence, seeing everything but unable to say anything. Everyone controls her, and finally she is prisoned in Kalbut and guarded by the black man. *Nedjma* is aware of the fact that she is silenced to make her defeat easy. So, at the end she refuses to be controlled by anyone.

Unemployment and hollowness make the colonized careless, with eyes reflecting "the boldness, the carelessness of the great apartment buildings" (Ibid, p.86). For them, the city is like a big insensible jail. The city becomes soulless, and the colonized life becomes a train journey with no sense of time. The train brings "closer to the passenger the moment of the naked, demanding city which lets every movement break up within it" (Ibid, p.93) and makes the human "at the mercy of a mechanical encounter with death" (Ibid). Those emotionless machines could not feel the tragedy of the colonized people, and no one could help them. The city replaces its people with the newcomer as it replaces the train with a new kind of trains that does not belong to the colonized. The whole country sinks in the dark "so many indecisive beasts, quickly restored to their somnolent watchfulness; no one dares look upon the God of the pagans now at his daily summit: noon, image of Africa seeking its shadow, unapproachable nakedness of the empire-eating continent the plain swollen with wine and tobacco" (Ibid, p.93). Algeria is left to the beasts that frighten the natives and leave nothing for them. Algeria, which is part of Africa, is being divided by the



colonizers and it falls in darkness as it waits for freedom.

*Nedjma* simultaneously explores ambivalences that devastated human sense of identity; the colonizers have two faces dealing with the people who live in the same place, Algeria. The colonizers who settle in Algeria after the independence are considered as civilized and educated people. They have privilege over the native: “gaming tables and first-class passages to France” (Ibid, p.136). The educated Arabs work under the authority of the settlement. Their children can join French schools, but they are forbidden from using their own language, Arabic. In addition, the colonizers do not give them the opportunity to observe their religious occasions publicly. Mustapha told his teacher “our holidays are not provided for in your calendars” (Ibid, p.295) and he gives his friend an excuse when they do not come to school in the anniversary of a religious occasion.

The colonized suffer from discrimination. When Lakhdar quarrels with his master, the police come and immediately consider Lakhdar guilty although he is not the one who started the quarrel. Shocked by the total absence of fair treatment, Lakhdar does not even think of running away. He rather stays motionless and emotionless where the corporal leaves him. The policeman treats Lakhdar badly, preventing him from walking in a normal way and even from looking to his friends, “Who soon no longer be able to see them, for the police man pushes him from behind and keeps him from turning around” (Ibid, p.68). Such unjust abusive and oppressive behavior is unlikely to be banished from the mind of its victims, and may have extremely negative consequences.

By contrast, the policeman helps Suzy to persuade her father not to return to the work yard because he was injured. In order to be safe, “The girl and the corporal are walking on either side of Monsieur Ernest with their arms around him, encouraging him, keeping him from going back” (Ibid, p.68). Tension, stress, and resentment are expected to prevail in such unhealthy atmosphere. The natives are traumatized by the colonizers’ ambivalence in the work field. They have to work for long hours, Monsieur orders them to do what he says and to “work ten hours including Saturday...” (Ibid, p.59), and these traumatized people cannot even dare to show their anger or objections: “Mustapha shows his disappointment right away... Lakhdar forces him to be quiet” (Ibid). The colonized obey the orders without any consideration for their own feelings.

The natives feel grateful to find a job, “smile, apes! it’s over. Tomorrow we work” (Ibid, p.333). It is a great victory for the colonized if they find job, “works and bread. Those are my dreams youth” (Ibid, p.318). Yacine here shows colonialism as spiritual killing with Algerian citizens leading hopeless lives. The opportunities available to them can barely keep body and soul together. Their suffering intensifies as all they can do is withholding their sentiments. They are denied freedom of speech which

they can enjoy in their world of dreams rather than their real life.

Referring to the desperate conditions in colonized countries, Fanon (1967) explains, “It is an underdeveloped world, a world inhuman in its poverty; but also it is a world without doctors, without engineers, and without administrators” (p.96). Colonizers have systematic plans to hold economic and social development back in countries under their control to keep them in need for their colonizers’ civilizing mission. Individuals are affected by such plans. They become aimless. The colonized educated youth spend ages sending letters to the employment agencies asking for jobs, decorating them with artificial language, full of respect in hope to be accepted as a workman or a cleaner. One may easily feel the sense of shock when all the desperate attempts made to find a job, no matter how meager the income it brings, seem to go in vain. For example, the only thing that they receive is a reply for the letter that they send to sell their body part as a result of starvation, “the director of the Institute Pasteur has forwarded your letter in which you proposed the sale of your eyes” (Yacine, 1991, p.332). The four men are aware that whatever the education they have, they will not gain any good work except as a cleaner:

Out of the thousands of children swarming in the streets, we are only a few students, surrounding with suspicion. Are we to work as flunkies, or content ourselves with ‘liberal professions’ in order to become the ‘privileged few’ ourselves? Can we have any other ambition? Everyone knows that a Moslem accepted in the air force sweeps up the pilots’ cigarettes, and if he’s an officer, even from the Polytechnic, he can only reach the rank of colonel in order to send his compatriots to the recruiting office... (Ibid, p.297).

Limited job opportunities, unemployment and the need to sell one’s body parts because of poverty usually cause harsh feelings and serious problems that can have catastrophic effects on individuals and their societies.

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## 2. POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA AND RACISM

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The colonizer considers the natives as the other who cannot represent themselves; they are uncivilized, childish, savage and less human. Instilling such negative ideas in someone’s minds makes them feel inferior. Boehmer (2005) claims that “the colonized made up the subordinate term in relation to European individuality” (pp.75-76) and at the same time he adds that they “categorized colonized people as primitive, inferior to European” (Ibid, p.76). The idea of inferiority dominates the colonized men. According to Fanon (2008), “the negro is enslaved by his inferiority” (p.42). Fanon also adds that this slavery makes the native live “in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected” (Ibid, p.55). In the novel, Ameziane tells Mourad when he tried to draw Suzy’s attention: “What can you say to a girl standing in the road especially

when she's the foreman's daughter!" (Yacine, 1991, p.28). Ameziane thinks that Mourad is inferior, so Suzy will not notice him or she will even treat him badly. In fact, Algerians may have a sense of double inferiority if they are Arabs "And not even Arab" (Ibid, p.28). They know that colonizers do not like to talk to Arabs face to face; they use intermediaries to communicate with them. Monsieur Ricard: "never speaks directly to an Arab either" (Ibid, p.18). At the same time, the colonizers stereotype the colonized image in the world's mind as nasty creatures, Mustapha said: "When I was born, I was fat, the tourists picked me up in their arms. He doesn't look like an Arab baby! How pretty he is!" (Ibid, p.279). The image of the fat boy may be seen as a symbol of the native land and its resources. Colonizers understand the value of native wealth which they completely exploit. At the same time they think the natives do not deserve this wealth and these resources. On their part, the colonized have strong feelings of hatred towards their colonizers because of the latter's exploitation and injustice.

Marsh (2010) points out the damage trauma causes as "Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between an individual and others as well as his or her own view of self, others, and the world" (p.116). The events which cause trauma destroy the sense of worthiness and make the traumatized lose self-worth. These events make the person focus on how to get rid of the pain, which leaves no time for improving the self or being productive. The colonized cannot escape trauma even when there is no conflict between the colonizer and the colonized. Schools and other colonial institutions such as police stations strengthen the superior/inferior relation between the colonizers and the colonized. There are two kinds of schools: schools for the colonizers' children which are well-equipped and schools for the colonized children which are poor and lack essential tools needed by those students. This is applicable to other colonial institutions such as the police station which does not blame Monsieur Richard and his pride for hitting the maid, but when Murad interferes they consider it as a crime, something ominous; and they predicted that he and his friends will get out of the village: "this time, he won't get out of it... and his friend will be called for questioning" (Yacine, 1991, p.40). The villagers considered them as strangers, criminals and trouble-makers while the colonizers have the right to stay and do whatever they want.

In the novel, the colonizer subdues the colonized. The colonized as inferior try to show their respect to the colonizer. They have to greet them regardless of their inner feelings, "you're better off saluting him as well as the civil and military authorities, especially Monsieur Richard who runs the bus line" (Ibid, p.33). As a French official, Richard can punish natives who do not show respect to him by not allowing them to use public service in their homeland. For the colonizer, nothing in the colonized country belongs to the colonized anymore.

Under colonial rule, citizens may not be sure about using public transport. Enjoying one of their basic civil rights depends on the mood or memory of the colonizer's agent. Feelings of discontent and injustice are likely to be aroused as citizens' freedom of movement is at the mercy of outsiders.

Traumatic feeling start since the colonized were young. Rachid hates his house as he feels that it is the house of defeat: "And Rachid had begun to loathe the place of sadness and abandon inherited from a father cut down in the prime of life" (Ibid, p.207). Warm feelings are absent among family members, even the strongest ones such as mother-son/daughter relationship. Losing the motherhood feeling indicates more than loss of an ordinary relation between mother and son or daughter. It goes beyond that to reach all ties that connect them with their land, country, tribes and families. These ties are affected badly as the colonized do not care about them. The most important thing for the colonized is being safe. Being insulted is normal among children who face different kinds of humiliation and dehumanization from a young age, which makes them traumatized:

The day he was promoted to the elementary course, he waited for the recreation period to rush into Madame Clément's courtyard... It was Monsieur Clément who found him. This time he received a rather rough smack on the cheek and was sent back to his new class from which he was quickly expelled: timidity became despondency, then playful savagery, finally hostility pure and simple. Then the other emotional bond with his mother broke..." (Ibid, p.207).

Rachid's fear and weakness make him helpless. And the way the colonizers treat the small children turns them into hostile ones. The children who suffer from traumatic experiences become programmed to take revenge upon anybody they meet and begin to have a feeling of envy toward people around them.

The colonized are aimless and unable to avenge themselves although they are young. Fear is instilled in their hearts. Tension permeates the school environment as "at the school... Madam Clément, the teacher, hit Mouloud on the head with the ruler. Our leader Bozambo took out his knife and offered it to Mouloud who tossed it at the teacher's feet without taking revenge" (Ibid, p.216). Weakness creates a sense of hostility. The weak person wants to prove to himself that he can do something or to take his rights. The teacher intentionally hits and insults the children's leaders to intimidate them all. Instead of a healthy educational environment where students learn new skills, one finds an atmosphere of violence and oppression destroying their spirits.

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## CONCLUSION

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*Nedjma* reflects postcolonial trauma through the suffering of different characters desperately seeking to escape their misery. Colonialism takes everything from the colonized

including honor and dignity, leaving them shocked and traumatized. The four major characters drink a lot of alcohol and smoke weeds to avoid thinking of their past traumatic experiences. Although the characters are fictional, still the writer derived them from a real world. Yacine took part in “Sétif demonstration” and he suffered from “imprisonment, without trial”(Kechichian, 2010) which made him definitely see a lot of young people in his country living under conditions similar to those of his characters. Life and death are alike for them as they conceive themselves no more than slaves; they do not lead a decent life and they work in their country for the benefit of the colonizer. They do not get proper education and no jobs are granted for them. The colonizer forces the colonized to follow colonial culture, undermining their native language, customs and traditions.

Racism and discrimination are constituent elements of colonial hegemony which is based on marginalizing the colonized, causing them to feel that they are excluded and despised. This feeling makes the use of force justifiable at first to resist colonial powers, and it becomes part of their daily life, even among family members. Traumatic effects of colonization cannot be easily erased from the minds of victims who have been exposed to all kinds of degradation and exploitation while being forced to migrate and face the unknown. The painful past lives with the victims of trauma in the present. A lot of them feel hopeless and homeless in their own homeland as if they are outside history, or even outside the circle of humanity.

Yacine is aware that writing his novel in French may be seen from different perspectives since it may “serve a neocolonial political machine, which only perpetuates our alienation. Yet the usage of the French language does not mean that we are the lackeys of a foreign power” (Kechichian, 2010, para.2) and “I write in French in order to say to the French that I am not French”(Casanova, 2004, p.260). Thus, while some opinions indicate that using the language of the colonizer (French) further promotes colonial policies and power, others consider it as a way to deliver messages for the colonizers about the feelings of the colonized, their rights and the damage caused by colonization. Using French made a large number of French people read his work. Yacine is like millions of Algerians who believed in revolution against the colonizer. His people used weapons to fight the French, and he used his pen.

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