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American and Algerian Historical and Literary Continuities: Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008) and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985)

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Abstract

This present research work undertakes a study of the American-Algerian historical and literary continuities in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008) and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985) in the light of New Historicism. It looks into the historical contexts and literary techniques which have influenced the production of the two texts. While Morrison's *A Mercy* is concerned with 17th century colonialism and slavery institution in America, Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* deals with French colonialism and the post-independence era in Algeria. The present work considers the literary techniques the two authors employ in the texts, including anecdotes, polyphony, and palimpsests to, allegedly, underline subjective historical realities and accounts. In the light of Stephen Greenblatt's new historicist approach, this research studies the interconnection of the historical and literary discourses in the texts. Shaped by the contextual codes and values of their time periods, the two literary texts, with the use of relevant literary techniques, construct subversive historical representations. Morrison and Djebar rewrite and revise the past histories of their nations to register the marginalized voices and experiences overstepped in the White colonial essentialist discourses.

Key words: *A Mercy*, *L' Amour, la Fantasia*, 17th century America, colonial and postcolonial Algeria, New Historicism, literary techniques

Dedication

To the memory of my brother Aissa. May Allah bless his soul and grant him the highest levels of paradise.

To my beloved parents, my faith, my hope, and my support

To all my sisters and brothers: Sonia, Wardia, Saloua, Idir, and Monçef.

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General Introduction

Introduction

Postmodernism as a pioneering philosophical and literary thought come into being in the second half of the twentieth century. It grows out of the new emerging ideologies, philosophies, and movements underway in the sixties, such as the Civil Right Movement, Women's Liberation Movement, and the liberation movements in the colonized countries. As an interdisciplinary field of study, postmodernism comprises various sub-theories, including Post-colonialism, Feminism, Post-structuralism, and New Historicism. These theoretical frameworks are critical of foundationalist thought and insist on the subjectivity and relativism of experience and truth. Indeed, the above mentioned postmodern theories react against the socio-cultural and historical realities bent on biased representations, hierarchy, and exclusion to emphasize and foreground subjective truths and experiences. They reflect on the essentialist, one-sided representations to introduce subjective interpretations in reference to the individuals' multiple and varied experiences.

The postmodern thinking considers a particular conception of literature and history. The new emerging cultural values and liberating philosophies of the 1960's have influenced the progressive perception of history advanced in the colonial era, moving it from objectivity and linearity to subjectivism and discontinuity. In reference to the progressive notion of the historical discourse, literary texts and historical writings are demarcated by clear cut distinctions set by former theories, such as Old Historicism and New Criticism. The old historicists focus on the historical context, by recording and exploring accurate, objective, and linear events disregarding the literariness of the text. Whereas, the new critics emphasize the text's artistic and poetic elements and explore the historical context as a secondary background. Old

historicism and New Criticism have established fixed boundaries between history and literature, privileging history at the expense of literature or vice versa.

As a postmodern theory, New Historicism sees the history-literature binary in constant and dynamic interaction and intersection. Instead of the unilateral studies of Old Historicism and New Criticism, the new historicists suggest a parallel analysis of both the historical context and the literariness of the text to comprehend the text's meanings. The approach assumes that the literary text reflects the established socio-cultural representations to insert subjective views and individual voices overstepped in dominant discourses. From this perspective, the literary text as a contextual and social production influences and subverts the dominant historical interpretations and representations. Yet, in its turn, the histories or accounts recovered are rendered fictional and lend themselves to literary language and techniques. That is history becomes a text. In a nutshell, history influences the text and literature influences history.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar consider the contextuality and textuality of their fictional narratives, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, respectively, to communicate definite ideas related to the historical and literary discourses. As postmodern writers, Morrison and Djebar rewrite definite historical past periods with reference to their significant socio-cultural values, ideologies, and historical representations. While Morrison's text revises the 17th century American society, the colonial and slave institution, Djebar's narrative explores the contextual ideologies of the Algerian society during French colonialism and the post-independence era.

Despite their socio-cultural and historical backgrounds, Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour La Fantasia* display continuities in terms of theme and structure. Instead of a traditional writing depicting accurate, objective, and linear

historical facts, Morrison and Djebar construct their nations' past histories using subjective and disrupted accounts. Actually, the two authors fictionalize the historical events specific to the American and Algerian histories by using similar literary techniques to develop counter narratives that react against the social monolithic discriminations and historical repressions. Through their reflections on the contextual codes, the texts understudy use distinct literary techniques, such as anecdotes, polyphony, and palimpsest to oppose the objective, monolithic, and linear records. The two texts constitute distinct nonlinear and fragmented accounts, which reveal the subjective views and voices of the marginalized individuals. Morison and Djebar, as may be assumed, reconstruct the individuals' social conditions to point down the discriminating and racial boundaries set between the power-holders and the aliens (people of minorities); the civilized centre and the primitive 'Other'. Hence, in accordance with the new historicists' insights, Morrison and Djebar consider the contextual and textual elements and their reciprocal interconnectedness in their literary narratives. They reveal several historical and literary continuities in the American and Algerian fictions/literary traditions.

As such, the present research work undertakes a study of the shared historical and literary concerns in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour La Fantasia*. It looks into the two texts' deployment of similar thematic concerns and literary techniques despite the differences in setting, culture, and language. One point of focus in this analysis is the two authors' concern with revision. They leaf through their nations' past and present histories in search for biased representation, racist attitudes, and hierarchical representations. Indeed, their attempt is subversive and aspires to deconstruct monolithic orthodoxies and voice oppressed and silenced experiences and groups.

Review of the Related Literature

A Mercy and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* have received a considerable amount of criticism. The critics involved embody various positions on the critical spectrum. In his article entitled "Americanity and Resistance in *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison" (2016), Gonçalo Cholant underlines the rewriting and revision of the historical context of 17th century America. He analyses the historical insights revealed in *A Mercy* in the light of the concept of Americanity[1]. Cholant studies Morrison's revision of the past history of America in reference to the elements constituting the concept of 'Americanity', such as coloniality, racism, and ethnicity as manifested in *A Mercy*. He assumes that Morrison's rewriting of the contextual ideologies of 17th century America depicts the White colonialism, the racial codes of the slave system, and their impact on the ethnic groups. The writer reveals that the contextual ideologies of 17th century America, which Morison reviews, are determined by the Whites' codes and beliefs. Morrison, as the critic suggests, shows the Europeans colonization of America and its policy in marginalizing the minorities, including the blacks and Native Indians.

In addition to the colonial oppressive codes, Cholant refers to the racial and hierarchical system of slavery created to subjugate people on the basis of differences in color, race, and cultural background. For him, Morrison assures that the Whites establish this discriminatory system to subdue the slaves under their autocratic dominance. To react against these discriminatory influences, Morrison reconsiders their individual and subjective views by telling history from their perspectives (5). Cholant points out Morrison's reasons behind rewriting of the contextual ideologies of 17th century America, saying:

> Revisiting the history of America and of Americans, she brings to the fore subjectivities that were misconstrued, denied, or erased by traditional historiography. (…) It is in works such

> as *A Mercy* that social minorities have a chance to recover their own history, to be seen in their complexity, and to recover some humanity. (12)

As shown in this quote, Cholant reveals the way Morrison reconstructs the historical context to counter the fixed and traditional representations of history as monolithic and power-bound. He asserts that Morrison underlines the individual experiences of the disregarded minorities by reacting against their oppression and discrimination. Cholant's review is significant for the understanding of the contextual ideologies depicted in Morrison's text. Yet, it seems to fall short of any reference to a specific theoretical framework to support his ideas. Also, the review makes no reference to the literary techniques deployed by Morrison to support her historical themes.

Likewise, in his article entitled "Body/Text/History: Violation of Borders in Assia Djebar's *Fantasia*" (1998), David Waterman discusses *L'Amour, la Fantasia* in relation to the Algerian colonial history. He studies the text by focusing on the oppressive attitudes of French colonialism and its influences on the Algerian society and individuals. He reads Djebar's text as a "novel which centers on Algeria under occupation as inextricably linked to the female body, functioning as the site of signification and mediation" (319). Waterman depicts the relation between the colonization of Algeria and the subjugation of women; the oppression of the Algerian women is similar to the mutilation of the land. For him, by rewriting the historical ideologies of the Algerian colonial period, Djebar reflects on the socio-cultural representation of the females by reconstructing their historical contributions and role in the colonial era. Waterman insists that Djebar's revision of some historical events during French colonialism aims to react against that history which is "generally written by the winners of the conflict" (328). He reads *L'Amour, la Fantasia* as the individual voice of the author, which looks to deconstruct the established boundaries

set by the colonial codes repressing the historical contribution of the female figures. It reacts against the official written history through the incorporation of the textual records of the alienated females.

Waterman's insight into Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* is relevant for the present study as it emphasizes on the hegemonic and despotic nature of the colonial history in Algeria and the author's insertion of women's contribution in that history. Nevertheless, the present work fills the gap by supporting these ideas with reference to New Historicism as a theoretical framework.

Still, in reference to Morison's and Djebar's acts of revision, various critics have drawn connections between the writings of the two authors. In her work entitled *Subverting Silence: Defining Feminine Spaces in the Works of Toni Morrison, Assia Djebar and Zoe Wicomb* (2009), Lisa Van Erp studies Morrison's and Djebar's texts from a feminist perspective. She underlines the two authors' discussion of the American-Algerian distinct socio-cultural contexts and historical pasts. She reveals Morrison's and Djebar's reflections, respectively, on the authoritative codes of 17th century America and the discriminating social values and Islamic beliefs during the colonial and post-colonial periods in Algeria. For her, the two writers depict these contextual ideologies of the past eras to retrace their submissive, discriminative, and oppressive influences on the individuals, especially women. Using the theoretical framework of gender theory and feminine space advanced by such feminists as Virginia Woolf and Hélène Cixous, Van Erp explores the themes of the feminine individuality, forced submission, buried memory, silenced voices, and normative violence in both texts. The critique argues that all these thematic notions deny the erection of a socio-cultural free feminine space. Hence, she argues that through the depiction of the circulating ideologies in the American and Algerian contexts during

the past periods, Morrison's and Djebar's works reconstruct women's social and historical representations. They insert their silenced voices and accounts to create, as indicated by Van Erp: "a feminine space independently of masculine authorities and expectation" (3).

Van Erp's study is significant as it emphasizes on Morrison's and Djebar's historical revisions of past histories in the light of the feminist approach. However, it disregards the textual and fictional aspects of the two works, which is one focus in the present work.

Furthermore, in her MA thesis entitled *The Powerful Writing Strategies of Assia Djebar and Toni Morrison: Differentiation of the Depictions of Otherness through Literature* (2010), Sanne Boersma compares between some works of Assia Djebar and Toni Morrison, including *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, *A Mercy,* and *Paradise*. She emphasizes the literariness of the texts understudy by revealing the authors' different writing strategies. Boersma depicts several writing methods, which she calls as 'the strategy of differentiating documentation' and the 'strategy of semi-autobiography' with reference to Djebar's works, and 'the strategy of early history' and 'the strategy of democracy of narrative participation and poetics imagination' in relation to Morrison's texts. In *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, the author argues that Djebar's *L'Amour La Fantasia* uses childhood memories, witnesses, reports, and testimonies to juxtapose historical documentations with autobiographical experiences and individual views. Also, Morrison's *A Mercy* reconstructs the early history of 17th century America by recording marginalized voices and individual views.

Boersma relates the author's deployed writing strategies to the postcolonial theory and Homi Bhabha's concept of 'third space'. She argues that the used writing

strategies serve the postcolonial writing of the two authors. Through these strategies, they challenge the boundaries set between the one-sided narrative written by the power-holders and the marginalized accounts that bring to the fore the subjective and diverse historical experiences. Boersma's literary study is relevant as it depicts the different writing strategies Morrison and Djebar employ in their narratives in relation to the postcolonial thought. Nevertheless, it seems lateral and one-sided revealing the old historicist insights. It studies the fictional and the literary aspects of the texts understudy as a means to foreground the historical revisions and postcolonial thoughts of the two writers. By doing so, it distinguishes the literary texts as poetic and imaginative constructions apart from the historical and politic writings.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* have received a wide spectrum of criticism. Gonçalo Cholant, David Waterman, and Lisa Van Erp base their readings on the depiction of the contextual ideologies particular to specific past periods in the history of America and Algeria and their influences on the individuals, such as the colonized and women. Sanne Boersma studies the different writing strategies which Morrison and Djebar underline in their texts to convey their postcolonial thoughts. This critical literature review has not, up to my humble knowledge, paired the historical and the literary aspects in the authors' texts in a single study with reference to the theoretical framework of New Historicism. Hence, the present work intends to draw mutual interconnection between the historical and the textual aspects of the literary texts understudy in the light of this theory. The originality of the work resides, first, in revealing the socio-cultural and historical codes controlling the texts' contexts related to America's and Algeria's oppressive colonial histories, and second, in demonstrating the American and Algerian historical and literary affinities presented in the literary texts.

The choice of the topic is stemmed from a personal interest in American literature and history introduced in American Studies course and Contemporary African Literature. Also, my choice is drawn from an interest in the interconnections between fictional writings and historical contexts outlined in the postmodern literature and, essentially, the theoretical framework of New Historicism, which are introduced in Theories of Literature course. Fascinated by contemporary individual narratives and subversive/ reconstructive interpretations, my choice falls upon Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*.

The present study interprets *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* in the light of the postmodern theory of New Historicism advanced by the American scholar Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). This practice insists on the parallel analysis of the historical and the fictional aspects revealed in the text under study. It suggests that the power-bound contextual values determine the author's text, his views, beliefs, and his individual interpretations. In the same way, this written text communicates distinct meanings and relative representations, which reflect on the sociocultural context of its production.

The current study has twofold aims. First of all, it depicts the dominant socio-cultural values and ideological discourses underlying the historical contexts presented in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. Also, this study points out the authors' individual views and subversive interpretations of these contexts by considering the marginalized experiences and silenced voices. Secondly, the present research intends to demonstrate that despite the differences in history, culture, and language, Morrison and Djebar have similar historical concerns and make use of similar literary techniques to back up their historical revisionist endeavor. Hence, this research aims at exploring these shared concerns to show the way Morrison, as a

literary historian, and Djebar, as a professional historian, fictionalize history and historicize fiction. In doing so, the two authors bridge the gap between history and literature.

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into a general introduction, three chapters, and a general conclusion. The general introduction refers to the characteristics of the postmodern thought and its influence on the conception of the historical and literary discourses with reference to the practice of New Historicism. The first chapter entitled "*A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*: Texts in Context" explores the historical and literary contexts, which influence both texts, and includes the two writers' biographies and the plot overview of their texts. The second chapter entitled "New Historicism: an Overview of the Practice" discusses the main principles of the new historicist approach with reference to Stephen Greenblatt's theoretical framework in the study of the contextual and textual aspects of the literary texts. The third chapter entitled "The Historical and Literary Continuities in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia"* analyzes the American-Algerian historical and literary affinities providing notable insights into the two texts' engagement with the revision of past histories and the literary techniques deployed as a support to back it up. The general conclusion sums up the major ideas discussed in the work and draws respective results from the analysis.

Chapter One

A Mercy and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*: Texts in Contexts

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Introduction

The literary text is considerably interrelated with its context. It mirrors and bears the ideologies and the sociocultural codes particular to the time period of its production. Indeed, the close study of literary texts requires a definite exploration of the way the present texts are reciprocally associated and interconnected with the sociocultural, historical, and literary contexts of their societies during specific time periods.

The present chapter studies the historical and literary contexts of the two text understudy; Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia.* It contextualizes the texts within their socio-historical time periods and the literary traditions they uphold / reflect. In the first section, the present chapter provides some historical facts in Morrison's and Djebar's texts. It depicts the 17th century colonial America, the institution of slavery, and its influence on the sociocultural conditions of the minorities in *A Mercy*. As far as Djebar's text is concerned, it reveals the French colonization of Algeria in 1830, the revolutionary war of the 1954, and the postcolonial Algerian society of the 1960s. This chapter provides short biographies of the two authors, Morrison and Djebar, and the plot overview of their texts, respectively, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. Adding up, it suggests feminist and postcolonial readings of the texts understudy. In their texts, Morrison and Djebar are revealed as two feminist and postcolonial writers advocating the themes and ideas of these literary movements.

I. Contextual Study

I.1. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

I.1.1. The English Thirteen Colonies

To escape the harsh sociocultural and religious conditions in their countries in the 17th century, the Europeans, mainly, the English have moved to the New World, seeking religious freedom and economic easiness. In his *The Forts of Colonial North America* (2010), René Chartrand, a Canadian historical consultant and writer, indicates that:

> The European colonization of North America was the result of endeavors by several nations. Explorers flying the English flag appeared on the North American coast as early as 1497 and many others followed. Viable, permanent settlements, however, would not occur until the beginning of the 17th century when English colonists built fortified dwellings, first in Virginia and later in Massachusetts. (4)

In this quote, Chartrand reveals the origins of European colonialism of North America, which goes back to the 1497. Following up the European first settlements, England has come after to occupy the land. It was during the 17th century that the English colonization of the New World began with the founding of Virginia colony (1607), originally Jamestown, by the Virginia Company during the reign of the King James I. It was followed by Massachusetts Bay colony, established in 1630 by the Pilgrim Fathers, an English puritan group seeking the freedom of cult. These first colonies were followed by others, including New Hampshire (1623), Maryland (1632), Connecticut (1635), Rhode Island (1636), North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. These colonies were founded for diverse economic, political, or sociocultural purposes. The colonists have escaped the European ideologies in the hope for a better and liberal world in America.

I.1.2. Slavery in America

17th century America is not only known for geographical discoveries and overseas explorations, but also for the peculiar institution of slavery. To achieve their ideological powers and economic aims, the Europeans have established a strict social system based on race distinctions referred to as slavery institution. In his book *Without Consent or Contract: the Rise and the Fall of the American Slavery* (1989), Robert Fogel refers to slavery as "not only one of the most ancient but also one of the long-living forms of economic as social organization. It came into being at the dawn of civilization, when mankind passed from hunting and nomadic pastoral life into primitive agriculture" (17). For him, slavery is a very ancient economic and social institution. It marks the shift from the hunting practices to the agricultural system, providing the manual manpower.

Slavery in colonial America was spread in the Sothern settlements, including Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, etc. It began in 1619 when a Dutch ship brought African slaves to the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. Actually, 17th century America has known a considerable trade of slaves. This trade is referred to as the 'Triangular trade' or the 'Middle Passage'. It linked England, Western Africa, and the English colonies in North America. The English provided industrial goods such as arms, textiles, and brandy to the Western African tribes in exchange of black slaves. These strong Africans were brought to the colonies for a cheaper and plentiful labour. They worked in the agricultural plantations to cultivate tobacco, coffee, sugar, and cotton, which were destined to England and other European markets.

To increase their production and output, the White masters imposed restrictive codes on the slaves. They were not allowed to learn and read or to express themselves

freely. In his text *Without Consent or Contract*, Robert Fogel describes the ruling system set within the slave plantation in colonial America, saying:

> A plantation might be considered as a piece of machinery," said Bennet H. Barrow in his Highland plantation rules. 'To operate successfully, all its parts should be uniform and exact, and its impelling force regular and steady," 'Driving', the establishment of a rigid gang discipline, was considered the crux of a successful operation. Observers, such as Robert Russell, said that the discipline of plantation life was "almost as strict as that of our military system. (26-27)

In his quote, Fogel depicts the harshness, rigidity, and discriminatory laws governing slavery. The White colonists exploited the Africans, depriving them from their individual views and values. They think that the more oppressing the system is the more plentiful the slaves are. To increase their wealth and power, the slave owners also encourage the population of the slave in the plantations. In reference to the colonial ideologies of white dominance and the hierarchical and discriminatory system of slavery, the blacks and slaves were marginalized and oppressed. Their individual identities and cultural heritage were repressed by the dogmatism of their White masters. Slavery is a dehumanizing institution encouraging racist and supremacist attitudes. It disregarded the sociocultural and historical contribution of these oppressed individuals.

I.1.3. Bacon's Rebellion in 1676

After the Europeans' settlements in the New World, they have managed, progressively, to acquire wealth from slaves and move furthermore in the continent, exploring other lands. In reaction to the European colonialism and expansion policies, the Native Indians have led diverse individual and collective attacks on the Whites. They have opposed the dogmatic colonial ideologies and their hierarchical social

system, based on gender and race discriminations. These codes oppressed Natives' beliefs, such as the exploitation of the sacred lands. In response to these repeated Indians attacks, the dominant Whites used their power to protect themselves, while the alienated and marginalized ethnic groups remained powerless and insecure.

Many of the Europeans who moved to the New World for religious freedom, land, and opportunities for wealth were deceived by the laws of sovereign states of Europe, sustaining the power holders over the other social classes. In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon, a citizen in Virginia, led an uprising against the governor William Berkeley. It started by the Whites living near the Native tribes and joined, later on, by the indentured servants and the slaves. The Bacon's Rebellion pleaded for a more offensive reaction against Indians' attacks by ensuring communal security and protection of White powerless groups.

As Berkley refuses to ensure protection from the Indians' attacks, the rebels rejected his dogmatic ideologies and questioned his authority by issuing the 'Declaration of the People' (1676). They denounced the discriminatory and oppressive codes supporting the higher classes by ensuring them a social protection. After the rebellion, the Governors of Virginia have issued laws claiming the authority of Whites over all other races and ethnic groups. They have given the right to Whites to persecute and kill any black or Native, willing to offend them. Actually, these laws issued after Bacon Revolution have deepened the gap between the social classes of colonial America during the 17th century. They have confirmed Whites' people supremacist and oppressive attitudes by imposing taxes on the slaves and Native Indians.

I.2. Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

I.2.1. French Colonialism in Algeria

I.2.1.1. Military Invasion and Territorial Expansion

The French colonization of Algeria began with a military invasion in 1830 because of a disagreement about unpaid debt between France and Algeria. Meeting the Dey Hussein, the French Consul Pierre Deval asked him for some requirements about some economic contracts on behalf of France. The Dey refused Deval's request waving by his fan to claim, in his turn, the unpaid French debts. The French misunderstood the Dey's gesticulation as an insult toward the French people for which they had to avenge. In his book *Histoire de France* (1956), H. Guillemain relates the anecdote saying: "the chief of Algiers was angry with our consul who demanded something in the name of France and struck the latter with his fan! Charle X protested against this offensive insult. The Dey of Algiers would not make any excuses. Thus, Charle X sent a fleet and troops to Algiers and seized the city" (Trans, Mine; 312).

In fact, the French monarch Charle X got advantage of the weakness of the Dey, who refused to apologize for his gesticulation to conquer Algeria. In the 14th of June 1830, the French warships, led by the General Bourmont, landed in the Algerian harbor of the Sidi-Ferruch. In his *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (2007), Martin Evans indicates that the French landed with "an impressive force of 37000 men and 91 artillery pieces, its [the French] largest expedition since the Napoleonic campaign" (3). To react against the attacks, the Dey fought the French in the battle of Staouéli in 19th of June 1830, to quote Evans as "the only serious military engagement of the whole campaign" (3). By the 5th of July 1830, General Bourmont captured the city of Algiers, completing the French conquest of the country. He exiled the Dey and seized his treasures, including the gold and the agricultural goods.

The colonists enjoyed many socio-political privileges and the colonized led miserable lives. The Algerians' individual freedom of expression and dignity were repressed by the dogmatic power of the French colonial administration. After the capture of Algiers, the French conquerors initiated an expansion policy to work their control all over the country during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Through their advanced military forces, the French moved progressively to the Eastern regions. They persecuted and humiliated the natives through exploiting their wealth and land. To react against the colonial invasion and its discriminating policies, the colonized people organized various revolts such as the rebellion of Abd El-Kader, El-Mokrani, Lalla Fatima Nsoummar, Sheikh el Haddad, among others in different regions of the national territory. These regional revolutions were harshly repressed and smashed by the French forces. In 1889, the colonial administration issued laws giving foreigners the French nationality to settle in Algeria. They encouraged the settlements of the colonists to spread their control and dominance over local populations and avoid the popular uprisings. Hence, the authoritative ideologies of the colonists harshly influenced the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the Algerians.

Modern historians point out the hidden purposes of the French conquest. They underline that the French invaded Algeria because of its geography and natural richness as a strategic trading-post in the Mediterranean Sea. It provided the French colonial empire with agricultural good such as corn and olives to meet their needs. In his *France, Algérie et Colonies* (1883), Onésime Reclus reflects on the significance of Algeria for France during the 1830's. He indicates that "because, by Algeria, we [French] are entering this vast barbarian continent, three times bigger than Europe, five times greater than France" (Trans, Mine; 591). Indeed, it was through Algeria that

the French conquered the Northern and the Central countries of Africa which serves the French monarchy to regain its domestic popularity.

I.2.1.2. Algerian War of Independence 1954-1962

The French colonial administration carried on its socio-political marginalizing policies to weaken the national forces and frustrate people. It founded a hierarchical system within the society bent on favoritism and distinctions between the dominant privileged colonizer or settler and the indigenous Algerian. The Algerian war of independence (1954-1962) came as an answer to the French dividing policies and colonial institution as a whole. From their past experiences of popular revolutions, they have decided to organize themselves much better and construct national unions to face the oppression of colonialism. In 1926, many historical figures, such as Messali Hadj, Ferhat Abbas, and Abane Ramdan among other created the first associative and political party. They denounced the colonial injustices by advocating the individual rights and freedoms of the Algerian people. This political party served the native population to develop a spirit of union and consciousness against the despotism of the French colonial power.

After the end of the WWII, Algeria witnessed popular manifestations all over the country in May 1945, claiming liberation and freedom. In 1940, France promised independence for the Algerians as they fought with it against the Nazi. However, after the victory of the Allies, France refused to liberate Algeria. They brutally repressed the manifestations, killing thousands of people in the events of May 1945. Following the events, the Algerian population decided on the necessity of military action against the colonial power as the only way to get their freedom.

In November 1954, a military revolution led by the Front de Liberation National was launched allover Algeria. The rebels attacked strategic sites of the French army, causing considerable losses for the colonial administration. Despite the

colonial power, the Algerian revolution was crowned with success. It gained the recognition and support of foreign countries and human rights organizations. Face to these contextual circumstances, the French administration of De Gaulle was forced to negotiate the national liberation of Algeria. The first peace talks in 1961 ended in failure, but the second peace talk at Evian, in 1962, led to the agreement over many political and economic issues such as the independence of Algeria and the cease fire of 19 March 1962. In July 5th, 1962 the Front de Liberation National declared the independence of Algeria, ending 132 years of colonialism.

I.2.2. Postcolonial Algeria

The post-independence times in Algeria started in the 1960s, after the withdrawal of the French troops in the country. The period witnessed distinct socio-political and historical challenges. In fact, after the end of the revolutionary war, Algeria has seen a conflict over the governance of the country between the political and military leaders. Post-independence Algeria was known mainly for its conservative socio-political system demonstrated through the political executions and the one party rule by the Front de Liberation National. Actually, the despotism of the colonial period persisted after independence, influencing considerably the Algerian society. It founded a hierarchical system based on strict distinctions based on class, gender, and role. The Algerian society was determined by conservative sociocultural codes and values restricting the individual liberties and rights, such as the freedom of self-expression, which influenced the sociocultural and historical representation of the Algerians in the coming decades.

Ahmed Ben Bella, an ex-fighter, was appointed as the first president of the independent Algeria in September 15th, 1963. Because of the persisting political and economic tension, Ben Bella was overthrown by the military *coup d'état* led by Houari

Boumdiene in June 19th 1965. Nowadays, the Algerian peoples live in a liberated society achieving several socio-political and economic developments. Currently, Algeria accomplishes significant progresses in different domains of education, politics, and economy, such as the multiparty governing system and the socio-economic infrastructures. Still, the Algerians endure some social discriminations inherited from past colonial institution and the persisting conservative codes and beliefs.

II. Literary Context

II.1. Toni Morrison's Biography

Toni Morrison is an African American writer and a contemporary woman of letters. Her childhood, family, and community are the cornerstones of her critical and fictional works. Indeed, many of the themes she explores in her texts reflect both individual and communal issues, including the African American community, black identity, and racial discriminations.

Toni Morrison, born as Chloe Ardelia Wofford, is born on February 18th, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, as the second child to George and Ella Ramah Wofford. Morrison's parents induced her to develop an appreciation for the values of self-reliance, responsibility, faith, and hope. She has been largely instructed by her grandparents, telling her stories about slavery and history from the times of slavery, describing their endurance of racism and discrimination.

Toni Morrison has led a bright and an accomplished academic career. She began her education at Lorain High School, where she was graduated in 1949. Afterwards, she carried on her education at Howard University, where she majored and received a BA in literature. While at Howard, she realized that the majority of the programs taught emphasized the involvement of the European history and culture in

the New World, relegating the sociocultural and historical contribution of the African American community. As such, she dedicated many of her critical texts to revive the black culture and history. In 1955, she received her MA in English at Cornell University, working on a paper about *Virginia Woolf's and William Faulkner's Treatment of the Alienated*.

As an editor, Morrison encourages works on African literature and the publication of Black writers, including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Leopold-Sedar Senghor, and, mainly, Ivan Van Sertima. Morrison's commitment was also manifested in her involvement in the 'Black Arts Movement'. For Morrison, the Black arts transmit the African American cultural heritage and history, including the traditional forms of storytelling, values, and ethics. The Black arts are made of both printed and oral literature like it was introduced in *The Black Book* Morrison edited in 1974, and which seeks to revive and reconsider the past history of the African American community. The advent of the Civil Right Movement has influenced the cultural constructions of Toni Morrison. In her writings, she called Blacks people to preserve their cultural practices and maintain the social values of their families and community and, mainly, to have faith in their individual competences.

Toni Morrison's literary career started with the publication of her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. In it, she narrates the story of Pecola Breedlove, a poor Black girl, who aspires to have blue eyes as a means to construct a social status. Published in 1973, her novel *Sula* was followed by *Song of Salomon* in 1977, for which she won the National Book Critic Award. These works were followed by *Tar Baby* released in 1981 and *Dreaming Emmett* in1986, Morrison's first dramatic play. These texts look into a wide spectrum of issues characteristic of Morrison's career as a black woman, such as friendship, marriage, family, quest for identity, class conflicts, and racial

issues. In 1987, Toni Morrison published *Beloved*. Set in Ohio, during the Reconstruction Era, the novel recounts the life of Sethe, a black woman smashed by her social and cultural constructions. Through the act of killing that Sethe undertakes, Morrison reviews not only the intricacies of the maternal love, but also the violent impact of the institution of slavery as it affects the black peoples, both physically and emotionally. Morrison manages to appeal her readers' consciousness through various aesthetic and restorative narratives in *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2011), *God Help the Child* (2015), and more recently, *The Origin of Others* (2017). Apart from her fictional works, Toni Morrison also writes critical essays, including "*Playing in the Dark: Essays on Whiteness and the Literary Imagination"* (1992), which reveal her sociocultural, literary, and political ideologies.

In 1988, Morrison received the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved.* She also awarded the Chianti Ruffino Antico Fattore price in 1990, to be the first woman and Black writer to receive it. Besides, in 1993, Morrison was considered as the first African American woman to win the Noble Prize, which she dedicated to all women, who suffer in silence under complex social structures. Ultimately, in 2016, Morrison received PEN/ Nabokov Award for Achievement in International Literature.

II.2. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* Plot Overview

A Mercy is Toni Morrison's text published in 2008. It tells the individual stories of many characters living in 17th century America, including Jacob Vaark, Florens, Lina, and Sorrow. Through these voices, the narrative reveals the circulating values which guide the life of these individuals under European colonialism, slavery, and racism.

The narrative revolves around the story of Jacob Vaark and the group of women living with him in the American wilderness. It narrates the way this White man settles in the New World and the hardships they come across. Jacob marries

Rebekka and purchases Florens, Lina, and Sorrow gathering them all in his Farm. He rescues them from their harsh living circumstances to serve him in the farm and help his wife Rebekka, who is in difficulty after the death of her child Patrician. Through the text, Jacob expresses his views and interpretations on the historical context of 17th century America. He conveys his views on Bacon's Rebellion, an uprising in Virginia 1676, led by the Whites, who are pro-slavery against the minorities, who are against it claiming more individual freedoms for the slaves. Reflecting on this historical event, Jacob depicts the harsh laws set after the conflict favouring the White race over the other minorities referred to as the Other, such as the slaves and the Natives. Also, Jacob denounces the institution of slavery and its dehumanizing effects. He depicts the way the slave system and social discriminations oppress and marginalize these others, such as the slaves, the Natives, and women.

Morrison records the individual accounts of Florens, Lina, and Sorrow. They narrate their distinct past memories and present experiences in reference to European colonialism, slavery, and hierarchical American society. Florens, an African American girl, narrates her past memories with her mother at slave owner's plantation named D'Ortega's. She depicts the miseries which they undergo at the hands of their master. The text portrays the way Florens is abandoned by her mother and sent away with Jacob, because of the mistreatment of their master D'Ortega. At her stay in Jacob's farm, Florens expresses her personal suffering and social oppression in relation to her traumatic past. Due to such strict contextual ideologies of racism and discrimination, she loses her identity and becomes dependent on others like Jacob, his wife, and the Blacksmith. However, as she meets Lina, who supports and assists her, Florens learns to overcome her suffering and discriminations. Within a context less oppressive than her past one, she reconstructs her identity and determines herself as a reliable woman.

Like Florens, Morrison's text records the individual stories of Lina, a Native American, and Sorrow, an orphaned girl. Lina is captured by the Presbyterians, who impose on her their conservative codes. They deprive her from her Native cultural practices and language. However, as she resists their oppressive and marginalizing rules, they abandon her, selling her to Jacob Vaark. Also, Sorrow tells her story as a socially excluded girl. She shows the way she lost her identity, unable to recall her past origins, the thing that contributes to her social marginalization, and exclusion. She carries on her account narrating her passing into motherhood. For her, giving birth to a child serves her to change and mature. Adding up, the text reports the individual experience of the Blacksmith. As a free black man, the Blacksmith works as a contractor for Jacob to help him build his new mansion by making an iron fence and gate. During his working days at Jacob's farm, he gets along with the women who are living in the farm. He enters into a relationship with Florens and manages to heal Sorrow by using traditional medicines. After his leaving for some time, the blacksmith returns to the farm to cure Rebekka who is sick. He has asked Florens to stay in his house with Malaik, an orphaned boy of whom he takes care, waiting his coming back from the farm. At his return, he finds that Florens has mistreated and offended the little boy. The text tells the way the black man casts Florens out, deprecating her inhuman and harsh character.

The narrative closes up with the voice of Florens' mother. It relates her individual account reflecting on the institution of slavery. The mother recalls back her hardships as a slave servant for D'Ortega, his mistreatment, and harassment. She tells the moment she sends her daughter away, clarifying her real motives. She addresses her girl, explaining how much it is difficult for her to endure the separation. However, she shows that the separation is determined by her terrible living circumstances. For

her, abandoning Florens is an act of mercy to rescue her from experiencing the same oppressions she herself has undergone as a black female slave.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is a contextual and textual narrative. It bears and reflects the sociocultural values and codes of 17th century America, White settlements, slavery, and hierarchical society. It depicts the oppressive and marginalizing impact of this context on the individual life, their views, and identity formation. As the text constructs individual voices and distinct interpretations, Morison reacts against the established social representations excluding the aliens, and reconstruct individual realities within the historical knowledge.

II.3. Assia Djebar's Biography

Assia Djebar, nee Fatima-Zohra Imlhayen, was born on June 30th 1936 in Cherchell, Algeria. She was grown up in a bourgeois family. Her father, Tahar Imlhayen, was a teacher of French language and her mother, Bahia Sahraoui, was a housewife. At a very young age, Djebar has joined a Quranic school, where she solidified her religious faith. She studied in the primary school of Mouzaiaville before moving to College de Blida. After that, Djebar was sent to Lycée de Bugeaud in Algiers, where she has learnt Latin and Greek languages and passed her Baccalaureate exam in 1953. With her father's support, Djebar has moved to France to continue her education in 1954 and studied at Lycée Fénelon in Paris. A year later, she acceded the French Institute of Higher Education in Sèvres. In the wake of the Algerian war of independence, Assia Djebar joined the General Union of the Algerian Muslim Student's movement in France in 1956 to protest against the social injustices of the colonial institution in Algeria. As such, she was excluded from the Ecole Normal Superieur de Sèvres. In 1959, she has resumed her higher education as she was accepted at the Ecole Superieur de Paris as the first Muslim woman, where she has studied history.

Settled in Tunisia with her husband, Ahmed Ould-Rais, Djebar has worked as a journalist in a refugee camp in the Algerian Tunisian frontiers during the French military attack on Sakiet-Sidi Youssef. Afterwards, while preparing her degree in history, Djebar has moved to Morocco to teach the modern history of North Africa at the department of French in Rabat. In 1962, after the Algerian independence, Djebar returned back to her country. She has taught contemporary history at the University of Algiers. Yet, as the application of Arabic as the only language of the independent Algeria was issued, Djebar has left her office and went back to France.

Djebar started her literary career in 1957, the year she published, under a pen name, her first novel *La Soif* (The Mischief), which was followed by *Les Impatients* in 1958. The following years, Djebar has carried on her literary writing, releasing *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* in 1962, *Les Alouettes Naïves* in 1967; *Poemes pour l'Algerie heureuse, poésie* in 1969, and *Rouge l'aube, theatre* in 1969. The novelist Djebar has written more than ten novels through the following years. In her trilogy made of *Les Femme d'Alger dans leurs Appartements* (1980), *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985), and *Ombre Sultane* (1987), she explores many issues including the Algerian sociocultural struggles and the impact of the French colonialism on the Algerian Muslim society. While *L'Amour, la Fantasia* focuses on the role of women over the liberation of Algeria, *Far From Medina* draws light on the female characters during the times of the prophet Muhammad as they were inspirational sources of strength and have helped in the spread of Islam. Besides, Djebar considers the Algerian cultural representation between the local traditions and the cultural heritage of the French colonizer as it is portrayed through a set of characters in *So Vast the Prison* (1995).

Djebar has committed herself to literary and historical writings. In reference to the sociocultural contexts, Djebar depicts the complex structures of the Algerian

society within its cultures and traditions. Still, her studies on history have incited her to deeply explore and review past historical episodes in the history of Algeria and, most importantly, the role the social groups, including the role the common class and women have played during such historical events.

In the 1970's, Djebar also opted for cinematographic exploration as another artistic expression of her sociocultural ideologies. Indeed, her experience with cinema was reflected in her *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1978), which was awarded the Grand Prix de la Critique Internationale at Venice Film Festival and *La Zerda ou les Chants de l'oubli* (1982), named as the best historical film at the Berlin Festival in 1983.

Djebar's prolific critical and literary writings have accorded her a worldwide acknowledgment and recognition. In U.S.A, Djebar was awarded many prizes, including the International Literary Neustadt Prize for Literature in 1996 and the Prize of Marguerite Yourcenar the following year. Besides, she received the Peace Prize in Germany before she was elected as the first Muslim woman to the French Academy in 2005, the same year she was awarded Doctorate honoris causa at Osnabruck.

II.4. Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* Plot Overview

L'Amour, la Fantasia is Assia Djebar's novel published in 1985. It is set in Algeria during the colonial and postcolonial eras portraying various sociocultural and historical realities. This narrative is divided into three major parts: "The Capture of the City, or Love Letter" "The Cries of the Fantasia" and "The Voices from the Past." These parts depict French colonialism in Algeria and its influence on the society, in general, and the individual's identity self-fashioning, in particular. Hence, through using fiction, the text reflects the sociocultural and hierarchical representations particular to the colonial and postcolonial Algerian society.

The opening part entitled “The Capture of the City, or Love Letters” reviews three historical events in French colonialism in Algeria, chosen for their historical intensity as they led to the taking over of the country by the French. It records, first, the landing of the French armada in Algeria in the thirteenth of June, 1830, then, the Battle of Staouali in Saturday in June 19th, 1830, and the explosion of the Fort Emperor in July 4th, 1830. To narrate these historical moments, the text does not rely on a chronological narration reporting the tensions between the colonial powers and the Algerian fighters. Instead, it records witnesses and individual experiences during or after the events. It accounts the views and witnesses of Amable Matterer, first officer of the Ville de Marseille; Aimable Pélissier, general in the French army; J.T. Merle, theatre manager; and Barchou de Penhoen, French historian and politician. Each one of these figures communicates his individual views and sociocultural values in reference to his beliefs. Through these various accounts, the text shows the influence of colonialism on the Algerian society, showing its oppressing and marginalizing policies. Actually, this first part juxtaposes the distinct interpretations of these past accounts with the author’s views to construct relative views on the context surrounding the reviewed historical events.

The second part “The Cries of the Fantasia” is the following up of the preceding part. It tells many sequences presenting the territorial expansion of the French in Algeria. In fact, after the occupation of the capital city of Algiers, the colonial institution stretches its dominance over four geographical regions. As an illustration of these expansionary attacks, the text depicts the demolition of a local tribe of Ouled Riah. In the daybreak of June 1845, Aimable Pélissier sets on fire the villagers enclosed in a cave, including women, children, and animals. The narrative narrates these attacks revealing the harshness of the colonial policies and their impact

on the Algerian society and its circulating codes. They oppress and marginalize the colonized people through setting fixed social distinctions and cultural hierarchies within the community.

The third part entitled “Voices from the Past” includes many sections such as Voice, Embraces, Murmur, and Whisper. While the two preceding parts revise some historical events and their sociocultural interpretations, “Voices from the Past” portrays the influence of the colonial ideologies on the individual’s views, social representation, and identity self-fashioning. It records various accounts of a first person narrator, young brides, outspoken women held in French prisons, and the older war widow. They narrate their lives, their views, and contribution in the Algerian revolution. As shown in the text, these women are deceived by social exclusion and oppression after the independence despite their considerable contribution in the Revolutionary War. Their rights and individual freedom of expression are repressed and lost. Hence, through their voices, the text reconstructs the representations of the socio-historically disregarded women, expressing their individual distinct experiences and subversive views in relation to the controlling hierarchical codes and values.

Assia Djebar’s *L’Amour, la Fantasia* is constructed through a fragmented narration. It reveals the contextual ideologies of colonial and postcolonial Algeria by revising and fictionalizing some historical events. On the one hand, the narrative shows the way the dogmatic attitudes of the colonial institution influences the Algerian society. On the other hand, the text depicts the social exclusion and marginalization of the alienated women by the social hierarchies set by the fixed codes and traditional values. Through voicing women and bringing to the fore their individual accounts, the text reconstructs the social representation of the aliens and regards their repressed views and interpretations. The text breaks down the distinctions

set between literature and history, society and individual, and the presented monolithic realities.

III. Literary Study

III.1. Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literature refers to the philosophical written productions introduced in the second half of 20th century. It marks the end of the colonial expansionary policies of the 1960's. In fact, the postcolonial literary thought records the texts composed by Europe's former colonies in Africa, India, and the Caribbean denouncing colonialism and imperialism. Works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism,* Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak", and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* attempt to reconstruct the cultural heritage of the colonial countries repressed by the colonial powers. In their fictional and theoretical narratives, postcolonial authors reveal the despotism of the colonial institution and its oppressive policies toward the colonized people. Postcolonial works explore issues of the national and individual identity, language, and intercultural encounters between the colonizer and the colonized. They also see into and attempt to deconstruct White metanarratives bent on disparities between the colonizer and the colonized. That is, the postcolonial literary productions reconstruct relative sociocultural and historical realities written from the margins by aliens, reporting their repressed voices and accounts. In his "Discourse on Colonialism" (1972), Aimé Cesaire depicts his works as the voice of the marginalized people. He states:

> I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo- I am talking about those who, as I write this, are digging the harbour of Abidjan by hand. I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life- from life, from the dance, from wisdom. I am talking about

> millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys. (6-7)

In this quote, Cesaire demonstrates the objectives of his postcolonial writings. He voices the historical contributions of the Africans of Congo and Abidjan, as marginalized aliens by inserting their accounts. Cesaire unearths and considers the repressed natives' cultural heritages and beliefs, repressed under the colonial institution. For him, colonialism engenders the complex of inferiority by fixing hierarchical distinctions between the colonizer and the colonized; the civilized and supreme man and the primitive 'Other'. He urges the oppressed people to give up their fears and complexes and to face the oppressors and their monolithic attitudes. In addition to Aimé Cesaire's works, the postcolonial literature includes prolific works as Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), among others. On the whole, these works reveal the dominant views and codes of the European colonial policies oppressing and excluding the marginalized 'Other'. Yet, they revise the sociocultural representations of the colonized people and reconstruct their repressed cultures and the historical heritage of their past.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* have many things in common with postcolonial writing. Written in the post-independence period, these two fictional narratives reflect the colonial institution to reveal its dehumanizing and marginalizing influences on the colonized society, in general, and individuals, in particular. The colonial institution represses the sociocultural values of the native peoples and disregards their historical representations. Morrison and Djebar write their texts to insert the voices and accounts of the excluded colonized people to determine

the violence of the Europeans and their expansionary visions. The two authors claim their ancestral past and revive their local sociocultural values. Toni Morrison exposes the contextual ideologies of the Europeans in 17th century America. She shows the way the colonial codes and values reinforce the White supremacy and marginalize the native peoples. The European colonialism in America is bent on hierarchical distinctions between the European powers and the minorities, including Native Americans, black slaves, and women. It oppresses these aliens, represses their cultural heritage, and denies their historical representations. Similarly, Assia Djebar reveals the circulating sociocultural codes which dominate the Algerian society during the colonial and postcolonial periods. She explores the excluding attitudes of French colonialism and the sociocultural conservative values of the Algerian tradition. She suggests that the colonial institution and the conservative Algerian traditions set divisions and establish hierarchies in society Morrison and Djebar use their literary texts to reveal the influences of the colonial ideologies on the social and individual values. Their counter narratives deconstruct the marginalizing and oppressing attitudes of the colonizer and inscribe individual accounts and relative socio-historical representations of the former colonized people.

III.1.2. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* as a Postcolonial Text

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is a postcolonial narrative. It reveals the ideological atrocities of the colonial institution and its slave system set on racial distinctions. The text depicts the way the colonial White man's codes impact the social minorities including the Natives, the black slaves, and women referred as the aliens.

Through the character of D'Ortega, Morrison shows the dogmatic attitudes of the White master. As a slave owner, he is led by materialistic and expansionary visions mirrored through his large plantation and high mansion. To maintain his power and

supremacy, he enslaves black individuals, including men, women, and children who work harshly day and night to increase their master's benefits. The writer inserts the stories of Lina, the Native girl, Florens, and her slave mother to inscribe their voices in history. Lina depicts the way, after her capture, the Presbyterians repressed her sociocultural beliefs and practices, such as bathing at the river. Florens' mother expresses their difficult experiences under the institution of slavery. When she is brought into slavery through sea, she relates that she has preferred death rather than submission to the oppressive social laws. She says: "I welcomed the circling sharks but they avoided me as if knowing I preferred their teeth to the chains around my neck my waist my ankles" (Morrison 162)[2]. For her, death is a rescue from the physical and emotional miseries she undergoes within the institutions of colonialism and slavery. Reflecting on their hard circumstances as black slave, Florens' mother indicates: "Unreason rules here. Who lives who dies? Who could tell in that moaning and bellowing in the dark, in the awfulness? It is one matter to live in your own waste; it is another to live in another's" (162). She asserts that they are silenced and let down. The slaves are governed by prejudiced and unfair rules, which reinforce the power of the masters.

Hence, through her fictional narrative, Morrison depicts the harsh influences of the colonial and slave system on the characters and emphasizes their resistance and subversive reaction in return considering the other side in the history of slavery and colonial America.

III.1.2. Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* as a Postcolonial Text

Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* reflects postcolonial thought. The author reveals colonial attitudes and voices the marginalized colonizer. Djebar shows the dogmatic power of the French colonialism in Algeria through revising some historical events,

which marked the beginning of the territorial and ideological conquest of Algeria. As the writer depicts the explosion of the Fort Emperor in the 4th, July 1830, she records the witness of the French J.T. Merle. In his prejudiced account, Merle shows the influence of colonialism bent on distinction between the colonizers and colonized; the civilized White and the primitive 'Other'. He portrays the Algerians as the 'decapitating savages' and native 'Arabs' (Blair, *Fantasia* 32)[3]. Also, Djebar's narrative records the repeated crimes the colonial powers have committed in Algeria. It depicts the firing of local tribes, such as that of Ouled Riah, killing thousands of men, women, and children.

Reflecting on the colonial presence of the French in Algeria, the writer demonstrates its violence and dehumanizing impact saying that: "For this conquest is no longer seen as the discovery of a strange new world, not even as a new crusade by the West aspiring to relive its past as if it were an opera. The invasion has become an enterprise of rapine: after the army come the merchants and soon their employees are hard at work; their machinery for liquidation and execution is already in place" (45). The writer shows the brutality of the colonial policies and denounces their ideologies based on the execution of peoples holding oppositional views and values. She records the voices of the oppressed peoples and minorities revealing the harshness, which they endure by the colonial institution. She reveals many accounts writing that:

> The mother who bore the soldiers' torture with never a whimper? That of the little moped-up sisters, too young to understand, but bearing tire message of mild-eyed anguish? Tire voice of the old women of the douar who face the horror of the approaching death-knell, open-mouthed, with palms of fleshless hands turned upwards? (123)

As an illustration of these voices, Djebar narrates the experience of a young woman held in jail by the French while she was fighting with the rebels. She depicts

the way the female character opposes the colonizer rejecting his authority and control. The writer reports her saying: “They took me to a tap and gave me some soap and a towel. I washed and went back to my cell. Then they came to fetch me for questioning. It began in the early afternoon. It lasted for hours… I simply replied to all their questions, 'I don't recognize you! I don't recognize France!’” (135). Djebar constructs her narrative to emphasize the resistance of the colonized Algerians. She depicts the Algerians’ commitment to resist the enemy’s dominant ideologies. She indicates that “Even when the native seems submissive, he is not vanquished. He does not raise his eyes to gaze on his vanquisher. He does not 'recognize' him. He does not name him. What is a victory if it is not named?” (56). The colonized people hold on their values and views rejecting and denying the French authority even when they are defeated.

Toni Morrison’s and Assia Djebar’s literary texts come to terms with the European colonial institution. They reveal the sociocultural and historical influences of the fixed colonial ideologies and codes, marginalizing the colonized societies and excluding the alienated others. The two writers denounce the Eurocentric sociocultural representations to reconstruct relative realities through voicing the silenced peoples. In other words, Morrison and Djebar record sociocultural and historical realities written from the Margins opposing the fixed ones presented by the dogmatic Center.

III.2. Feminist Literature

Feminist literature refers to the literary and non-literary texts written by women. It is introduced during the nineteenth and twentieth century. It reflects the sociocultural and historical representations of women in society with reference to the contextual ideologies and codes. Feminist narratives point out the hierarchical ideologies based on the centeredness of patriarchy and subjugation of women. These values establish fixed demarcations between the male and female; the rational and dominant male and

the emotional and alienated female. Feminist literature explores various issues, including identity, women's individual freedom, and the patriarchal society. It denounces women's marginalization and discrimination by monolithic masculine attitudes.

The feminist movement goes through three waves according to the varied themes on women's social and political position, including self-expression, domesticity, sisterhood, and political commitment. The 'Fist wave' feminism refers to movement of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, which defended the political and educational rights of women, such as the right for education, learning, and custody. The publication Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) established the mains ideas of this first wave. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf calls for a foundation of a tradition of women's writing to escape from the sociocultural exclusion and identity repression. For her, a distinctive tradition of women's literature liberates women from the feminine views set on submission. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) introduces the ideas on sexual differences and socioeconomic and political conditions. De Beauvoir reflects on the oppressive masculine claims, which incapacitate the female socio-political contribution and evolution. Reflecting on the patriarchal codes and their influence on women she indicates that "...her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly" (Borde and Malovany-Chevallier 731)[4].

The 'Second wave' was introduced in the 1960's along with the liberation movements, such as the Civil Right Movement and Women's Liberation Movement. 'Second wave' feminism does not only advocate the social liberation of women from domesticity, but also emphasizes their political and economic contributions. In her text

The Feminine Mystique (1963), Betty Friedan regards the dominant sociocultural ideologies and values which marginalize and oppress women. She reacts against the patriarchy and the women's inadequacy and inaccessibility to the political institutions and economic positions by revealing their reliability and potentials. Friedan suggests that man dominates and oppresses women because they ignore their real abilities. She says: "Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves? Who knows what women's intelligence will contribute when it can be nourished without denying love?" (259). Friedan denounces the fixed representation of women as weak and dependent by constructing relative views on the female figure being rational and reliable. She rejects the established claim of reproduction, which views women as nothing but a womb, inserting; in turn, the female's freedom of choice and control of their body. On the whole, feminist literature points out the contextual hierarchies and values oppressing women and reconstructs their sociocultural representations through inserting their accounts and individual freedoms.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* are two feminist texts par excellence. They reflect the contextual codes which determine women's sociocultural status and construct different representations. Morrison exposes women's oppression under the contextual ideologies of 17th century America. During this time period, women were socially excluded by the White man's colonial codes and the institution of slavery. Djebar points out the sociocultural conditions of the Algerian women in the colonial and postcolonial eras. She highlights the despotism of the French colonization and the conservatism of the traditional values, which influence the social representation of women. The two narratives also insert the individual voices of the silenced women who are oppressed and excluded from their society by both the colonial ideologies and conservative codes and values. Through

the fictional characters, Morrison and Djebar depict women's dependence on the male and reveal the way these women react against patriarchy.

III. 2.1. Feminism in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison reflects on the sociocultural conditions of the American women and their historical representation during 17th century America. She suggests that women's social position is associated with the circulating codes dictated by European colonialism, slavery, and racism. In the text, Morrison portrays female figures whose identity is determined by the oppressive and hierarchical values. She indicates women are not innately inferior, but society amounts to their inferiority, to quote De Beauvoir "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (330). Reflecting on the influence of the patriarchal ideologies on women, Rebekka indicates: "Without the status or shoulder of a man, without the support of family or well-wishers, a widow was in practice illegal. But was that not the way it should be? Adam first, Eve next, and also, confused about her role, the first outlaw?" (96). Women are only defined only under the marriage institution, or as sisters and housewives; they are a second class citizen. Rebekka refers to the oppressive influence of the context on women through narrating her marriage. She accounts the way her father has decided to send her to the New World and to wed her to Jacob Vaark, who is a wealthy white man. Her marriage is determined by the patriarchal codes of her society.

In her text, Morrison maintains that religion also oppresses and marginalizes women. She revises the fixed and established representations of women in the world of *A Mercy*, using illustrations from the Bible. Recalling her passage on the ship to the New World, Rebekka accounts the way the other women are telling their stories to comfort each other. She compares women's situations and their distress to that of Job, a biblical figure, who experiences the same anguish and pain among his comforters.

She narrates that during his suffering and harsh situation, God intervenes proposing to him his divine knowledge. However, at that moment, Job seeks nothing more than to gain the Lord's attention. He needs this attention "to be noticed as a life" as a human soul distinct by itself. Likewise, women need the recognition of the society, to be seen as human beings, as human creatures and souls worthy of dignity and social inclusion. The writer narrates:

> But then Job was a man. Invisibility was intolerable to men. What complaint would a female Job dare to put forth? And if, having done so, and He [Lord] deigned to remind her of how weak and ignorant she was, where was the news in that? What shocked Job into humility and renewed fidelity was the message a female Job would have known and heard every minute of her life. No. Better false comfort than none, thought Rebekka, and listened carefully to her shipmates. (89)

In the same situation of distress and oppression, Rebekka wonders what a female figure would ask for and whether the Lord would simply remind her of her inferiority and otherness. Through this biblical revision, the writer reveals the discriminatory influences of religion on women. In the same situation of distress and pain, the writer suggests a different answer from the Lord. While He proposes the divine Knowledge for Job, He just recalls the 'female Job' of her irrationality and unreliability. Morrison uses her fictional narrative to reveal women's oppression under the sociocultural and religious institutions of their context. She denounces these codes which marginalize the female as others to construct relative representation through inserting their voices and views.

Actually, *A Mercy* recodes various accounts of female characters telling and expressing their distinct stories and individual views. It conveys the account of Florens, her slave mother, Lina, a Native girl, Rebekka, and Sorrow. Each one narrates

her distinct experiences and the way the contextual ideologies influenced their identity and social representation. Florens and her mother reflect on the hierarchical system of slavery. Altogether, the text's female voices share a sense of sisterhood and friendship, mainly between Rebekka and Lina, who learn to accompany and serve each other. While Rebekka protects the Native girl, providing her a legal status, Lina helps her mistress in the house hold chores and the farming of the land. Sorrow's accounts depicts, essentially, her lost identity due to the social exclusion and the way her childbirth allows her to reconstruct her individual identity; she changes name from Sorrow to Complete, a more positive identification.

III.2.2. Feminism in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* reflects feminist thoughts. It exposes the impact of French controlling ideologies and the conservative social values of the Algerian traditions particular to the colonial and postcolonial time periods on women. In her text, Djebar depicts the patriarchal values, which oppress women and deny their voices.

Through the account of the first person narrator, the writer considers the authority and dominance of the patriarchal codes. When she recalls her memories, the female narrator depicts the authority of her father. She receives a love letter from a young boy, who addresses her openly. Once her father perceives the correspondence, he tears up the paper. The narrator reports: "At seventeen I am introduced to my first experience of love through a letter written by a boy, a stranger. Whether acting thoughtlessly or out of bravado, he writes quite openly. My father, in a fit of silent fury, tears up the letter before my eyes and throws it into the waste-paper basket without letting me read it" (3-4). The correspondences of the women with strangers are anti-conservative and nonconformist values, which are firmly rejected in the

context of the novel. Djebar reviews the patriarchal values that distort the sociocultural representations of the Algerian women. The Algerian society is based on strict demarcations between male and female. The writer maintains that women's social representations are like, to quote Simone de Beauvoir, "The representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of me; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (196). For her, the authority of the dominant male determines the representations of the world and women. Hence, these masculine representations communicate fixed sociocultural and historical realities about women.

To deconstruct the hierarchical distinctions between the male and female, Djebar revises the social portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad as historical male figure. She depicts him as being sensitive and caring. When he receives the divine revelation of Koran, he trembled and was anxious. During these difficult circumstances, the Prophet seeks refuge in the arms of his wife Lla Khadija. The narrator indicates:

> 'Is that the way for a Prophet to behave?' I asked, offended and shocked. 'Can a man who sits on his wife's lap be a Prophet?' My aunt smiled discreetly, her heart melted…Years later, my heart too was melted by another detail in her tale.' Long after Khadija's death,' so she related, 'one particular circumstance would cause Mohamed uncontrollable distress: whenever his late wife's sister approached his tent, the Prophet would be most upset, because he said the sound of the sister's footsteps was identical to that of his dead wife. At this sound, which seemed to restore Khadija to life, the Prophet could scarce hold back his tears. (171-2)

In this quote, the narrator recalls her aunt's account about the Prophet and his wife. While she depicts him being an emotional and sensitive male, his wife who is portrayed as responsible and protective. She shows also the Prophet's feelings of love

and fidelity for Khadija, which she expresses openly even after her death. Through this revision of the representation of the Prophet, the writer denounces the established portrayals of the male as dominant and rational and the female as emotional and weak. She reacts against the conservative values, repressing the individual expressions and feelings. Emotions are neither exclusively feminine nor fatal as an attribute of weakness. After revealing the oppressive contextual codes, which influence the sociocultural representation of women, the fictional narrative reconstructs relative female accounts and voices. It records their subversive views and distinct experiences regarding their historical contribution. Among these voices, Cherifa, a war fighter who narrates her individual views. She recalls her fight in the mountain with other women, narrating their capture by the French. She says: “One man picked up my young sister to carry her across. She struggled with all her might, shouting, 'Put me down!' The man was a Goumier. 'We're only trying to help you!' he exclaimed. I intervened: 'She told you not to touch her! So don't touch her!'”(118). In her narrative, Cherifa insists on sisterhood between the captured females to face the oppressive colonial ideologies. Hence, Djebar reconstructs the females’ sociocultural representations, biased by the colonial ideologies and social conservative codes, through revealing the oppressive influences of these patriarchal values on women’s condition. She inserts the relative and individual voices of the outspoken women held in French prisons and older war widow. These Algerian women are socially excluded and historically disregarded during the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar refer to the feminist thought in their texts, respectively, *A Mercy* and *L’Amour, la Fantasia.* They depict the contextual ideologies, which influence the social conditions of the American and Algerian women. They reveal the way these women are oppressed and marginalized in their

environment. In their text, the two authors bring to the fore the female voices and reconstruct their sociocultural representation. Reflecting the silenced females and their voices Djebar writes:

> Suddenly these pages begin to emit a strange power. They start to act like a mediator: I tell myself that this cluster of strangled cries is addressed - why not?-to all the other women whom no word has ever reached. Those of past generations who bequeathed me the places of their confinement, those women who never received a letter: no word taut with desire, stretched like a bow, no message run through with supplication. Their only path to freedom was by intoning their obsessional chants. (59-60)

In this quote, Djebar reveals the importance of founding a tradition of women's writing to record their voices and seek their sociocultural and historical emancipations.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the historical and literary backgrounds which construct Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. It has exposed the colonial ideologies of 17th century America and the institution of slavery in reference to Morrison's text. Likewise, it has traced the colonial policies of the French during the colonization of Algeria and the postcolonial period in Djebar's text. Regarding the literary context, the chapter has provided the biographies of the two authors and the summaries of their texts. Also, it has studied *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* in the light of the postcolonial and feminist thoughts. It has explored the way these texts reflect on the literary tradition of post colonialism and feminism. Hence, these historical and literary insights help the reader in the understanding of the two texts and the way they reflect and encounter the contextual ideologies of their time period.

Following this chapter, the second chapter discusses the practice of New Historicism being the theoretical framework of the present study.

Chapter Two

New Historicism: an Overview of the Practice

New Historicism: an Overview of the Practice

> I had dreamed of speaking with the dead, and even now I do not abandon this dream. But the mistake was to imagine that I would hear a single voice, the voice of the other. If I wanted to hear one, I had to hear the many voices of the dead. And if I wanted to hear the voice of the other, I had to hear my own voice. The speech of the dead, like my own speech, is not private property. (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 01)

Introduction

The present chapter discusses the theory of New Historicism. It looks into the major pioneers of the practice through exploring their ideas and views. The key scholars associated with this theory are, mainly, Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose, Clifford Geertz, and Michel Foucault. They show the relevance of New Historicism to humanities through their significant interventions in literary studies. As the chapter shows, New Historicism lends itself to three major premises in its insights into literature, including the context, the text, and the notion of power revealed in the two preceding elements.

I. New Historicism: Definition and Reaction

New Historicism is defined as a contemporary field of cultural, historical, and literary study that emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's among both American and British academics. Initiated by the American scholar Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicism looks to connect and situate literary texts within the socio-cultural circumstances surrounding their production. In fact, Greenblatt reacts against the approaches of New Criticism and Historicism. New Historicism rejects New Criticism approach, which explores the literary text, as a self-contained entity; it suggests a fixed and textual study of the text without the association of the latter to its context. Indeed,

Greenblatt considers the impacts of the sociocultural ideologies on the literary text. Also, New Historicism reacts against Historicism. In their studies, the traditional historians focus on the historical context as the ultimate end of the literary text. For them, literary texts are written to reflect some chronological sequences of factual and historical events. Historicism emphasizes on the factuality of history. It privileges notions of objectivity and linearity over literariness in the study of the historical text.

New Historicism stresses on the multiple interpretations of the historical events, the nonlinearity of history, and the relativism of the historical truths. A historical study of texts dealing with the Holocaust, for example, looks into the objective narration and description of sequential facts through the exploration of their causes and effects. However, a new historicist study of the same texts provides another new perspective. The new historicist approach suggests several close analyses about the ways the text understudy embodies the sociocultural values of the period, the multiple interpretations, and views on the events, and most importantly, the present reconstructions which the historical text bears. In his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2009), M. H. Abrams sums up New Historicism's responses to the previous literary and historical theories: "(…) for the views and practices of the new historicists differ markedly from those of earlier scholars who had adverted to social and intellectual history as a "background" against which to set a work of literature as an independent entity, or had viewed literature as a "reflection" of the worldview characteristic of a period" (218-9).

In the new historicist approach, literary and historical texts are, actually, the products of the time period, the place, and the context of its composition. As relevant discourses, these texts, as the new historicists suggest, must be read and interpreted not in isolation, but rather within their biographical, social, and historical contexts.

Therefore, through his academic studies, Stephen Greenblatt seeks to give a historical reading of the text without disregarding its literariness and the context surrounding its writing. Simply put, he considers the dynamic exchange between literature and history through studying both the literary and non-literary texts in parallel process.

II. New Historicism and Postmodernism

Postmodernism embraces many theories which were introduced in the 1960's, such as Post colonialism, Eco-Criticism, Post structuralism, and New Historicism. Most importantly, these theories seek to react against the old narratives set on objectivity and fixed knowledge. Each in its specific field of study such as, linguistics, cultural, political, and historical studies, these introduced postmodern theories share many principles and ideas of the postmodern ethos. Altogether, they insist on the different notions of the subjective interpretations, the individual stories (mini-narratives), the 'contextualality' of all knowledge, and the incredulity towards the grand metanarratives.

Following the postmodern line of thought, New Historicism is subversive and critical of the traditional dogmatic theory in its study of literature. Introduced during the 1970's, New Historicism provides new insights on the representation/ reconstruction of history and literature. The modern era views history as a meta-narrative, which produces a factual, linear, and universal historical knowledge. However, in accordance with postmodern theory, New Historicism describes history as being subjective and non-linear. According to the new historicists, the historical knowledge is both contextual and textual.

New Historicism lends itself to the postmodern theoretical framework of Foucauldian notion of power. In his *Power*/*Knowledge*: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, *1972-1977* (1980), Michael Foucault discusses closely the

postmodern thought. He draws a clear cut connection between knowledge and power. He suggests that the two present elements are in a dynamic and evolving interference. That is, any kind of knowledge is to be understood in relation to the power structure of the context of its production, such as the political institutions, religious, cultural codes, and ideologies. In the same way, New Historicism stresses the power of the socio-historical ideologies as decisive prerequisite in the making of historical knowledge. While Foucault relates the contextuality of the historical knowledge to notions of power, Jean-Francois Lyotard do associates it with the fixed metanarratives.

Drawing from the ideas of Jean-Francois Lyotard, New Historicism inscribe the multiple and subjective interpretations of the marginalized groups to counter and react against monolithic history, portrayed as a factual and a universal entity. Indeed, history as fixed meta-narrative neglects the voices of many social groups, including the colonized people and lower classes, like women and the blacks. Similar to Postmodernism, defined by Lyotard as the "incredulity toward metanarratives" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv), New Historicism suggests that a single and fixed presentation of history communicates nothing, but a foundation of a distorted version of reality guided by the authoritative attitudes of power.

New Historicism, also, underlines the notion of the instability of language and experience, discussed by Jacques Derrida in his philosophy of deconstruction. As they emphasize on the representations and the various stories of the unvoiced/ marginalized social groups, the new historicists insist on subjective experience and instability of the historical knowledge. On the whole, New Historicism considers the postmodern notions of subjectivity and relativism through the dynamic relations between power and truth (knowledge).

III. The Significance of the Context in New Historicism

According to Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicism is a two-sided practice which deconstructs traditional distinctions between binaries, such as literature and history, texts and contexts, fiction and facts, and knowledge and power. It brings into focus the unavoidable interaction between the two sides of the binaries above mentioned. Greenblatt emphasizes the context surrounding the historical text understudy. For him, the context represents both the explicit and the implicit milieu for literature. It refers to all the various cultural, political and historical values, ideologies, and institutions which all together form each society that is distinct from other cultures and communities.

New Historicism views the analysis of context within the literary and historical studies as being significant due to the requirements of the 1970's and the 1980's. This historical period reveals changes in the sociocultural, political, economic, and historical atmosphere, such as the Cold War, post-Vietnam war, post colonialism, the women's right movement, and immigration…etc. As the texts understudy bear the contextual values and views, Greenblatt suggests that context is among the elements to consider within literary criticism. For him, the study of the context contributes in the understanding of the various meanings the historical text communicates. The new historicists view both the historical and literary criticism as responses to the changing context challenging it either by modifying it or simply reinforcing its sociocultural beliefs and ideologies.

In his text *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Greenblatt views the dynamic 'cultural mobility' between the different contextual values, ideologies, and institutions. Through analyzing many Renaissance literary figures such as Thomas More, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare,

Greenblatt stresses the interaction between the writers' texts and the religious, cultural, political, and historical ideologies particular to Renaissance era. Referring to texts which deal, for example, with religious faith , Greenblatt writes: "In all the works of religious controversy, any intimation that reality is not given but rather constructed by the shared convictions and institutions of men depends upon certain existence of a sole, ultimate community, the Catholic Church" (63). He suggests that the contextual beliefs, codes, and institutions are not only manifested through texts, but rather they contribute in the construction of the author's ideologies and meanings. Indeed, this reciprocal interaction between these social codes and the produced works determines the specific features of 16th century England.

As Greenblatt explores More's *Utopia* (1516), he reveals that there was a strong connection between the political and cultural ideologies of the British Monarchy (Henry VIII) and the socio-historical values of the epoch. The King's rejection of the Roman Catholic Church has affected the social beliefs, the artistic and literary productions of the time. That is, the changing ideologies of the context during Renaissance has shaped, reconstructed, and fashioned More's identity and self, like almost all other writers. For Greenblatt, the writer's self-fashioning refers to "(…) the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (2). Greenblatt insists that the achievement of a personal identity, what he calls "self-fashioning", is guided and determined by interconnection between the different values and views, which compose the surrounding context. He emphasizes the interdependence of the context, writers and their written productions. Neither the process of creation of works, nor the expression of views and values are exclusively autonomous acts. Hence, Greenblatt

bases his new historicist studies on the reciprocal consideration of the contexts of the writer in order to determine the hidden socio-cultural and historical ideologies.

Following his thought on the interdependence of context and the social practices, Stephen Greenblatt shows distinct views about culture and history. Actually, both culture and history are interrelated to the time period, the place, and the conditions of their presentations. In his text *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt refers to the anthropologist Clifford Geertz who suggests that "There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture," (03). Like Geertz, Greenblatt underlines the subjection of the social and historical knowledge to the cultural values and views particular to the time period of its construction. Hence, he considers that the knowledge produced in different time periods and different cultures is subjective and incomplete. That is, there is no such universal cultures and monolithic history. Rather, Greenblatt suggests that each historical time period identifies a definite and distinct culture. The association of the historical knowledge only to its time periods affirms, then, that history consists of fragmented, multiple, and repressed histories determined by particular views and ideologies and not yet fully reconstructed.

IV. The Relevance of Text in New Historicism

In parallel with the study of the socio-cultural contexts, New Historicism is founded upon the literary analysis of the historical and literary texts. Stephen Greenblatt suggests that both the literary and non-literary texts are linked to a web of other texts and the various conditions of their productions. The historical text embodies the social codes, cultural beliefs, political, and historical ideologies of its writer, the place, time, and the power structures of its production. To explain the association of texts to contexts, Greenblatt writes that "written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power" (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 07).

In his text *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), Greenblatt examines Renaissance texts in terms of the contextual values, views, and the social relationships during that period. For him, the historical text either reinforces or challenges the views, values, and ideologies surrounding it. Dealing with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Greenblatt reveals how the author uses language, structure, and characters to react against the religious and cultural beliefs of Protestantism. Through his studies, Greenblatt shows that literature is not 'timeless' but rather contextual. That is, the new historicist analyzes the historical text as a 'socially produced' literature; however, New Historicism connects the historical text to other different historical periods. It relates historical texts produced during the past time periods to the contemporary contexts to reflect and reconstruct new representations. Greenblatt affirms his views on literature as history-oriented factor; while it is shaped by the historical time period of its writing, it makes, on its own, its history through the multiple and flexible interpretations.

The writer's individual representations reconstruct and redefine his present time circulating/ changing values and ideologies. Still, Greenblatt claims that no reading of the historical text is definitive. Indeed, it conveys cultural views and historical knowledge, specific to particular subjective human experiences. Adding up, as the text is in ceaseless dynamic negotiations with the multiples socio-cultural beliefs and values, Greenblatt ensures the text does not mirror a fixed truth. Rather, the historical text creates and fashions its own interpretations and representations, reflecting on specific issues and social structures of its writer concerns.

Louis Montrose

Following Stephen Greenblatt's thoughts, Louise Montrose provides many insights into the practice of New Historicism. Montrose is known for his prolific theoretical

and academic texts and essays, such as “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture”, (1989), *The Purpose of Playing*, (1996), and *The Subjects of Elizabeth*, (2006). Montrose draws three main axes within a new historicist study; the author, the reader/ critic, and the relation between the historical text and reality. Like Greenblatt, Montrose views the writer in terms of his society and own ideologies. For him, the reader / critic considers, in addition to the ideologies the text communicates, his own views and beliefs, which impact his readings. Through such consideration, Montrose insists that the reader/critic constructs new interpretations to revive past cultures and affect truth. Regarding past cultures and views, the reader/ critic challenges present conditions with past histories by constructing his present time views through revising the past socio-cultural codes and ideologies. Hence, in his studies, Montrose draws a mutual interconnection between the text and society as he sees both the author and reader through the sociocultural beliefs and views they communicate or construct. This reciprocal connection between the literary text and its historical time period is referred to by Montrose as the “historicity of the text” and “textuality of history” (20). Once the historical text bears the contextual ideologies, it shapes and reconstructs its surrounding cultures, mainly by fictionalizing the historical knowledge through literary techniques such as the use of anecdotes and storytelling.

V. The Use of Anecdote in New Historicism

In his theoretical investigations, Stephen Greenblatt underlines the use of anecdotes as a significant element in new historicist studies. Inspired by the cultural studies of the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Greenblatt draws attention to the importance and relevance of anecdotes in new historicist analysis. As defined by literary critics, anecdotes are short accounts, small events, stories, and records, which are fictional, imaginative, or factual. In his essay “History of Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction”, Joel

Fineman refers to the anecdote as "the historeme (…) the minimum unit of the historiographical fact" (qtd. Aram, H.57). Made of particular details, specific figures, dates, and events, these short accounts are central subjects in the literary and critical approach of New Historicism. In an essay entitled "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (1973), Geertz explains that cultural studies are set on interpretative practices of 'factual' accounts, social codes, and beliefs. He considers the representations of the socio-cultural productions and beliefs as the expressions of a social discourse specific to its historical period. Clifford suggests that the analysis of cultural practices, such as marriage and faith may reveal the complexity of different social structures and historical ideologies which constitute the society.

In his book entitled *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), Stephen Greenblatt focuses on the use the detailed realistic descriptions, which oppose the single representation of the historical past. They present both 'a touch of the real' and 'counterhistories'. Greenblatt affirms that the historical anecdotes provide elements of the 'real' due to the voices and experiences of particular individuals they convey. The single and the particular story/ account is used to present and communicate the other neglected stories. Embodied in fictional structures within a socio-cultural context, the historical anecdote provides deep revisions of both culture and history. The use of the historical anecdote underlines the emphasis on the social and historical reconstructions/ interpretations of the author. It juxtaposes historical events and cultural conceptions with contextual interpretations, individual representations, and ideological constructions. Drawn from official archives, documents, testimonies, memoirs, and oral traditions, the historical anecdote fragments the structure of the text. For Greenblatt, the disconnection of these historical narratives through the use of anecdotes reflects the nonlinearity of history as a whole. Through their vivid character

and the power of words, they stand as counter histories against the 'official' and fixed representation of history. The author of the historical text uses the anecdotal material to write a "history from below" (53), made up of subjective interpretations of events and ideologies depending on the individual views and experiences. Hence, the historical anecdote breaks down the established formal distinctions between text and context, fiction and truth, and literature and history.

VI. The Notion of Power in the Construction of the Historical Knowledge

Stephen Greenblatt suggests that both the relationship between the historical text and its surrounding context are power-bound. The works of Michel Foucault, such as *The Order of Things* (1966) inspire, considerably, new historicist thoughts. Foucault draws his ideas on the analysis of the narratives of power, their relation to the sociocultural codes and belief, and most importantly, the interconnection between power structures and the historical knowledge. He assumes that the socio-cultural values and ideologies of specific hierarchical societies are exclusionary. They broaden the gap between the social classes and groups. He adds that each epoch is exclusively determined and defined by dynamic exchanges between the institutions of power and the contextual values. Hence, through his studies, Foucault denies the study of literary and historical texts as autonomous and self-contained. He affirms that the historical knowledge, produced by literary and nonliterary works, is both contextual and textual as it is influenced by the control of power.

Furthermore, Foucault sees that the produced truth is not only guided by the sociocultural power structures but also the flexible use of language and words. In this understanding, Foucault views history as a complex discourse related to other political, social, and cultural discourses. For him, history is power as each historical period creates its own rules, which underline the historical knowledge specific to its

time and place. In other words, each historical period uses its produced knowledge in order to control the circulating sociocultural views. Therefore, Foucault insists on the fact that history is a nonlinear and non-progressive narrative or discourse; it consists of many prejudices and exclusionary judgments.

In his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt studies the monarchic institutions and the sociocultural codes which shape the historical knowledge related to 16th century England. It is through exploring many literary and nonliterary works written during Renaissance England that Greenblatt considers the social and historical power, which guides the era's produced texts. In his study of Thomas More's masterpiece *Utopia* (1516), Greenblatt looks into the representation of some social belief and power structures, such as the monarchy, religion, and family. He reveals how such values of shame or honor and fictional representations of political and social institutions reveal the power-bound relations between the historical knowledge and the surrounding context of 16th century England.

Greenblatt suggests that through fiction and language, Thomas More presents the way the historical knowledge and views of the time period affect the social classes, religious sects, political, and historical representations. It is through the analysis of the complex functions of the power structures and the 'official' representation they display that Greenblatt studies the historical knowledge specific to the time period of the Renaissance era. For him, power structures and their authoritative attitudes favor only the knowledge that serve their private objectives and limited aims. Hence, the approval of the dogmatic knowledge upon other realities draws formal distinctions between the perceived reality and the 'single' representation. Therefore, Greenblatt assumes that such distinctions repress and marginalize many social groups and their

historical representations. Greenblatt focuses on the insertion of the marginalized voices, the repressed representations, and the disregarded socio-cultural beliefs under the dogmatism of power and truth. He also emphasizes on the revision of the past histories and stories to reflect on their contemporary/ present contextual issues and views.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theoretical framework of the postmodern theory of New Historicism. It has looked into the new historicist ideas of Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose, and Michael Foucault. As shown in the chapter, Greenblatt has introduced the major tenets of the new historicist analysis. He sets his subversive theory on a parallel study of the contextual and textual aspects of the historical texts to reconstruct relative interpretations of the fragmented historical time periods, their sociocultural ideologies, and power bound institution. Like his new historicist followers, Greenblatt assumes no clear distinction between fact and fiction, history and literature. New Historicism focuses on the analysis of notions of power in order to subvert the fixed and official historical representations and reinsert the various marginalized and repressed historical voices.

Chapter Three

The Historical and Literary Continuities in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

Chapter Three

The Historical and Literary Continuities in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

Introduction

This chapter analyses the American Algerian historical and literary continuities presented in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. Indeed, the two writers contribute by fictional narratives referring to similar historical concerns and literary affinities, regardless of their different social and geographical contexts. Following New Historicism, the present chapter looks into the historical revision they undertake and the use of literary techniques they deploy in their fictional narratives. The two authors expose the power structures which influence the production of their texts, including colonialism and slavery in the case of Morrison; French colonialism and postcolonial Algerian sociocultural values in Djebar's text. As far as the literariness of the texts, Morrison and Djebar deploy several common literary techniques, such as anecdote, polyphony, and palimpsest to structure their arguments on the historical revision. They record the individual accounts of the historically disregarded aliens and counter the established representation of the past history. Hence, these historical and literary continuities provide notable insights into the context that shape literary texts and the way these produced writings shape their particular environments and time periods.

The postmodern liberation movements of the 1960's, advocating the notions of the individual freedom, result in decline of the Western authoritative, dominating, and imperial ideologies. Actually, the postmodern thought proclaims a definite transition in the understanding of history. Influenced by the notions of relativism and

spatiotemporal fragmentation, brought in postmodern theory, history is no longer a factual and linear conception marginalizing the 'Other'. It is rather a set of subjective interpretations. It emphasizes the relative accounts and mini-histories instead of the 'Big' visions and interpretations of the world. That is to say, history breaks away from the progressive and factual understanding, bringing its ultimate end in the process. Hence, academic scholars, and in the vanguard the new historicists, consider the significant change in the understanding of the historical knowledge. They regard history as a biased and non-linear narrative. In his essay "The Fiction of Factual Representation" (1976), Hayden White does not only confirm the distinct shift in the views of history, but also considers its impact on literature. Indeed, the theoretical turn concerning the perception of history determines a particular study of literary texts. Hayden differentiates clearly the writing of the professional historians and the literary writers suggesting that:

> Historians are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time-space locations, events which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable, whereas imaginative writers—poets, novelists, playwrights—are concerned with both these kinds of events and imagined, hypothetical, or invented ones. (21)

Unlike the professional historians, the literary writers consider the textual and fictional aspects of their writings. They use different literary techniques and writings styles to communicate their individual meanings. The literary texts reveal fictional and imaginative stories to reflect on the contextual ideologies; they deploy several literary techniques to points out the circulating ideologies of the historical contexts, constructing relative and subjective views, and interpretations.

Retrospectively, literature and history are viewed as separated concepts. It is either the literature serving the historical period or it is the surrounding context, which

supports the literary text. With the progressive conception of history, the literary text functions as a fixed factual reflection of the historical events. It is an objective and sequential narrative depicting a single historical representation. The text understudy serves only the historical context of its time period. To react against the ultimate focus on the contextual elements, the new critic's study of the literary text approaches the surrounding context in terms of literariness. It stresses on the literariness of text, represented through style, language, and techniques, as the embodiment of all the meanings.

Following the end of history as viewed above, New Historicism as a contemporary practice reacts against the old historicists and New Critics. It suggests a shift in the conceptualization of history through a parallel study of both the literariness and the context of the text understudy. In his *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), Stephen Greenblatt explains that in the new historicist approach "the relative positions of text and context often shift, so that what has been the mere background makes a claim for the attention that has hitherto been given only to the foreground and privileged work of art, yet we wish to know how the foregrounding came about" (16). By breaking down the established distinctions between literature and history, New Historicism views history as nonlinear, fictional, and relative presentations. It rejects the emphasis on facts and the sequential reporting of the historical realities. Further, the new historicist approach points out the notions of power and the way the latter influences the historical knowledge. New Historicism, in fact, seeks to voice the marginalized individuals and social groups referred to as the 'Other', including the blacks, women, and Native Americans, in response to the authoritative and abusive attitudes which they experience. On the whole, the new historicist practice reacts

against the progressive history as a metanarrative revealing a single historical presentation that favoured only the established view.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar share significant literary and historical continuities in their literary productions. As postmodern writers, they advocate a revisionist stance in the depiction social and historical realities. They react against the fixed, dogmatic, and biased historical representation. By doing so, they work to re/construct individual stories and values in their fictional narratives. Morrison and Djebar use many shared literary techniques, such as storytelling, anecdotes, and palimpsest. Through these literary strategies, they deeply buck up their revisionist discourse, deconstructing and subverting the dominant views and representations of the past.

Toni Morrison is a prolific American literary writer. She deals with various themes, such as the cultural beliefs determining her society, the impact of slavery on the Afro-American community, and the role of the marginalized people, including women, in the making of the national history. In her text *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison depicts the experience of the poor black girl Pecda Breedlove within an oppressive cultural milieu. To meet her community's obsession with specific notions of beauty, Pecda undertakes a self-destructive course seeking blue eyes. Through this story, Morrison points out her sociocultural codes and views being cruel and repressive. Like almost in all her novels, in *Beloved* (1987), Morrison reflects on the dehumanizing effect of slavery. She portrays the physical and moral effects of a life of enslavement and subjugation of the female character named Sethe. Through narrating individual stories, Morrison discusses the institution of slavery, its harshness, and most importantly, the historical contribution of women and the people of minorities during this time period. She explores the way women, religious sects, the natives, and the

blacks- as marginalized other- have all contributed in the foundation of the history of America.

Similarly, Assia Djebar has written many literary and critical works dealing with different themes. She points out the Algerian sociocultural and religious beliefs, the despotism of the French colonial institution, and mainly, the contribution of women in the history of modern Algeria. Through challenging the historical and social realities given by patriarchy and the colonial institution, Djebar considers the female accounts in the society. She voices the silenced and disregarded accounts relying on different literary and fictional techniques, including storytelling and the historical anecdotes. In her text *La Soif*, written in the wake of the Algerian war, Djebar depicts the Algerian society under French colonialism. She reflects on the oppressive cultural and historical legacies, which repress the beliefs of tolerance and security. Through the fictional accounts of Nadia's daily life, her marriage, and family, the writer shows the dependence of women on the social and historical values. They are persecuted and deprived from their individual freedoms. To react against the religious justification of the socio-cultural subjugation of women and the oppressed individuals, Djebar also revises the historical representation of women in the ancient Muslim civilization. In her text *Loin de Médine* (1991), she reveals the way the Prophet Muhammad has valued and highly regarded the female figures. She affirms the tolerance of the Islamic preaching and values of humanity and equality, viewed through the figures of Fatima and A*ï*cha. Djebar assumes that the historical representations concerning the social status of women are distorted in contemporary Algeria. Thus, through her literary productions, she asserts the individual stories and views of the marginalized peoples.

In line with the postmodern thought, Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar share the interest of considering both the historical and literary knowledge. They assume that the contextual ideologies of a specific time period contribute in the construction of the literary productions. For them, these produced literary texts, together with the used literary techniques, create relative historical realities. Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* re/ construct and rewrite the historical knowledge. These fictional narratives regard and insert the marginalized ideologies and histories. Adding up, through the literary techniques, the writers introduce their individual views and beliefs concerning the socio cultural issues. Indeed, they explore the dynamic system behind the power structures and the fixed historical knowledge.

A Mercy is Toni Morrison's novel published in 2008. It depicts the individual stories and views of many characters within the contextual codes and ideologies of 17th century Virginia, America. It juxtaposes the characters' views, the sociocultural beliefs, and the historical realities of 17th century America. Through this fictional narrative, Toni Morrison considers her views and beliefs, which she has acquired through the context of the Afro-American community, to reflect on the present time values and re/ construct subversive historical interpretations. She inserts the accounts of some native, black, and oppressed females who fell preys to their contextual and social representations.

Likewise, Assia Djebar writes *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985) with reference to the sociocultural beliefs and the literary context of the produced text. Set in 19th and 20th century Algeria, the novel tells the stories of many female characters and reflects the colonial and postcolonial Algerian society; its beliefs, values of marriage, honour, and resistance. As a professional historian and literary critic, Djebar revises the fixed portrayals of some social groups in the Algerian history, such the common people and

women. Through individual stories and some other realistic accounts, Djebar explores the contextual ideologies and makes visible the sociocultural power bound codes, which determine the historical truth. She assumes the established historical representation as a discriminatory conception. Hence, Djebar, like Morrison, attempts a rewriting of the founded portrayals of the one-sided historical knowledge. Through regarding the contextual ideologies and the fictional narratives, Morrison and Djebar voice the aliens by drawing attention to their active participation/ contribution in the historical realities/ knowledge, such as the American and Algerian history.

I. The Historical Concerns

Context is a relevant element in New Historicism. It refers to the environmental values, codes, and institutions which guide the society. Its study demonstrates the notions of power, which structures the sociocultural practices, which shape the authors' identity and their writings, and ultimately, determines a particular historical and cultural knowledge specific to its time period. In his text *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt reveals the way the contextual power structures and the socio-cultural, historical, and political influences rule society. To sustain his ideas, Greenblatt argues that the establishment of a self-identity during the Renaissance era is not a self-enclosed process, but rather a contextual construction. The context forms the individual self or identity of the author. There is no such a pure and independent achievement of any personal individuality. In fact, the author's identity does not spring out from the void, but rather, it is the outcome of the complex and dynamic negotiations between all the contextual institutions and ideologies, such as monarchy, family, marriage, shame, and honour. Hence, Greenblatt illustrates the identity formation through the connection of Thomas More's identity to the contextual values and ideologies of his social environment.

Dealing with More's self-fashioning or "More's sense of his own distinct identity", Greenblatt highlights the author's "participation in a complex set of interlocking corporate bodies- law, parliament, court, city, church, family- and a secret reserve"(41-2). In a nutshell, the human self is the product of its environment.

In their texts *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar refer to the relation of the context with the individual and its influence on his identity formation. They depict the marginalizing values of colonialism, slavery, and the patriarchy. They reveal the way these fixed codes influence the social representations, favouring some groups and excluding others, such as the blacks and women.

In *A Mercy*, Morrison reviews 17th century power structures that determine the context of the American society. In the 1600's, the American society was influenced by European colonialism, the institution of slavery, and the hierarchical social values. This time period marks the territorial expansions and the reinforced settlements of the wealthy Europeans and religious groups in the Eastern part of the New World. In 1607, they founded Virginia colony, which was followed by many other colonies in the following years. This historical period had also witnessed the establishment of slavery by captivating Africans from their native land and shipping them to the colonies through the Middle Passage. The enslaved Africans were destined, mainly, for the Southern colonies, to work in the plantations of the White masters, cultivating agricultural goods, such as tobacco, corn, and rice. To reinforce their political power and economic wealth, the Europeans imposed dogmatic and supremacist attitudes to work out control over the non-European ethnic groups, including the black African and the Native Indians. In his book entitled *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (2012), Bernard

Bailyn reviews the sociocultural and historical ideologies of 17th century America. He points out the authority and dominance of the European masters in the American social system through their religious conservatism, racial ideologies, and slave system. He indicates that:

> Though contentious in religious doctrine and organization, the English were monotheists, devoted to the belief that there was a hierarchy of being—that though touched by God, civilized mankind existed below the divine order but above and apart from crude nature and "natural" people, whom they were destined to convert and to rule, as they were to have "dominion over … all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (36)

The Europeans' dogmatic and monolithic codes influenced the minorities. The African slaves, the Native people, and women referred as the 'Other' were socially exploited and disregarded by repressing their sociocultural backgrounds. In 1692, The Whites persecuted many women after their accusation of superstition; they rejected the Africans' and Natives' beliefs in superstition and regard them as primitive and ignorant.

In her text, Morrison, makes visible the power structures and reveals their oppressive and illusionary attitudes, exclusively, guided by power and dogmatism. She shows that the social and historical marginalization of the aliens, such as the natives, blacks, and women is the result of the contextual ideologies. It is the context and the power structures, which determine the socio-historical representations of the individuals, including women. Morrison depicts the dominating values of patriarchy, White supremacy, religious conservatism, and colonialism. She exposes the way the Europeans' supremacist codes control and dominate the alienated non-Europeans, such as Natives, blacks, and women. She writes "Europes could calmly cut mothers down,

blast old men in the face with muskets louder than moose calls, but were enraged if a not-Europe looked a Europe in the eye" (44). They marginalize individuals denying any resistance or opposition to the fixed views. She depicts the way the power structures impact the social life in Virginia. Describing the setting of *A Mercy*, Morrison affirms that the social disorder of Virginia during this time period is caused by the controlling power institutions, such as the monarchy and religion which reveal biased representations and realities. She demonstrates that "In short, 1682 and Virginia was still a mess. Who could keep up with the pitched battles for God, king and land?"(9)

Adding up, Morrison reflects on the Natives' beliefs and values to illustrate the excluding attitudes of the power structures toward the social codes. Recalling the life of Lina, the Native girl purchased by the Presbyterians, Morrison depicts the way this religious group imposes its conservative ideology and marginalize any other opposing value through power. Lina's identity is formed by the Amerindian culture. She openly sticks to her oral tradition of storytelling, cultural values, and practices, such as bathing at the river bank. However, when the Presbyterians take hold on her, they deprive her from her Native practices, obliging her to be assimilated to their religious power bound values. Speaking about the impact of the marginalizing attitudes of these religious ideologies on Lina, Morrison writes:

> She learned that bathing naked in the river was a sin; that plucking cherries from a tree burdened with them was theft; that to eat corn mush with one's fingers was perverse. That God hated idleness most of all, so staring off into space to weep for a mother or a playmate was to court damnation. Covering oneself in the skin of beasts offended God, so they burned her deerskin dress and gave her a good duffel cloth one. (46)

As shown in the quotation, the Puritan church and its monolithic knowledge are despotic. It excludes and represses the views of the 'Other', such as the Natives' culture and their social beliefs, embodied in the character of Lina. Actually, once her values are repressed, Lina loses her native culture and is obliged to adopt the one imposed on her.

In addition to the suppression of the Natives' culture and beliefs, the writer reveals the way the contextual codes regard and influence women in 17th century America. Morrison refers to the sociocultural condition of the female figures within the established institution of slavery through the characters of Florens and her mother. She tells Florens' separation from her slave mother. In reference to her experience in D'Ortega's plantation, Florens' mother is obliged to give up her daughter away; she abandons her to protect her from the White master's harassments and harshness. The institution of slavery works out power upon the mother and daughter, inflecting upon them oppression, deprivation, and loss.

Similarly, in *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Assia Djebar unearths the power structures particular to the colonial and post-colonial Algerian society, such as French colonialism and social conservatism. She reviews colonial Algeria by narrating the French conquest of Algiers in 1830, the colonial expansions in 1830-1845, and the Revolutionary War in 1954. Depicting these historical events, the writer reveals the contextual ideologies, which influence the Algerian society in the colonial period. Using historical accounts which were written during the colonial conquest in 1830, the author depicts the harsh and dehumanizing effects of the colonial policies. The French impose their dogmatic power on the colonized Algerians by oppressing them and suppressing their resistance to French military invasion. Moreover, Djebar refers to several colonial crimes during the military expansion in the country during the 1840's,

such as the massacres of Ouled Riah and El-Kantara. Through these expansionary policies, the colonial institution persecutes the indigenous and establishes hierarchical systems, dividing society into two sects: the Europeans and the Algerians. The writer also points out the conservative ideologies of the Algerian society during the colonial and postcolonial eras and their impact on the Algerians, mainly, women. During these historical time periods, the Algerian society was dominated by strict social values bent on conservative religious beliefs, and patriarchal values. Women are socially disregarded by patriarchal rules and historically denied by marginalizing their historical contributions in the Revolutionary War.

Discussing the colonial system in Algeria, Djebar depicts oppressive and monopolistic policies bent on a hierarchical division and differentiation set between the White and the Natives; the colonizer and colonized peoples. The French draw a clear cut distinction between the various social groups; city people, countryside peasants, settlers, and indigenous. The writer describes the established hierarchy saying:

> Did any significant hierarchy divide the society of this mountain rimmed city, impoverished by erosion? If so, it was of minor account, compared to the discrimination made between the city-dwellers and the peasants of the surrounding area; or, more important still, the segregation introduced by the colonial settlers. Few in number, but influential, the group of Europeans of Maltese, Spanish or Provencal origin not only possessed all the power, but controlled the only lucrative activity - fishing and the use of the trawlers in the old port. (196)

The writer considers the impact of this class system on the Algerian peoples. While the minority of the European settlers enjoys the economic privileges granted by the

colonial institution, the majority of the indigenous people are segregated and socially excluded. In *History of Madness* (1961), Michel Foucault relates the social exclusion of the minorities to the dogmatism of the power structures of a particular society. Discussing the notion of power and power relation, Foucault reveals that authoritative attitudes oppress the social majority to serve the dominating minority, by reinforcing its power. As shown by Djebar, the colonial administration privileges the European settlers to deepen the social gap between the colonizers and colonized. By doing so, it attempts to maintain its dogmatic power and control the circulating social ideologies irrespective of indigenous peoples and cultures.

Moreover, Djebar discusses religious dogmatism as another manifestation of the power structures particular to the Algerian society. In accordance with the contextual codes, Djebar reviews the conservative religious beliefs and Islamic values and their influence on women. She indicates that the strict religious codes set gender distinctions between men and women. While men are represented as rational and independent individuals, women are dependent and submissive to the masculine attitudes. These conservative values repress women's voices and regard their self-expression as violation of the circulating social ideologies. The writer reflects the influence of the religious conservatism on women saying:

> At the mosque, in the corner reserved for women, only the matriarchs squat, the very old whose voices have already died. In the transmission of Islam, acid erosion has been at work: tradition would seem to decree that entry through its strait gate is by submission, not by love. Love, which the most simple of settings might inflame, appears dangerous. (169)

Like the sociocultural ethos, the religious beliefs, as the quotation shows, are bent on division and separation. The power structures of the colonial institution and religion

are ideologically one-sided as they encourage discriminative attitudes, excluding peoples and suppressing their voices. Recalling the colonial genocide of June 1845 in Ouled Riah, Assia Djebar points out the indifferent and hypocritical attitudes of the authoritative power.

> Six hundred members of the Ouled Riah tribe, laid out in the fresh air side by side, without distinction of sex or rank; notables with the poorest, fatherless orphans, widows, repudiated wives, swaddled babes at their mothers' breasts or clinging to their shoulders…Corpses with smoke-blackened faces sleep, stripped of their jewelry and burnouses, but even more denuded by the silence which enfolds them. (74)

Here, Djebar underlines the harshness of the power exercises. The dogmatic and hierarchical values of the colonizer result not only on the physical alienation, but also the cultural and historical oppression viewed in the repression of their historical sacrifices and testimonies. After killing six hundred individuals, the commander in chief of the French troops, Aimable Pélissier, believes that his acts are predestined and compulsory. Discussing the tragedy with the Marshal, he asserts that "These operations, Field-Marshal, are such as one undertakes when obliged to do so, but one prays to God that one will never again have to carry them out!" (74). In this view, Pélissier incarnates the oppressive and irresponsible attitudes of power holders. He justifies the colonial oppression and pretends compassion as he turns to God.

I.1.Identity Self Fashioning

In his theoretical framework discussing New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt considers self-fashioning as the main outcome of the dynamic interaction between the different contextual beliefs and institutions. He sees the individual self as related to the context bearing the changing social and ideological values and codes. In his

Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare, Greenblatt explores the selves of renaissance writers, such as Thomas More, Tyndale Wyatt, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare as shaped by the era's major social, cultural, and religion influences. He reveals that self-identity in Renaissance era is contextually constructed, formed by both internal and external elements. Dealing with Thomas More's self-fashioning or "More's sense of his own distinct identity", Greenblatt underlines the interconnection of the self with its own physical setting and social condition as it "is compounded of a highly social role, fashioned from his participation in a complex set of interlocking corporate bodies- law, parliament, court, city, church, family- and a secret reserve" (41-2). That is, the human self is constantly related to the surrounding environment and shaped by his dynamic involvement in the socio-cultural and political power structures of his society. Hence, Stephen Greenblatt deeply explores the power structures and their fixed ideologies to explain the particular way self-identity is socially constructed.

Following New Historicism, Morrison's and Djebar's fictional narratives affirm the contextuality of identity self-fashioning and the individual reaction to the power bound values. They portray detailed descriptions of many characters as shaped by the power-bound ideologies and circulating attitudes of their nations and time periods. Dealing with 17th century America, Toni Morison unearths the contextual authoritative values defining the social and individual representations of the minorities, such as the natives, the blacks, and women. She indicates the oppressive and marginalizing attitudes of the white supremacy and their fixed religious beliefs. Likewise, Assia Djebar revives the French colonial powers and the conservative Algerian traditions. She points out the impact of such monolithic values on the socio-cultural conduct of women. These established views impose the subjugation of women

to the colonial institution, patriarchy, and the strict traditional beliefs. In line with these imposing views, individuals give up their individuality, self-autonomy, and values.

In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison recognizes the influence of the social beliefs and views in the self-fashioning of the characters. She highlights the effect of the powerful values and ethos on the individual and communal identities. She deals mainly with female figures struggling to identify and/ or subvert their identities such as Florens and Lina. After her abandonment by her mother, Florens loses her individual identification with the slave system. She becomes dependent on her master and his White views. Also, Lina expresses her need to reconstruct her individual sociocultural identity after being baptized into a Presbyterian Quaker. As Florens reflects on her own self with Lina, the writer reports:

> Sudden a sheet of sparrows fall from the sky and settle in the trees. So many the trees seem to sprout birds, not leaves at all. Lina points. We never shape the world she says. The world shapes us. Sudden and silent the sparrows are gone. I am not understanding Lina. You are my shaper and my world as well. It is done. No need to choose. (69)

Actually, Florens admits her connection to the external world. She realizes herself as constructed by her surrounding world, its sociocultural views, and members, such as Lina. Through Florens' self-fashioning, Morrison acknowledges the construction of the identity as a complex process controlled by the dominant circulating values and codes. Still, Morrison discusses the collective identity through the voice of Lina. Like the individual's self-fashioning, Morrison views the collective identity as a contextual formation, issued from the interaction between the individuals and the social institutions. With the illness of Mistress Rebekka, Lina, Florens, and Sorrow are afraid

to remain after her as illegal women. When Lina reflects on their social being, she expresses the necessity of an external reference or connection to shape their individual identity. She reports:

> Herself, Sorrow, a newborn and maybe Florens-three unmastered women and an infant out here, alone, belonging to no one (…). Baptists, Presbyterians, tribe, army, family, some encircling outside thing was needed. Pride, she thought. Pride alone made them think that they needed only themselves, could shape life that way, like Adam and Eve, like gods from nowhere beholden to nothing except their own creations. (56-7)

Through Lina's view, Morrison considers the role of the sociocultural institutions in the life of the girl and her identity formation. Without the protection of their Mistress Rebekka, the women are illegal and lost. By their selves, the women are unable to construct a social identity, because they lack the notions of power the context insures. Therefore, Lina longs for some belonging either within family, tribe, or any religious group to ensure their sociocultural identification. Morrison depicts also the influence of the contextual ideologies on the identity formation through the character of Jacob Vaark, a whiter master. At the beginning, Jacob is leading a humble life as a trader of commercial goods. However, when he has met D'Ortega, a slave owner in the Virginia, he has been influenced by the dogmatic and authoritative attitudes of that Southern man. During his stay in D'Ortega's plantation, Jacob seems to denounce the lavish life of the Whites and to criticize the hierarchical system of slavery and its racial effects. Still, upon his return to his farm, Jacob builds a new mansion, grand, and impressive like that of D'Ortega. He explores new territories and deforests larger lands. His influence by the White man's supremacist values is shown through establishing a similar hierarchy to that of the slave owner. He purchases a group of

alienated and socially disregarded females, including Florens, Lina, and Sorrow to help build his empire in the New World.

Likewise, Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* considers the role of the context in the construction of the self. Through the depiction of her characters, their beliefs, and views, Djebar shows the specific impact of the environmental ideologies and institutions on their identity construction. She exposes the authoritative colonial policies and the conservative social hierarchies to better understand the constitution of the individual self and some oppressive and marginalizing values. Recalling her childhood memories, the narrator narrates a conversation between the women of her village talking about the French women and their behaviors. They points out that the high social representation of the French women is formed by the colonial policies, which promote their sociocultural position within the Algerian social system. Djebar reports the words of an unnamed Algerian female who portrays the French women, saying:

> 'French women don't all come from Paris,' asserted the busybodies.' Most of the ones who come here, thinking they'll have such a good life in the colonies only know how to milk a cow when they arrive! If they get more civilized later on, it's because this country offers them power and wealth. Because the laws are on their side, on the side of their menfolk!'(24)

Actually, this unnamed woman insists on the impact of the sociocultural context on the French settlers. She agrees that the 'civilized' character of the French women is not innate, but rather acquired due to the colonial laws supporting them with power and granting them high social standing. Djebar confirms the social formation of the self as shaped by the contextual power structures and their controlling values. She stresses the identity self-fashioning of these women as a biased construction determined by the

colonial laws and ideologies. Adding up, Djebar discusses the individual self-fashioning of an Algerian woman in relation to the foreign French milieu. In fact, the narrator associates the difference between her individual identity and that of her cousins to the contrasting ideologies and cultures. Djebar quotes the first person narrator saying:

> I did not realize that by this assumption I was putting on a symbolic veil. I had passed the age of puberty without being buried in the harem like my girl cousins; I had spent my dreaming adolescence on its fringes, neither totally outside, nor in its heart; so I spoke and studied French, and my body, during this formative period, became Westernized in its way. At all the regular family gatherings, I had lost the knack of sitting cross-legged: this posture no longer indicated that I was one of all the women and shared their warmth - at the most it simply meant squatting uncomfortably. (127)

This voice of the first person singular reveals that she is not constructed by the Algerian traditions, but rather by the French culture acquired through her education. Unlike her cousins who are shaped by the Algerian sociocultural values, the narrator underlines her assimilation of the French language and culture, which impact her character.

Dealing with self-identity and its contextual construction, Stephen Greenblatt draws a clear link between self-fashioning and self-cancellation. Once he clarifies the power structures influencing social life, Greenblatt exposes the relation of the individual to these dominating sociocultural beliefs and views. As he studies Thomas More's identity, he suggests that self-construction necessarily involves cancellation of some individual features of one's self over others. In his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare,* Greenblatt insists on More's self-cancelation as he resists

the influence of the power structures, including the Monarchical system. To achieve an individual sociocultural identity, More meets the opposing authoritative attitudes, leading to his "profound alienation from his society, from the greater part of his acquaintance, from himself" (16). Through his literary productions, such as *Utopia*, More voices his socio-political ideologies and reacts against the established church of Henry VIII to maintain his social identification. However, by challenging the authoritative values, More falls a prey to his context as he was deprived by the Court from seeing his family in prison, before being executed. Hence, Stephen Greenblatt suggests self-construction and self-cancellation as two sides of the same coin resulted out of an encounter between the power structures and the holders of the opposing groups seen as aliens.

In *A Mercy*, Morrison portrays the individuals' encounter with the controlling attitudes and their weight on the individual's identity self-fashioning. She conveys the characters' views on their self-identity and their social lives in relation to the power structures of their time period. By doing so, Morrison shows that the individuals are, actually, conscious of the contextual nature of their constructed self. Thus, as aliens, she suggests that they meet the dominating ideologies either affirming their dependency on their power or challenging its fixed views. *A Mercy* presents many of the characters in relation to the contextual values of 17th century America. Reflecting on the presumed death of the Mistress Rebekka as a power holder, Lina emphasizes on their dependency on their Mistress. Their identifications rely on Rebekka's powerful protection and dominating values. During a moment of distress, Morrison reads Lina's thoughts:

> Don't die, Miss. Don't. Herself, Sorrow, a newborn and maybe Florens—three unmastered women and an infant out here, alone, belonging to no one, became wild game for anyone.

> None of them could inherit; none was attached to a church or recorded in its books. Female and illegal, they would be interlopers, squatters, if they stayed on after Mistress died, subject to purchase, hire, assault, abduction, exile. The farm could be claimed by or auctioned off to the Baptists. (56)

Indeed, with the death of their Mistress, these women lose their identity and become "wild game for anyone". To ensure their survival within the oppressive society, these women are determined to give up their individual freedom and submit to the power holders. Without the controlling power, the females are subject to purchase, assault, and exile. Lina underlines the women's dependency on their holders saying that: "the certainty was a kind of death for herself as well, since her own life, everything, depended on Mistress's survival, which depended on Florens' success" (58). On her turn, Florens expresses her subjection to the surrounding environment. She identifies herself with the Blacksmith, her dominating lover, as she exists only with and for him. Hence, to achieve her desired attachment, Florens renounces her individual freedom as the latter cannot provide her reassurance as much as does the Blacksmith.

> Standing there between the beckoning wall of perfume and the stag I wonder what else the world may show me. It is as though I am loose to do what I choose, the stag, the wall of flowers. I am a little scare of this looseness. Is that how free feels? I don't like it. I don't want to be free of you because I am live only with you. (68)

As Lina and Florens foster their dependence on the domination of the superpower; the Mistress and the Blacksmith, respectively, they affirm the controlling ideologies and cancel the notion of the individual liberty as a feature of their self-fashioning. Like Thomas More, they identify themselves with the representatives of power to form a legal and social identity; they cancel their individual freedom and independence,

becoming dependent on the Mistress and the Blacksmith as their only social identification. Lina and Florens as alienated women cannot stand independently by their selves. Thus, through self-cancellation, these women, indirectly, reinforce the fixed, authoritative, and sociocultural codes specific to their society of the 17th century.

Equally, in *L'Amour, la Fantasia,* Djebar considers the relatedness of identity self-fashioning and the surrounding power structures, and the individual views on the determinant codes and ideologies. In her fictional narrative, Djebar depicts characters, who are aware of the complexity of their individual identity bearing the contextual values. While some are condemned to absorb the dominating beliefs, others try vainly to destroy them. As an illustration of the interconnection between the power holders and the marginalized aliens, Djebar portrays the relationship between an Arabo-Berber woman and the wife of a French policeman. In her behavior with the Frenchwoman, the Algerian woman is depicted as acquiescent and obedient. She cares attentively for the well-being of the French woman, respecting her Western values to demonstrate and confirm her high social status as a civilized woman, ridding herself of the traditional Berber character. Her relatives reproach her submissiveness to the French woman; they condemn her behavior viewed as incorrect as it affirms the power of the colonizer and the fixed distinctions set between the colonizer and the colonized. Yet, they themselves admit the male dominance of the social ideologies referring to the female figures as second class individuals. As Djebar tells, these women reject the submission to a female figure, but bear indifferently, the dominating sociocultural value of patriarchy.

> She's my friend! She's French but she's my friend! '
> One relative shrieked with laughter: 'She's been your friend for years and you still can't manage to shake her hand and say

> "Au revoir, Madame!" like they do. Now, if it was a man, I couldn't do it, but in front of a woman, like myself. What would be the harm? After all, we can do things in the French way! Naturally not going out without a veil, God help us! Or wearing short skirts and showing ourselves naked to all and sundry, but we can say "Bonjour" like them, and sit on a chair like them, why not? God created us too, didn't he? ... (21)

Through their views on their social conduct, these Algerian women acknowledge their self-fashioning in relation to the dominant circulating codes. They affirm their dependence on and submissiveness to both patriarchy and religious authority, which influence their constructed identity. Also, Assia Djebar points out the interference of French colonialism on the individual through reviewing the military expansions in 1840 led by the general Lamoricière. She draws attention to a particular victim killed by the French soldiers during the battle, confronting the colonial forces to the *Doua*ïrs or tribes which try to resist the military powers. As she reveals his sacrifice, she underlines the young's views and his relation to the colonial institution.

> Without a word, Lamoricière is led to the most magnificent of the tents: a fifteen-year-old youth is lying on his back, his face turned towards the ground with his eyes wide open; there is a gaping wound in his chest and rigor mortis has already set in. 'He defended his sister against five soldiers!' a voice at the back explains. (53)

To preserve his individual values of honor and manhood, the young male challenges the colonial institution and its dogmatic attitudes. However, his persecution by the soldiers shows his inability to resist the colonial power and construct his individual self through the rejection of the codes and ideologies of the French. His attempt to form his identity independent from the power structure of French colonialism has led to his fatal death. Through this individual experience, the writer reveals the fatality of

rejecting the influences of the context and the interconnection of both the construction and cancellation of the self.

I.2.The 'Contextuality' of the Texts Understudy

In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt suggests a close study of the literary and non-literary texts in relation to the power-bound context. In addition to the influence of the context on the identity formation of people, he maintains that in the same way the social ideologies and codes shape the literary constructions as subjective and relative realities. He emphasizes the interconnection of the written texts to the contextual ideologies of the time period of their production. Greenblatt writes:

> I perceived that fashioning oneself and being fashioned- by cultural institutions-family, religion, state-were inseparably intertwined. In all my texts and documents, there were, so far as I could tell, no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; indeed, the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society. (256)

Greenblatt reveals the influence of the power structures, including family, religion, and state, upon his identity formation and the construction of his texts. He suggests that the written text or document, actually, bear the social codes and ideologies acquired by the author's interconnection with the sociocultural and historical context. Influenced by the contextual values, the author's written productions reflect the circulating ideologies and insert the author's individual views and subversive interpretations. To illustrate the significant influence of the social context upon the literary writings, as socially produced to reconstruct the circulating social views, Greenblatt refers to the writings of Thomas More, focusing on his text *Utopia*. He studies the way More's text reveals the sociocultural context specific to the

Renaissance era, including monopoly of the monarchy, supremacy of the King, social hierarchies, and religious conflicts between the catholic and protestant groups. Through his *Utopia,* Thomas More conveys his distinct and individual views reflecting on these social codes and ideologies. He expresses his catholic faith and belief in the supremacy of the Pope over the church, denouncing the monopoly of King Henry VIII, who considers himself as the head of the English church. More constructs his imaginative *Utopia* in reference to England to re-establish the laws of the Lord on the land. Greenblatt indicates that:

> The imagined existence of Utopia may function as a reproach to a corrupt social order, it may signal the limitations of the usual accommodation to power and property, it may expose the process whereby the established order of things lays claim to reality itself and denies the possibility of alternatives, but *Utopia* is always an imagined existence and vulnerable to the doubts and ironies and civilized demurrals of its creator. (54)

Stephen Greenblatt shows *Utopia* as a fictional construction of its author revealing his individual views and values to reflect the sociocultural realities. This fictional text, which conveys the subjective interpretations of its writer, denounces the social disorder, the power-bound ideologies, and the fixed metanarratives as outcomes of the society, such as monarchy, state, and church. Through his fictional and subjective writings, Thomas More reacts against the established and one-sided representation and realities, by revealing a utopian world that stands as an alternative and a counter-narrative to the distorted reality of England. Regarding the distinct influences of the context, New Historicism underlines the subjectivity and relativism of the constructed literary texts; it rejects the fixed, linear, and objective narratives advocating a single and monolithic reality in favour of multiple constructions and interpretations.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar reveal the influence of the postmodern sociocultural and historical context of the production of their texts. Following the postmodern thinking, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* insist on foregrounding the individual voices and subjective realities to deconstruct the fixed narratives, advocating monolithic and one-sided representations. Morrison and Djebar review past contexts of their countries to inscribe individual voices and accounts. The two authors express their own views and interpretation to react against the official and established realities, which marginalize the alienated minorities and disregard their historical contributions. They affirm the disruption of the historical and literary discourses as nonlinear, subjective, and biased constructions. Morrison writes her literary text revising 17th century America to inscribe the voices of the marginalized slaves, Natives, and women and construct their sociocultural representations distorted by the power-bound ideologies. In the same way, Djebar narrates her text reviewing colonial and postcolonial Algeria to bring to the fore the relative accounts and experiences of the socially oppressed and historically disregarded people, such as the colonized Algerians, mainly, women.

To reflect on the contextual power-bound ideologies, the two authors insert their individual views and beliefs. Indeed, they react against the established sociocultural representation marginalizing and repressing the aliens' codes and values. They insert the historically disregarded accounts and histories voicing the silenced 'Other', such as the native, the blacks, and women. However distinct their individual experiences are, the two authors share a common story to spread, as Greenblatt suggests: "everyone should be free to follow the doctrine of his choice and to attempt to persuade others of the truth of this doctrine, provided that such attempts remain modest and nonviolent" (53). The two authors confirm the weight of the surrounding

codes in their self-fashioning as postmodern writers. By their turn, they reflect on/ shape new alternatives and readings by exposing the individuals' interconnections with the sociopolitical and historical power structures.

In their fictional narratives, Morrison and Djebar share various themes communicated through particular literary techniques. These techniques, in fact, enable the authors to challenge the notions of factuality and linearity in the writing of history. For the two authors, the presented historical interpretation is subjective "the reality we assume in our daily existence is also a construction, as is the identity we deploy in our relations with power" (Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 57). That is the knowledge which Morrison and Djebar communicate in *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* is a creative construction. Their literary texts shape subjective interpretations and readings communicated through the used literary techniques, such as the anecdotes, polyphony, and palimpsest.

II. The Literary Techniques

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar share various literary continuities. Through *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, the two authors employ particular literary techniques and structural forms, revealing the creativity of their fictional narratives. Altogether, these techniques indicate the aspects of the text understudy as relative and fragmented individual constructions. They convey various subjective accounts to insert the individual views and ideologies. By doing so, they revise the established realities and reconstruct the historical representations of the minorities. As an illustration of these literary continuities, the two authors use anecdotes, polyphony, and palimpsest to convey similar aims.

II.1.Anecdotes

Following New Historicism, the use of anecdotes as a literary technique is a prerequisite element to approach the literary text. The anecdote as a form of storytelling refers to short stories, tales, and accounts. In his text *Renaissance Self Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare,* Stephen Greenblatt refers to Thomas More's anecdote of the Cardinal Wolsey's luxurious dinner party. Thomas More recalls his attendance in a dinner party organized by the Cardinal Wolsey. He tells the way a group of elites praises and flats the Cardinal through fictional and poetic verses, showing his wealth, aristocratic status, and power. As Thomas More attends this party and witnesses the flatters who do their best to impress their Cardinal, Greenblatt describes his "peculiar mood of ambition, ironic amusement, curiosity, and revulsion. It is as if he [More] were watching the enactment of a fiction, and he is equally struck by the unreality of the whole performance and by its immense power to impose itself upon the world" (23). This individual account of Thomas More reveals the power-bound codes of the upper-class, showing its power to dominate the sociocultural, political, and historical values of their society. For him, the anecdote serves to reveal some realistic accounts and counter the historical fixed representation by breaking down the traditional distinctions between literary texts and history.

Greenblatt suggests that the new historicist anecdotes enable literary writers to reflect contextual values, historical events, and individual views. Still, realistic or fictional, these "fragmented and miniature stories" (*Practicing New Historicism* 67), as Greenblatt suggests, break off the linear structure of the narrative and induce specific contents and ends. In his *Practicing New Historicism*, Stephen Greenblatt stresses on the significance of studying the writer's use of anecdotes. They narrate realistic stories weaved by some fictional figures to insert individual views and

construct subjective interpretations. The anecdotes react against the historical representations of the marginalized 'Other'. They work to deconstruct history as a metanarrative through fictionalizing the historical events and recording the relative accounts. The new historicists associate the anecdotes with "the disruption of history as usual, not to its practice: the undisciplined anecdote appealed to those of us who wanted to interrupt the Big Stories" (51). The anecdotes provide a revisionist reading of the historical knowledge as a nonlinear and fragmented narrative. On the one hand, the use of anecdotes and their realistic aspects expose the power bound contextual ideologies presenting oppressive attitudes and marginalizing historical realities. On the other hand, the consideration of the fictional and imaginative elements of the used anecdotes helps the writer to construct and shape individual and subversive readings.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar construct their fictional narrative through referring to various realistic and imaginative anecdotes. These anecdotes convey relative views, fragmented narratives, and subversive historical realities. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests in *Practicing New Historicism*, the use of anecdote as a literary technique reveals: "an undeniable appeal for those who wanted to break the continuities of the *grand récits*, to hear the voices of history's excluded, (…) and to attend the unsaid" (67).

Morrison's *A Mercy* breaks its linearity through recording the anecdote about colonialism and slavery, reviewed by Jacob. The writer reports the individual views of the characters and reflects on the oppressive sociocultural context of 17th America. Indeed, Morrison inserts the individual anecdotes of the marginalized aliens to rewrite and reconstruct attitude of tolerance and cohabitation. Similarly, Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* reports various fragmented accounts about French colonialism and the oppression of women. She narrates the anecdotes of J.T. Merle and the 1st person

narrator to reveal their individual views and reflections on the French institution of the colonial Algeria during the 1800's and the normative violence of the Algerian sociocultural traditions. As she inserts the individual accounts and the reactionary views, the writer reconstructs the historical representations of the colonized and women and interpretations specific to the particular time period. Hence, Morrison and Djebar use anecdotes as a literary technique to show the circulating codes and ideologies, and shape alternative sociocultural view and readings. They interlace fictional images and historical realities to rewrite the historical knowledge about colonialism, patriarchy, and cultural values.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* demonstrates a particular practice of new historicist anecdotes. Morrison tells many short stories and fragmented accounts, which reveal the fictional and contextual attributes of her narrative. She relies on anecdotes to reveal the circulating values of 17th century America and, in return, insert her subversive views and interpretations. These individual reflections on the power bound context enable the writer to "divulge", as Stephen Greenblatt suggests "the suppressed unofficial, authentic story" (54) of the historically marginalized people. By doing so, Morrison counters the established representation reacting against history as objective and linear. She fictionalizes her historical readings to show history as contextual and individual constructions bearing the subjective attitudes. As Morrison matches the literary and historical representations through the literary technique of anecdote, she removes the established distinctions between literary and historical writings.

Toni Morrison builds her *A Mercy* on a distinct anecdote narrating the story of Jacob Vaark as he moves to the plantation of D'Ortega to get back his debts from the slave owner. As he meets D'Ortega at his plantation, Jacob expresses his views and reflections on the social condition of the slaves in the plantation and the attitudes of

the White masters towards them. He depicts the racial discriminations of the enslaved individuals and women; D'Ortega exploits the slaves imposing on them hard works and strict laws. Jacob considers his views on the sociocultural values of the White, their oppressive laws in 1682 Virginia, and the dehumanizing effect of slavery. Reflecting the contextual ideologies, he indicates that "Any social ease between gentry and laborers, forged before and during that rebellion, crumbled beneath a hammer wielded in the interests of the gentry's profits" (8). He confirms the marginalizing attitudes and White supremacy. Despite of his White origins, Vaark criticizes this establishment and points out the danger of harassing black people. He assumes that exploiting, silencing, and preventing slaves from their individual freedom presents a real threat for the oppressors. Through Jacob's descriptions, Morrison depicts the dominating values and the ideologically determined social institutions. She contradicts the lavish living of the White settlers with the harsh circumstances of the Black slaves.

Furthermore, as she narrates Vaark's stay in the plantation, Morrison reveals his critical views on the peculiar institution of slavery. To return back his money, D'Ortega asks Jacob to choose a slave as the payment for his debts. Morrison describes the black slaves presented for Jacob by their master D'Ortega, depicting the different status of the dominant master and the oppressed aliens. She reports:

> The two men walked the row, inspecting. D'Ortega identifying talents, weaknesses and possibilities, but silent about the scars, the wounds, like misplaced veins tracing their skin. One even had the facial brand required by local law when a slave assaulted a white man a second time. The women's eyes looked shockproof, gazing beyond place and time as though they were not actually there. The men looked at the ground. Except every now and then, when possible, when they thought they were not being evaluated, Jacob could see their quick

> glances, sideways, wary but, most of all, judging the men who judged them. (20)

Actually, the writer describes the social hierarchical system by drawing attention to the harshness of slavery, which oppresses the aliens. They are seen as objects and property to be owned. As the anecdote reveals, these women are lost in time and place, trying not to attract the masters, who would purchase them. Vaark refuses the slaves presented for him by D'Ortega and requests for Florens' mother as a Negro female servant for D'Ortega's family.

Morrison interlaces the story of Vaark's debt with the story of the slave mother. She voices the mother telling and reporting her distress and individual view. As the slave mother realizes that she is the one Vaark has selected, she begs him to take her little daughter instead of herself. Due to the sufferings and the difficulties she endures, Florens' mother prefers to rescue her child, offering her to Vaark. Reporting her story, Morrison records that:

> Her voice was barely above a whisper but there was no mistaking its urgency.
> 'Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter.'
> Jacob looked up at her, away from the child's feet, his mouth still open with laughter, and was struck by the terror in her eyes. His laugh creaking to a close, he shook his head, thinking, God help me if this is not the most wretched business. (24)

As the Mother's voice is strong and appealing, Vaark accepts her yearning and agrees to take the daughter. Jacob thinks that this girl will accompany his wife Rebekka and compensate for the child she loses. Hence, through telling Vaark's anecdote and his view on the slave mother's story, Morrison reveals the circulating values of the 17th century slavery system and its influences on peoples. She illustrates the harshness of

slavery through the suffering of the slave mother letting down her daughter. With the influence of the power bound values, such as the White supremacy and the sociopolitical codes, and the oppressive laws, slaves and women are voiceless and marginalized 'Others'. Morrison shows the individual sociocultural representations and the depicted historical realities as prejudiced and distorted. Therefore, she uses the literary anecdote to react against the established and historical one-sided representation through inserting the individual accounts and beliefs reflecting the 17th century American context and slave system.

Morrison fragments her narrative through another anecdote as a literary technique. She records a short story which Lina narrates to Florens. As a Native American, Lina narrates various accounts drawn from the native oral tradition. To reflect on the contextual codes and values of her time period, Lina narrates a fictional and allegorical story. She tells the story of an eagle that "laid her laid her eggs in a nest far above and far beyond the snakes and paws that hunted them. Her eyes are midnight black and shiny as she watches over them." This eagle is very protective, vigilant, and attentive about her eggs. However, one day a traveler arrives at the mountain enjoying the beauty of the natural sight of the lake and rainbow. In front of this scene, he proclaims the perfect nature as his possession screaming "This is perfect. This is mine." Lina continues her tale describing the damaging effect of the traveler's scream on the whole spectacle breaking one of the eagle's eggs. Lina narrates that:

> But one thing she cannot defend against: the evil thoughts of man. (…) The eagle swivels her head to find the source of the strange, meaningless thunder, the incomprehensible sound. Spotting the traveler, she swoops down to claw away his laugh and his unnatural sound. But the traveler, under attack, raises his stick and strikes her wing with all his strength. Screaming

> she falls and falls. (…) Screaming, screaming she is carried away by wind instead of wing.
> Then Florens would whisper, “Where is she now?”
> “Still falling,” Lina would answer, “she is falling forever.”
> Florens barely breathes. “And the eggs?” she asks.
> “They hatch alone,” says Lina.
> “Do they live?” Florens’ whispering is urgent.
> “We have,” says Lina.” (60- 1)

Actually, this anecdote told by Lina is important for the narrative’s structure and content as it reflect the colonial and patriarchal codes. It breaks down the narrative fusing the oral tradition of storytelling and the written literary form. In other words, it suggests the discontinuity of the human thought and the vividness of his voice as a realistic aspect of the tale. Through portraying the image of the black eagle, the narrator presents the social experience of women under the institution of slavery and the masculine values of the white people. The injustice and oppressive practices the eagle undertakes are related to the oppressive policies of the colonial institution. Just like the eagle’s experience, the contextual ideologies oppress the black slaves, Natives Americans, and minorities discriminating them on the basis of their gender and colour of skin. In fact, the progressive attitudes of the power structures referred to through the traveller reveal their social repressive and historical marginalizing conduct.

Morrison voices Lina and Florens, two alienated women referred to as the ‘Other’. She records their individual views and beliefs to react against the sociocultural representation of the individual oppressed by colonialism, slavery, and patriarchy. The last sentences of the story suggest an optimistic belief in the oppressed other, determined as ever to resist and hold on “Do they live?” Florens’ whispering is urgent. “We have,” says Lina.” Through the character of Lina, Morrison underlines the necessity to resist the oppressive and marginalizing influences of the contextual

ideologies on the identity formation of the alienated people. Accordingly, this anecdote on the eagle is distinct as it brings together the fictional and realistic constructions breaking down the distinctions between literature and history. It reacts against the historical realities as a grand narrative through reflecting on the contextual values and the sociocultural fixed representations. In other words, the use of anecdotes as a literary technique serves Morrison to counter history though inserting the individual views and interpretations and challenging the biased historical knowledge with fictional and creative constructions.

In the same way, Assia Djebar relies on anecdotes to write down her *L'Amour, la Fantasia.* She uses various individual accounts to reflect the contextual ideologies of the colonial and post-colonial eras, excluding the aliens, such as the colonized Algerian people, and particularly, women. The anecdotes serve the writer to expose the circulating values which influence the sociocultural representations and historical readings. Through relying on both imaginative and realistic details, Djebar records short stories to insert the subjective views, voices, and readings of the character's experiences. Djebar employs anecdotes to break down the conceptualization of history as metanarrative, by inscribing the sociocultural and historical representations of the aliens. In *Practicing New Historicism*, Stephen Greenblatt asserts that "the new historicist anecdote was a conduit for carrying these counter historical insights and ambitions into the field of literary history" (54). Following Greenblatt, Djebar records the repressed and silenced accounts of the other, such as the colonized and women, enabling them to express and voice their oppression. That is, through anecdotes, Djebar reconstructs new views, reading, sociocultural and historical representations.

Indeed, Assia Djebar revises various historical events related to the French colonialism and Algerian revolution by telling short stories happened during the

colonial period. She records the invasion of Algeria by the French colonial institution in the battle of Staouali in June 19th, 1830. After the landing of the French fleets in Algiers in June 13th, the Algerian peoples meet the French forces in Staouali to resist and end the colonial conquest. Dealing with this battle, setting off the French colonialism of Algeria, Djebar records a short account of J. T. Merle, a French theater manager. Merle narrates his witness on the day of July the forth, focusing on the description of the harshness of the conflict. Djebar indicates that "J.T. Merle, our theatre manager who is never in the theatre of operations, conveys to us the amazement, the excitement and the pity that he has felt from the day he landed (the only time he has been in the front line) until the end of hostilities, on this 4 July" (32). Then, Merle portrays his individual admiration of the Arabs' brotherhood proudly resisting the French soldiers and rescuing their compatriots. He expects difficulty for the future French struggles in Algeria because of the resilience and fortitude of the Algerian people. Depicting the Algerians' fighting, he says that:

> (…) every Arab skillfully handles a wooden device, to convey a wounded friend, or drag the bodies of every one of their dead through the densest undergrowth. In this, these 'decapitating savages' show a secret superiority: they mutilate the bodies of the enemy, to be sure, but they will never let one of their own to be taken dead or alive. . . The land, into which the French army is gradually catting its way, is seemingly not the only thing at stake. (32)

Although Merle's description is prejudiced in reference to the Algerians as the 'Arab' and 'decapitating savages', it conveys the oppressive and marginalizing views of this French manger. Merle also transmits the contextual values of the colonized people, who refuse to submit to the French attackers. Following this first incident, the writer carries on reporting another story told by Merle on three injured men taken by

the French soldiers after the battle of Staouali “a Turk, a Moor and a young man who was probably a Kabyle. Merle describes at length their faces, their bearing, their resignation or their courage” (32). He accounts the stay of the young Kabyle at the French hospital visited by his father. Djebar reports Merle tale depicting the French attitudes toward the injured son indicating that:

> We are now in the midst of a real drama, like the ones that Merle is accustomed to producing on the Paris stage: 'Arab father and son, the object of French solicitude'; 'father disturbed by French humanity'; 'Arab father bitterly opposes his son's amputation which the French doctors advise'; 'Muslim fanaticism causes the son's death, despite French medical science'. This is the final tableau in the drama which Merle has thus constructed before our eyes. (32)

Through his anecdote, Merle reveals the French colonizer as human and civilized subject, while the Algerian Muslim father and son as fundamental fanatics. Merle’s account juxtaposes two images of the colonizer and colonized; the colonized Algerians as ‘the decapitating savages’ and the French colonizer as humanitarian doctors. By doing so, he shows the hierarchical and social separations at the heart of the Algerian under French colonialism. In fact, this anecdote reveals Merle’s historical representation of the Algerians as prejudiced and one-sided. Commenting on it, Djebar reveals it as an artistic account individually constructed by Merle.

Actually, through referring to Merle’s anecdote, Assia Djebar exposes the distorted historical representations, influenced by the dogmatic attitudes of the power holders. Through asserting the brotherhood and resistance of the Algerians, Djebar depicts the colonized views as active historical subjects protecting their land and values. Hence, the writer reconstructs Merle’s biased portrayal and the established historical realities disregarding the contributions of the aliens, the colonized Algerian

people. Also, the literary anecdotes result in breaking the fixed distinctions between literature and history as they provide different readings and views on the historical colonial knowledge.

Adding up to the historical anecdote discussed above, Assia Djebar refers to another literary anecdote in *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. She reflects on the Algerian sociocultural values and their influence on the representation of the women as the 'Others'. The writer records an anecdote experienced by one of her female narrators. The narrator recalls one of the past wedding parties she attended. During this familiar gathering, the invited women attend the wedding ceremony with decency respecting the social norms. This meeting presents one of the rare collective gatherings, where these women entertain and express themselves. However, one detail attracts the attention of the narrator. She accounts that at the moment the food is served and the bride is exposed in her magnificent dress and jewelry, the mistress opens the door and lets the onlookers or 'voyeuses' examine the ceremony from the outside. These outsiders completely veiled are not invited to attend the ceremony, but their observations are considerable. They serve the circulating of the social norms showing the way the ceremony is held. Reflecting on this cultural practice, the narrator explains:

> The hostess has let them in in order to show off, as if saying, 'Look! Examine everything! I'm not afraid of gossip! My wedding celebration respects all the traditions! Let even the women I've not deigned to invite see for themselves and let everybody know!'…The crux of the ceremony is there, in this uneasy knot. As if the guests could no longer endure their exclusion from the outside world…As if they were finding a way of forgetting their imprisonment, getting their own back on the men who kept them in the background: the males-father, sons, husband - were shut out once and for all by the

> women themselves who, in their own domain, began to impose the veil in turn on others. (205)

This social practice of setting distinctions between the enclosed women attending the ceremony and the onlookers excluded from the party reveals the normative violence of the Algerian traditions. This demarcation between the invited insider and excluded outsider is illusionist. In fact, this anecdote shows the unreal representation of women. Despite their marginalization and submissiveness to the male dominant codes, the invited women consider themselves as socially inserted compared to the excluded women from the ceremony. In reality, women are subjugated by the Algerian contextual ideologies. However, through the cultural practice of the 'Onlookers', the invited women to the ceremony regard themselves as socially included while the non-invited women as the only excluded 'Other'. Compared to the excluded women, the included women see themselves as neither discriminated nor marginalized by the social and patriarchal codes. Actually, Assia Djebar refers to the literary anecdotes to reveal the way the traditional codes distort the representation of women. Through voicing the female narrator reflecting on these violent sociocultural codes, Djebar inserts her subversive views of freedom of expression. She reacts against the fixed and excluding cultural practices and shows Algerian society as biased and patriarchal.

II.2.Polyphony

In addition to anecdotes, Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar deploy another literary technique referred to as polyphony. In his text *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1972), Mikha*ï*l Bakhtin introduces polyphony as a literary technique. It refers to the multiple narrators and voices constructing the fictional narrative. Each narrator communicates specific individual meanings and perspectives. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2009), M. H. Abrams discusses this technique as a form of plurality

and subjective accounts. He defines it as "(…) the dialogic form (…), in which the characters are liberated to speak "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (77). As Bakhtin, Abrams believes in the notion of polyphony and multiplicity of voices; he rejects the linear mono-voiced narration of the literary texts. Actually, the polyphonic voices demonstrate their individual accounts and interpretations through using the 1st person singular, flashes back, and stream of consciousness. Altogether they show the nonlinearity, discontinuity, and the subjectivity of the literary text understudy.

In reference to New Historicism, polyphony is considered in the study of the literary text in relation to the context. The construction of the narrative through the various accounts reveals new historicist notions of plurality, relativism, and subjectivity of the historical knowledge. In his *Metahistory* (1987), Hayden White shows the multiplicity of voices in the literary text in reference to history. Discussing the new historicist reflections on history, he indicates that "we are free to conceive 'history' as we please, just as we are free to make of it what we will" (433). Indeed, the multi-perspectives produced through the constructed text reveal the plurality of the sociocultural and historical representations and readings. As the literary technique of polyphony records various narrative accounts and voices, it reacts against the established historical realities and notions of objectivity and linearity.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar make use of the polyphonic literary technique. They construct their literary texts using various voices and narrators. Each of these distinct accounts conveys the individuals' views and beliefs reflecting on the contextual ideologies particular to their historical time period. Morrison and Djebar deploy this technique because of its significant impact on both the structure and content of their texts respectively, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour la Fantasia*. The technique

of polyphony fragments and interrupts the sequential narratives; it weaves many distinct fragments and voices helping Morrison and Djebar to construct their individual voices and own stories through their texts. The polyphonic form serves them also to reveal relative views and historical interpretations. Each account shows a singular interpretation and perspective of the dominant ideologies. Through this technique the two authors demonstrate the new historicist insights in their literary texts. They refer to multi-voiced and fragmented narratives and distinct and relative accounts to reject the established and one-sided sociocultural and historical interpretations. As they revise and rewrite some historical realities of past contexts, the two authors show the relativism, plurality, and nonlinearity of the historical realities reflecting Stephen Greenblatt's idea that "When the historian E. P Thompson, for example, interspersed his prose with the putatively unprocessed "voices" of the lower classes, he was striving to present previously disregarded historical subjects, who could give access to a multiplicity of pasts" (*Practicing New Historicism* 55). On the whole, the literary technique of polyphony shows a fragmented narrative revealing various voices and mini-narratives, emphasizing the subjective and individual views and experiences.

Morrison inserts the voices of the marginalized black slaves, the Native Americans, and women historically disregarded by the power bound codes of 17th century colonial America and the institution of slavery. In her turn, Djebar records various accounts of the colonized Algerians and women, expressing their views and values. These accounts review the influences of the ideologies and codes of the French institution and the conservative Algerian traditions during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Through the technique of polyphony, the two authors react against the monolithic sociocultural and historical representations of the individual aliens.

They insert their voices and individual views bent on nonlinear and subjective historical realities and readings.

In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison opts for the multi-voiced narration to record multiple accounts reflecting on the excluding contextual values determined by the power structures of 17th century America, including the oppressive slave system, colonialism, and patriarchy. Through these individual voices, Morrison reconstructs the individual stories of the oppressed people. Using a fragmented polyphonic structure, the writer reports the voices of Flores, the black girl; her slave other; Lina, the Native American; Jacob Vaark, the White master; his wife Rebekka; and Sorrow, a purchased woman. Although they are living together, these characters reveal distinct individual experiences and beliefs. Morrison describes these women indicating that "Each woman embargoed herself; spun her own web of thoughts unavailable to anyone else. It was as though, with or without Florens, they were falling away from one another" (132). The dominating codes influence them differently shaping singular historical experiences.

A Mercy starts with the account of Florens. She introduces her narrative recalling back her stay in the plantation of D'Ortega. She depicts the difficulties and injustices inflected on her under the institution of slavery and the colonial codes of 17th century America. Florens expresses her confusion and embarrassment as her mother gives her up away to Jacob Vaark; she is unable to realize the real motives behind her mother's act. She recalls her mother saying: "Her baby boy is still at her breast. Take the girl, she says, my daughter, she says. Me. Me" (5). She questions her relation with her mother as she keeps her brother, and sending her away. Then, Florens accounts her arrival at the house of Jacob, her relationship with the mistress, Rebekka and Lina. She asserts that despite the difficulties she encounters in the first days, she

learns to adapt herself to the new environment and cohabit with the other women on the land. She develops a strong and solid relationship with Lina, who protects and cares for her. Through her narrative, Florens tells the reader about her relationship with the Blacksmith, her lover, a free man working for Jacob. At the beginning, she sees herself depending on him and his physical presence. It is only with him and for him she exists. She narrates that:

> Night comes and I steal a candle. I carry an ember in a pot to light it. To see more of you. When it is lit I shield the flame with my hand. I watch you sleeping. I watch too long. Am careless. The flame burns my palm. I think if you wake and see me seeing you I will die. I run away not knowing then you are seeing me seeing you. And when at last our eyes hit I am not dead. For the first time I am live. (36)

After a period of time, the Blacksmith rejects the girl and abandons her because of her obsessive and self-destructive attitudes. Facing her social oppression, she decides to overcome her sufferings and difficulties presented through the power-bound codes and beliefs. She point out: “But my way is clear after losing you who I am thinking always as my life and my security from harm, from any who look closely at me only to throw me away. From all those who believe they have claim and rule over me. I am nothing to you. You say I am wilderness. I am. Is that a tremble on your mouth, in your eye? Are you afraid? You should be” (155). Indeed, addressing her lover, the girl breaks down her submissive relationships and the dogmatic values enchaining her. At the end of her account, Florens confirms her independence and individual change. At last, she overcomes her sufferings and pains, confronting the rejection from both the blacksmith and her mother. She addresses them saying that “See? You are correct. A minha mãe too. I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving. No ruth, my love. None. Hear me? Slave. Free. I last. I will keep one

sadness. That all this time I cannot know what my mother is telling me. Nor can she know what I am wanting to tell her. Mãe, you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are hard as cypress" (159). According to Florens, the only thing she regrets after her change is her separation from her mother unable to hear from her. Still she reassures her mother as she become strong and reliable. On the whole, the voice of Florens records her oppression, struggle, and her overcoming. It reveals and inserts her individual views reflecting the contextual institution of slavery and the ideologies of the White man. Through her narrative, Florens portrays the sociocultural and ideological change she acquired from her environment and relationships with the other women.

Florens' mother also inserts her individual voice through Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. A slave servant for D'Ortega, she asserts the oppressive and controlling attitudes of 17th century America. She narrates her difficulties and misery within the institution of slavery and the harassment at the hands of her White master. She relates her racial discrimination and the social exclusion she goes through under the dogmatic system of power. She reflects on herself saying that: "It was there I learned how I was not a person from my country, nor from my families. I was negrita. Everything. Language, dress, gods, dance, habits, decoration, song– all of it cooked together in the colour of my skin" (163). She depicts herself as lost in both space and time as deprived from her African cultural values and practicesc. Her social and historical representation is determined by her epidermal signs as a black individual. The mother's voice is distinct as it recalls back sending Florens away with Jacob. The mother has requested insistently Jacob to rescue Florens out of the plantation. Morrison says that "Her voice was barely above a whisper but there was no mistaking its urgency. "Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter" (24). She follows

her account explaining her real motives behind letting down her daughter. She justifies her act as righteous and sympathetic preventing Florens from living the same sufferings she herself has lived in the plantation. She comments on it saying that:

> One chance, I thought. There is no protection but there is difference. You stood there in those shoes and the tall man laughed and said he would take me to close the debt. I knew Senhor would not allow it. I said you. Take you, my daughter. Because I saw the tall man see you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes. It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human. I stayed on my knees. In the dust where my heart will remain each night and every day until you understand what I know and long to tell you: to be given dominion over another is a hard thing; to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing.
>
> Oh Florens. My love. Hear a tua mãe. (165)

Through these words, the slave expresses her pain and emotional suffering, away from her daughter and unable to explain her real motives. Her child has always been in her memory. Her remembrances remind her of how hurtful, determined, and courageous her act is. The slave mother expresses also her reflection on the relations between the individual and power within society. She asserts that the real influence of the power-bound attitudes on the individual is not the social oppression and marginalization which they make them endure, but rather, the fact of being imposed to admit and affirm these dogmatic and authoritative attitudes by submitting oneself to it; “to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing”.

Lina is another voice in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*. She relates her individual story and experiences within the 17th century circulating ideologies. Following her narrative, she identifies herself as a Native young girl captured by the Presbyterians, a

conservative religious sect. They have ruined her village and killed all her community. She recalls back the "Memories of her village peopled by the dead turned slowly to ash and in their place a single image arose. Fire. How quick. How purposefully it ate what had been built, what had been life. Cleansing somehow and scandalous in beauty. Even before a simple hearth or encouraging a flame to boil water she felt a sweet twinge of agitation" (47). She explains the way the Presbyterians impose on her their values and beliefs repressing her Native sociocultural values. Lina combines her Native sociocultural practices with the European codes to adjust to the new context. The Native girl carries her story revealing the way she gets along with Jacob, her Mistress, Rebekka, Florens, and Sorrow. While her master Jacob offers her a social protection, Lina serves him and his wife, Rebekka. She helps them with agricultural techniques drawn from her native culture, cares for their farm, and the other purchased girls; Florens and Sorrow. Lina's voice shows her experiences and individual reactions to the sociocultural and historical contextual ideologies of 17th century America. She reflects her views marginalizing her Native culture, the religious conservatism. In Jacob's farm, she constructs individual social relations with other disregarded women such as Florens. Hence, relating her account, Lina is portrayed as "steady, unmoved by any catastrophe as though she has seen and survived everything" (98). She is a socially active, reliable, strong, and resistant woman.

In addition to the voices of Florens, Lina, and the slave mother, Toni Morrison constructs other fragmented mini-narratives. She records the voice of Rebekka, Sorrow, and Jacob. Rebekka Vaark narrates her account as she travelled from Europe to the New World and her sociocultural relations with the other Lina, Florens and Sorrow. Through her narrative the reader hears about her arranged marriage with Jacob, repeated loss of her children, the death of Jacob, and ultimately, her illness. She

recalls her passage in America during the 17th century to reflect on the contextual ideologies and codes of the time period. She relates her voyage on the Angelus accompanying other female figures who are moving for different reasons. Reporting Rebekka's journey Morrison indicates that:

> The range of baggage, clothes, speech and attitude spoke clearly of who they were long before their confessions. One, Anne, had been sent away in disgrace by her family. Two, Judith and Lydia, were prostitutes ordered to choose between prison or exile. Lydia was accompanied by her daughter, Patty, a ten-year-old thief. Elizabeth was the daughter, or so she said, of an important Company agent. Another, Abigail, was quickly transferred to the captain's cabin and one other, Dorothea, was a cutpurse whose sentence was the same as the prostitutes'. Rebekka alone, her passage prepaid, was to be married. The rest were being met by relatives or craftsmen who would pay their passage—except the cutpurse and the whores whose costs and keep were to be borne by years and years of unpaid labor. Only Rebekka was none of these. (79-80)

Indeed, the stories of the eight women, including Anne, Judith, Lydia, among others, interlace the account of Rebekka. The mistress's narration shows that despite their distinct experiences, these women are all socially discriminated and excluded. Rebekka narrates her marriage with Jacob Vaark and expresses her remorse on the death of her new born babies. Reflecting on her infants' loss, Rebekka points out the hypocrisy and empty talk of religious men. The religious men have let her down and have interpreted her infant's death as a malediction. For her, religion is a biased construction unable to serve the 'other'. The writer explains that "Rebekka's understanding of God was faint, except as a larger kind of king, but she quieted the shame of insufficient devotion by assuming that He [God] could be no grander nor

better than the imagination of the believer. Shallow believers preferred a shallow god" (72).

Through her account, the mistress reveals social relationship, mainly, with Lina. These established relations loosen her moral and physical difficulties after the death of her infants and husband. Lina helps her overcoming her individual distress and communal exclusion. Morrison comments on the friendship of Rebekka and Lina saying that "They became friends. Not only because somebody had to pull the wasp sting from the other's arm. Not only because it took two to push the cow away from the fence. Not only because one had to hold the head while the other one tied the trotters. Mostly because neither knew precisely what they were doing or how" (51). The two women rely on their sisterhood as a way to face and overcome their shared sociocultural oppression and historical disregard.

On her turn, Sorrow, another purchased girl by Jacob Vaark, inserts her individual story in the text, *A Mercy*. She describes her life after the purchase and the change after giving birth to a child. Taken away from her native context, Sorrow loses her identification with both time and space. In her account, the reader does learn nothing about her past origins and identity. All what she remembers is that she has taken a journey on an unknown ship. She cannot recall her family, her people, or her country. Sorrow's lost memory and identity is revealed as she narrates her purchase by Jacob indicating that:

> Sir asked, 'Where is she?' and Sorrow was summoned into the mill.
> 'How old?'
> When the sawyer shook his head, Sorrow spoke up.
> 'I believe I have eleven years now.'
> Sir grunted.

> ‘Don’t mind her name,’ said the sawyer. ‘You can name her anything you want. My wife calls her Sorrow because she was abandoned. She is a bit mongrelized as you can see. However be that, she will work without complaint.’ (118)

Indeed, Sorrow’s lost past origins and identity contributes in her sociocultural marginalization and oppression. Under the influence of strict and dominating values, she is socially excluded as destined only for domestic and agricultural work. Her incapability to identify herself with a specific time period and place traumatizes Sorrow and causes her psychological insanity. Sorrow voices her individual views and experiences to overcome social oppression. She closes her account as she gives birth to a little baby. She asserts that becoming a mother makes of her a responsible and mature individual. Depicting Sorrow, Morrison reports that “Sorrow’s wandering stopped too. Now she attended routine duties, organizing them around her infant’s needs, impervious to the complaints of others. She had looked into her daughter’s eyes; saw in them the gray glisten of a winter sea while a ship sailed by-the-lee. “I am your mother,” she said. “My name is Complete” (132). She points out her individual change as she overcomes her difficulties as a dependent female. Thanks to this change, Sorrow is, ultimately, determined to reconstruct her sociocultural views and representation by raising up and serving her child as an independent female.

Toni Morrison constructs her *A Mercy* in reference to the technique of polyphony. It records various distinct accounts of Florens, Lina, slave mother, Rebekka, and Sorrow. Each of these voices inserts definite individual experiences, views, and sociocultural beliefs. These voices react against the power-bound codes and the hierarchical social system, bent on fixed demarcations in terms of race, religious views, gender, and colour. Through this multi-voiced narration, the text understudy reveals the new historicists notions of discontinuity, relativity, and

subversive sociocultural and historical views. It fragments the narrative structure. It inserts self-constructed views and representations, rejecting the fixed and one-sided interpretations and ideologies. The polyphonic form serves Morrison to review sociocultural and historical realities related to 17th century America from different perspectives, revealing individual and distinct voices. These individual accounts foreground the subjectivity of the historical and literary discourses.

In the same manner, in *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Assia Djebar uses various voices and individual accounts. She constructs her narrative through inserting fragmented mini-narratives to reflect on the contextual ideologies of the colonial and postcolonial times in Algeria. In fact, along *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, the reader hears from different tellers, such as the 1st person narrator, young brides, outspoken women held in French prisons, and an older war widow. They express their views and beliefs. These aliens' exclusions are due to the controlling and oppressive attitudes of French colonialism and the conservative values of the Algerian traditions. Both colonial ideologies and the traditional practices deprive the Algerian peoples, mainly, women from their freedom and voice. Hence, the literary technique of polyphony serves Assia Djebar to tell various voices and reconstruct individual beliefs, relative readings, and review traditional representation.

Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* opens with the account of the 1st person narrator. This voice is manifested in the text through italicized parts. The girl narrates her growing up in a rural region of the West, in a conservative and traditional society set on male-female hierarchical and gender distinction. The first person narrator observes and admires the French sociocultural and educational codes and assimilates the Western views for more liberty. Through her fragmented story, the 1st person narrator reflects on her contrasting self-fashioning compared to her female relatives.

While she enjoys a liberal life, expressing herself freely, the female relatives are socially enclosed and marginalized by the strict and conservative codes. She asserts that these differences in individual views and social conduit are due to the opposing contextual ideologies and codes of the French and Algerian cultures. As she voices her account, the 1st person narrator inserts many flashes back to her childhood, revealing the traditional sociocultural practices and codes. Recalling one of her family gatherings, she reflects on the beliefs and values which forbid voice for the female figures. These voiceless females are determined by the value of shame. She explains that during such collective gatherings, women are not allowed to express themselves to preserve and reinforce the sociocultural values prevalent in their society. The narrator reports her grandmother's reaction against her sister, who has tried to tell her own account saying that:

> I was struck by the verdict expressed by my grandmother: not on her nephew whom she refrained from either judging a hero or a highway robber, nor on the misfortune which had befallen her family, of which she deemed herself the mouth-piece. But she condemned her sister for exhibiting her grief too ostentatiously in front of the assembled women. Resignation was the important thing according to the matriarch: to take the rough with the smooth and always be equal to the part assigned to you by fate. (155-6)

Indeed, the narrator points out not only to the repressive attitudes of these conservative sociocultural codes, such as the value of shame, but also denounces its marginalizing impact. While women are restricted by the codes of shame repressing their voice, men are not controlled by such codes. Her grandmother blames her sister for not respecting the value of shame, but ignores the men's disregard for it. Hence, the 1st person narrator shows that these values and codes encourage a hierarchical

system and set gender demarcations between men and women. This narrator questions the self-expression of the Algerian woman. She suggests that even when melt within the collective groups of the same gender, the Algerian woman cannot identify herself as a distinct individual. She never uses the pronoun of the first singular person. She lets down her personal identity at the expense of the conservative and conformist ethos. Reporting one of the narrator's reflections, Djebar reports that:

> How could a woman speak aloud, even in Arabic, unless on the threshold of extreme age? How could she say 'I', since that would be to scorn the blanket-formulae which ensure that each individual journeys through life in a collective resignation? . . . How can she undertake to analyze her childhood, even if it turns out different? The difference, if not spoken of, disappears. Only speak of what conforms, my grandmother would reprove me: to deviate is dangerous, inviting disaster in its multiple disguises. Only speak of everyday mishaps, out of prudence rather than prudery, and so stave off misfortune… As for happiness, always too short-lived, but compact, succulent, close your eyes and concentrate all your strength on enjoying it but do not speak of it aloud…" (156)

In reference to the conservative sociocultural values and codes, woman is identified only with the collective groups. According to these codes, the woman's individual voice is a shame and nonconformist. It is to be silenced and repressed. The account reveals that the Algerian women are called only to reinforce the conservative attitudes. They are not allowed to react against them expressing their voices and social views. Even their individual pleasures are enjoyed in silence. However, to react against these established representations of the Algerian women and their lost individuality, the narrator emphasizes her voice as individual and distinct liberated from conformism. She inserts the first singular pronoun as a personal identification standing for all the

other women. For her, it is not the collective plural which represents the singular, but rather the individual voice which represents the silenced plural.

Through this voice, Djebar reveals the new historicist insight on polyphony. As in his *Practicing New Historicism,* Stephen Greenblatt suggests that the individual accounts "transform the first person singular into the first person plural." (18) Hence, the present first person narrator depicts her voice as personal and distinct revealing her individual sociocultural views and beliefs. As she describes the conservative Algerian traditions, the first person narrator incarnates all the neglected and excluded accounts, revealing their subversive and non-conformist views. She unearths their silence and constructs new individual representations. The female narrator indicates that:

> My oral tradition has gradually been overlaid and is in danger of vanishing: at the age of eleven or twelve I was abruptly ejected from this theatre of feminine confidences - was I thereby spared from having to silence my humbled pride? In writing of my childhood memories I am taken back to those bodies bereft of voices. (…) The flesh flakes off and with it, seemingly, the last shreds of the unwritten language of my childhood. Wounds are reopened, veins weep, one's own blood flows and that of others, which has never dried. (156)

Indeed, the narrator emphasizes the individuality of her account. She inserts it not only to express her views and values but also to stand for all those enclosed and excluded voices of the Algerian society. These disregarded women are prevented from the liberal outside and deprived from their self-expression. The narrator's reflections and memory serve to reconstruct the women's views and perspectives within a conservative and hierarchical society.

L'Amour, la Fantasia records also the individual voices of young brides. Reviewing some historical events during the French colonization of Algeria, Djebar

refers to women, who are taken as tools of war. She reveals a historical conflict between two opposing tribes of Kadruma and Mazuna. They have been captured by the French soldiers to weaken their resistance. These accounts depict the oppression and miseries women have experienced under the contextual dogmatic ideologies. These women are harassed, oppressed, and silenced. The fighters of Kadruma led by Aissa ben Djin have taken many brides, such as Badra, during their wedding ceremony. The account describes the way they oppress and harass the captured brides and women. Djebar shows Aissa's attitudes marginalizing women by his dogmatic power as he orders that: "You must each remove every item of jewelry and hand it to the Chaouch! If anyone hesitates or shows reluctance, then I'll tear off her jewels with my own hands and her clothes as well! 'Aissa announced in his sonorous voice" (97). They oppress the women and disregard them as individual human and repressing disobedience. Such marginalization heightens the women's suffering and indignity within their community.

Discussing Badra's maltreatment and her circumstances as a prey, the writer reports that: "Badra, relieved of the weight on her head and shoulders, huddled in her nurse's arms. 'I am dead!' she sighed. 'I am dead!' After her attendant had laid Badra down to rest, she thought how the mortified girl must have wept; she said to herself…'He disdained the rarest pearl of Mazuna!'"(95). Following this oppression and dehumanizing behavior, the writer records two images of women; while some denounce openly this social conduct, others fear and submit themselves to the power bound views. Djebar records the voices of these women saying that:

> 'Brigands! Highway robbers!' hissed one of the women.
>
> And the others immediately protested: 'Hold your tongue, wretch! Do you want to get us all assassinated?' (98).

Whatever the reaction of women against their oppressor and his authoritative attitudes is, they fall preys to the colonial men, who assassinate them indifferently. The writer narrates that “Finally everything lies dormant: the bodies of the women, crushed beneath the weight of their jewels; cities weighed down by the burden of their past; and so too the epigraphs left by long-forgotten witnesses.” (100). Djebar insists on the way these captured women are socially oppressed and historically disregarded. Their accounts and individual views, memories, and witnesses are silenced and forgotten. This voice is significant as it reinserts the silenced accounts to reconstruct other subversive historical representations.

The voice of the outspoken women held in French prisons is another account which is revealed in Djebar’s *L’Amour, la Fantasia*. These women account their individual experiences during the Algerian revolution against the French colonialism. They narrate their active role and involvement in the Algerian war of independence, reflecting on the contextual sociocultural codes and beliefs. Lla Zohra is one of these outspoken women. The reader hears her voice depicting her life and social relationships. She reveals her assistance and support for her Algerian brothers, fighting the colonized in the mountains. When they come down to the village, she gathers them in her house to hide them from the French soldiers. She depicts the way she prepares for them food and supply them with various goods, such as cloths and medicines. However, upon each coming of the Algerian fighters, the French army visits her to inquire about the outlaws. As Zohra disdains the French soldiers, they torture her and burn her house. The woman recalls one occasion when the French have burned the whole of her farm. Depicting this incident, she reveals the people’s views and the way they regard her. She expresses her reflection indicating that: “When my farm was in flames a man whose house wasn't far, just on the main road, shouted, 'Well! That's

God's doing! When the partisans wanted to hide in this woman's house, I advised her not to get involved. And she replied, "I am involved, until I die!" Since she claims she's in it till she dies, let's just see what happens now!'"(147-8). Despite her aid for the Algerian fighters, they scorn and mock her saying this is what she deserves. Still, Zohra depicts herself as courageous, indifferent, and determined as ever to serve the Revolution. She carries on her story indicating the hard experiences she has been subject to. After having joined the fighters in the mountain, the colonizer seizes her. She remembers the time saying that:

> One morning, at daybreak, the local police came and tied me up.
> 'You're the one who's betraying France! Who do you think you are? Up on the mountain, you gave us enough trouble, and you're starting the same thing again here! (148)

Indeed, through her account, Zohra reveals her historical contribution in the Algerian revolutions fighting the French colonizer both as a housewife and a fighter in the mountains. Still, her voice and views are disregarded and suppressed in the historical discourse. They silence her voice and disregard her historical contribution. Zohra accounts the way she is obliged to hide herself from society. When she moves to Hajout seeking refuge, she reflects saying that:

> Because I was frightened! I knew that these people came 'in the name of God and his Prophet', in all good faith, but all the same, if they saw me when they left, they'd talk! They'd say, 'Lla Zohra from Bou Semmam is there! She's come here so that Hajout can also be burnt down! 'I had to hide! Everything that has happened to me! Oh, Lord, everything that has happened! (150)

Zohra's voice in the narrative inserts her account denouncing the imposed silence just as she has once denounced French colonialism. She narrates her experience as an

outspoken woman held in the French prisons to reconstruct subversive sociocultural representations and individual historical realties overstepped in historical records.

In *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Assia Djebar records, moreover, the voices of an older war widow, who survived the Revolutionary war and the postcolonial era. During French colonialism, she fights the colonial man and loses almost all her family, including her husband, brothers, and sons. This woman has contributed in the liberation of Algeria and made sacrifices to liberate her country. She narrates her individual experience during the colonial period and voices her discrimination in the post-independence Algerian society. The narrator depicts the harshness and the dehumanizing policies of the French colonizer discriminating the Algerian fighters, essentially, the female figures. Commenting on the colonizing oppressive policy, Djebar reports that the French soldiers are cruel "Taking the animals away, killing human beings! Can you imagine what would happen when they arrived at a house and found women alone?" (187). The voice depicts the way she contributes in the war of independence scarifying her whole family as she joins the Algerian army. She indicates how many of her relatives have been killed by the colonial army, reflecting that "I lost four of my men in this war. My husband and my three sons. They took up arms at almost the same time. One of my youngsters had just three months left for the end of the fighting; he's dead. Another disappeared at the very beginning: I never heard what happened to him. My brother was the fifth" (198).

In fact, the loss of her family enhances her determination and will to fight the French. The widow denounces the colonizer and his attitudes by rejecting his social injustices and hierarchical demarcations within the Algerian society. She recalls her contribution in the war saying that "They never managed to find me during the whole of the war ... From there, I began to go into the hills to help other people; we took

food, we washed their uniforms, we kneaded bread... Until the day when, as God had willed, my husband was killed fighting!" (188). To liberate her country and construct values of tolerance and individual freedoms, the widow accounts the oppression and intimidation of the colonial regime.

Through her account, the older war widow reveals her individual contribution in the construction of the Algerian historical realities. Then, the narrator carries her account on her individual experiences, sociocultural views, and historical representation in relation to post-independence Algeria. As she reflects on the postcolonial ideologies, she shows her participation in the Algerian Revolution fighting the colonizer and serving the rebels. However, after the independence, she loses her individual rights. Despite her historical contribution and social aid, the war widow is socially discriminated and oppressed not only by the colonizer, but also by her compatriots. Djebar records her voice to express her individual views on post-independence era, saying that "At independence, the people in the city didn't give me anything. There was one man in charge, named Allal: the day he ran away to join the maquis I hid him for a time at my place!" (199). The historical representation of the woman is disregarded and her individual rights to protection and dwelling are lost. When she asked for recognition and her share she is deceivably turned down by the man in charge Allal whom she has protected during the past war. The writer reports her narrative:

> 'O Allal, where are my rights?' I exclaimed. 'My sons fought from here to the Tunisian border, while you remained hidden in caves and holes!'(…)
> They didn't give me a thing ... You can see where I'm living now; I had to pay to occupy this hut. 'You pay or you don't put a foot inside!' they told me. (199-200)

Actually, Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* reveals a multi-voiced narrative. It is constructed in reference to individual accounts and perspectives. The text understudy inserts distinct mini-narratives with individual views, values, and socio-historical realities. Djebar records the accounts of the 1st person narrator, young brides, outspoken women held in French prisons, and the older war widow. They attempt to unearth and voice the oppression inflected on them by the colonial and patriarchal ideologies.

II.3.Palimpsest

Palimpsest is a literary technique used in historical and literary writings. Initially, it refers to the reuse of written papers due to the scarcity and unavailability of untapped writing paper and documents during the past time periods. New texts and literary productions are written down on the same papers on which preceding texts are recorded. It contains various literary genres, intertextual styles, and cultural and historical references. In his article "Postmodernism, Palimpsest, and Portfolios: Theoretical Issues in the Representation of Student Work" (2004), Kathleen Blake Yancey defines palimpsest as "neither a genre nor an object, but a writing in-process that may make use of any number of textual sources. As its name implies the palimtext retains vestiges of prior writings out of which it emerges. Or more accurately, it is the still-visible record of its responses to those earlier writings" (qt. Davidson, 78). For him, the palimpsest technique relates the text understudy to various prior writings and the specific contexts revealing: "the shifting relationships between context and text: to make meaning" (741). Hence, through this technique, the literary text is demonstrated as a contextual construction drawing its existence on preceding writing forms, styles, and themes. It is not a self-enclosed and eccentric narrative.

In literary and historical studies, a palimpsest serves to juxtapose and contrast the past and present historical events, periods, and representations to reflect and construct subjective views and interpretations. That is, the writer does not communicate exclusive meanings and constructions but multiple compositions and representations changing according to the circulating ideologies of a given society in specific historical periods. As it reveals the interconnection of the contextual and textual elements, the palimpsest model has many things in common with New Historicism. Referring to past representations and contextual ideologies, the technique serves the writer to revise and rewrite the fixed socio-cultural representations to inscribe relative and subjective views and perspectives.

Toni Morrison and Assia Djebar use palimpsests in their texts; *A Mercy* and *L'Amour la Fantasia*. These narratives communicate their meanings and interpretations in reference to various historical, cultural, and literary influences. As textual melting pots, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour La Fantasia* make distinct references to the authors' socio-cultural backgrounds and literary heritages. They consider different themes using various writing styles and genres drawn from preceding traditions, writers, and historical records. Indeed, Morrison and Djebar construct their texts in a form of palimpsests combining historical truths and factual events, cultural influences and religious reflections, and some literary references. In *A Mercy*, Morrison narrates definite historical events related to 17th century America. Similarly, Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* accounts a number of real facts in the history of Algeria during French colonialism the post-independence era.

As far as cultural influences are concerned, the two authors explore the oral traditions and religious beliefs of their respective American and Algerian communities. Morrison depicts the orality of the American society and the cultural

practices African Americans and Native communities; the slave songs, storytelling, and Christian values. While Djebar represents some cultural practices related to Algerian traditions and Muslim religion, such as the family meetings, the traditional veil, and stories of the Prophet. As far as literary references, the two authors reveal various intertextual references of influential authors, who have an impact on their narratives in terms of style, form, and themes. Morrison, as an African-American, draws her texts from the Afro-American literary tradition and Western writing styles. Likewise, Djebar's works emerge from both the Algerian Islamic and socio-cultural traditions and the French culture, which she assimilates during her exile in France. As such, notable literary influences on her writing include French authors and Algerian literary tradition.

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is a literary and historical palimpsest constructed by contextual references and textual influences. Through these elements, the text combines factual, cultural, and literary history. Regarding the factual history, *A Mercy*, like in Morrison's earlier works, reveals an initial interest in the history of the African American community by reviewing some historical periods and past facts. In her best seller *Beloved* (1987), Morrison revises the history of the Afro-American community and their historical contribution in the national history. The novel reviews the socio-cultural conditions of the black slaves with reference to the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Reconstruction Era contextual ideologies. The writer reconstructs these definite historical periods to reconsider the socio-historical contributions of the Afro-Americans, disregarded by the Whites' authoritative attitudes.

In his article "The New History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the Construction of the Black's Subjectivity" (2014), Gang Xu studies Morrison's reviewing of the African American's historical past in *Beloved*. He shows the way the

writer reconstructs and regards the representations of the Blacks to react against the master narrative and official historical discourse. He indicates that "In the novel Morrison consciously sets African Americans' past and their present living situation into her work, for she intends to make use of her literary discourse to reproduce "The New History" that was once veiled by the American white's mainstream society"(105). In this study, Xu emphasizes Morrison's interest in the revision of historical facts to reconstruct a 'New history' which regard the individuals' stories, views, and experiences without references to their racial ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. In the same way, Morrison constructs *A Mercy* interference to the historical past of the American society. Set in 17th century America, the text understudy depicts the European colonialism of the New World and its slave system as historical realities of the American history. It points out the colonial policies and the way they settled on the land. Revealing the motives of the colonial system, the writer indicates:

> They would forever fence land, ship whole trees to faraway countries, take any woman for quick pleasure, ruin soil, befoul sacred places and worship a dull, unimaginative god…Cut loose from the earth's soul, they insisted on purchase of its soil, and like all orphans they were insatiable. (52)

As shown in this quote, the European settlements in America are led by consumerist and materialistic motives. Through their dogmatic and authoritative powers, the colonizer exploits the land and its wealth, discriminates women, and oppresses the Natives' cultures and sacred beliefs. To maintain their power and colonial authority, the Whites founded the institution of slavery by purchasing Africans from their land and shipping them to America through the Middle Passage. Through the experiences of the characters such as Florens and her mother, the representatives of black African

slaves, the text explores the slave system and its racial attitudes. Also, the text understudy refers to Bacon's Rebellion and Virginia Slave Codes as other historical facts and realities. Opened in the 1682 Virginia, the text recalls the sociopolitical uprising in 1676 led by Nathaniel Bacon against the governor of Virginia, William Berkley. Bacon and his fighters reproached the misleading policies of Berkley who neglected the protection and security of the people, repeatedly, attacked by the Native Indian tribes. After months of conflict, the rebellion is suppressed by introducing a set of laws referred to by historians as Virginia Slave Codes 1705. Instead of improving the social conditions of the ethnic groups such as the indentured servants and the Blacks, these issued laws reinforced the control and dominance of the Whites over the other groups. The writer comments saying:

> When that "people's war" lost its hopes to the hangman, the work it had done (…) spawned a thicket of new laws authorizing chaos in defense of order. By eliminating manumission, gatherings, travel and bearing arms for black people only; by granting license to any white to kill any black for any reason; by compensating owners for a slave's maiming or death, they separated and protected all whites from all others forever. (8)

In this quote, Morrison reveals the way these one-sided laws create chaos and worsen the lives of the powerless. They encourage Whites' discriminating and oppressing attitudes by ensuring them the right to "to kill any black for any reason". Through these historical facts and realities which the text understudy reveals, Morrison rewrites 17th century America to demonstrate the effect of these realities on the American society. She provides relative interpretations about this presented history to inscribe the individual voices, experiences, and representations.

Adding up, *A Mercy* bears various cultural influences and religious beliefs related to the author's background, in particular, and the American society, in general. Composed of multiple ethnic groups and communities, such as African Americans, Native Indians, and European settlers, the American society is a melting pot revealing a rich cultural diversity. In her earlier works such as *Beloved*, Morrison uses the ghost and magic realism as references from the heritage of the African Americans. In his article "Cultural Hauntings in Toni Morrison's Beloved" (2016), Mohammad Deyab studies the connection between Morrison's literary writing and her cultural background. Expressing her recollection of her cultural heritage, Deyab quotes Morrison interviewed by Mel Watkins saying: "I wanted to use black folklore, the magic and superstitious part of it. Black people believe in magic. Once a woman asked me, 'do you believe in ghosts?' I said, 'yes…it is part of our heritage" (24). For her, these folkloric references enable her to revive the Blacks' traditions and cultural heritage. Deyab suggests that Morrison' use of such references is significant. It shows the text's imaginative and creative powers serving the themes of the novel by revising the slave system and its haunting impact on the Blacks. He indicates that the Gothic tradition aims to "retell the story of slavery as a way to let Africans go through it and, therefore, overcome it" (27).

Furthermore, *A Mercy* reveals Morrison's concern with cultural codes, traditions, and religious beliefs. Revising 17th century America, Morrison considers some cultural practices of the Native Indians and African American communities. Through the character of Lina, she reveals the Indians' beliefs in the sacredness of the land and mainly the practice of storytelling. In the text, Lina relates every now and then stories which are drawn from her Native culture to reflect on her present social

situations. Through these tales, she comforts Florens who suffers from her mother abandonment. She narrates various stories:

> Stories of wicked men who chopped off the heads of devoted wives; of cardinals who carried the souls of good children to a place where time itself was a baby. Especially called for were stories of mothers fighting to save their children from wolves and natural disasters. Close to heartbreak, Lina recalled a favorite and the whispered conversation that always followed it. (59)

Lina's stories unveil individual experiences, injustices, and sufferings. They appeal to Florens as they evoke the mother-daughter relationships. As an illustration of these tales, Lina narrates the story of a mother eagle. It is about an account of an eagle protecting and defending her eggs after being killed unfairly by a greedy man. These tales help Florens, as a Black slave, to overcome her past difficulties and social discriminations by drawing morals of resistance and resilience.

In addition to the Natives' storytelling, Morrison refers to the cultural heritage of the enslaved African Americans. She maintains how the African traditions help the slaves to endure their hard situation in reference to the oppressive slave system. For example, she depicts the way the Black slaves hold on the traditional chant encouraging them to overcome their sufferings. Indeed, the slaves compose various songs to express their repressed views and react against the White masters' despotism and discrimination. Florens' mother recalls a song which she rehearses during her first meeting with Jacob Vaark. She indicates: "After the tall man dined and joined Senhor on a walk through the quarters, I was singing at the pump. A song about the green bird fighting then dying when the monkey steals her eggs. I heard their voices and gathered you and your brother to stand in their eyes" (164). In this quote, the slave mother tells the way the song about motherhood serves her to stand in the eyes of the White

masters; D'Ortega and Vaark. The song insists on the mother's love and sacrifices for her children. It enables her to express her views of motherhood and reflect on her social condition in D'Ortega's plantation. Hence, through these cultural references to the oral traditions of Native Indians and African Americans, Morrison shows her own interest in cultural heritage and their role in identity formation of individuals. They communicate the personal voices and reactionary views against the hierarchical and oppressive social system dominated by the Whites' dogmatic codes.

In addition to the oral traditions, *A Mercy* makes references to the circulating religious beliefs and practices. Through her religious references, Morrison aims at reviewing biased Christian views and their impact on the individual's socio-cultural conditions and representations. In his article entitled "Toni Morrison and Tradition of Christianity" (2007), Udono Erika reviews the use of Christian values in Morrison's novel *Paradise*. He considers the relation between the African American and the Christian traditions, depicting them as not exclusive since they share values of humanity and forgiveness. However, the White man's supremacist and expansionist attitudes distort the primary values of Christianity and exclude the African American values and beliefs viewed as primitive and inhuman. To justify their exploitative attitudes toward the blacks in the earthly life, the Whites refer to Christian emphasis on the eternal happiness of the afterlife. Udono Erika indicates that, as shown in *Paradise*, Christianity is used as a pretext; it is "introduced to enslaved African Americans as a means of domesticating them. Christianity's emphasis on happiness after death "was a convenient tool for the white slave holders to tame slaves and to suppress any insurgence as was the case in most former colonies in the world" (188). White people rely on Christian codes, especially, the belief in the eternal paradise in the after-life to justify their discriminative attitudes, and then, affirm the necessity of

suffering in this life to be rewarded heavenly bliss. Similarly, in *A Mercy*, Morrison makes references to Presbyterians' religious practices and rewrites the biblical story of Jacob, a Christian figure, to reflect on the social marginalization of the individuals. For her, the religious discourse has to record the females' suppressed voices and their distinct experiences, and then, to consider their socio-cultural difficulties and marginalized representations by preaching values of tolerance and equality.

As intertextuality in *A Mercy* is concerned, Morrison makes references to various literary traditions revealing the influences of African American and Western writers. The text understudy overlaps with various European and American literary traditions and writing styles. To reflect on the contextual ideologies of 17th century America, *A Mercy* refers to such writers Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf, who have considered the individual representations of the marginalized 'Others', such as black slaves, and women in the African American contexts.

Earlier writings of Phillis Wheatley (1753-1785) and Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), as former slaves, provide Morrison with historical facts and details about the hierarchical institution of slavery in America. Morrison's literary references to the works of Wheatley and Douglass foreground her emphasis on relative and subjective voices to revise the fixed socio-cultural and historical context of 17th century America. They reveal their individual experiences and political commitment as witnesses of the horror of the slave system. Morrison takes the title of her text, *A Mercy*, from Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America" perceiving to the act of mercy. Wheatley describes, ironically, Whites as merciful and compassionate for they brought her from her native land to America, introducing her to civilization. She opens her poem saying: "Taws mercy brought me from my Pagan land, Taught my benighted

soul to understand, That there's a God, that there's a Savior too". Likewise, Morrison depicts Florens' abandonment by her mother to Jacob Vaark as a mercy offered by the latter, who has taken away the girl from the oppression in the slave plantation. She writes: "It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human" (165). Morison refers to Wheatley's ironical description of the Whites as merciful and compassionate to reflect on the oppressive and marginalizing impact of the Whites' dogmatic and authoritative attitudes on the Black slaves and the African American community.

In reference to Frederick Douglass, Morrison is influenced by the literary tradition of slave narratives such as *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). Written after his escape from the slave plantations, Douglass's narrative records his individual accounts recalling his hard oppressions, dependency, and then, narrates his individual change to become free and independent. In the same way, Morrison uses various characters' voices, such as the mother slave, Florens, Lina, telling their harsh experiences, individual views, and interpretations in relation to the colonial ideologies of 17th century America and the institution of slavery. Hence, through referring to the slave-narratives writings, Morrison inscribes the individual voices of the oppressed people.

A Mercy has also many affinities with the writings of William Faulkner (1897-1962). As a Southerner American writer, Faulkner writes about poor Whites; agrarians, working-class southerners, runaway or former slaves. In his narrated stories, Faulkner's characters depict their oppression by the biased ideologies and values of the aristocracy during Reconstruction Era. On her side, Morrison considers the African American Blacks who are discriminated by the fixed contextual codes of the Whites. In her article entitled "The Long, High Gaze: The Mythical Consciousness of Toni

Morrison and William Faulkner" (1997), Carolyn Denard studies various literary affinities in Morrison's and Faulkner's writings. Through reviewing some of their works such as Faulkner's *As I lay Dying* (1930), *Absalom! Absalom!* (1936), and Morrison's *Beloved*; *Song of Solomon*, the critic maintains that, like Faulkner, Morrison's texts explore deep-rooted understandings of gender and racial awareness. She indicates:

> There is something more, however, than their language, their interest in race and history, or their shared literary esteem that has us seeing Morrison and Faulkner in a comparative way. The larger, more important basis for the common critical consideration of Faulkner and Morrison, I believe, is (…) a "mythical consciousness." Mythical consciousness creates an awareness in these writers of the role that imaginative narratives may serve in providing a cognitive, unbroken connection of the present with the past and with the future (19-20).

According to Denard, Morrison's texts refer to the literary and historical writing of Faulkner through the use of language, race, and history. Like him, her writings reflect the past historical contexts to reconstruct the socio-cultural representations in their present time periods. *A Mercy* reveals the literary influences of Faulkner through the depiction of the White masters' authoritative attitudes in reference to the historical context of 17th century America. Like Faulkner's works, *A Mercy* revises definite historical periods through inscribing individual accounts, which underline their historical contributions overcoming the normative violence such as the slaves' stories about their traumatic experiences and exploitations in the slave plantations. By doing so, Morrison is inspired by Faulkner's literary canon to reconstruct the historical representation and contribution of the Black in the foundation of their country through their labour in the slave plantations.

Still, *A Mercy* refers to the writings of Virginia Woolf (1883- 1941) to review the gender discriminations of women in relation to the historical context of 17th century America. Woolf's literary writings such as *A Room of One's Own* (1926) and *In the Light House* (1927) discuss various issues related to the socio-cultural and historical conditions and representations of women, such as self-expression and equality. In these texts, the writer inscribes the female voices and reveals their interpretations reacting against the patriarchal ideologies and fixed historical contexts of Victorian and modernist era. Likewise, Morrison's text records the individual accounts of the alienated female characters such as Lina, Florens, Rebekka, and Sorrow to reflect on the masculine and patriarchal codes represented by White masters such as D'Ortega and Vaark. Morrison draws on the feminist literature of Woolf to reconstruct the socio-cultural representations of the subjugated females by underlying their individual expressions, voices, and subversive interpretations.

As far the literariness of *A Mercy* is concerned, Morrison opts for a variety of characters, writing styles, and multiple narratives. Like Faulkner and Woolf who portray fictional figures issued from different social classes and cultural backgrounds, Morrison constructs her narrative using different characters representing the social classes and ethnic groups. She populates her narratives with a lot of characters including, the slave mother and Florens, Lina, Rebekka, D'Ortega, and Jacob Vaark. These characters reveal the complex ethnical composition of the American society during the 17th century. Through the different portrayals, the writer reflects on the hierarchical social system dominated by the Whites and their dogmatic ideologies toward Blacks, Native Indians, and women. Influenced by the poetic writings of Phillis Wheatley, the text understudy reflects poetic images, imaginative stories, and allegories such as Florens' dreams, and Lina's story of the eagle.

Furthermore, *A Mercy* reveals several literary modernist techniques used by Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, such as the flashbacks, multiple narration, and stream of consciousness. The writer records the stream of consciousness of Rebekka when she is confined to bed by her illness. She says reflecting on her condition: "And me? How do I look? What lies in my eyes now? Skull and crossbones? Rage? Surrender?" All at once she wanted it—the mirror Jacob had given her which she had silently rewrapped and tucked in her press" (93). Then, like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, Morrison also uses a multi-voiced fictional narration; she records fragmented, nonlinear, and inconsequent stories of the several characters. By merging these writing styles and literary techniques to record the individual stories and historical facts, *A Mercy* demonstrates the postmodern literary genre of the historical fiction breaking down the distinctions between the creative imagination and the factual realities.

Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* is a also a palimpsest. It combines various historical references and textual influences. The author refers to different elements, such as historical facts, cultural mentions, and literary inspirations. Indeed, *L'Amour, la Fantasia* demonstrates Djebar's interest in the writing of historical realities related to the Algerian past and present time periods. In her book entitled *Assia Djebar: Histoires et fantaisies* (2007), Beïda Chikhi reveals Djebar's emphasis on historical facts to reflect their effects on the social system and individual representations. She indicates that Djebar's works retrace not only the historical periods, which mark the history of Algeria, such as the colonial invasion, the war of liberation, but also records events disregarded by official history. Instead of objective and chronological historical writing, Djebar fictionalizes the historical events, using archival materials, written documents, and aesthetic and poetic elements.

In *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Djebar confirms her commitment to historical writing. She refers to many historical facts and events related to the national history of her country. In the first part of her narrative, the writer records the French invasion of Algeria in June 1830; the arrival of the French Armada in Algiers in June 13th, the Battle of Staouéli in June 19th, and the Explosion of Fort l'Empereur in July 4th, 1830. In the second part, the writer regards the territorial expansionist policies of the colonial institution and the historical military atrocities inflected on the Algerian rebels, persecuting and exterminating whole local tribes, such as Ouled Riah in June 1845. The author rewrites the Revolutionary War of Independence of 1954 and then the postcolonial contextual ideologies and their impact on the Algerian society. The writer constructs these historical references by consulting past records written by witnesses, including Amable Matterer, the officer of the Ville de Marseille; J.T. Merle, a theater-manger; Aimable Pélissier, commander in the French army, Eugène Fromentin, a French painter. Rewriting one of the French atrocities in El-Kantara during 1840s, killing many of the local population, she underlines her review in the light of the past writing of Pélissier, the commander of the attack. She indicates that "Pélissier, speaking on behalf of this long drawn-out agony, on behalf of fifteen hundred corpses buried beneath El-Kantara, with their flocks unceasingly I bleating at death, hands me his report and I accept this palimpsest on which I now inscribe the charred passion of my ancestors"(79). She uses the account of Pélissier to reconstruct this historical event by considering the disregarded voices and representations of her ancestors.

In another instance, Djebar refers to a journal written by Eugene Fromentin, *Chronique de l'Absent,* as a historical record to inscribe the contributions of women. She writes:

> In June 1853, when he leaves the Sahel to travel down to the edge of the desert, he visits Laghouat which has been occupied

> after a terrible siege. He describes one sinister detail: as he is leaving the oasis which six months after the massacre is still filled with its stench, Fromentin picks up out of the dust the severed hand of an anonymous Algerian woman. He throws it down again in his path. Later, I seize on this living hand, hand of mutilation and of memory, and I attempt to bring it the Qalam. (226)

The quote juxtaposes two different reactions of Fromentin and Djebar. While the painter neglects the dead woman, the writer reconsiders her reaction against the historical disregard of women's contributions. Her symbolic act of presenting the pen or 'Qalam' for the woman's dead hand is subversive as it enables her to inscribe her voice, express her views, and write down her individual experiences. Hence, the writer's interest in the factual realities points out the impact of these contextual events on the socio-cultural conditions of the individuals.

In addition to the historical facts, Djebar constructs *L'Amour, la Fantasia* with reference to several cultural and religious codes and beliefs. She depicts the Algerian Islamic values and emphasizes their influence on the socio-cultural representations. Many of Djebar's literary works mirror her consideration of the cultural values and practices of her society. In her article entitled "Tradition and Transgression in the Novels of Assia Djebar and Aicha Lemsine" (2003), Silvia Nagy-Zekmi studies Djebar's references to the cultural and religious influences in her literary writings. She indicates that Djebar's writing "(…) is embedded in the (Islamic) tradition as an axis of religious and social identity" (2). Nagy-Zekmi asserts that Djebar's works review the traditional values and religious beliefs intending to repress the individual's identity and social representation because of the conservative and masculine attitudes.

L'Amour, la Fantasia reflects Djebar's several cultural references. It depicts the Algerian social practices and values, such as marriage, shame, and honor. Djebar

reviews the female-male relationships under the institution of marriage. According to the socio-cultural norms, women have no right to decide on their husbands. Instead, their fathers or brother, as the protectors, arrange their engagement and marriage. Also, Djebar refers to values of shame and honor clearly depicted in the traditional gatherings of women of the village in wedding ceremonies, funerals, and Hammam referred to as the 'Turkish bath'. She indicates that:

> Every gathering, for a funeral, for a wedding, is subject to rigid rules: the separation of the sexes must be rigorously respected, care must be taken that no male relative sees you, no cousin among the men crowding outside the house must run the risk of recognizing you when you go out or in, veiled amid the host of other veiled women, lost in the mob of guests concealed behind their masks. (169)

In the quote, the writer reveals that every traditional meeting of women is determined by fixed socio-cultural codes. In one of these familiar meetings, she remembers her grandmother blaming her sister for having expressed her grief and suffering which she regards as a violation of the cultural codes of honor. The grandmother depicts the woman self-expression as shameful and dishonorable deed. The writer quotes the grandmother emphasizing the conformity to the social codes saying: "Only speak of what conforms, my grandmother would reprove me: to deviate is dangerous, inviting disaster in its multiple disguises. Only speak of everyday mishaps, out of prudence rather than prudery, and so stave off misfortune" (156).

Djebar makes references to the oral tradition through her childhood stories she used to hear from her mother and grandmother to demonstrate her religious influences. In *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, like in other works such as *Loin de Médine*, she refers to distinct traditional ballads related to the religion of Islam. Through these chants and stories, she reconstructs the conception of the religious codes which are

historically used to justify women's subjugation by repressing their views and emotions. As an illustration, *Loin de Médine* records many accounts of female figures who have witnessed the life of the prophet Muhammad, such as Aicha and Khadija. In her text, Djebar recalls the stories of Abraham and the Prophet Muhammad as her first initiations to the religious knowledge. She evokes the story of Abraham by recalling her childhood memories when she used to listens to 'The Ballad of Abraham' during the religious celebration of the 'sacrifice feast' commemorating the Abraham's experience with Isaac. She narrates that, in the name of God, Angel Gabriel asks Abraham for the sacrifice of his son Isaac. Narrating the story, she indicates that the aesthetic and poetic images of the song fascinate her more than the written form revealing once again her interest in the oral tradition. Through this story, the writer depicts the reactions of Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac to God's will. She writes: "Abraham's wife, Sarah, had her say in the verses, just like my mother describing to us her joys, fears or forebodings. Abraham could have been my father who never expressed his own feelings aloud, but who, it seemed to me, might have..." (171).

In another instance in the novel, Djebar reveals her influences by the religious discourse by referring to the story of the Prophet Muhammad. She recalls her aunt's account of the first days of Muhammad's prophecy. During his distress and trouble, the aunt suggests, his wife supports and alleviates him by her care and love, "'To comfort him, Lalla Khadija, his wife, sat him on her lap,' my aunt explained," (171). The writer remembers having been stunned listening to her aunt who describes the Prophet sitting on his wife's lap. In her conservative society, men do not manifest such attitudes. Through the Prophet's story, Lalla Khadija is represented as awesome and reliable woman being the first person to believe in the prophetic teachings. The writer

demonstrates her socio-cultural and historical contribution saying: "'So', she always concluded, 'the very first Muslim, perhaps even before the Prophet himself, may Allah preserve him! was a woman. A woman was historically the first to adhere to the Islamic faith, out of conjugal love,' according to my relative" (172). Hence, Djebar's depicts the socio-cultural values and practices as being conservative, patriarchal and biased.

Concerning the intertextuality of *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, Djebar makes references to various literary traditions revealing influences from other Algerian, Arabic, and Western writers. The text understudy, *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, demonstrates various literary references and writing styles in relation to historical, postcolonial, and feminist works. In her text, Djebar refers to several historical writings about the history of the Berbers and French colonialism in Algeria. She reviews the ancestral history of North Africa and its population by recording foreign invasions such as that of Banu Hilal. To depict these historical facts and their consequences on the Maghrebine society, she mentions the writings of the social historian Ibn Khaldun, including *History of the Berbers* (1375-1379) and *Al Ta'arif*. She indicates:

> The Maghrib sees a procession of new invasions; new occupations. Repeated raids by the Banu Hila! tribesmen finally bleed the country white. Soon after this fatal turning point, the historian Ibn Khaldun, the innovatory author of The History of the Berbers, as great a figure as Augustine, rounds off a life of adventure and meditation by composing his autobiography in Arabic. He calls it Ta'arif, that is to say, ' Identity' (216).

Ibn Khaldun writes his autobiographical text *Al Ta'arif* in the language of the colonizers to review the historical realities of North Africa by reconstructing its Native Amazigh and Berber identity. In the same way, Djebar writes her text in the French

language to revise the distorted Algerian identity during French colonialism. Also, the text understudy makes references to other historical and literary accounts written by many eyewitnesses.

In her article entitled "Assia Djebar and Algerian Cultural Memory: Reimagining, Repositioning and Rewriting in Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade" (2012), Erin Peters underlines the intertextuality of Djebar's text with other historical records of French soldiers, artists, journalists. She underlines that these referred documents such as private diaries, official political correspondence, and letters home from the soldiers serve Djebar to construct an aspect of Algeria's historical past from individual perspectives and relative views. Peters asserts that these literary references "help to set up a contrast in the novel between the French written and established historical records in the archives on the one hand, and the Algerian oral and traditional manner of storytelling which has no written evidence on the other" (01). As shown in this quotes, the writer constructs her text by juxtaposing the established historical archives and the oral traditions reflecting on socio-cultural realities. She reacts against the fixed historical narratives by fragmenting the linear and objective narratives about the colonial history of Algeria.

Still, regarding the time period of its production *L'Amour, la Fantasia,* considers the contextual ideologies of the post-war colonial period. Like her contemporaries, Djebar considers themes related to national identity, individual freedom, and the sociocultural representation of the alienated peoples. In her work entitled *Themes in the Francophone Algerian Novel* (1991), Zahia Smail studies the Algerian post-colonial literature referring to various authors such as Mouloud Mammeri, Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine, and Assia Djebar. She maintains that Djebar's works, like those of Mammeri, Dib, and Kateb, depict a literature of combat

and post-independence concerns, such as the quest for national identity and the reconstruction of the sociocultural representation of colonized people. Djebar's literary reference to these writers is revealed through the themes of disillusionment in post-independence era. Their literary works reveals, to quote Smail, "the disenchantment felt by many Algerians, whose great hopes in the revolution were betrayed." Indeed, the text understudy depicts this disenchantment through the marginalization and discrimination of women. Smail asserts that through referring to her postcolonial contemporaries, the writer "lets out a lengthy complaint about the condition of women in Post-War period. Her novels suggest that Algerian women, who took part, along with their male compatriots, in the revolution, have been betrayed as they were sent back to their previous status as second class citizens" (246).

As an illustration, the fictional narrative depicts the socio-cultural condition of a female former fighter who after the independence is oppressed by the authoritative powers. Left without shelter, she asks the responsible for her right to homestead, but he turned her down disregarding, her historical contributions. In her text, the writer reports the disillusioned female saying:

> And then, in front of all those townsfolk, he started talking to me in Berber! Just to emphasize that I was a country-woman! I repeated in Arabic, with the correct accent: 'Give me my rights!' They didn't give me a thing ... You can see where I'm living now; I had to pay to occupy this hut. 'You pay or you don't put a foot inside!' they told me. (200)

As revealed in the quote, the female voices in post-colonial Algerian society are silenced by dogmatic and authoritative laws. Djebar's influences by earlier authors who advocate female emancipations from the restrictive sociocultural codes are revealed in many of her literary works, including the text understudy.

In reference to the Islamic cultural values, Djebar is influenced by many Arabic writers, such as the early Egyptians feminist women. Her influence by the Egyptian earlier feminists is revealed in the similarities between the Egyptian and Algerian women who are both discriminated by the harsh colonial institution and the conservatism of the traditional beliefs and values. In her article entitled "Islam, Individualism and Dévoilement in the Works of Out-el-Kouloub and Assia Djebar" (1999), Jana Braziel studies the literary influence of Out-el-Kouloub (1892-1968) on Assia Djebar. Exploring *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, she depicts several literary references to Kouloub's work *Ramza*. Written in the foreign French language, Djebar, like Out-el-Kouloub, reveals her autobiographical elements, such as her childhood memories to unveil the individual accounts and suppressed historical contributions. Similar to Kouloub's works, Djebar denounces the social discriminations which are justified by the biased religious beliefs and contextual codes and rewrite the females' participation in the historical events of the country.

In addition to these literary influences, *L'Amour, la Fantasia* considers artistic and poetic aspects. In its title, it refers to Ludwig Van Beethoven and his piano composition Sonata number 14 "Quasi una Fantasia" (1802) which is constituted of three movements. Djebar constructs her fictional narrative of three parts: The Capture of the City, or Love Letters, The Cries of the 'Fantasia', and Voices from the Past. Following the varied slow and fast tunes of Beethoven's sonata, Djebar opts for multiple narrators intersecting personal experiences, historical events, and creative and aesthetic images. By doing so, she fragments her text by deconstructing the fixed and linear narratives which distinguish between the literary and historical realities.

Djebar's text foregrounds her influence by French literature in terms of the writing styles and the use of the French language. In her Frankfurt discourse in 2000,

edited in Chikhi's *Assia Djebar: Histoires et Fantasies*, Djebar has referred to her French literary influences. She has indicated that her works are inspired by "the words, the figures of speech, the sociocultural variation of the language, by the rich tongue-the realistic of Descartes, the poetic of Racine, the philosophical of Diderot, and the advanced of Victor Hugo" (159-160). She writer claims her influence by the language and writing styles of several writers such as René Descartes, Jean Racine, Denis Diderot and Victor Hugo whom she has studied in the French schools. Indeed, Djebar's interest in the French language is due not only to its aesthetic and poetic character, but also due to its accessibility to the historical archives written by the colonizers, serving her historical writings.

To rewrite the historical facts, depict the socio-cultural representations of the oppressed people, and record their individual stories, *L'Amour, la Fantasia* uses realistic, narrative, the descriptive writing styles. Hence, as discussed above, *L'Amour, la Fantasia* is a palimpsest making several references to factual events related to the history of the colonial and postcolonial Algeria, cultural values and religious beliefs, and ultimately, to literary traditions .

Conclusion

The chapter has revealed the historical and literary continuities represented in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. Despite their different social and historical backgrounds, the two writers depict oppressive and marginalizing contexts controlled by the colonialism and the biased socio-cultural values. Morrison reviews the contextual ideologies of 17th century America dominated by the White supremacist attitudes and the racial system of slavery. She points out the way these attitudes discriminate the ethnic groups and minorities, such as the African Americans, the Native Indians, and women. In the same way, Djebar revises the restrictive and

conservative codes particular to the Algerian society during the French colonialism and the post-independence era. She maintains that these colonial and cultural values oppress people of minorities. Also, the chapter has studied the way Morrison and Djebar denounce these contextual discriminations and reconstruct the silenced voices of the alienated individuals. As discussed above, the two texts refer to the several techniques such as anecdote, polyphony, and palimpsest. They reconstruct the socio-cultural conditions and representations of the alienated people such as the slaves and women by inscribing their relative accounts, subjective interpretations, and regarding their historical contributions. Adding up, these shared techniques present the fictional narratives as fragmented and intertextual constructions, drawing from various references to factual histories, cultural truths, and literary influences. Through these techniques, they break down the distinctions fixed between history and literature, facts and fictions.

End Notes

[1]Americanity: it is a concept introduced by Anibal Quijano and Imanuel Wallerstein in their work entitled *Americanity as Concept or the Americas in the Modern World-System* (1992). It refers to the study of many elements, including coloniality, racism, and ethnicity; the way they are demonstrated on the text and their influences.

[2]Morrison, Toni (*A Mercy*, United Kingdom: London, 2009) 33. All the subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[3]Blair, Dorothy (*Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade*, Unites States of America: New York, 1993) 34. All subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

[4]Borde, Constance and Malovany-Chevallier, Sheila (*The Second Sex*, United States of America: New York, 2010) 36. All the subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This present research has looked into the historical and literary connections presented in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. It has argued that the two authors share historical and literary affinities despite the divergences in their sociocultural and historical backgrounds. The thesis has studied the two fictional narratives in the light of the theoretical framework of New Historicism developed by the American scholar Stephen Greenblatt. It has paired the two texts understudy in terms of sociocultural, historical, and literary continuities.

This work is divided into a general introduction, three chapters, and a general conclusion. The introduction has given insights into the conception of the historical and fictional narratives as advanced in the postmodern thought. The first chapter entitled "*A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia*: Texts in context" has studied the two literary texts with reference to the historical and literary contexts of their productions. Moreover, it has provided the biographies of the two authors and the plot overviews of their narratives. It has also read the two texts understudy in the light of the postcolonial and feminist literary traditions. The second chapter entitled "New Historicism: An Overview of the Practice" has explored the theoretical framework of the new historicist approach in the philosophical and analytical writings of Stephen Greenblatt. As discussed in his Renaissance studies, Greenblatt emphasizes the parallel study of the contextual and textual aspects of the literary texts, breaking down the fixed distinctions between fact and fiction. The third chapter entitled "The Historical and Literary Continuities in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*" has studied the historical and literary affinities represented in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia.* It has pointed out the writers' revisions of specific sociocultural and historical contexts and their impact on the

society, in general, and on the individual identity formation, in particular. Also, it has referred to the textual and fictional techniques which are used by the two authors to give voice to the alienated figures and inscribe their role in history.

In reference to the new historicist insights, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* has depicted, respectively, the American society in the 17th century and the Algerian society during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Morrison reviews the contextual ideologies of 17th century America characterized by the Europeans' dogmatic and supremacist attitudes represented in institutions of colonialism and slavery. In her text, she reveals the way these authoritative institutions affect the social system and individual identity self-formation. The Whites repress the individual voices and disregard the historical contributions of the Black slaves, the Native Indians, and women. In the same way, Djebar revises the ideological values particular to the colonial and postcolonial Algeria dominated by colonial despotism and sociocultural conservative beliefs. Through her fictional narrative, Djebar demonstrates the sociocultural and historical oppressions inflicted on the colonized Algerians and, mainly, women. Hence, both *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* depict marginalizing sociocultural ideologies and biased historical representations.

In addition to the deep-rooted exploration of particular historical contexts and their controlling ideologies, Morrison and Djebar regard the textuality and literariness of their fictional narratives. They construct their texts using several literary techniques, such as anecdote, polyphony, and palimpsest to reflect on the sociocultural representations of the marginalized people. Using the techniques of anecdotes and polyphony, the two authors have inscribed the individual voices, accounts, and interpretations neglected by history. In *A Mercy*, Morrison records the accounts of Florens, her slave mother, Lina, Sorrow, Rebekka, and Jacob. In the same way, Djebar

records the individual voices of female characters, including the 1st person narrator, young brides, outspoken women held in French prisons, and older war widow. Through these individual records, Morrison and Djebar give rise to the people of minorities and inscribe their roles and contributions in their nation's histories, undermined and overstepped in White colonial discourses and historical records.. Also, Morrison and Djebar use the technique of palimpsest in the writing of their texts. They interlace their written narratives with other past historical and literary canons. They make various references to factual history, mythic and cultural realities, and also, to literary traditions and writing styles. Through the constructed palimpsests, the two writers reveal their texts as historical and literary intertextual pastiches communicating relative, subjective, and subversive realities.

The study of the historical and literary continuities represented in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* has capitalized the revisionist and subversive visions of the two authors. They react against fixed and biased historical knowledge by reconstructing the sociocultural representations of the alienated people emphasizing their individual voices and historical contributions. Adding up, they fragment their fictional narratives and interlace several references to factual histories, sociocultural views, and writing styles. By doing so, *A Mercy* and *L'Amour, la Fantasia* reacts against the traditional narratives based on linear, objective, and idiosyncratic truths. Hence, they break down the established distinctions between history and literature, fact and fiction.

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Abstract in French (Résumé)

Ce travail de recherche entreprend une étude des similarités historiques et littéraires dans *A Mercy* (2008) de Toni Morrison et *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985) d'Assia Djebar en référant au Néo-historicisme. Le travail considère les contextes historiques et les techniques littéraires qui ont influencés l'écriture des deux textes. Comme *A Mercy* décrit la société Américaine du 17eme siècle, *L'Amour, la Fantasia* examine la société Algérienne durant la colonisation Française et l'ère après l'indépendance. En outre, ce travail considère que les techniques littéraires que les deux auteurs emploient dans leurs textes, notamment des anecdotes, la polyphonie, et le palimpseste, visent à souligner que les histoires et réalités historiques sont subjectives et relatives. À la lumière de l'approche Néo-historicisme, introduite par Greenblatt Stephen, cette recherche étudie l'intersection des discours historiques et littéraires dans les deux romans. Influencés par les valeurs et les normes socioculturelles de leurs temps, les deux romans introduisent, à l'aide des techniques littéraires, des représentations historiques alternatives. Morrison et Djebar réécrivent et révisent l'histoire de leur pays pour réinscrire les voix séquestrées et les expériences individuelles négligées dans les discours officiels.