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Self and Other in the Works of African American Novelists during the Black Renaissance and Algerian Novelists during the Algerian War of Independence : A Comparative Study

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DISCLAIMER

I hereby declare that the substance of this thesis is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

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ABSTRACT

Through the present research work, we aim at confronting four contemporary post-colonial writers, who are, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston from the United States of America, and Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar from Algeria with notions of representation, identity, and culture. While Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston wrote their novels at the time when the African American people suffered from political, economic and cultural inequities between the white and the black people in America, Toomer's Cane in 1922 and Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God in 1937 ; both Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar wrote their novels during the period of Algerian colonization, Nedjma in 1955, and Les enfants du nouveau monde in 1962. Through the present research work, we aim at analyzing the thematic correspondences between the two pairs of writes, particularly in the way they conceive of 'Self' and 'Other'.

In fact, this thesis operates on the principle that there are recurrent, common parameters existing within the two peoples, Africa American and Algerian, and which stem from shared historical, political and cultural referents, those of peoples deprived of their identities and self-esteem by colonizing and oppressing powers. The writers we explore in the present work bridge racial, cultural, and linguistic divides in facing the same prejudices and stereotypes that have 'Othered' them. They adopt the same methods in reconstructing the Self that has been negated by the colonizing Other. In both cases, the people oppressed by a superior power are depicted in stereotypical terms, their culture belittled, and their identity blurred.

The four novels selected for analysis in this thesis will be closely read through the lenses of various theories. First, the novels will be read from a postcolonial perspective in order to highlight their moments of interruption of the national narrative, and as a tool to recognize and explain their strategies of resistance and defiance. On the other hand, the women writers selected for the present study present interesting works for analysis

from a feminist perspective since they not only have to deconstruct the obscured and misrepresented world of women as depicted by the colonizers but the world of women under patriarchy as well. While we are also interested in culture and nation as reflected in texts, our method is more thematically oriented, more interested in direct similarities between the works of the four writers.

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INTRODUCTION

> It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.[1]

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Stuart Hall states that identity is relational. Its construction depends on differences, exclusions and power struggle. It can only be meaningful when related to something different as it is "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."[2] He later adds that, "it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term-and thus its 'identity'- can be constructed."[3] In the context of colonizing and colonized people, the colonial experience and the struggle for power have created a new relationship between the Self and the Other. Difference between the two groups of people is defined in oppositional terms. One part is not simply different from its counterpart; it is inherently opposed to its other. For the colonizing group, the objectification of the 'Other' is necessary in order to impose its power, domination and superiority on the weak, subordinate, and inferior Other. bell hooks asserts that, " As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history,"[4] while as objects of the dominating group, "one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject."[5] Objectification based on difference takes, accordingly, different forms from cultural degradation, to disempowering alienation, to de-humanization, to invisibility.

For the colonized people, whose identity has been blurred in the process of colonization, self-identification in terms of a rigid opposition to the 'Other' becomes a necessity in order to discover/ recover the real Self. Accordingly, the postcolonial writers, whose aim is to represent the people traditionally considered as 'Other', need to dismantle the subject-based Western representational system in order to deny the West its traditional right to impose the status of 'Other' to all that is not 'Self'. They also need to reject their identity as defined by the oppressing 'Other' and establish their own identity as full subjects. However, and as this study is going to reveal, such a task is not an easy one. By simply inverting the colonial system of

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1. Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (1952). London: Pluto Press, 1986, p.231.
2. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory. Ed. Patrick Williams and Lauren Chrisman. London: Harvester Wheat Sheaf, 1994, p.394.
3. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, Questions of Cultural Identity. London: SAGE Publication Ltd, 1996, p.4.
4. bell hooks, Talking Back : Thinking Feminism, Thinking Black. Boston: South End Press, 1989, p.42.
5. Ibid.

representation, placing the object in place of the subject, the postcolonial writers would validate the racially-based binary division upon which the colonizer's system of superiority depends. So what they need most is to deconstruct the system of opposition completely, and to render visible what has been made invisible.

The present work aims at the study of the representation of the 'Self' and the representation of the 'Other' by both African American and Algerian postcolonial writers in their literary works. We will confront four contemporary authors, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston from the United States of America, and Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar from Algeria with notions of representation, identity, and culture.[6] Although the colonial situation of the two pairs of people is far from identical, it remains that there are striking thematic correspondences between them, particularly in the way they conceive of 'Self' and 'Other'**.** In fact, this thesis operates on the principle that there are recurrent, common parameters existing within the two peoples, Africa American and Algerian, and which stem from shared historical, political and cultural referents, those of peoples deprived of their identities and self-esteem by colonizing and oppressing powers. The writers we explore in the present work bridge racial, cultural, and linguistic divides in facing the same prejudices and stereotypes that have 'Othered' them. They adopt the same methods in reconstructing the Self that has been negated by the colonizing Other.

We are highly aware that the texts chosen to be analyzed in the present work are too diverse to allow for generalizations, however, we agree with Ania Loomba in her declaration that "it is sometimes overlooked that colonial methods and images varied hugely over time and place,"[7] we also believe that colonized peoples have always engaged in the same path in the reconstruction of their culture and identity. This is what we are going to show in the present work. In fact, historians have already made references to the similarity between African Americans and Africans in their experience with colonialism and oppression, like for example John Bracey who establishes an analogy between the black experience in the United States and the history of the black people in Africa. In "Black Nationalism since Garvey" he states,

> The black experience in America can be viewed as similar to the colonial experience of blacks in Africa, the West Indies, and Latin America. The historical process in these areas-colonisation,

6. Although both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston wrote their novels after slavery was abolished, there were still political, economic and cultural inequities between the white and the black people in America at the time the two writers wrote their novels (Toomer in 1922 and Zora Neale Hurston in 1937). On the other hand, both Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar wrote their novels during the period of Algerian colonization, Nedjma in 1955, and Les enfants du nouveau monde in 1962.

7. Ania Loomba, Colonialism / Postcolonialism. London: Routledge, 2005, p.19.

> resistance, accommodation, nationalism, de-colonisation, nationhood- is operable in Black America. The corresponding historical continuum in America, then, is colonialism (slavery), 1619-1865, colonialism (imperialism), 1865-1963, and decolonization, since 1963.[8]

Such a statement can easily be applied to Algeria since the Algerian people have gone through the same process experienced by black people in America and black Africa, that is: "colonisation, resistance, accommodation, nationalism, de-colonisation, nationhood".

The point of departure for this study is the presence of thematic similarities between the African American and Algerian literary works which exceed what could be solely explained by direct socio-historical correspondences, and are instead the result of the way both African American and Algerian authors have conceptualized the reverberations of colonialism and racism within their communities. The issues we study are exactly those that can be compared in spite of the vast differences between the two pairs of people. In The Empire Writes Back, Ashcroft and al. state that beyond their historical and cultural differences, 'place', 'displacement', and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures.[9] Othering, oppression, and the search for one's identity are in fact shared experiences between African Americans and Algerians.[10] Accordingly, this study argues that racism and colonialism have always had the same negative consequences on the subjugated people. In both cases, the people oppressed by a superior power are depicted in stereotypical terms, their culture belittled, and their identity blurred. This study also points out that in order to confront the oppressive powers whose aim has been to erase the identity of the colonized people, the writers and intellectuals belonging to the oppressed groups try to deconstruct colonial narratives and erect their own cultural mythology. These are but some of many parallels that

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8. John H. Bracey, "Black Nationalism Since Garvey" in Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience. Ed. Nathan Huggins et al. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971, p.259.

9. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature. New York: Routledge, 1989, p.9.

10. Colonial studies, in fact, encompass such a vast area that we should not confine ourselves to the study of particular cases. As Ania Loomba states so well, "it is more helpful to think of post colonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism. Such a position would allow us to include people geographically displaced by colonialism such as African Americans or people of Asian or Caribbean origin in Britain as 'post-colonial' subjects although they live within metropolitan cultures. It also allows us to incorporate the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and to dominant Western culture." Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Post colonialism, op cit., p.16.

exist between African American and Algerian postcolonial literature that we will try to demonstrate in the present research work.

Above all, studying African American and Algerian writers together establishes a more comprehensive postcoloniality, illuminating the unity between seemingly disparate fields and challenging the binaries often imposed on literary studies as more often than not African American studies are studied differently from Francophone studies and the two bodies of literature are considered different due to the language in which each one of them is written. Moreover, the fact that the peoples belonging to the two sets of literature had been subjugated by two different colonial powers, the Anglo Saxons for the African Americans and the French for the Algerians makes the history of their colonization and the methods of their subjugation quite different. Nevertheless, "the point is not that we need to know the entire historical and geographic diversity of colonialism in order to theorise, but rather, that we must build our theories with an awareness that such diversity exists."[11] Thus, in the present work, we aim at bridging seemingly disparate literary bodies by studying authors who have many aspects in common, to cite but a few: their African heritage, their shared history of subjugation and oppression, the search for their origins, their choice of the novel as a literary genre, and the articulation of their woes in a language imposed on them.

For centuries, whites were the exclusive authors of literary narratives concerning the black people in America. These narratives were united by representations of blackness in a stereotypically degrading and dehumanizing way that reinforced the position of African American people as 'Others' to the whites' identity, social standards and values. These representations were instrumental in defining the identity of the African Americans as essentially different and inferior to the established White norms. They were used as tools to subjugate the black 'Other'. Racial biases developed, as a consequence, and were to remain a prominent influence in the collective imagination of the whites even in the presence of contrary evidence.

These negative connotations and stereotypes affected deeply the African American people. They lasted for centuries and were almost impossible to get rid of. Rather than feeling compelled to accept white values, the writers of the Black Renaissance[12] encouraged fellow blacks to embrace their blackness as a positive affirmation. They also developed an image of essentially black character. As a result, black became, not a derogatory label,

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11. Ania Loomba, op cit.,p.3.

12. The term ''Black Renaissance'' refers to the efflorescence of African-American cultural production that occurred in America from the 1920's to the mid 1930's. 'Black Renaissance' is used interchangeably with 'New Negro Renaissance', 'New Negro Movement', and 'Harlem Renaissance'. These terms include all African Americans, who participated in this cultural revolution.

but a symbol through which African American people could assert themselves, take pride in and work towards rebuilding the future they envisaged for themselves and their own race. They maintained the division between blacks and whites but reversed the dichotomies as they assigned positive status to all that was black and denounced the white values that had 'Othered' them. New representational techniques were adopted to depict African Americans as subjects of their own discourse. The African American authors employed the narrative form as a tool for asserting themselves and deconstructing white values and norms that have 'Othered' them.

Operative with respect to Algeria in the years following the colonization of the country, 'Othering' as constructed by the colonizers in their strategy of controlling the colonized was adopted by the French in their colonialist discourse so as to monopolize superiority and reduce the Algerians to invisibility.[13] The French, the racially and culturally 'superior', depicted Algeria as the 'Other' against which they constructed their own identity as the civilized people. Because nearly all printed historical and fictional works about Algeria during the colonial period were written by Europeans, the existing texts focused on the Europeans themselves as main characters, with the Algerians primarily portrayed in contrast to what is known about the Europeans, as exotic individuals.[14] Accordingly, they were portrayed in either stereotypical terms, or as an unnamed, homogenous group subjugated by the force of the powerful European. In her PhD thesis, the Representations of African Identity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Francophone Literature, Nancy E. Wardle states that,

> Regarding itself as the master for presenting foreign lands and populations in narrative, the Occident's defensive reaction against the unknown Orient prompts the author to name it and attempt to classify it within his knowledge base, in order to better hold it and

13. Rabah Belamri states in this context: "The European minority is valorized by the terms used to refer to it; the Algerian majority is devalorized. The terms: Arab, Muslim, native are based on ideological presuppositions. Roles are inverted. The term Arab helps the colonizer satisfy his desire to push the colonized out of society. The term refers to a foreign country, a distant country, Arabia. It is designed to remind Algerians that their ancestors arrived in Algeria as colonizers, thirteen centuries earlier. The term Muslim refers to a theocratic community, a backward social formation fossilized for centuries. As for the term native, it conveys both disdain and paternalism." In L'œuvre de Louis Bertrand : miroir de l'idéologie colonialiste, Alger : O.P.U, 1980. pp.200-201. Translated and cited by Peter Danwoodie in Writing French Algeria. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p.4.

14. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin," [t]he word exotic was first used in 1599 to mean 'alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous.' By 1651 its meaning had been extended to include 'an exotic and foreign territory.'. . . During the nineteenth century, however, the exotic, the foreign increasingly gained . .. the connotations of a stimulating or exciting difference, something with which the domestic could be (safely) spiced" in Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies. New York: Routledge, 1998, p.94.

> gain possession over it as a concept that is defined using his own discourse. This discourse rests on a dialogue of polar opposites that is unable to analyze the surrounding world in anything other than extremes. The Orient is thereby viewed as different and exotic, a spectacle and a fantasy encompassed by vague generalizations suggesting sameness that result from an attitude of superiority of the subject towards its object. [15]

In an attempt to refute the colonialists' pretensions and assert themselves as full individuals with an independent identity, the Algerian people, in the same way as the African Americans, engaged in a process of re-writing the history of their country. They rebelled against the imperialistic ideology that marginalized them and attempted to restore a sense of community based around what had been subordinated by the colonizers. They reversed the colonizers' hierarchies and revalorized pre-colonial accomplishments and values.

The narratives chosen for the present research work are: Jean Toomer's Cane (1922), Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937), Kateb Yacine's Nedjma (1955), and Assia Djebar's Les Enfants du nouveau monde (1962). All four writers chosen for the present work have met at one time or another success in their lives, and the novels selected for analysis have been considered (except the work of Assia Djebar) as their most important achievements. The four writers have also been the subject of numerous anthologies, critical essays and literary analyses. In exploring their works again, we aim at highlighting a number of elements they have in common. In fact, the choice of our corpus has been carefully made. First, we wanted to choose two writers from the New Negro Movement or the Harlem Renaissance that would stand for both the movement and its people. Then, we wanted a male and a female writer to compare and contrast because of our conviction that neither the themes chosen by the two writers, nor the reception of their works by their people would be similar due to their difference in gender.

Accordingly we have chosen Jean Toomer to represent the African American male writers and Zora Neale Hurston to stand for her female counterparts. Toomer and Hurston both experienced life in the South characterized by Jim Crow Laws of segregation, and chose to speak about them in their literary works. Concerning their works, we have chosen Cane by Jean Toomer because it marks, according to critics and historians, the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance Movement, and Their Eyes Were

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15. Nancy E. Wardle, Representations of African Identity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Francophone Literature, PhD. The Ohio State University, 2007, p. 3.
I have mentioned the Orient here because North Africa was often considered to be part of the oriental world due to the spread of Islam in the area.

Watching God because it marks its end. In addition, Jean Toomer was considered as "the most talented Negro writer America had bred"[16] and "one of the most studied authors of the Harlem Renaissance."[17] His work was described by Louis Rubin as "the first fully mature work of the Southern Literary Renaissance of the years after World War I,"[18] while Zora Neale Hurston was considered as a writer ahead of her time. Her novel had "achieved a position of prominence within the American literary tradition."[19] It was also recognized as "a bold feminist novel, the first to be explicitly so in the Afro-American tradition."[20] Ever since Alice Walker's "rediscovery" of Hurston in 1970 as "A Genius of the South." her novel has enjoyed a steadily increasing popularity among both academic and general public reading circles.

The same considerations have been taken when choosing Algerian literary works that best describe the revolt of the Algerian people against the French colonial presence in their country. This period extends from 1945 to 1962 as it witnessed the bloodiest events in the history of the country. We have chosen Kateb Yacine to represent Algerian male writers and Assia Djebar to represent the female writers. Kateb Yacine's Nedjma was published in 1955 (at the beginning of the war) but deals mainly with the bloody events of 1945 which marked the beginning of Algerian people's political consciousness, while Assia Djebar's Les Enfants du nouveau monde was published in 1962, the year of the independence of the country when the Algerian people started dreaming of a new world, and a brighter future. Furthermore, many reasons have led us to choose Nedjma among all the literary works of Kateb Yacine. The most important one is the fact that Nedjma is among the first Algerian literary works to deal directly with, and denounce French presence in Algeria. As Marc Gontard states, " Nedjma est l'une des toutes premières œuvres profondément engagées dans le processus révolutionnaire qui aboutira à l'Independence de l'Algérie ."[21] Unlike other Algerian writers of the same era , such as Mohamed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri , and Mouloud Feraoun who tended to write ethnographic or realistic novels, Kateb Yacine refused to limit himself to any literary genre or school in his novel. His novel is thus described as being "à l'avant- garde du roman international."[22] The second reason is the

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16. Darwin T. Turner, In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971, p.4

17. Cherene Sherrard- Johnson, Portraits of the New Negro Woman: Visual and Literary Culture in the Harlem Renaissance. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007, p.108.

18. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., ed. The Literary South . Baton Rouge: Wiley, 1979, p. 429.

19. Michael Awkward, ed. New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.4.

20. James C. Cobb, Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.154.

21. Marc Gontard, Nedjma de Kateb Yacine: Essais sur la structure formelle du roman. Paris : L'Harmattan ,1985, p.16.

22. Charles Bonn, Kateb Yacine: Nedjma. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1990, p.23.

fact that Kateb Yacine always considered himself as a one-book man. "Je crois bien, en effet, que je suis l'homme d'un seul livre. "[23] This book was worked and reworked by the writer over his whole life, the themes and characters of which are found in his plays and in Le Polygone étoilé. (1966). References will be made to these latter works at certain points of this thesis whenever seen useful or illuminating.

Assia Djebar, on the other hand, has been chosen for many reasons. Although not the best of Assia Djebar's literary production, Les Enfants du nouveau monde is considered as "Djebar's first step towards a more political mode of reflection…[as] the work marks the beginning of a prolonged interrogation concerning the nature of women's contribution to the war effort and the effects of the conflict on their processes of self-construction and individuation."[24] It was written just before the end of the war of independence and was considered as a transitional work in the literary career of Assia Djebar as the latter would move to a different style and different concerns after the independence of the country. The second reason that has led us to choose Les Enfants du nouveau monde is more personal. We have noticed that more importance has been given by critics and scholars to Assia Djebar's latest works, mainly Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (1980), L'Amour, la fantasia, (1985), Vaste est la prison, (1995), and La Femme sans sépulture, (2002). This has led to a certain neglect of her earlier novels. By choosing Les Enfants du nouveau monde as a corpus for study, we contend that Assia Djebar's interest in both her country's colonial history and in the position of women within a patriarchal society started earlier than most critics state.

In addition, given that scholars have devoted many books to exploring and comparing Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston's lives and literary works,[25] we focus this comparative study on points of intersection between the two African American writers and their Algerian counterparts. At the same time, we hope that these comparisons will also shed light on some previously unexplored issues in the works of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston as well. In the same way as Kateb Yacine's Nedjma which defies easy literary descriptions and 'blows' the boundaries between genres,[26] Jean Toomer's Cane is hardly conceived as a novel. Cane is a collection of short stories, prose,

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23. Quoted in Jean Déjeux, Littérature maghrébine de langue française. Québec : Editions Naaman, 1978, p. 210.

24. Jane Huddleston, Assia Djebar, Out of Algeria. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006, p.34.

25. Some of the books that compare the two African American authors are: In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity by Darwin T. Turner (1971) that compares Jean Toomer with Countee Cullen and Zora Neale Hurston . We also have Nathan Grant's comparative study, Masculinist Impulses: Toomer, Hurston, Black Writing, and Modernity. (2004)

26. Kateb Yacine is described by Jacqueline Arnaud as a " terroriste, faisant sauter les cadres et les barrières par la force explosive de la poésie et de l'humour ". In Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine de langue française : Le Cas de Kateb Yacine. Paris : l'Harmattan, 1978, p.153.

poetry and drama that makes the work difficult to classify. Moreover, both writers emphasize the painful realities of violence and subjugation as experienced in their respective countries. Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar, on the other hand, although far from being indifferent to the suffering of their people, seem more centered on gender issues giving voice to women in their literary works.

The four novels selected for analysis in this thesis will be closely read through the lenses of various theories. First, the novels will be read from a postcolonial perspective in order to highlight their moments of interruption of the national narrative, and as a tool to recognize and explain their strategies of resistance and defiance. Our justification for using the postcolonial theory comes from our conviction that Algeria and black America share a unique perspective on the phenomenon and predicament of colonialism which, in turn, enables us to examine certain parallels between the literatures of both regions. The African American case could be an instance of what Ania Loomba calls "internal colonization", meaning that " 'Colonialism' is not just something that happens from outside a country or a people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces inside, but a version of it can be duplicated from within."[27]

Indeed, historians have long considered Black America as "an internal or domestic colony."[28] In her article, 'Four hundred years of silence, myth, history, and motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved', Sally Keenan explains why African American history was not addressed to as postcolonial by stating: "That the inclusion of Native and African American histories in post-colonial discourse has not been axiomatic in the past signals a failure to address the processes of colonization on which the foundation of the United States rests. That it is a post-colonial society can no longer be in question."[29] She later adds that "the post- of that term should not be regarded as a sign that the processes of colonialism have ended, rather, their legacy continues to exist as a lived reality for many citizens."[30]

Although slavery was abolished long before the works of the two African American writers under consideration in this research work were written, slavery was abolished in name only as the Americans of African origin remained at war with the forces of cultural degradation and social oppression. Both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston were born in the American South at a time that has been termed the 'Decades of Disappointment' for African

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27. Ania Loomba, op cit., p.16.

28. John H. Bracey in Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience, op cit., p.260.

29. Sally Keenan, 'Four hundred years of silence, myth, history and motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved' in Recasting the World: Writing after Colonialism. Ed, Jonathan White. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p.45.

30. Ibid.

Americans. During these decades, there was an intensification of violence towards the black people, and oppression was implemented in all kinds of forms and shapes.

> Random violence and systematic oppression were supported by Jim Crow laws, which legalized racial segregation in virtually every area of life. The last part of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth became known in African American history as the 'Decades of Disappointment' or, as black scholar Rayford Logan termed it, 'the Nadir of Black Experience'.[31]

Despite the fact that Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston's approach to the themes of this era were vastly different, their goal was the same: to promote the literary works of black people.

The four selected novels illustrate characters that are precisely affected by their White/ French colonial heritage more than any other factor in their lives. The postcolonial theory, we believe, is going to be extremely useful for our purpose because, in the four novels we will study, the authors describe characters whose existences have undergone substantial transformations due to specific encounters with the colonizer. Despite all the differences already mentioned that separate the two pairs of writers, the colonial heritage tends to bind them together. Our postcolonial reading of the four literary works is supported by critical observations of postcolonial literary critics such as Edward W. Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. In spite of individual differences between the selected postcolonial theorists, the latter are considered as the foremost exponents of the inequalities of representation of the colonized and have all been concerned with how identity is formed through the self-other trajectory.

Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) is considered as the pioneering work on exposing the prejudices of European colonialism. In his seminal work, Said articulates the undermining of the 'Orient' through Western discourses that constructed binaries of "us" and "them", polarizing the West and East in terms of superiority and inferiority. Indeed, Said argues that the colonizer's representation of native people "promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."[32]This dichotomy between the West and its "Others" served, according to the critic, to justify the forced occupation of non-Western territories and the subjugation of their peoples. Gayatri Spivak, for her part, introduced the notion of "subaltern" to postcolonial theory. Although the term

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31. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and Nellie Y. McKay, eds. The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997, p.464.

32. Edward W. Said, Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.43.

is not originally hers[33], Spivak argues that, "the subaltern has been redefined to encompass all subordinated populations oppressed by colonial/postcolonial regimes in various ways (economic, racial, sexist), to which the supplement of resistance acts a contrapuntal chord."[34]

Homi Bhabha, on the other hand, extends Edward Said's work in his, The location of Culture (1994), by arguing that colonialism is informed by a series of assumptions, which aim to legitimate its views of other lands and people. He states, "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a people of denigrate types on the basis of racial origin , in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction."[35] However, Bhabha distances his stance from Edward Said by arguing that colonizer and colonized cannot be viewed as separate entities that define themselves independently since the position of the colonizer is undermined by the position of the colonized. Accordingly, Bhabha takes up issues of 'ambivalence', 'hybridity', and 'mimicry', revealing the intertwined agency of the colonizer and the colonized. Seminal texts by Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi will also be used extensively in the present work since the two critics analyzed deeply the effects of colonization on the psyche of both colonized and colonizer in Algeria. This study will take into account several postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, subalternity and subordination.

Though to elaborate in detail on the history of colonialism of both the African American and Algerian peoples would be a deviation from the main focus of this thesis, which is the depiction of the 'Self' and the 'Other' in the literary works of African American and Algerian writers during decisive periods in the history of their peoples; an approach that seeks to deal with the representations of the two peoples, without throwing any light on their socio-historical background, is in danger of missing some important facts that will certainly help understand the current situation in which they found themselves. It is to be reminded, however, that our comparison between the African American and Algerian literary works is not based on the similarities

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33. Spivak based her analysis of the 'subaltern' on the work of Antonio Gramsci, (1891-1937) an Italian political activist who was the first to introduced the concept of the subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank in his article "Notes on Italian History" which appeared later on as part of his most widely known book Prison Notebooks written between 1929 and 1935.', to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes.. For Gramsci, "subalternity is a condition marked by the absence of a will or project on the part of a social group to achieve an integral organic critical self-consciousness." In Beyond Postcolonial Theory by San Juan Epifanio . New York: San Martin's Press, 1998, p. 95.

34. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, ed. The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 203.

35. Homi Bhabha , The Location of Culture. New York: Routledge, 1994, p.7 0.

between cultural or social conditions, but rather on the various authorial responses they make to them.

On the other hand, patriarchy, in the same way as colonialism, is regarded as the exertion of power on subjects who are considered as subordinate. Indeed, patriarchal societies impose on the women the same submissive role as that inflicted by the colonizers on their colonized subjects. Accordingly, the women writers selected for the present study present interesting works for analysis from a feminist perspective since they not only have to deconstruct the obscured and misrepresented world of women as depicted by the colonizers but the world of women under patriarchy as well.[36] They also have to overcome cultural biases that have only recently allowed them to write. As we will see in due time, women writers have long suffered from the persistent ideal of women's silence and invisibility which has denied legitimacy for their literary works , and rendered their creativity marginal. The patriarchal gatekeepers of art and society have refused to see women's creative work as anything other than shallow minor fiction. Accordingly, we offer in this study a close reading of the novels of Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar through the concepts of gender and nation, delineating a thematic trajectory of undermining traditional gender roles. The novels of these female writers embody a new voice which discards the submissiveness and passivity of the female characters, and conveys instead their struggles, their anger and their hope for a better future.

In the case of Zora Neale Hurston, Mary Helen Washington has pointed out that "one of the main preoccupations of the black woman writer is the black woman herself."[37] Challenging the stereotypical images to which the black woman has been subjected has become a core theme in the literary works of African American female writers. Through her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston documents Black women's resistance to their attempted objectification and exploitation. She insists on her right to define female African American self and to establish her identity and history. Assia Djebar too defies the objectification and invisibility to which women have been subjected. In Les enfants du nouveau monde, she tries to uncover different forms of Algerian women's resistance to both colonialism and patriarchy. She also gives voice to women to express their dissatisfaction and uneasiness with the condition in which they find themselves, cloistered and muted.

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36. As we will come to see, male authors' fiction shows that men have not yet transcended stereotypical portrayals of women.

37. Quoted in Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s. Eds, Baker A. Houston Jr., and Patricia Redmond . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.53.

Our argument is that the protagonists of these novels struggle with questions of national identity, and their place within it, through the prism of gender by appropriating or rewriting their assigned roles. These characters contradict the mainstream focus on patriarchy. They are strong, independent female characters that are capable of living according to their own values. The various struggles they go through sharpen their self-awareness as the subordinate sex, as well as develop their political and social consciousness. By focusing on the condition of women in their literary works at a time when both communities, the African American in the USA and the Algerian people in Algeria, were fighting for more equality and freedom, earned the two female writers the disapproval of critics and readers in their respective countries who felt that the two novelists neglected the realities and demands of their peoples and focused instead, in their literary works, on 'subordinate' issues such as women's search for voice and sexual freedom, and their revolt against traditional mores.

Although the works of feminist critics such as bell hooks, Barbara Christian, Mary Helen Washington and Carole Boyle Davis seem to be very helpful in providing an important dialogue with race and gender, we have considered it necessary to include the works of contemporary Arab feminist writers who address issues of female subordination and oppression in the Arab world. By using the works of Fatima Mernissi, Ahlem Mosteghanemi, Marnia Lazreg, and Nawel El Saadawi in our study of the work of Assia Djebar, we want to analyze specificities of the Arab women which are not present in Western texts. Indeed, despite the fact that there are grounds of similarities between women all over the world in terms of patriarchal oppression, silencing and objectification, there exist characteristics that separate them too and that make it impossible to have univocal voices.

We consider that the two theories chosen for this research paper are complementary as "both feminist and anti-colonial movements needed to challenge dominant ideas of history, culture and representation. They too questioned objectivity in dominant historiography, they too showed how canonical literary texts disguised their political affiliations, and they too broke with dominant Western, patriarchal, philosophies."[38] Ania Loomba further emphasizes the analogy between the two theoretical movements by stating that, "Anti-colonial or feminist struggles emphasized culture as a site of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. The decentring of the human subject was important to them because such a subject had been dominantly theorized by European imperialist discourses as male and white. They also paid attention to language as a tool of domination and as a means of

38. Ania Loomba, op cit., p.39.

constructing identity."[39] While we are also interested in culture and nation as reflected in texts, our method is more thematically oriented, more interested in direct similarities between the works of the four writers.

In addition to the postcolonial and feminist theories, we would also refer to the theories of triangulated desire and scapegoating as developed by René Girard in his psychoanalytic works mainly, Deceit, Desire, and the Novel (1965) and The Scapegoat (1986) , and this for explanatory purposes since the French theorist posits a psychoanalytic theory for considering violence in society. Girard argues that societies that are under the strain of psychological tension because of the chaos and extreme violence that prevail in their communities seek a new sense of social unity and harmony through the mechanism of scapegoating. In both African American and Algerian communities, as our study of the novels will reveal, individuals are selected collectively by their communities to bear all the guilt and ills of their society.

In the first part of the thesis, we will deal with 'Self' and 'Other' in race relationships. Historians and critics have shown that the oppressing groups tend to portray subjugated groups and their peoples as effeminate, weak, submissive, and irrational, and thus in need of protection and guidance from masculine imperial authority. The oppressed groups, on the other hand, have always had to confront the reductive gaze of the dominant power and deconstruct the image of their people as depicted by their oppressors. Accordingly, we will see in the first part of this work the way(s) the intellectuals of the oppressed communities , mainly their writers, use in order to dismantle the ideologies that support the systems of domination. We will show the similarity between the two pairs of writers chosen for this study, and the methods they adopt in refuting the stereotypes imposed on them and proving the worthiness of their people.

In the first chapter of part one, we will deal with the works of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston. The two African Americans' literary works are seen as an attempt to redefine the predominant images of African Americans in American fiction prior to the Harlem Renaissance. Through their novels, the two writers seek to challenge and transform earlier stereotypical portraits of African American life by confronting and refuting the distorted images of their people in popular fiction. They also seek to write about African Americans from a black perspective. They seek to revise and reconstitute what they perceive as misperceptions and inaccuracies about African Americans of various socioeconomic levels, genders, and ideologies. The two writers also denounce in their works the relentless suffering and persecution to which black people are subject although they are more than half a century removed from

39. Op cit., p. 40.

chattel slavery. The chapter will show us that the new emerging racialist system is far from being less repressive than slavery. The black people, although free, suffer from psychological, social, and economic exploitation and oppression. In the second chapter of part one, we will show that the situation of the Algerian people under colonization is not better than that of the African Americans under racism. Although living on the soil of their forefathers, the Algerian people, in the works of Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar, are subject to negative stereotypes that depict them as lazy, dirty, uncivilized, and unworthy of the land on which they are living. They also experience physical and psychological torture, economic exploitation, and social degradation.

In this part, we will also discuss the various ways in which violence is present in the four narratives, and the ways in which the different protagonists experience physical and emotional atrocities. Indeed, living in the face of constant physical danger, and of the possibility of having one's body aggressed and tortured, is one of the most important experiences described in all four books. Violence is both at home, affecting the psychological development of the protagonists, and in the larger racial and social milieu in which the protagonists evolve. However, and as we are going to see, violence is much more accentuated in the narratives of the two Algerian writers than in the narratives of the African American writers. At the end, we will arrive to the conclusion that whether colonized from the inside or from the outside, the colonized people find themselves, whatever their racial, religious, or geographical belonging, oppressed and subjugated by the colonizing powers in the same humiliating and dehumanizing way.

In the second part of this thesis, we will deal with Self and Other in gender relationships. In fact, imperialism and gender are closely linked in a number of ways. While the imperialistic powers used the term ‘Other’ to refer to the colonized subjects, the use of ‘the Other’, with all its stereotypical connotations, to refer to women has been used since Simone de Beauvoir set forth her theory of ‘Woman, the Other’, in The Second Sex in 1949. On the other hand, scholars have shown that the imperialistic powers often use gendered symbols to depict their colonies. They often apply masculine values to the colonial power while attributing feminine characteristics to all subject countries and their people. The latter are often portrayed as effeminate, weak and submissive and consequently in need of the protection of the masculine imperial authority. In black America, as in Algeria, the emphasis placed on gender roles among subject peoples has been used as a means of further controlling colonial societies by erecting or maintaining rigid gender, race, and class distinctions between rulers and their subjects. The myth of the powerful male and the weak and defenseless female as established by the colonial powers with their subjects has spread to include the members of the same community. Thus, the native male who has been bestowed with feminine

characteristics of weakness and passivity by the colonial 'Other' has had no other alternative than to restore his masculinity and authority at the expense of his female counterpart.

In the first chapter, we will study the issue of gender and its structuring through male perspectives. In both communities, women are perceived as a threat to manhood. In The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, El Saadawi states that the tyranny exerted by men over women indicates that men have taken the measure of the female's innate strength, and that "[they] needed heavy fortifications to protect themselves against it."[40] These attitudes towards women's presumed power have historical origins and are embedded in the collective cultural and social consciousness. As will be argued in due course, the colonized society defended itself, under foreign occupation, by secluding and ferociously dominating its women. In addition, women were treated as a burden that had to be protected from the sexual gaze of other men. The second chapter will deal with the issue of gender from women's perspective. Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God will be analyzed with special emphasis on black women's lives and survival struggle in the Old South as well as the complicated social network of oppression they encounter in virtue of their race and gender through the experience of the main character Janie Crawford. Most of the black scholars and writers of the 1930's overlooked the social and political dimension of Hurston's novel. Because the African American writer articulated her fiction through a woman's point of view, they failed to perceive the interrelation between black women's oppression and the issues of race and class divide. For them, to use James Young's words, "Miss Hurston skillfully wove the romantic elements into a pattern of protest; not race or class protest, but feminine and individual protest,"[41] thus narrowing the scope of her protest to the feminine and individual levels.

Speaking about the condition of African American women within racist white America, Audre Lorde argues that, "within this country where racial difference creates a constant, if unspoken, distortion of vision, Black women have on the one hand always been highly visible, and so, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism."[42] In reality, black women were relegated to a place outside the ideological construction of 'womanhood', they were not just deemed as inferior to white men and women, they were invisible to them as human beings. As a female belonging to a racially and economically subjugated group, Hurston celebrates,

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40. Nawal El Saadawi, The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World . London: Zed Books, 2007, p. 151.

41. James O. Young, Black Writers of the Thirties. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973, p. 220.

42. Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Michigan: Crossing Press Feminist Series, 1984., 1984, p.42.

in her work, the physical, emotional, and spiritual strength of black women who stand against oppression and refuse to be obliterated by a racist/male dominated society. The analysis of black women's oppression as advocated by the two afro- American scholars, bell hook and Hazel Carby are extensively used in this chapter as they offer valuable information about the level of meaning affecting both men and women as social beings within the community under study. Assia Djebar's work, similarly, is closely related to issues of race and gender. In the section dealing with the Algerian writer we will show how the female characters, in Les Enfants du nouveau monde, try to transmit the need to raise their voice within their community and fight for a more active role within their peoples' life. "Djebar notes that the war heralds new forms of questioning, and the text uncovers diverse forms of feminine resistance, overt and tacit, forgotten by more mainstream accounts both of Algerian women's position during the war and of the experiences of the maquisards."[43] It is to be reminded, however, that although the construction of race and gender in the literary texts is highlighted in some specific parts of the research work, it is also dealt with throughout our thesis.

Part three will deal with the search for one's identity and self. In The Wretched of The Earth, Frantz Fanon emphasizes that colonialism is aimed at erasing the cultural memory of the colonized people by devaluating their history and collective memory. "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it."[44] This results, more often than not, in the marginalization and subjugation of the native people, leaving them aliens within their own land. Accordingly, Fanon suggests that the oppressed people must reclaim their repressed histories and assert their indigenous cultural traditions.

In the first chapter, we will analyse the search of identity as depicted by Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine in their works. We will analyze the way Jean Toomer has interrogated the myth upon which racism and the subjugation of black people was built. We will also see how the African American writer has reconstructed history from an African American point of view. The preoccupation with the search of one's identity is of paramount importance to the Algerian writer too since the pre-colonial era was represented by French historians and academics as blank and hence was not significant in any respect. Kateb wished, through his novel, to reclaim the history of his people from the ethnocentric works of the western historians and reform it, representing his

43. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria, op cit., p.34

44. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of The Earth, (1961). Trans, Constance Farrington. New York : Grove Press, 1963, p. 208.

people as active subjects of their own histories rather than passive objects as depicted in western histories and other bodies of knowledge. Accordingly we will also analyze in this chapter the way Kateb Yacine, through his novel Nedjma, attempts to confront the oppressive powers which have aimed to erase the identity of his countrymen. We will see the ways he adopts to construct a revolutionary consciousness as a means of renovating and strengthening his people's identity. Throughout the novel, the male characters fight to forge an identity outside the sphere of the colonizer's influence. For Kateb, the quest is an important element since nothing is clear yet for the Algerian people of the 1950's. As Kateb confesses: "Le sens le plus authentique de Nedjma est d'être lui-même incomplet, inachevé, incertain…Pouvait-il en être autrement dans l'Algérie des années 50?"[45] Neither the writer nor his characters can know what is in store for them.

In the second chapter, we aim at analyzing the issue of voice as has been treated by both Zora Neale Hurston in Their Eyes Were Watching God and Assia Djebar in Les enfants du nouveau monde. When given the opportunity to write and publish their works, both Hurston and Djebar chose to work within their own horizons and out of their experiences as women. This involved ritualistic journeys and articulated voices in the search for the self that challenged the claims others wanted to impose. Moreover, both writers personally experienced prejudice as females, and grew to understand that the prejudice they confronted was deeply rooted in the patriarchal society they were living in. Their reinterpretation of history provided them with the impetus to break free of gendered silence and inferior status. As Celia Britton points out in Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction: "The fact that both the authors and the protagonists of these novels are females in itself encourages critics to assume some kind of autobiographical continuity between the two [...] this specifically female *voice* is in fact a central concept of this critical discourse; the concern is with (de)colonized women as silenced subjects finding a voice , being 'authorized' to 'speak'."[46] Accordingly, the idea of "voice" appears highly pertinent for women writers from former colonies.

In the last part of this work, we shall see through our examination of the four novels, the constant battle waged by the writers selected for this study between their true self/ identity and the identity imprinted on them by their oppressors. In other words, these novelists symbolize through their writings the cultural and historical splits between their native community and the dominating one. This part is important to our study as it allows us to show

45. Marc Gontard, Nedjma de Kateb Yacine : Essais sur la structure formelle du roman, op cit., p.110.

46. Celia Britton in Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction. Ed, Nicholas Harrison. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 131-132.

another similarity in experience between African American and Algerian peoples. Alienation and double consciousness as experienced by both African American and Algerian writers demonstrate that oppression and subjugation have the same consequences on the oppressed people whatever their location or their origins. This has been well expressed by Marc Black in his article, "Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness" where he states that, "[The] similarity of double consciousness between people of color in the U.S. and colonized people historically supports the claim of close connections between racism in the U.S. and colonialism internationally."[47] Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar all lived on the borderlines of their countries' cultures, growing up in their colonized communities but also experiencing relationships with the culture of the colonizer.

As we will see in this part, the personal developments of the four writers: getting educated, becoming well-known artists, or simply mingling in the society of the colonizer had distanced them from their own culture, and had, in a certain way, excluded them from their own community. They started rejecting Eurocentric models and interpretations of manhood and womanhood. They turned instead to non-western/non-white communities and privileged folk traditions and beliefs. Toomer aimed to construct a unique identity that would resist definitive categorization. Hurston for her part, challenged prevailing stereotypes surrounding the practices of African American folk beliefs by perpetuating and subverting them. Instead of promoting the black race by showing their likeness to the whites, as advocated by the black middle class, Toomer and Hurston preferred to promote the culture of their people and to rescue it from sinking in the midst of industrialization and modernism. They felt that their native African culture was eroded away by the white American culture, and that it was their role as writers to try and rescue it from disappearance. However, by employing folklore, mythology, oral traditions and other indigenous cultural materials that represent native culture and experience, their works were unconventional in American literature. Yet both Toomer and Hurston's texts have created a consistent controversy among readers ever since their publication surrounding their political intentions, and their representation of African American subjectivity.

On the other hand, the French colonial educational system engendered a double consciousness in the Algerian colonized people by initiating the natives into a culture and knowledge system contradictory to that of the home. Due to the exclusionary nature of this colonial educational system, and the devaluation of their native culture, the colonizer's language became the unique medium of literary expression for Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar. They had no

47. Marc Black, "Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness" in Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge: Vol. 5: Iss. 3, Article 36, 2007, p. 393.

choice. The language in which they were educated is the language in which they produced their works. However, French emerged as emblematic of oppression and degradation since it awakened in them painful memories of conquest and subjugation. Their works became filled with the tensions between their native heritage and the French culture they acquired at school. Despite their feelings of otherness and alienation within their own communities, they endeavoured to preserve their own culture by intertwining the two 'exclusive' cultures. The result of such blending has created literary works that assert their creators' claims that in terms of literary definitions, Algerian culture lies outside western conventions.

In the conclusion, we will expose the results of our confrontation of the two pairs of writers and show how these writers have succeeded in bridging racial, cultural, historical, and linguistic divides that separate 'internally' colonized people from 'externally' colonized ones through their struggle against the prejudices and stereotypes that have 'Othered' them.

PART ONE

S*elf* and *Other in Race Relationships*

Throughout history, the people of subjugated groups have had to confront the reductive gaze of the dominant power that has belittled them and assumed superiority over them in civilization, religious worship and/ or skin color. To deconstruct the image of their peoples as depicted by their oppressors, it has been necessary for the intellectuals of the oppressed communities to dismantle the ideologies that support the systems of domination by proving the worthiness of their people and by developing positive descriptions of their native culture in order to confront their oppressors with them. Accordingly in, "The Self and the Other[1] in Race Relationships", we will study the in-group attitude towards the 'Other' as depicted by the writers selected for the present work. In the case of the black Americans portrayed in the novels of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston, the most cohesive in-group attitude is a bitter rejection of white prejudices and stereotypes. Within a society still burdened by the legacy of slavery and its consequent racial violence, the colored community, like the white, brings severe sanctions to bear against its members who mix socially. "Anti-white sentiment provides the psychological impetus of Negro nationalism, a negative attitude toward all things white is accompanied by a positive valuation of blackness Negro."[2] In the same way as their African-American counterparts, Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar call into question the French colonizers' ideology that has aligned the French with enlightenment and civilization and the Algerians with savagery and backwardness, denying them their individuality and identity.

This part is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, we will deal with the image of the black man as 'other' as drawn by the whites and see how the African American writers try to deconstruct this image in their literary works. Jim Crow and the continuing supremacist policies that characterized America of the 1920's considered black people as savages, and placed them, accordingly, at the bottom of the social scale, next to apes. White writers of the era, influenced by the segregationist policies adopted by White America, featured African Americans in their literary works, on the periphery. Consequently, the African American writers felt a great need for an authentic representation of their people. We will accordingly, analyze in the first chapter, the ways Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston try, through their works, to

1. The [capital O] Other has been called the grande-autre by Lacan, the great Other, in whose gaze the subject gains identity. [. . .]This Other can be compared to the imperial centre, imperial discourse, or the empire itself, in two ways: firstly, it provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow 'other,' dependent; secondly, it becomes the 'absolute pole of address,' the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world. In colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonized is continually located in the gaze of the imperial Other, the 'grande-autre.' Cited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in their handbook, Key Concepts in Post- Colonial Studies op cit., pp.169-71.

2. Alain Locke, The New Negro. New York: Athenaeum, 1925, rpt, 1979, p.5.

formulate an authentically black subjectivity and positionality. In the second chapter, we will refer to the image of the Algerian man/woman as depicted in sociological and literary works written by the French colonizers. In addition, we will study the methods Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar adopt in order to recuperate the lost history of their country and how they re-compose this history as an element of collective history and national identity.

Because the revised history of colonized nations continues to be most of the time a male-centered history, we have felt it is necessary to include the works of Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar in addition to those of Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine in our study, as the two works will help us show how these two women writers have transformed female characters in their novels from passive and voiceless characters into active and voiced ones willing to take their fate in their hands and break down the walls of confinement built around them by colonizer and colonized men alike. These women writers, as we are going to see in the present part, refuse the picture drawn of them by both their foreign oppressors and their male counterparts, and aim at breaking with a persistent cultural ideal which encourages male representation of women in their literary works as either the all suffering and asexual females or the exotic temptresses.

Chapter One
The Black vs. the White in Toomer's Cane and Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God

> I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. . . I was battered down by tom-toms cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects. . . I took myself far off from my own presence. . . What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?[3]

In their explanation of racism, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari state that, "From the view point of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should be like us and whose crime it is not to be."[4] The primary characteristic in most portrayals of the 'Other' is the manner in which it compares to the standard of normalcy that is embodied by Western culture, values and customs. Seen as animals, brutes, rapists, rebellious, and potentially murderous, black people of African descent have been victimized by white stereotypes from the very beginning of their arrival to the American continent as slaves. Racist white America refused to see them in any other way than as savages incapable of harboring feelings or of generating grief. A good example of the way African American people were viewed by racist white sociologists and anthropologists would be the research made by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier in which he concludes that "To be sure, when one undertakes the study of the Negro he discovers a great poverty of traditions and patterns of behavior that exercise any real influence on the formation of the Negro's personality and conduct. If . . . the most striking thing about the Chinese is their deep culture, the most conspicuous thing about the Negro is his lack of a culture."[5] Worse, they were perceived as cannibals who consorted with demon spirits and idolaters, and whose dark skin was a mark against the Christian god. Their rituals and spiritual traditions were equated with devil worship, superstition, and black magic. "Practitioners of the African-based New World religions were called devil-worshippers, their

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3. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., pp.110-112.

4. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Trans, Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p.178.

5. Franklin E. Frazier, "Traditions and Patterns of Negro Family Life in the United States" quoted in John F. Szwed, "An American Anthropological Dilemma: The Politics of Afro-American Culture." In Reinventing Anthropology. Ed, Dell Hymes. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1972, pp. 153-181, p.159.

dancing and drumming ceremonies were perceived as sexual orgies, and their practice of animal sacrifice was assumed to include human sacrifice."[6] The whites considered these spiritual practices as dangerous and subversive. They interpreted African spiritual worship and healing practices as incantations to the devil. Refusing to comprehend any type of spirituality outside of Christianity, they used legislation to silence and even erase these traditional African practices. Although such interpretations were lacking in any kind of objectivity, they were accepted as general truths.They were so popularized and highly accepted by the white society that they were almost rarely challenged. Black people who refused this categorization were forced to hold back the self they wanted to express. They had to repress and contain their feelings of frustration and revolt for fear of being tortured, burnt or/and lynched by white mobs.

Plagued with the long standing stereotypes that depicted them as savages and sexual predators, the black males had no real say about the way they were represented by the whites. They had to accept, unwillingly, the subordinate social and psychological roles assigned to them. This had, of course, devastating consequences on their personality. bell hooks says in this context:

> It is inescapable for Blacks who are born into a society that makes such a strong distinction between white and Black (and even between light and dark skin shades within the race) to grow up without, at some point, entertaining feelings of inferiority because they are not members of the majority, privileged group which has attached a high premium to white skin. To some extent, all Blacks must have made the comparisons between the inferior, subjected status they occupy in the society, which are based primarily on color, and the positive value and privileges that are automatically attached to being white. Even the most emotionally stable person has experienced the humiliation and feelings of degradation that have their origin in systematic racial oppression.[7]

The black people started despising themselves and all that linked them to blackness and to the black race. In fact, the effects of being imposed a subordinate role were profound and lasting, explaining the feeling of degradation, low self-esteem and humiliation that black people go through in a white supremacist society.

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6. Carolyn Morrow Long, Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001, p.14.

7. bell hooks quoted in Joyce A. Ladner, Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, pp. 70-71.

Alongside the image of the black male as savage, brute, and rapist, comes the image of the black female as uncontrollably libidinal and even immoral in the practice of her sexuality. The black woman, as an inferior human being, has a predisposition to a lascivious behavior. Among the traits attributed to her in the American racialist discourse is 'the oversexed temptress', very often inviting a sexual attack. This has justified her rape by the white master first and later by other white men. Well-known are the narratives that tell of the white master's serial raping of his female slaves. In Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist, Hazel V. Carby describes the degrading situation in which black women were put by the supremacist society in which they lived. Instead of being considered the victims of their white masters' sexual greed and violence, black women were often accused of being the ones who provoked their male masters.

> Confronted by the black woman, the white man behaved in a manner that was considered to be entirely untempered by any virtuous qualities; the white male, in fact, was represented as being merely prey to the rampant sexuality of his female slaves […] Thus, the white slave master was not regarded as being responsible for his actions toward his black female slaves. On the contrary, it was the female slave who was held responsible for being a potential, and direct, threat to the conjugal sanctity of the white mistress.[8]

Accordingly, the argument that Black women were lascivious and immoral was used to rationalize their sexual abuse by 'white' masters and overseers. The latter transferred the blame for their sexual exploitation of their black female slaves and other black women onto the evil charms of the black female race and thus, exonerated themselves from any kind of blame.

Whether inviting a sexual attack , or being a victim of it, black females were considered by the whites as accepting their fate and encouraging their repeated sexual abuse by the very fact that they survived the experience of rape and did not die defending their 'virtue'. Indeed, conventional expectations of the importance of sexual purity dictated the choice of death for women in case they were at risk of losing their virtue.[9] The fact that the black women repeatedly survived their institutionalized rape, instead of committing suicide in the tradition of outraged virtue, made of them a spiritually inferior

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8. Hazel V. Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist. New York : Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 27.

9. Hazel Carby in her commentary on the cult of 'true' womanhood within the white Southern social structure suggests that to be a 'true' woman, 'the possession of virtue was imperative', Reconstructing Womanhood, op cit., p,25. Barbara Welter , on the other hand, classifies the "four cardinal virtues of True Womanhood" as "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity." In Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century. Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 1976, p. 21.

race in the eyes of the whites. Black women were very often associated with illicit sexuality and became the personification of what is polluted in society. Frances Smith Foster has argued in Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narrative that,

> The black woman became closely identified with illicit sex. If the "negress" were not a hot-blooded, exotic whore, she was a cringing terrified victim. Either way she was not pure and thus not a model of womanhood. Moreover, her ability to survive degradation was her downfall. As victim she became the assailant, since her submission to repeated violations was not in line with the values of sentimental heroines who died rather than be abused. Her survival of these ordeals and continued participation in other aspects of slave life seemed to connote, if not outright licentiousness, at least a less sensitive and abused spirit than that of white heroines.[10]

White supremacist society gave black women a permanent though tarnished historical presence that survived for more than three centuries. Indeed, the construction of the black women as not pure and not virtuous was transmitted from the institution of slavery to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The continuation of racism after Emancipation institutionalized rape of black women, especially in the South, and allowed space for whites to assert themselves as rapists and exploiters. Throughout that period, the black women remained nameless and stereotyped rather than named and personalized.[11] Alice Walker further explains the black woman's plight in "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens", and lists many of the stereotypes that have been applied to the black women in America.

> Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "the mule of the world," because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else—everyone else—refused to carry. We have also been called "Matriarchs," "Superwomen," and "Mean and Evil Bitches." Not to mention "Castraters" and "Sapphire's Mama." When we have pleaded for understanding, our character has been distorted; when we asked for simple caring, we have been handed empty inspirational appellations, then stuck in the farthest corner. When we have asked for love, we have been given

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10. Francis Smith Foster, Witnessing Slavery: The Development of the Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives . Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979, p. 131.

11. Violence against Black women by whites survived slavery and accompanied the Reconstruction Era. Despite the Black women's emancipation, there was no adequate legal protection of Black women rape victims, "from emancipation through more than two-thirds of the twentieth century, no Southern white male was convicted of raping or attempting to rape a Black woman", despite the fact that this crime was widespread. For more details about the issue see W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 .New York: Atheneum, 1975.

> children. In short, even our plainer gifts, our labors of fidelity and love, have been knocked down our throats.[12]

These stereotypes inherited over centuries of European ideology proved remarkably tenacious and could not be easily dismantled. As a consequence, the African American intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance felt a persistent need to resist the objectification of their people as the 'Others', and to tell about black men and women from an African American perspective.

Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston raise questions of respectability and sexual subjectivity in their works. The two concepts, as already seen, emerge from historical discourses of racialized rape, lynching and ideologies which represent the African American man as impotent and the African American woman as loose and oversexed. The two writers challenge western misconceptions by deconstructing the old image of the black people as drawn by the dominant white culture and imbue their people with voice, agency, and spiritual power, the very things that were stripped from them during the institution of slavery. Thus, it is no coincidence that both Cane and Their Eyes Were Watching God are set in the South as one of the main reference points for African American identity: "with the vast majority of African Americans either residing in, or recently migrated from, the South, "race" could be seen to have a distinct geographic cast in the 1920s. To understand the essence of the black experience, one needed to turn to the South and its figurations of black and white."[13] In their desire to formulate an authentically black subjectivity and positionality, Toomer and Hurston felt the necessity to travel South in order to create a more complete notion of their racial identity.

However, the discourses of black identity as set in the South are replete with images of violence and repression. Encounters with the white community are marked by violence, oppression, and discrimination. Although sometimes not mentioned directly, scenes of brutality, beatings, rape and lynching are evoked in both Cane and Their Eyes Were Watching God to document the relentless suffering and persecution to which black people are subject. "Contrary to being a place where black identity grows in its most natural way, the South is a location in which black identity and life may be cut down suddenly and unnaturally."[14] The black people described in the two novels are more than half a century removed from chattel slavery, but they are still surrounded by many aspects of that past. Jennifer Lynn Ritterhouse explains that "black southerners continued to face economic and political oppression, as well as the humiliations of racial etiquette and other

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12. Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mother's Gardens. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983, p. 237.

13. Martin J. Favor, Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999, p.15.

14. Ibid, p. 65.

hardships"[15] in the South throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the South depicted in the two novels is not less repressive than slavery. The exploitation and oppression that slavery had set in place continues under the racialist system. It appears as if slavery has been abolished in name only.

I.1-The Black vs. the White in Jean Toomer's Cane:

> "Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all."
>
> **William Faulkner,** ***Absalom, Absalom!***

In Cane, the South is, in terms of the narrator in the novel an 'other' that is violent and terrifying. Lynching and rape are the two political weapons of terror wielded by the white powers behind black domination and oppression. The poem 'Portrait in Georgia' in section I is an illustration of this geographic otherness, alien and repressive.

> Hair- braided chestnut,
> Coiled like a lyncher's rope,
> Eyes- fagots,
> Lips- old scars, or the first red blisters,
> Breath- the last sweet scent of cane,
> And her slim body, white as the ash
> Of black flesh after flame[16]

The poem describes a white woman, but her main traits and characteristics spell only death and terror. This poem, in fact, is an indictment of the multiple oppressions and brutalities that African Americans have to battle in the South. The most obvious aspect of racism found in the South is the color line that separates the white community from the black one. This line forbids any kind of relationship between black males and 'pure' white females. Indeed, after the failure of Reconstruction, social conventions dictated an increasing and more absolute distance between black and white as institutionalized in the Jim Crow laws. In response, color lines were established, and any transgression would lead, as we will see in the present section, either to death or to rejection by both communities.

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15. Jennifer Lynn Ritterhouse, Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, p. 27.

16. Jean Toomer. Cane, 1923; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Incorporated, 1988, p.29. Future citations from the book will refer to this edition and will occur parenthetically in the text.

a- The Black Female's Sexual Exploitation:

All of Jean Toomer's characters live in a world defined by its blackness and by the surrounding white society that both violates and denies their very existence. The devastating effects of this white supremacist society take, most of the time, the form of outright physical violence. However, psychic violence remains the most prevailing and enduring. Thus, it is not surprising that Jean Toomer opens the first story in Cane by addressing directly the myths of black female sexuality, exposing a past shaped by a white world concerned with justifying slavery, rape, and segregation. Karintha, the female protagonist in the story is defined by male sexual appraisal of her. "Men had always wanted her, this Karintha, even as a child, Karintha carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down." (Cane,3). Karintha's beauty is immediately, even during childhood, corrupted by a long history of racism and oppression that has stripped black women of the power and control of their body. Yet Karintha resists her destiny as a sexual object by resisting most men in town. However, surviving her past and her sexualisation has cost the young woman her soul. "Men do not know that the soul of her was a growing thing ripened too soon." (Cane, 4)

By opening his stories with a black woman victimized since childhood by a dehumanizing stereotype of black women grounded in the historical confrontation between whiteness and blackness, Jean Toomer emphasizes the social construction of race and gender. Karintha is objectified by the men around her because she is perceived as 'Other' by them. Although she belongs to the same race as them, they have so much internalized the white stereotypes of black women as inferior and deviant that they willingly collaborate in their sexual oppression. In Black Feminist Thought, Patricia Hill Collins states that, "As the 'Others' of society who can never really belong, strangers threaten the moral and social order. But they are simultaneously essential for its survival because those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries. African American women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging."[17] By being assigned all of the negative characteristics opposite and inferior to those reserved to white womanhood, black women have become subject to all kinds of sexual and physical oppression by white and black men alike. However, while Karintha does not meet the criteria of true womanhood established by the supremacist whites because of her skin color and sexual activities, Becky, as we will see in the next sub-section, does not fit too despite the fact that she is a white woman.

17. Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. New York: Routledge, 2000, p.70.

b - The Social Consequences of Miscegenation:

Becky's story, in fact, raises the problems of the persistence of the conception of race as fixed as well as the rigidity of the white/ black binary. It stands for the southern racial codes that forbid any sexual relationships between black men and white women and that viewed racial mixture as an aberration. Whenever these relationships happen, the black men are automatically accused of rape and bestiality towards the 'pure' white women. The violation of these codes leads, almost all the time, as already seen, to the physical extinguishing of the black males through lynching.[18] When her first 'Negro' child is born, Becky, in the novel, is cast out by both communities, white and black. "'God-forsaken, insane white shameless wench', the white people said, 'Poor catholic poor crazy woman', the black people said." (Cane, 7) The white woman finds herself alienated and rejected by both white and black communities because she has dared to blur the well-established racial lines. She is punished because she has broken the acceptable codes that separate whites from blacks. People of both communities wish her dead, they build her, nevertheless, a house away from the town. They also bring food and leave it by her door. Things worsen five years later when Becky has a second 'Negro' son. This time, both blacks and whites decide that she is dead and stop leaving food at her door. "Becky had another son, was what the whole town knew. But nothing was said, for the part of man that says things to the likes of that had told itself that if there was a Becky, that Becky was now dead." (Cane,8) Thus, Becky becomes socially dead and spoken of as a ghost long before anyone is sure of her physical death. The house that has been the instrument of her banishment from human contact becomes her tomb.

Becky, in the novel, is an example of individuals ignoring racial laws and transgressing sexual codes. She, in fact, is different from Southern white women as she seems a willing partner in an illicit relationship. She is white and she has not one, but two Negro sons. Moreover, Becky refuses to name the father(s) of her sons, thus protecting him/ them from persecution and imminent death. Because of her illicit interracial relations and the children they have produced, both white and black people ostracize her with equal conviction. They all want her dead. When Becky's house falls in beneath the leaning chimney on a Sunday afternoon, no one goes to check if she is dead or still alive. Becky's death, either from the impact of the fallen house, or from the suffocation of being buried alive by its rubble, without any kind of help from

18. Sexual relations between black men and white women were considered as a supreme sin that deserved killing of the black man and saving of the 'poor' white woman. In fact, black men were killed for a lot less than that. bell hooks states that black men were murdered/lynched for daring to look at white women. " the black male gaze was always subject to control and /or punishment by the powerful white Other." In Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. Eds, Reina Lewis and Sara Mills. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003, p. 209.

either of the two communities, is the direct result of the racist actions of the people of her town. In her study of Becky's story, McKay states:

> Becky's predicament and fate has roots in the racism that permitted white men, from the days of slavery, to make black women the objects of their sexual lusts, and at the same time made it impossible for black men to have open relationships with 'respectable' white women. Becky's behaviour makes her a non-conformist, a rebel against the mores of her society, and for this, she is punished. She is physically isolated, suffers from social alienation, and consequently dies from malignant neglect.[19]

The miscegenation represents the ultimate violation of the white woman's social position and requires the degradation of the transgressor and the relegation of her offspring to the status of chattel.

In her Pamphlet, Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all Its phases, Ida B. Wells states that "There are many white women in the South who would marry colored men if such an act would not place them at once beyond the pale of society and within the clutches of the law" as such miscegenation laws were meant primarily to forbid "the legitimate union of the races."[20] By ignoring the anti-miscegenation laws that inhibit racial mixing, Becky, in a way, forces the hand of the system by engaging in intimate intermingling between the races. Her rejection of the prescribed racial codes forces the community to wish her dead. Indeed, Becky, in the story, suffers and dies because she has not respected the most sacred taboo on which white Southern society depends for its feeling of superiority over the blacks. In a society where the virtue of white women is jealously protected and defended by white men, Becky's misconduct and breaking of the restrictive social codes of her community could only leave her defenceless and powerless against the harsh reprisals she confronts.[21]

At another level, Becky is suggested to be 'crazy' or psychologically unstable for having dared to willingly cross the color line and 'degrade' herself with someone of an inferior status and race. Becky, in this context, stands for white America whose system of racial exclusion and Jim Crow Laws are far from sane. These racist and segregationist laws can engender only violence and death as seen in Becky and her two children's tragic ending. Although no one in the community dares to kill her or assume responsibility for the act, all wish

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19. Nelly Y. McKay, Jean Toomer, Artist: A Study of His Literary Life and Work, 1894-1936. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, p. 99.

20. Ida B. Wells, quoted in Feminist Postcolonial Theory, op cit., p. 228.

21. In "Who is Black": One Nation's Definition, James Davis states that "any sexual intercourse between a white and a black was twice as evil as fornication between two whites." He also added that punishment for such a crime was instituted. It ranged from fines to imprisonment to banishment from the colony for white women who disturbed the racial foundation on which the hierarchal system was based. James Davis, "Who is Black": One Nation's Definition. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p.33.

for an unconscious execution of the white woman. This leads to the social ostracism of her whole family. Her children, because of the atmosphere of hatred and guilt in which they have grown up, become violent, displaying their hatred and anger against all those who have denied their existence, either white or black. "Godam the white folks; godam the niggers; they shouted as they left town." (Cane, 6) Becky's children recur to violence and killings as the only way they know to express their self-hatred as people of mixed blood.

Becky's death in the story can also be understood in terms of René Girard's mechanism of scapegoating. According to the French theorist, a community beset by violence and destructive rivalry needs a scapegoat in order to restore harmony. By selecting an individual who is either an outsider or on the margins of society, the community can direct their violence toward this person and ease the existing tension. Rivals forget their differences momentarily and unite collectively against the victim. The "war of all against all" turns into a "war of all against one."[22] As a result, the scapegoat is either "banished or assassinated by the community"[23] and order is temporarily restored. In Toomer's story, Becky, the potential scapegoat, lives on the margins of both black and whites societies as she has ignored the well-established codes of behavior. Indeed, Becky has committed miscegenation which is considered by whites and blacks alike as a sin that disturbs harmony and causes disorder. By having a sexual relationship with a black man, Becky, in fact has offered the community in which she lives a mark that "identifies the selection of a victim for persecution."[24] As a selected scapegoat for racial miscegenation, Becky is ostracized and let to die alone, without any kind of help from either the white or the black community.

c- The Tragic Mulatto /Mulatta:

In connection with Becky's children, another aspect of racism that deserves to be mentioned is the fate of the mulatto or mulatta[25] as a consequence of the transgression of the color lines by both white and black people. For American writers of the early twentieth century, the mulatto/a symbolises the merging of two main American taboos: sex and race. Even though Becky is a white woman, her two sons are considered as 'negroes' by both white and black communities. This goes with the social codes of the time and the 'one drop' rule which consider anyone of mixed race as belonging to

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22. René Girard and M.R. Anspash, Oedipus Unbound: Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire. Redwood City: Stanford University Press , 2004, p.24.

23. René Girard, The Scapegoat. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986, p.32.

24. Ibid, p.31.

25. Hazel Carby explains that "the mulatta figure was a recognition of the difference between and separateness of the two races at the same time as it was a product of a sexual relationship between white and black" in Reconstructing Womanhood, op cit., p. 90.

the socially subordinate race.[26] Although Becky is a white woman, her children's blood has been 'polluted' by a black strain. Such a policy is meant, as expressed by Higginbotham and Kopytoff, "to classify mulattoes with blacks, [serving to solidify the idea that] the mulatto child of a white mother was an assault on white purity […,] whereas the mulatto child of a black mother merely exhibited … the range of skin color or the lower racial caste."[27] Nancy Stepan has argued, on the other hand that "the discourse of 'races and proper places' was grounded in the monogenists and polygenists' belief in the necessity of keeping races 'pure' and 'apart' for fear that interracial breeding would create sub-humans akin to the mule: that is, infertile mulattoes who would cause the white race's degeneracy and its eventual extinction."[28] The categorization of Becky's two sons as black, while their mother is white, is a powerful illustration of the rigidity of the white/ black binary. The negative reaction of both communities, white and black to Becky's children also shows that racist attitudes are persistent and ingrained in society as a whole.

In an attempt to discount the validity of racial mixing, the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of medical men and sociologists who popularized the idea that blacks and whites derive from different species and, when combined in union, produce offsprings that are sterile with a tendency towards the baser human characteristics.[29] Thus, Becky's children in Toomer's Cane are unwanted too. Born in a country fragmented by racial and racialist ideas, they find themselves cut off from full inclusion in either white or black community. Rejected by both communities, they are murdered or become murderers.

Esther in Cane is another tragic mulatta who is rejected by both black and white communities. She feels alienated and rejected by the whites because she is colored, at the same time, she is scarcely perceptible by the blacks because she is colourless. Esther's ambiguous color makes of her an outsider. She is trapped between her own 'pale' physical features and the black female ideal of beauty. Her whiteness holds no appeal to the black people with whom she is living. Unlike Karintha and Carma whose beauty and skin color are

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26. In "What is a White man?" Chesnutt explains how divisions between black and white during the nineteenth century became an imperative for many states, with the vast majority of states submitting to the definition that "less than one-fourth of Negro blood left the individual white." Charles Chesnutt, "What is a White man?" Interracialsim Black-White Intermarriage In American History, Literature, and Law. Ed, Werner Sollors. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.38.

27. Leon Higginbotham and Barbara Kopytoff, "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia" in Interracialsim Black-White Intermarriage In American History, Literature and Law, op cit., p.119.

28. Nancy Leys Stepan, cited in Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity. Ed, Francoise Lionnet. New York: Cornell University Press, 1995, p.44.

29. Robert Miles, Racism. London: Routledge,1989, p. 34. Moreover, Sterling Brown in his article, "The Negro Characters Seen by White Authors" states that "white blood," gives the individual of mixed race "his intellectual strivings, his unwillingness to be a slave; [and] from his Negro blood come his baser emotional urges, his indolence, his savagery." In Interracialism Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law , op cit., p.279.

rooted in nature and the Southern soil on which they live, Esther is separated from both. She is disconnected from the black people of the South because of her origins, as a mixed-race woman, and because of her social position as a shopkeeper, daughter of "the richest colored man in town." In fact, although a lot of mulattoes find themselves absorbed into the African-American community, this acquired position does not secure their racial identity. Despite the fact that the skin color hierarchy privileges lighter skinned people, individuals like Esther who are neither white nor black, and not even brown but 'yellow', are frequently associated with unflattening images of 'contaminated' or 'polluted' individuals through their connection to white people. Because of the "ambiguity of the[ir] ethnic identity,"[30] they more than often find themselves set apart.

Esther's overwhelming desire to attain blackness and embrace her African-American heritage leads her to fantasize a persona that she imagines will make her more desirable. She "decides she loves [Barlo]."

> Barlo …Black. Magnetically so. Best cotton picker in the country, in the state, in the whole world for that matter. Best man with his fists, best man with dice, with a razor. Promoter of church benefits, of colored fairs. Vagrant preacher. Lover of all the women for miles and miles around. (Cane, 23)

The black man becomes the leading figure in the young woman's fantasies from a very early age. He becomes 'the starting point of the only living pattern that her mind was to know.' (Cane, 21) In her confused state, Esther believes that sexual union with Barlo will provide the respect and acceptance she longs for. However, after waiting for him and fantasizing about him for almost eighteen years, Esther's dreams are shattered as Barlo too rejects her. In fact, Esther makes a superman of Barlo in her efforts to retain a uniquely black identity. When she becomes finally aware that she cannot measure up, that awareness leads to her madness.

The story of Esther's alienation and rejection by the two communities is another example of the South's oppressive racial morality. Analysing the story, Nellie McKay comes to the conclusion that:

> On a realistic level, in physical appearance, Esther is a painful symbol of the ignominy of bastardy in the black community. Interracial sexual relations between black women slaves and white men slaveholders were the most important factor in the birth of mixed- blood children in America before the abolition of slavery. Although these children have traditionally been accepted within the

30. Pamela Gerrish Nunn, "Artist and Model: Joanna Mary Boyce's Mulatto Woman." Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies 2.2 (1993): 12-14, p.13.

> black community with impunity, Toomer, taking poetic license, uses Esther's whiteness as an extended metaphor for the powerlessness of black America in relation to white America. [31]

Though Esther occupies a mixed-race position, she desires mono-raciality. But, she ends up outside both communities, with no place to go, confirming her ambiguous social position between the black and white communities. In relation with Esther and her mixed blood heritage, Christian states in her analysis of the character of the mulatta in African American novels: "caught between two worlds, [. . .] the result of an illicit relationship, she suffers from a melancholy of the blood that inevitably leads to tragedy."[32] Esther's story, in fact, denounces racial divisions and shows what consequences racial stereotypes have on the life of people. Their psychological impact on individuals is, more often than not, more deadly than overt social violence.

It is to be noted, however, that although Esther meets the same fate as the tragic mulatta and ends up demented, she has never attempted to pass for white. Her desire for mono-raciality has meant for her to become 'fully' black, dissociating herself from the white race. Through Esther, Toomer, who was himself a mulatto who moved in freely between the white and black worlds thanks to his racial heritage and skin color, wanted, through his literary work to deconstruct the belief that beauty equates whiteness, and that any mulatto/a's wish is to pass for white. The same method was adopted by Zora Neale Hurston in her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God. As we are going to see in the next section, Janie, the mixed-race protagonist of the novel, provides a clear contrast to the tragic mulatto/a frequently found in African American literature at the time. Despite her light skin and flowing hair, Janie always aspires, throughout the novel, to affirm her blackness and be accepted within the black community in which she lives. Through Janie, Hurston revises the tragic mulatta tradition by making her female character coming to psychological and sexual consciousness and maturity within the black community instead of committing suicide or becoming insane because of her failure to be accepted within the white one.[33]

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31. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p. 116.

32. Barbara Christian, Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980, p.16.

33. Janie, as we will come to see, is not a 'tragic mulatta,' the sexually arousing, seductive, near white woman, who is tainted by "one drop" of African blood and who attempts to pass for white at whatever cost. This literary character, in fact, spans from William Wells Brown's Clotel (1853) to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1865) to Frances Harper's Iola Leroy (1892) to Pauline Hopkins' Of One Blood (1902-3) and to Nella Larsen's Quicksand and Passing (1928-9). In all cases, the main protagonist is a suffering heroine who embodies many of the qualities of white virtuous womanhood but who ends up living a dreary depressed life or committing suicide because she can fit neither into the white nor the black world.

d- Physical Extermination/ Lynching:

Perhaps, the most evident indictment of white America's racial system is found in 'Blood-Burning Moon'. In the story, the miscegenation that costs Becky's family social acceptance plays also a role in the ruin of Louisa. The young woman's desire for both a white man and a black man destroys the lives of the three people. Indeed, the fractured America that lies in the ruins of slavery fuels on-going racial tensions between the different protagonists. Racial oppression culminates in physical and psychological violence. From the opening of the story, images of night, danger, and decay create an atmosphere of foreboding. Louisa, a young and beautiful black cook in a white people' house is the object of sexual admiration by two men: black field hand Tom Burwell and young white Bob Stone. Tom is a black hard working man who seeks economic gain, social progression and racial equality with his white counterparts as a way of resisting racial oppression and disciplinary control in the South. He refuses to succumb to the constraints of the social order and aims at celebrating his freedom against all odds by looking for the little possibilities of freedom and opportunity offered to him. Tom loves Louisa and assures her of his good intentions. He hopes within a year to have the resources to secure his own farm and the means to marry her. In addition, blinded by jealousy, desire, and a cultural memory of the white master's rape of the black female slave, Tom warns Louisa that he will cut Bob Stone in the same way he has done black men before, if he finds Stone making advances to her.

On the other hand, Bob meets Louisa in the canebrake and repays her favors with silk stockings and purple dresses. Bob Stone, scion of a once slave-owning family, represents the power and pride of white male birth right. He resents the subterfuge he must use in order to see Louisa. "His family has lost ground', he thinks. In the old days, as master, he would need only go and take her 'direct, honest, bold', with none of the sneaking around he was now doing. But he wanted Louisa; he wanted the 'beautiful nigger gal." (Cane, 33) The young man is humiliated at knowing that he shares Louisa with a black field hand. In fact, Tom Burwell's interest in Louisa challenges his power and privilege. His lust for Louisa increases his racism and his hatred for Tom. Bob's thoughts and feelings, in fact, call attention to the ambivalence of the white male to the black female body. Bob Stone finds himself simultaneously repulsed by and attracted to Louisa.

Toomer insightfully analyzes this paradox of eroticizing the Other. The relationship between Bob and Louisa becomes a metaphor for black–white relationships. His conscious whiteness empowers him. It transforms him from man to master and reduces Louisa's position from a free woman to a slave. "No sir. No nigger had ever been with his girl. He'd like to see one try. Some position for him to be in. Him, Bob Stone of the old Stone family, in a scrap with a nigger over a nigger girl." (Cane, 32) According to Delia Jarrett-Macauley, "Black women were despised, forbidden yet sexually exploited.

Hence sexual contact with Black women were regarded as debasing but also exciting."[34] Bob Stone's consciousness that the old days have indeed ended and that his right to Louisa is unacceptable to Tom Burwell leaves no recourse. He must accept the situation or move to a confrontation with "a nigger over a nigger girl".

Tom Burwell and Bob Stone's rivalry over Louisa can be explained, on the other hand, in terms of René Girard's Mimetic Theory. In his theory, Girard proposes that much of human behaviour is based on 'mimesis', or imitation. People imitate admired models/mediators and eventually strive to possess the very same objects their models possess. Thus, desire is not a spontaneous action but an imitation. Moreover, desire does not take place between just a subject and an object, for a desiring subject necessarily generates a rival. So, there are always two subjects desirous of the same object since desire and envy are inseparable: "jealousy and envy imply a third presence: object, subject, and a third person toward whom the jealousy or envy is directed."[35] In other words, human beings fight over objects, not because they wish to attain objects in themselves, but because of desire. According to Girard, it is the desire of the Other that is the object of contestation and imitation. Hence, desire is mimetic; reproduced in others and therefore imitated through rivalry for the Other's desire. In Toomer's story, Tom Burwell's actions, reactions and desires are mimetic of Bob Stone's. He wants to have the same position as his mentor. Accordingly, he works hard to become a land owner and buy to his beloved "what [she] gets from white folks now." (Cane, 32) He insists to know if Bob Stone admires Louisa," Bob Stone likes y. Course he does" (Cane, 32) He also oppresses his fellow black men the same way he is oppressed by the white people "Ise already cut two niggers." (Cane, 32) The only obstacle that prevents him from reaching all his objectives is Bob Stone. However, despite the efforts of Tom to compete, keep up, and eventually catch up to Bob Stone, he is unable to do so. Thus, his unsuccessful desire to emulate Bob, his model, transforms him into a very resentful and angry individual whose desire has eroded into rage.

Bob Stone and Tom Burwell's negative and aggressive feelings towards each other can lead only to a violent confrontation between the two men. Gerard calls this new phase in his Memetic Theory: 'conflictual mimesis'. Conflictual mimesis is the process when "two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means."[36] The triangular nature of this process, between model/mediator

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34. Delia Jarrett- Macauley, Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women. New York: Routledge, 1996, p.8.

35. René Girard, Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965, p. 11.

36. Rene Girard, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism." Berkshire Review 14 (1979): 9-19, p.9.

(Bob Stone), and the disciple (Tom Burwell) at the base of the triangle, and the object of desire (Louisa), at the apex in Toomer's 'Blood-Burning Moon', and the resulting violence that erupts at the contact of the two rivals can find an explanation in Girard's Deceit, Desire, and the Novel. According to him, the more the desire intensifies for appropriating the object, the more the focus shifts from the desired object to the rivalling actors themselves since they no longer focus on winning the object but on competing with each other. "[they] abandon the object of rivalry as a starting point and choose instead the rival."[37] Although the tension between Tom Burwell and Bob Stone in 'Blood-Burning Moon' starts with the desire of each one of them to have Louisa for himself, the competition between the two men extends over the possession of the black woman to become a competition for the prestige of winning over the rival.[38] Once the level of 'conflictual mimesis' is reached, violence erupts between model and rival. For Gerard, such rivalry can only lead to reciprocal acts of violence resulting in a dramatic event. Indeed, when this kind of violence occurs, the participants' behavior can inspire and infect the entire community until it is completely consumed by rage and chaos.

In the story, Bob Stone's feeling of superiority over Tom Burwell fuels his bloody anger. "Veins in his forehead bulged and distended. Saliva moistened the dried blood on his lips. He tasted blood on his lips. He tasted blood. Not his own blood; Tom Burwell's." (Cane, 33) Although it is Stone who initiates the physical confrontation between the two men and the one who whips out a knife, he is the one slashed. "Blue flash, a steel blade slashed across Bob Stone's throat…Blood began to flow …He turned and staggered towards the crest of the hill in the direction of white town."(Cane, 33) Soon, the white mob comes "like ants upon forage rushed about…Shotguns, revolvers, rope, kerosene, torches. Two high–powered cars with glaring lights…They come together…Nothing could be heard but the flop of their feet in the thick dust…The moving body of their silence preceded them…It flattened the Negroes beneath it." (Cane, 34) They drag Tom to the old factory, and there they start their preparations for his lynching. Everything is done quickly, precisely and silently. When the human torch is lit, the mob yells to announce the supremacy of the white laws.

While the white mob is executing Tom in the novel, the black people who have witnessed the fight 'slink' into their houses and blow out the lamps. They do not lure themselves into fighting back. They know the barbarity with

37. Deceit, Desire, and the Novel , op cit., p.13.

38. According to Girard's theory, the choice of the beloved is determined in the first place, not by the qualities of the beloved, but by the beloved's already being the choice of the person who has been chosen as rival. In fact, Girard considers the bond between the two rivals as being even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved.

which the white community retaliates in such situations and they are aware of their powerlessness in protecting their rights.

> [Blood-Burning Moon] is a metaphor for the inevitable confrontation between white and black men as the latter sought to recover the human dignity they had lost through slavery, segregation, and other forms of racial oppression. For black men knew that they could regain their birthright only when they assumed the responsibility of destroying the evil power that had deprived them of it.[39]

The horrific image of Tom's burning body continues to haunt the community. "It fluttered like a dying thing down the single street of the factory town." (Cane, 35) The lynching becomes the inevitable climax to the performance of racial hierarchies and patriarchal power. The spectacle of Tom Burwell's burned flesh, in fact, reaffirms the constant violence necessary to preserve the white power structure.

Lynching serves as the climax to this story and other stories in Toomer's work. The stories themselves try to establish a context for understanding lynching, and how and why it happens. Toomer explains the phenomenon within the racial legacy of enslavement and segregation. According to the writer, lynching shows how White supremacist America can manipulate sexual ideologies to justify political and economic subordination. While supremacist White America justifies lynching as being a preventive measure to protect white female virtue from black male sexual assaults, the act of lynching, in reality, highlights the inconsistency of punishing a man because he strives for improvement,[40] "when accused of threatening the white female body, the repository of heirs to property and power, the black male, and his economic, political, and social advancement, is lynched out of existence."[41] Lynching, in fact, was a political weapon that manipulated ideologies of sexuality to enable the White Southerners to regain control over the black body. It was a material practice that was enacted upon the bodies of black men and became a distinctly Southern phenomenon.

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39. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p. 121.

40. In her analysis of the causes of the emergence of the phenomenon of lynching black men in the South, Ida B. Wells discredits the arguments presented by the Southern whites and states that there is no historical foundation to the association between rape and lynching. As early as 1892 , the African-American activist stated that lynching was just a justification used by the whites to eliminate black males, "the crime of rape was unknown during four years of civil war, when the white women of the South were at the mercy of the race which is all at once charged with being a bestial one." In Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases by Ida B. Wells-Barett, (1892). New York : Emereo Pty Limited, 2012, p.5.

41. Hazel Carby, "On the Threshold of Woman's Era" in Feminist Postcolonial Theory, op cit., p.234.

As a matter of fact, lynching was intended as a metaphor for the white-black race relations, "white men used their ownership of the body of the white female as a terrain on which to lynch the black man."[42] Lynch mobs worked to ensure that black audiences were aware of the strength of White supremacy and the cost of violating the boundaries of racial order. "As legal segregation made living conditions for blacks in the South more and more intolerable, the widespread lynching of blacks bitterly underscored the extent to which they were powerless before the law and less than human in the eyes of many whites".[43] Jonathan Markovitz, in his book, Legacies of Lynching, explains the beginning of lynching, and how it became through time and circumstances a metaphor for white racism.

> Lynching dates back at least as far as the American Revolution, but before the Civil War, the term "lynching" referred to a variety of forms of punishment, including beating, whipping, tar-and-feathering, and, only occasionally, killing. The term was used to describe the actions of mobs of American patriots who beat and, only occasionally, hanged Loyalists and British sympathizers […]But during the Civil War, as communities throughout the South began to fear slave rebellions, slaves were occasionally executed in large numbers in order to terrorize the slave community into submission. The meaning of the word "lynching" started to change around this time, and shortly after the Civil War was over, "lynching" had come to mean putting to death. Robyn Wiegman notes that it was at this time that "lynching" came to be understood "almost exclusively" as a method of punishment for newly enfranchised African Americans.[44]

In addition to lynching that was used as a weapon of oppression against black males, sexual abuse was used, as already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, as a tool to establish terror among black women and division among the black community. The sexual abuse of black women was also meant to disavow the traditional virility of the black men as black women were repeatedly abused by their masters, and there was no shadow of law to protect them from the sexual exploitation of white men.

Louisa in 'Blood-Burning Moon' is a good example of the sexual exploitation perpetrated against black women by white men. The history of chattel slavery directly informs the type of sexual oppression of which African American women were often victims. The latter endured centuries of male dominance over their productive systems as they were forced, in addition to

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42. Ibid, p.23.

43. The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, op cit., p. 190.

44. Jonathan Markovitz , Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. xxiii.

satisfying white men's sexual urges, to breed like farm animals and reproduce children for the sole purpose of populating a booming slavery economy. Delia Jarrett-Macauley asserts that, "the endeavours of slave-owners to increase the fertility of Black women in order to maximize profits entailed the systematic control of the sexuality of female slaves. The actual breeding of slave women served to label them as animalistic as well as to maintain their treatment as less than human, since only animals can be bred against their will."[45] Bob Stone's lust for Louisa's body makes of the young woman a completely disempowered and subjugated person. Although her white lover brings her gifts of silk stockings and purple dresses, she is and remains his property and does not have the agency to refuse him. 'Blood-Burning Moon', in fact, is a poignant manifestation of the oppression of the black people by the whites through the sexual abuse of their women.[46] For centuries, the abuse of the sexuality of the black women by white men had been one of the most hurting aspects in black history. In addition to the abuse and control of the black female body by white male power, whites destroyed any black male who attempted to exercise any oppositional patriarchal control as he was considered a threat to the economic and political stability of the white man's world.

e- Racial Alienation:

Racism, violence, sexual abuse and lynching that characterize the first stories in Cane culminate and form the background of section III of the novel. 'Kabnis' in fact, provides another example of the geographic otherness Toomer sets up in the novel. Ralph Kabnis, the protagonist in the story, is a teacher with southern ancestry and northern upbringing, who comes South seeking knowledge and motivation for his self-definition as a black man. As soon as he arrives in Georgia, the South exerts a strong and strange power on his psyche. The story opens with his geographical apprehension "if I could feel that I came to the South to face it." (Cane, 83) From the outset, geography serves as a maker of alienation and discontent. As a non-white northern male in the South, Kabnis faces problems from both the white and the black communities who view him with suspicion, anxiety and mistrust. Thus, he becomes overwhelmed by his fear of the South's unspeakably violent history of racism, violence and lynching.

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45. Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism, op cit., p.9.

46. Patricia Hill Collins argues that: "controlling Black women's reproduction was essential to the creation and perpetuation of capitalist class relations. Slavery benefitted certain segments of the population by economically exploiting others…. Under such a system in which the control of property is fundamental, enslaved African women were valuable commodities. Slave owners controlled Black women's labour and commodified Black women's bodies as units of capital. Moreover, as mothers, Black women's fertility produced the children who increased their owners' property and labour force.(p.51) For more details see, Patricia Hill Collins in Black Feminist Thought , op cit.

The drama opens on a Saturday night. Kabnis is having difficulty going to sleep, mainly because he is afraid of the dangers he has heard of and imagines lurking in the southern night.

> White-man's land.
> Niggers, sing.
> Bum, bear black children
> Till poor rivers bring
> Rest, and sweet glory
> In Camp Ground. (Cane, 83)

Kabnis's black helplessness, in the face of a white oppression that he has heard of, propels him into great paroxysms of terror. Propped up in bed and aided by the light of a single oil lamp, he tries to calm his fears by reading. But a hen resting on a shelf in the hen house next door to his cabin ruffles her feathers and scratches the wood of her perch. Kabnis throws his slipper against the wall of the hen's coop and loudly admonishes her to cease her scratching. Frightened by the sudden noise, the hen cackles loudly and is joined by chickens all across the yard in a chorus of nervous cackling. Kabnis jumps from his bed and chases the hen around the adjoining room until he catches her. Next, he "whirls the chicken by its neck, and throws the head away." He snatches up the bloody, headless body and hides it in a clump of bushes.

Kabnis's exaggerated fear leads him to irrational actions, and these generate comedy and pathos, but as McKay explains it, there is no comic action, rather "an ironic comparison to racial violence, the bloodied hands of which symbolize the moral irresponsibility of its perpetrator. With scathing wit, Toomer presents a portrait that mirrors the image of the senseless brutality that buttresses the foundations of white power and black helplessness in American society."[47] When Kabnis goes back to his room, he thinks that dead things move in silence and that they are there to touch him. He lights a cigarette and notes ironically that smoking is not allowed on school property, in a land "where they burn and hang men". Kabnis is paralysed with fear. He imagines his own lynching while the rest of the town is sleeping.

References to oppression and violence against black people are mentioned another time the next day when Kabnis pays a visit to Fred Halsey in Sempter, the small town near Kabnis's school. Halsey, who had left home only once in his life tells Kabnis: "Prejudice is everywheres about this country. An a nigger aint in much standin anywheres" (Cane, 110) while Professor Layman, a visitor to Halsley's house, who has traveled in all parts of the state "knows more than would be good for anyone other than a silent man."(Cane, 88) According to the two men, although the lives of the black people are not

47. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p. 154.

directly controlled by an overseer with a whip in his hand as in times of slavery, they are still controlled indirectly by white prejudices and random violence. They know that the racial attacks they experience cannot be escaped.

Kabnis seems to have forgotten his night-time terror when he is in the company of the two men. He evokes his views of Southern life as different from reality, with a lot of exaggeration from the part of the northerners. “theres lots of northern exaggeration about the South. Its not half the terror they picture it. Things are not half bad, as one can easily figure out for himself without ever crossing the Mason and Dixie line: all these people wouldn’t stay down here, especially the rich, the ones who could easily leave, if conditions were so mighty bad.” (Cane, 89) But soon his day time optimistic view of the South is refuted when Layman starts telling Kabnis about the brutal murder of a black woman and her unborn child the previous year. In “low and soothing tones’, Layman recounts how the men had ripped the dead woman’s stomach open, let the child fell out, and then impaled it to a nearby tree. When Layman is telling his story, a rock, with a note attached to it, crashes through the window of the room where the three men are sitting. The note reads: “You northern nigger, its time for y t leave.” Kabnis is sure the message is for him. “Fear squeezes him. Caves him in. As a violent external pressure would. Fear flows inside him. It fills him up. He bloats.” (Cane, 92) To save himself, he rushes from the room with all the strength he can gather in his frozen limbs.

We learn about Lewis for the first time in this scene. He too is a northerner. But contrary to Kabnis who displays timidity and reservation, Lewis expresses strong opinions on the life he sees around him. Halsey explains his outspokenness: “I heard him sayin somethin about a stream whats dammed has got t cut loose some-wheres. An that sounds good. I know th feelin myself. He strikes me as knowin a bucketful bout most things, that feller does.... Damn queer feller.” (Cane, 91) Among other things, Lewis has been asking questions and taking notes about the murder of the black woman and her unborn child. Because of his questions and growing curiosity, Lewis is seen by the entire town, as a potential threat to the delicate balance of the racial peace that both white and black communities try to maintain in this small town. Accordingly, when Halsey and Layman read the note thrown through the window, it is not of Kabnis that they think but rather of Lewis. The latter has always expressed his outrage of the black people’s squalid social and political conditions, and of the psychological and physical violence perpetrated against them by the white people. His open questions, note-taking, and defiance of the status quo make of him an undesired person even to those people he is trying to defend. The beginning of the third scene shows Kabnis in flight following the rock-hurling incident. He is desperate to regain the safety of his cabin. However, in his heightened awareness of danger, he is sure that the fears and anxieties he envisioned in the first scene have come fully to life:

> A splotchy figure drives forward along the cane- and corn-stalk hemmed-in road. A scarecrow replica of Kabnis, awkwardly animate. Fantastically plastered with red Georgia mud. It skirts the big house.... Its shoulder jogs against a sweet-gum tree. The figure caroms off against the cabin door, and lunges in. It slams the door as if to prevent someone entering after it. ... "What in God's name did I run here for? A mud-hole trap. I stumbled on a rope. O God, a rope." (Cane, 93)

While in the previous night he had imagined his death by lynching, Kabnis, in this scene actually stumbles over a rope. Escape seems impossible, for the cabin, yesterday's "hole," has become a "mud-hole trap."

Inside the cabin, Kabnis's fears take over reality. He imagines himself trapped between those pursuing him on the outside with "eyes flaring. Hounds, [and] shouts"(Cane, 93) and those on the inside concealed beneath his bed. He grabs a broom to rout the ones inside from their hiding place, and "violently pokes [the space] under the bed." (Cane, 93) Halsey and Layman soon arrive at the cabin, and they inform Kabnis that his fears are unwarranted. He is not the target of the missive. The message to leave town is intended for Lewis. Moreover, it has not originated with white people, as he has thought: "These aint the days of hounds an Uncle Tom's Cabin, feller. White folks aint in fer theatrics these days. They's more direct than that. If what they wanted was t get y, theyd have just marched right in an took y where y sat" (Cane, 94) Analysing Kabnis's reaction to the South and its threats, Nellie McKay states:

> As the symbol of black fear in this scene, Kabnis is all that is pathetic in the black experience. He embodies its sheer terror and the humiliation of absolute helplessness. However, the debasement in this image is offset by the presence of Halsey, Layman, and Hanby, southern blacks who show that there are ways to cope and survive in a hostile environment without a complete loss of dignity. But their ways do not offer healing for the ever-present internal dread with which they live, and Toomer implies that there is need for new sources of strength to restore a spiritual wholeness to black America.[48]

As we will come to see in the last part of this thesis in more details, Toomer presents, through Kabnis, a microcosm of the African American social, political, and economic experience in the Jim Crow South of the early twentieth century. The segregation, social prejudice, and economic inequality that the African American people experience in the South develop into a "massive psychoexistential complex"[49] or "a feeling of non-existence"[50] as a

48. Ibid, p. 163.
49. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., p.12.

direct consequence of the "juxtaposition of the white and the black races"[51] and the imposition of an alien culture that involves self-questioning concerning self, identity, and social belonging. By insisting on Kabnis's biracial background, and his suffering as an alienated man, the writer offers a criticism of color and class prejudice, for racism and elitism function as self-hatred and self-estrangement.

f- Economic Deprivation:

In addition to the overt acts of violence and oppression that the blacks face in their everyday life through lynching, rape and abuse, racism is also practiced through the continuing impoverishment of the black people. Indeed, Toomer's strongest indictment in 'Karintha' is on the harsh economic conditions in which Karintha has lived, and that have made her prey to the men around her. The lack of privacy in the African-American homes initiates the children to the adults' world at a very early age. In rural Georgia, where people are very poor, houses have only two rooms: one for living and cooking, the other for sleeping. Accordingly, children, very early in their lives, become aware of adult sexual activity. Karintha was such a child. "Homes in Georgia are most often built on the two-room plan. In one you cook and eat, in the other you sleep, and there love goes on. Karintha had seen or heard; perhaps she had felt her parents loving. One could but imitate one's parents for to follow them was the way of God." (Cane, 3-4) The houses in which the black people live are functional only as shelters. In The Souls of Black Folk, DuBois describes the homes of the black people in rural Georgia at the turn of the century. "The size and arrangements of a people's homes are no unfair index of their condition…All over the land is the one-room cabin…It is nearly always old and bare, built of rough boards and neither plastered nor ceiled."[52] When Karintha reaches full womanhood, the impact of her poor childhood reveals its tragic consequences. She has had many lovers but her life remains unfulfilled and empty. "She is a victim because of her defencelessness against social malignancy."[53] McKay comes to the conclusion that:

> Although internal sexual oppression is the most obvious factor in the abuse of Karintha, race, class, and economics are the factors that perpetuate the cycle of poverty in which she—and those who follow her—live. In a world in which men manipulate the souls of women, Karintha is a paradigm for the black community's powerlessness over the control of its own class and economic status in a white, capitalistic society.[54]

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50. Ibid, p.139.
51. Ibid, p.12.
52. W.E.B DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, (1903). New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003, p.101.
53. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p.93.
54. Ibid, p. 95.

As in 'Karintha' economics again plays a crucial role in 'Becky' and "Blood Burning Moon". White Becky has chosen to be on the side of the blacks by refusing to name the father(s) of her two black sons. As such, she has to endure the same squalid conditions in which the black community lives. In 'Blood-Burning Moon', on the other hand, Tom Burwell's circumstances reveal the degree to which the economic situation determines the destiny of the black folk. Tom needs to work very hard in order to secure a better life for him and for Louisa. In the narrative, Toomer highlights Tom's desire for land and a family. The young man believes that the separate social arenas for black and white people can become equal. He challenges the racist logic that makes every aspect of black people's lives open to the master's scrutiny. Tom believes in the possibility of farming his own land and raising his family without interference from white people. However, things under Jim Crow are not as he thinks. Peter Coclanis and Bryant Simon describe living in the Jim Crow South as a "carefully choreographed affair".

> Everyone had a part to play and every line and every gesture was scripted. African Americans were supposed to be poor and look like it; they were told to remove their hats whenever they spoke to a white man; they were taught to move off sidewalks when whites passed; they were told to use the back door of white homes, never the front; and they were instructed to address whites as Boss or Mr and Mrs.[55]

The black people, in fact, were refused to contemplate any act or thought outside the approved bounds set by the Whites. Tom ends up lynched because he has gone past the limits set for him by the racial culture; he has chosen to struggle instead of being satisfied with his prescribed social place. In The Souls of Black Folks, W.E.B. Du Bois argues that in the South, the Negro was forbidden from having any kind of normal life similar to that of the whites: "he [the slave] felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in the land of dollars is the very bottom of hardship."[56] The random and unexpected violence described in the story serves to make the black people always aware of their racial status and the racial roles expected from them by the Whites.

The politics of race and economics shapes and feeds also the tension that besets the relationship of Carma with her husband. In fact their conflict resonates with the anger and frustration of the black man's socio-economic

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55. Peter Coclanis and Simon Bryant "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: African American Strategies for Day-to-Day Existence / Resistance in the Early Twentieth-Century Rural South." African American Life in the Rural South 1900-1950. Ed, Douglass R. Hurt. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003, pp.189-210, p.203

56. The Souls of Black Folk ,op cit., p.12.

powerlessness that forces Bane, Carma's husband in 'Carma' to leave home in search of work. Conjugal violence and oppression reveal, as we will see in more details in the next section, the vicious intra-racial conflicts that result from the white subjugation of the black people. They show how violence and other forms of discrimination enter even the private space of the black family. The problem of unemployment concerns women too. In 'Esther', the title character is finished with school. From the narrative we know that she almost certainly had gone to college, but with few options for employment, she returns to work in her father's store. In 'Kabnis', Ralph Kabnis, the protagonist lives in a cabin, a place he appropriately describes as a hole and a grave.

g-Intra- Racial Class Divide:

This 'otherness' that the black characters experience at the hands of the white people in both the short stories and 'Kabnis', is not limited to the South. Having suffered from different forms of discriminatory repressive and sometimes deadly devices, such as Black Codes, Jim Crow, and lynching, in the South, the Southern black people had no other alternative than to move North and seek a 'safer' life as well as better job opportunities. But the North was far from the heavenly place they imagined. For Jean Toomer, the black people who have chosen the alternative of escape through migration to the North are not happier than the ones they have left behind even though open racism is less evident there. On the contrary, while the characters of the first part of Cane experience anguish and pain because of the oppressive racial morals and codes that deny their existence, the characters who live in the North suffer frustration and fragmentation. Cut off from the spiritual heritage they left behind them in the South and unable to conform to the norms and standards of the Northern whites, they suffer from a sense of spiritual sterility. The clash between the traditional values they have brought with them from the South, and the radically new materialistic values they have to adopt in the North have left them uprooted, confused and isolated as the two sets of values are, most of the time, oppositional to one another. They have migrated to the North in search of the American Dream of economic prosperity and equality, often to find that the dream is elusive. In their anxious process of assimilation, and their eagerness to integrate and imitate white middle class America, these black people are destroyed by the conventions of the whites. The politics of race and class often militate against their quest for success and prosperity.

Toomer, in fact, fuses South and North by putting his Northern characters in predicaments similar to those faced by Southern ones. They are seen, throughout the novel, fighting against social conformity and boundaries of acceptability as established by the whites. "In the North, blacks struggle to establish an identity out of the remnants of their past and the values and ideals of their newly acquired home. Because race is a crucial factor, they will always

be a separate group within the dominant culture."[57] Thus, in the same way as their counterparts in the South, these Northerners find themselves isolated and alienated because of their race. As the policy of segregation is not limited to the South, most doors to economic and social advancement are just as closed to blacks in the North as they are in the South. For the black people who have succeeded in going over racist obstacles and material difficulties in the North, and who have managed to adjust to the new urban life, material goods and social conventions have become their main concern. "They have escaped the more overt oppression of one region for the more covert and psychological oppression of another."[58] Intra-racial discrimination on the basis of skin color and class are mechanisms that replicate the hierarchy of the plantation in the urban environment.[59]

Dorris in 'Theater' is a mulatta dancer in the city's famous Howard Theater, the performing center for Howard University. She loves John, another mulatto, and John loves her. However, the two of them cannot unite because John is a writer and the brother of the manager of the theater while Dorris is a mere dancer. In other words, John is a member of the Washington elite, the aristocratic talented tenth while Dorris is a member of the underclass. Because of John's social position, Dorris's physicality and expressiveness render her an unsuitable partner for him. "As an exotic, inaccessible entertainer, Dorris is a temptress who can titillate, but any respectable union must be assiduously avoided."[60] Despite her light skin, Dorris cannot overcome the intra-racial class divide that separates her from John.

> The mulatta as icon, then became a representative of unspeakable subjugation and erotic desire, both inter- and intra-racial. Styled as the ideal template for measuring black feminity, she was, by turns, a constrained symbol of Victorian womanhood, a seductive temptress, and a deceptive, independent, modern woman.[61]

In the narrative, Dorris decides to win John with her dance. She puts all her energy, her dreams and her love in the dance. "O will you love me? And give me kids and a home, and everything? (I'd like to make your nest, and honest,

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57. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., pp.124-125.

58. Ibid , p.128.

59. Skin tone differences among enslaved Africans were exploited by white slave owners, who created caste systems on the plantation as a basis to divide the slaves for work chores and to create distrust and animosity among them, minimizing the chances for revolt. Generally, there were two types of jobs: the house servants and the field servants. Slave owners would habitually delegate "intelligent" tasks, such as craftsmanship or light labor, to lighter-skinned blacks, while darker-skinned blacks were tasked with tougher, more laborious work, usually in the field. For more details about the topic see Harvey, Richard D., Nicole LaBeach, Ellie Pridgen, and Tammy M. Gocial. 2005. "The Intragroup Stigmatization of Skin Tone Among Black Americans." Journal of Black Psychology. 31(3): 237-253.

60. Portraits of The New Negro Woman, op cit., p.136.

61. Ibid., p. xix.

hon, I wouldn't run out on you)."(Cane, 55) While Dorris dances, John dreams, transporting them both in his imagination beyond reality and social conventions. However, when the performance is over, Dorris looks at John hoping to discover that she has succeeded and that John approves of her and will reciprocate her love for him but what she sees disappoints her. "She finds [his face] a dead thing in the shadow which is his dream." (Cane, 56) In fact, Dorris attempts to break the barrier of class that separates her from John through her dancing, but he is unable to go beyond conventions and break the arbitrary social division that separates them. Of John and Dorris, Toomer states: "stage folk are not respectable, audiences are."[62] Though beautiful and inspiring, Dorris's free artistic expression and dancing are not thought respectable by the black middle class.

In 'Box Seat', another of Toomer's narratives, Muriel loves Dan, but she too suppresses her passion for him because of Dan's class background. Born in a cane field, Dan is only a poor black man out of work while Muriel is a school teacher concerned about the respectability of her profession. Muriel, like John in 'Theater' is a slave to conventions. Her aspirations for security and social success are threatened by Dan's invading passion. She wishes she could love him openly, but she knows she will not let herself violate the social codes of the world she has chosen to belong to. The trappings of ladyhood and of middle-class propriety interfere with her desires.[63] Dan attempts to help Muriel free herself from her inhibitions and return to her roots in order to be saved from the oppressive social conventions that enslave her and gain self-achievement, but like Dorris in 'Theater' he does not succeed.

The same fate awaits Paul Johnson in 'Bona and Paul'. Paul Johnson, the main character, is the only mulatto in Cane who tries to "pass" for white. He is a very light-skinned southern black college student who goes to school in Chicago. Because of the color of his skin, Paul is and remains the subject of racial mystery to the white people around him. Bona Hale, a southern white woman student is sexually attracted to him. "The dance of his blue trousered limbs thrills her." (Cane, 72) However, Bona remains hesitant about starting a serious relationship with Paul because of her suspicions that he is black. "He is a nigger. Bona! But don't all the dorm girls say so? And don't you, when you are sane, say so?" (Cane,72). Accordingly, her relationship remains superficial and ambivalent. She is sometimes passionate, sometimes uncertain. Paul, on

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62. Jean Toomer to Gorham Munson, Toomer Collection, Box I, Folder 7. Quoted in Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p.83.

63. In Women, Race and Class , Davis writes, "for the African-American female, particularly if she came from the working class, an advantageous marriage was empowering. A publicly sanctioned institution gave her respectability, with a status and a title long denied her by slavery and segregation. The married African-American woman achieved not only an improved place in the larger society but also a transformed self-perception. She was freer to pursue her own interests without challenges to her morals or good name" Angela, Davis. Women, Race and Class. New York: Vintage, 1983,p. 128.

the other hand, aims through his relationship with Bona, to transcend their history through a physical and spiritual fusion. He insists that he wants to know her. "You matter. I'd like to know you whom I look at. Know, not love. Not that knowing is greater than pleasure; but I have found the joy of it." (Cane,78). When Paul dances with Bona, he feels the beginning of the union he wishes to have with her. On their way out of the night club to the Crimson Gardens, Paul explains his new need to the black doorman. However, before he can reach her, Bona has gone thus forbidding any attempt at reconciliation between the two races.

Judith Berzon notes that for Toomer as well as for many other writers, "there is the challenge of exploring the psychological and sociological dimensions of mulatto characters who seek to create a third caste in what is essentially a two-caste system. For some black writers, [these characters] are utilized to attack the aping of white bourgeois values and to praise the values and life style of the black 'folk'."[64] The characters of 'Theater', 'Seat Box' and 'Bona and Paul', dream of a richer, fuller life away from the harassment and limitations that a position of Southern Negro can cause. Thus, they start denying their blackness and seek as close as possible an approximation to white ideas. However, the new life they seek in the North as an escape from their Southern black origins can only lead, as is the case for John, Muriel, Paul and the others to despair, human isolation, frustration and fragmentation.

As a conclusion to this section we can say that the construction of the image of African American people as brutes and savages helped to justify their objectification and oppression by the white Americans. "these controlling images" as Patricia Hill Collins declares, " are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal and inevitably parts of everyday life."[65] These "forms of social injustice' are not to be found only in Toomer's work. Indeed, the world in which Zora Neale Hurston's black characters in Their Eyes Were Watching God live is not very different from the one depicted by Jean Toomer in his literary work. From racism to economic oppression to class divide, Janie, Nanny, and the other black characters in Hurston's novel, experience, as we are going to see in the following section, the same kind of oppression and racism experienced by Toomer's characters and denounced by black critics and historians.

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64. Judith R. Berzon, Neither White nor Black: The Mulatto Character in American Fiction. New York: New York University Press, 1978, p.13.

65. Black Feminist Thought, op cit., p.69.

I.2- The Black vs. the White in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God :

While Cane was appraised by white and black reviewers alike as a celebration of the Negro way of life, most critics of the 1930's found Zora Neale Hurston's novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, to be entirely devoid of social consciousness. It was blamed for its inability to speak about the political life of its time. For the African American critics of the time, Hurston was "a literary climber, willing to sacrifice social reality for a pretty turn of the phrase."[66] As M.Genevieve West points out, "Promoting the novel as a romance [. . .] effectively suggested that Hurston was not a serious writer in a time when the social crises of the Great Depression and rampant racial discrimination demanded serious change."[67] Perhaps the most severe criticism of Hurston's work at the time was Richard Wright's, whose review in New Masses condemned Hurston's "minstrel technique" aimed at satisfying only her white audience and characterized her prose as being "cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley." In the review Richard Wright states that, "The sensory sweep of her novel carries no theme, no message, no thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a white audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy. She exploits the phase of Negro life which is 'quaint,' the phase which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the "superior" race."[68]

In her essay, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," in I Love Myself When I Am Laughing ... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive, Zora Neale Hurston responded to critics such as Richard Wright who accused her of dealing with racial questions by ignoring them by stating:

> But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world-I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.[69]

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66. Maria Eugenia Cotera, Native Speakers : Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita González, and the Poetics of Culture. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, p.72.

67. Genevieve M. West, Zora Neale Hurston and American Literary Culture. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005, p.107.

68. Richard Wright, "Between Laughter and Tears," October 1937, rpt. in Critical Essays on Zora Neale Hurston. Ed, Gloria L. Cronin . New York: G. K. Hall, 1998, pp. 75-76.

69. I Love Myself when I Am Laughing ... and Then Again when I Am Looking Mean and

Hurston viewed life as a battle, and she believed respect was most due to those able not only to survive but also to attack in the great "skirmish" of life. In addition, Hurston spent a great part of her childhood in the all-black rural town of Eatonville, Florida, where her early experiences as an African American did not involve much contact with white people. This can perhaps explain partly why Hurston's hometown takes on an almost mythic quality in her fiction and autobiographical writing where the blacks live an independent life from white people, govern themselves by themselves, and where there are no racist incidents whatever. However, and despite the fact that there are only black characters in Their Eyes Were Watching God, the events of the novel are rendered in the context of the white-controlled society and embody many of the negative aspects of that society. There is, in the novel, a rejection of the dominant value system and a harsh criticism on the urge of some black people to attain self-validation by emulating the socio-economic dream of white manhood. Moreover, although these events are not deeply developed, they remain at the background of the novel and depict the characters' visions about the interaction with white people.

a- The Stained Origins of the Racially-Mixed Woman:

The black female's sexual exploitation that has been exposed in Toomer's work is also present in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God . Janie, the protagonist, is the fruit of a long lineage of violence, rape, and sexual exploitation of black women at the hands of white men. Janie's family tree, as Nanny, the grandmother informs the young woman, is embedded with slavery, rape, and other forms of violence. Indeed, Nanny, as a slave in a white man's plantation was repeatedly raped by the man who owned her. She was also forced to carry a child that was a product of that rape. In addition, Nanny suffered abuse at the hands of her owner's wife who threatened to tie her to the whipping post and to sell her new-born child.

In fact, the rape and violence that Nanny was subjected to were not isolated acts as the history of slavery attests. The rape of slave women played into the stereotype of black females' sexuality and accused black women of entrapping their white masters in order to satisfy their sexual needs. So the sexual assaults they were subjected to were not considered as rape but rather as sexual compliance. This sexual violence towards black women did not stop with the end of slavery as Janie's mother's rape reveals. Indeed, even though Leafy, the fruit of Nanny's sexual assault, grew up during the Reconstruction era, at a time when black women were supposed to have gained freedom, the young woman was abused by her white school teacher.

Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader. Ed, Alice Walker. New York: The Feminist Press, 1979, p.153.

Black women, as we have already said, were preys to white men's sexual exploitation because of their voicelessness and vulnerability. The enduring abuse and humiliation they experienced reflect the general view of the time of black women as subservient objects that existed only to satisfy the pleasure of men. Adding to the shame caused by the white master's rape of his female slave, comes the humiliation caused by the white master's wife's punishment. Very often, white women held the black women responsible for the repeated sexual assaults they endured. They had difficulty accepting their female slaves' new born children whose Caucasian features were too similar to the features of their master. Thus, "Sadistic floggings of naked black women were another method employed to strip the female slave of dignity. In the Victorian world, where white women were religiously covering every body part, black women were daily stripped of their clothing and publicly whipped."[70] Sexual purity for the black woman, as bell hooks explains in *Ain't I a Woman?* was further complicated by the complicity of white women.

> White women held black slave women responsible for rape because they had been socialized by 19th century sexual morality to regard woman as sexual temptress. This same sexual morality was adopted by slaves. Fellow slaves often pitied the lot of sexually exploited females but did not see them as blameless victims.[71]

Janie, who is the consequence of the double rape of her grandmother and mother by white men, is not white enough for the white children of the Washburn family for whom her grandmother works, and not black enough for the children of her school who keep taunting her about her 'shameful' mixed-race identity.

> They'd push me 'way from de ring plays and make out they couldn't play wid nobody dat lived on premises. Den they'd tell me not to be takin' on over mah looks 'cause they mama told 'em 'bout de hound dawgs huntin' mah papa all night long. 'Bout Mr. washburn and the sheriff puttin' de bloodhounds on de trail tuh ketch mah papa for whut he done tuh mah mama. (Their Eyes,9-10)

These painful experiences would teach Janie early in her life about the pervasiveness of racial ideologies in both white and black communities. They also mark her as an outsider to both groups. Hazel Carby states in a different context that the presence of racially mixed characters in fictional works "emphasizes particular social relations and practices and must be understood historically. Such characters are often the physical consequences of a social

70. bell hooks, Ain't I a Woman: black women and feminism. Boston: South End Press, 1981, p. 37.
71. Ibid.

system that exercised white supremacy through rape."[72] Although Janie's physical features, her light brown complexion and her flowing hair make of her the object of desire of men in her community, these features "…are also profoundly disquieting racial makers, reminders of a legacy of slavery, rape and social control that paradoxically make her an object of desire for men and alienate her from the Black community in general. As such, Janie's physical appearance becomes a critical site of ideological struggle over the meanings of community, identity and love itself."[73] Thus, Janie's presence in the text as a mixed race woman allows for a fictional reconstruction of the 'socially proscribed.'

In analysing Janie's first awareness of her social non belonging when she was still a young schoolgirl, Maria Eugenia Cotera notes that, "By beginning her narrative with these stories of innocent childhood experience, Janie has provided her listeners with the critical tools they will need to deconstruct – as she has- the experiences of marginalization, confinement, love and loss that she encounters on her journey."[74] The narratives, in fact, reveal the devastating impact of racism on the mixed race Americans.

b- The Black Woman as 'de mule uh de world':

Later in her life, Janie learns harder lessons of race and class when her grandmother Nanny wants to marry her to a much older man. Indeed, in her desire to convince Janie to accept her marriage to Logan Killicks, Nanny explains to Janie the social position of black people in the Whiteman's land.

> Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he haveto, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so far as Ah can see. (Their Eyes, 14)

Nanny has been taught since her young age that servitude is in her condition of being a woman and black. Racism and sexism assign the most subordinate place to her. She has been made to believe that she is dependent on men and mainly on the white man. Thus, she exhorts Janie to accept Kellicks' proposal, for he will bring the young woman wealth, material possessions, and social status.

Furthermore, as Hazel Carby explains, the institution of slavery depended for its continuance on men's reproductive control over women,

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72. Hazel Carby, "On The Threshold Of Woman's Era", op cit., p.233.
73. Ibid, p. 186.
74. Native Speakers, op cit., p. 185.

which "had entirely different consequences for white women and for black women". White women were deemed chaste and demure. They were the progenitors of the superior race, while black women were depraved and produced not children but "property [. . .], capital itself in the form of slaves". Slave women's fears for their female children, destined for breeding and rape, are well documented.[75] Accordingly, Nanny's story is aimed at reminding Janie and the readers of the collective suffering of slaves and the racial oppression endured by a people within a system that denied them both physical and intellectual autonomy. She also wishes to rescue her granddaughter's body from association with illicit sexuality.

Moreover, through her character Janie, Hurston deconstructs the long standing stereotypes of the black woman as either the oversexed temptress or the asexual mammy. Indeed, Janie Crawford, despite her young age and beauty, does not seem to make of sexual relationships a priority in her life. What she is looking for first is spiritual communion and affectionate love. This is best seen in her marriage to Joe Starks. Janie remains with him despite his physical impotence. On the other hand, she refuses to take her grandmother Nanny as a model to follow and live the life of a muted mammy, ready to sacrifice her own happiness for the well-being of others.

When Janie fails in her first two marriages, she resents her grandmother's thwarted dreams of middle class stability, conceived in the age of slavery that have made of her, instead of a lady in control of her voice and body, an object under the control of the two men who have married her. However Janie does not fail to comprehend the motives behind her grandmothers' behaviour, and the historical circumstances that have made Nanny to value economic security over human relations.

> She was borned in slavery time when black folks,dat is black folks, didn't sit down anytime dey felt lak it.So sittin' on porches lak de white madam looked lak uh mighty fine thing tuh her. Dat's whut she wanted for me- don't keer whut it cost. Git up on uh high chair and sit dere. She didn't have time tuh think whut tuh do after you got up on de stool uh do nothin'. De object wuz tuh git dere. (Their Eyes, 114)

In The Mind of the South, Wilbur Cash states the case that the black slave was thought to be "natural and could give herself up to passion in a way impossible to wives inhibited by Puritanical training."[76] That explained, in a way their repeated rape by white men. Nanny, who experienced slavery and rape at the hands of the white people, values the notion of marriage as a prop to woman's security, protection and respectability. She emphasises material achievement

75. Reconstructing Womanhood ,op cit.,pp. 24-25.
76. Wilbur J. Cash, The Mind of the South. Gloucester: Peter Smith Pub Incorporated, 1992, p .84.

and middle class respectability in order to spare her granddaughter the suffering she has endured and uplift her in the social scale. She sees herself as " 'guidin'[her]feet from harm and danger'" so that " de menfolks white or black…[won't be] makin' a spit cup outa [her]." (Their Eyes,20)

c- The Prejudice of Colorism[77]:

Early in the novel we are made aware of the problem of race. Janie Crawford , the protagonist frames her experience with her three husbands with a series of accounts from her childhood and young adulthood that have made her conscious of her race first, then of her difference from both White and Black people. Like Esther in Cane, Janie in Their Eyes Were Watching God, is rejected by both white and black children during her young age as she has inherited the features of her mixed race grandparents and parents. Janie's three marriages have all been affected in one way or another by her mixed race parentage and her Caucasian features. Indeed, when Janie starts to have problems with her first husband Logan Killicks, the latter does not fail to insult her about her racial heritage.

> Logan dropped his shovel and made two or three clumsy steps towards the house, then stopped abruptly. "don't you change too many words wid me dis mawnin', Janie, do Ah'll take and change ends wid yuh! Heah , Ah just as good as take you out de whit folks' kitchen and set you down on yo' royal diasticutis and you take and low-rate me! Ah'll take holt uh data x and come in dere and kill yuh! You betterdry up in dere! Ah'm too honest and hard-workin' for anybody in yo' family, dat's de reason you don't want me! (Their Eyes, 31-32)

Later on, Joe Starks, her second husband marries her because of her light brown complexion and her flowing hair. He plans on treating her right by treating her 'white', implying that 'white' is synonymous with 'right'. Unconsciously, Joe Starks emulates the white men in his acts and behaviour. In his rush to mimic the white people, he replicates the role of the oppressing whites. As an example of mock-white male dominance, Joe Starks, in an attempt to enforce the hierarchies he is emulating from the white superstructure, does not want his wife to mix up with the rest of the black community.

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77. The term 'colorism' has been borrowed from Mark E. Hill's article "Skin Color and the Perception of Attractiveness Among African Americans: Does Gender Matter?" in which he uses the term "colorism" to define the "[s]kin color bias. . . in the United States [that] originates from a history of slavery and racial oppression" . In "Skin Color and the Perception of Attractiveness Among African Americans: Does Gender Matter?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65 (2002): 77-91, p. 77.

> Though Jody, as Janie calls him, offers her the creature comforts of middle-class respectability, he also transforms her from his lover into the symbolic repository of his power. Like his "sparkly white" house, Janie's beauty—in particular, her "coffee and- cream complexion" and her long, flowing hair—are markers of Whiteness that Joe simultaneously displays and controls. Cycling between Joe's house and his store, both of which are material embodiments of his power over the community, Janie is caught in a narrow orbit of things, increasingly alienated—first from the community, then from her husband, and finally, most devastatingly, from herself.[78]

Janie's marriage with Tea Cake is not free from the prejudice of colorism too. Although Tea Cake does not seem to care too much about his wife's light skin complexion, as soon as the opportunity presents itself, he shows her who is master. Indeed, Tea Cake's jealousy of Janie's light skin and his fear to lose her for someone lighter than himself grows as soon as Mrs Turner appears in their life.

When Mrs Turner, the owner of a local café 'on the muck', meets Janie, she quickly befriends her as she sees in her Caucasian features an image of whiteness to which she desperately aspires. Indeed Janie's straight hair and light skin color are seen by Mrs Turner as the embodiments of white society's norms, conventions and expectations. She finds it inconceivable that a "featured" woman such as Janie would mix with common "niggers" and marry a man as dark as Tea Cake. Mrs Turner is obsessed with "lighten[ing] up the race", saying, "Ah can't stand black niggers. Ah don't blame de white folks from hatin'em 'cause Ah can't stand 'em mahself." (Their Eyes,141) "Nother thing" she continues, "ah hates tuh see folks lak me and you mixed up wid'em. Us oughta class off." (Their Eyes,141) Consequently, Mrs Turner proposes to Janie to leave her husband for her light skinned brother "he's real smart. Got dead straight hair." (Their Eyes, 142) Mrs Turner views the white standard of beauty as the only ideal of beauty. As such, she shuns those with darker skin color. She also makes a futile attempt to assume this ideal. She attempts to convince Janie that this standard has no alternative.

Mrs Turner's view of stratification according to color was not new to the era in which Their Eyes Were Watching God was written. Floris Barnett Cash states that "African Americans constructed a class hierarchy based on color as much as income. Divisiveness in the black community based on skin color began during slavery and became further entrenched in the decades following freedom."[79] In the same line of thought, Franklin Frazier argues in his study of the black color stratification among black people in America at the

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78. Native Speakers, op cit., p. 188.

79. Cash Floris Barnett, African American Women and Social Action: The Clubwomen and Volunteerism from Jim Crow to the New Deal, 1896-1936. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.53.

beginning of the twentieth century that mulattoes were conscious of the distinctions between themselves and darker slaves, and believed that their white blood did indeed make them superior. One's social position ultimately reflected the amount of "white blood" in his or her ancestry, and patterns of stratification among blacks included considerations of skin tone.[80]

It is worth noting, nevertheless, that intra-racial color prejudice worked in two opposite ways. While light skinned African Americans shunned those with skin color darker than theirs, the dark-complexioned ones reviled those with light skin. Not only the light-complexioned but also those thought to place "a premium on a fair complexion became the targets of bitter criticism by those, usually of a darker hue, who denounced such color consciousness as a major impediment to the 'progress of the race'."[81] Although African-Americans considered the lighter-skinned African-Americans to be more attractive, their reaction toward these mixed-blood people was more than often ambiguous. The black community was always suspicious of the possibility of the lighter-skinned blacks to 'pass'. There is no denying, however, that American society largely privileged light skinned African Americans over darker skinned ones. In the novel, Janie lives outside of the expectations of the white cultural norms. She is convinced that real beauty is grounded in racial identity and that she should not imitate other races' forms of beauty.[82] To do anything less is to deny herself. "Hurston has managed to create, in Janie, a character who has the physical attributes of white-female beauty but can still effectively demonstrate the destructiveness of the white-controlled society's impact on blacks."[83]

Tea Cake overhears the conversation between the two women and beats Janie when she is introduced to Mrs Turner's brother. He also destroys Mrs Turner's café and obliges her to leave the community of the muck. Maria Cotera has argued that, "Janie's beating, and especially its narrative coupling with Mrs Turner's banishment from the community of the muck, represents a key turn in her story, in that both events highlight the destructive historical impact of racism on relationships of intimacy and sociality in Black communities."[84] Tea Cake beats Janie "not because her behaviour justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession." (Their Eyes, 147) This fear and the violence it

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80. Franklin E. Frazier, The Black Bourgeoisie. New York: Free Press.1957, p.257.

81. Willard B. Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990, p.151.

82. As Fanon asks, "What indeed could be more illogical than a mulatto woman's acceptance of a Negro husband? For it must be understood once and for all that it is a question of saving the race." In Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., pp. 54-55.

83. Bertram D. Ashe, "'Why don't he Like My Hair?': Constructing African-American Standards of Beauty in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon and Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God." African American Review, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), Indiana State University ,pp. 579-592, p.590.

84. Native Speakers, op cit., p. 195.

has engendered, is in fact, an articulation of Tea Cake's belief in Mrs Turner's ideology of colorism. By beating Janie and running Mrs Turner off the muck, Tea Cake tries to silence his feeling of insecurity at being a common 'nigger' marrying a light skinned lady.[85] On the other hand, Janie's beating by her husband for a mistake she did not make shows the impossibility for her as a light skinned woman to be easily trusted and accepted by the black community. Her mixed race origin remains a reminder of the shame and humiliation endured by the black people at the hands of the Whites. As such Janie has to endure the prejudices of the community she aspires to integrate. As Cotera states, "Janie's beating, and the community reaction to it, demonstrates that even though Janie's access to Whiteness grants her some shelter from the most onerous effects of racism in both Black and White communities, it also prevents her from achieving the connection to Black people that she so desperately desires."[86] Hurston uses the relationship between Janie and Mrs Turner to illustrate the impact white-controlled society has on all black community.

Although Mrs Turner tries to get Janie to act as if she were above other blacks, Janie's reaction to her racial bias indicates that the young woman's racial identity is intact. She comments on an American culture where skin color sets the parameters of perception, behaviour and accomplishment. She confirms her creator's position concerning the issue "'Us can't do it. We'se uh mingled people and all of us got black kinfolks as well as yaller kinfolks.'" (Their Eyes, 141) Indeed, Hurston's criticism of blacks who make themselves look whiter demonstrates that she did not believe that whiteness represents superiority. In the novel, she is very direct in her characterisation of Mrs Turner as a woman very much influenced by the white power structure.

> Mrs. Turner, like all other believers had built an altar to the unattainable- Caucasian characteristics for all. Her god would smite her, would hurl her from pinnacles and lose her in deserts, but she would not forsake his altars. Behind her crude words was a belief that somehow she and others through worship could attain her paradise– a heaven of straight-haired, thin-lipped, high-nose Boned white seraphs. The physical impossibilities in no way injured faith. That was the mystery and mysteries are the chores of gods. Beyond her faith was a fanaticism to defend the altars of her god. It was distressing to emerge from her inner temple and find these black desecrators howling with laughter before the door. Oh, for an army, terrible with banners *and swords!* (Their Eyes, 145)

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85. Sally Ann Ferguson in her article 'Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God' states that "Tea Cake strikes his wife because he cannot do the same to the racist aberrations that inject themselves into his life." Black American Literature Forum, Vol. 21, No. 1/2 (Spring – Summer, 1987), pp. 185-197,p.195.

86. Native Speakers, op cit., p. 195.

In her article "Vodou Imagery, African-American Tradition and Cultural Transformation in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God" Daphne Lamothe states that "While the other characters" in the novel " are not as virulent in their internalized racism as Mrs Turner, Nanny, Logan, Jody, the townsfolk and even Tea Cake show signs of being color struck and materialistic."[87] Thus, the text's condemnation of Mrs Turner implicitly extends to a critique of other characters who share her views."[88] This statement has been confirmed by Susan Meisenhelder in her analysis of the episode of the hurricane in the novel. Meisenhelder states:

> Beneath the surface of what seems simply dramatic action and vivid language in her description of the hurricane, Hurston carefully develops the storm as a symbolic ritual of purification, a rejection of those characters who have betrayed the egalitarian and culturally autonomous values of black life on the Muck. Hurston suggests this idea in the contrasts between those who are saved and those who perish. Characters such as Lias, Stew Beef, and Motor Boat, whom Hurston paints as ethnically secure and immune to Mrs. Turner's influence, survive. Those who perish are those who accept white definitions and standards: amongst the drowned are those 'folks [in the quarters who] let the people [in the big houses] do the thinking'.[89]

The Hurricane, in fact, is symbolically used to destroy all the old prejudices and stereotypes. It also symbolically destroys the white principles of oppression embraced by Janie's three husbands. As Tea Cake's sense of racial and gender identity changes and his treatment of Janie worsens, it is not surprising that he is killed as a consequence of the storm. Susan Meisenhelder suggests that Tea Cake's death is not just "a tragic ending to a love story", but rather "the symbolic expurgation of the false values he has come to represent, values and behaviors that directly threaten Janie's identity as a black woman."[90] As a destroyer of artificial distinctions and hierarchies, the Hurricane is meant to destroy the white power and erase racial categories.

Later in the novel, Janie experiences bitter strings of racism at the hands of her own people when she kills Tea Cake and is presented to the court of justice to be judged. The black people present in the courtroom during the trial pass their own judgement over Janie, accusing her of killing her husband

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87. Daphne Lamothe "Vodou Imagery, African-American Tradition and Cultural Transformation in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God" in Zora Neale Hurston. Ed, Harold Bloom. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2007, p. 167.

88. Ibid.

89. Susan Meisenhelder, False Gods and Black Goddesses in Naylor's "Mama Day" and Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God". Callaloo, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Autumn, 2000) :1440-1448, p. 1443.

90. Ibid, p.1444.

purposefully. Although the narrator in the novel justifies the black people's use of "their tongues cocked and loaded" as "killing tool(s)," (Their Eyes, 185-186) as a result of their love for their friend Tea Cake, they do not hesitate to voice their racist thoughts at Janie's racial belonging. Thus, according to them, Janie has been acquitted not because she killed Tea Cake out of self-defence, but because she is nearer in skin color to the white people than to the black ones. "Aw you know dem white mens wuzn't gointuh do nothin'tuh no woman dat look lak her." (Their Eyes, 189) They also note that as long as she does not kill a white man , "she kin jus'as many niggers as she please."[91] (Their Eyes, 189) Through the courtroom scene, Hurston exposes the effects of racism and othering as experienced by light-skinned African Americans. The latter find themselves trapped within a system that accepts people as either white or black, and nothing in between.[92] While they are completely rejected by the white community as 'stained/polluted' people, they are not accepted by the black community because they are not black enough. Russell, Wilson, and Hall write in this context that, "Neither fully white or Negro, mulattoes lay outside the social order."[93] This is evident in Hurston's novel. The manner in which Janie is forced back and forth between the white and the black races from her early childhood demonstrates the othering and lack of belonging she faces as a light-skinned woman.

d- Economic Oppression:

In the same way as in Jean Toomer's Cane, Economic oppression is a leading force in Their Eyes Were Watching God . The accumulation of wealth and power, the social and economic advancement remain the leading values in the dominant social structure. To secure an economic independence to her granddaughter, Nanny in the novel, chooses Logan Killicks as a husband for Janie. Despite the difference of age between the two people, and despite Janie's repulsion of the would-be husband, Logan remains for Nanny the symbol of respectability and success because he has achieved a place in his community parallel to the one considered respectable by the white society. "If you don't want him you sho oughta. Heah you is wid de onliest organ in town, amongst colored folks, in yo' parlor. Got a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road …" (Their Eyes, 23) For Janie's

91. According to Russell, Wilson, and Hall, mulattoes enjoyed special privileges because they were considered "more intelligent and capable than pure Africans"; therefore, Caucasian society's ability to identify more closely with the mulatto based on physicality promoted the belief that these "yellow" men and women were a bit more intellectually adept and consequently, a fraction higher on the "scale of being" than those valued as livestock. In The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans. Ed, Kathy Russell,Wilson Midge, and Ronald Hall. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 23.

92. The courtroom scene shows also that the preferential treatment reserved by white people to mulattoes has caused more bitterness among the black people and trapped mulattoes in the midst of racial friction.

93. The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans, op cit., p. 14.

grandmother, Logan Killicks is the best opportunity for the young woman to take an upward step on the social ladder. In her analysis of Nanny's insistence on marrying Janie to a much older man , Carol Batker comes to the conclusion that:

> Because Nanny sees socioeconomic positioning as contributing to women's vulnerability, she advocates middle-class marriage and 'respectability' as protection from sexual abuse. Nanny,[…], introduces a sociological refutation of primitivism which sees sexual "immorality" as a racial trait. However, she also represents working-class desire as illegitimate. For Nanny, […], middle-class status is a necessary precursor to the expression of African American women's subjectivity.[94]

Nanny suffers from the absence of historical legitimacy. As an ex-slave, she is locked in a negative image of the past. Her conviction that Killicks is the right husband for Janie stems from her belief that economic independence would be Janie's passport to freedom and integration into the world of respectability.

Sally Ann Ferguson in her article 'Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God' confirms the above statement and explains Nanny's motives in forcing Janie into marriage with Logan Killicks as follows:

> Nanny also perceives the relationship between a woman's being poor and the likelihood of her receiving mulish treatment. For this reason, she finds Janie a "rich" husband-old Logan Killicks-and forces the girl to marry him. Nanny sincerely believes that he will protect the sexually and intellectually awakening teenager from a heritage of adultery and illegitimacy and from a future of economic exploitation and harsh physical abuse. [95]

However, Killicks places more importance on maintaining the farm than on sustaining his marriage. "A whole lot of mens will grin in yo' face" he tells Janie, "but dey ain't gwine tu h work and feed yuh." (Their Eyes, 30) Although he provides for Janie during the first months of their marriage, he expects her to do her share of the labor. Before Janie escapes from his grip, Killicks proposes that she, like him, could run a 'plow'. " … Ah needs two mules dis yeah.[...] Ah aims tuh run two plows, and dis man Ah'm talkin' 'bout is got uh mule all gentled up so even uh woman kin handle 'im." (Their Eyes, 27) On the other hand, Nanny considers Johnny Taylor, Janie's first lover as beneath her granddaughter in the community's social hierarchy. As such, he does not

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94. Carol Batker, "Love Me Like I Like to Be": The Sexual Politics of Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God: the Classic Blues, and the Black Women's Club Movement". African American Review, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer, 1998): 199-213. Indiana State University, pp. 205-206.

95. 'Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God', op cit., p.187.

deserve to have a relationship with the young woman. “ah don’t want no trashy nigger , no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor usin’ yo’ body to wipe his foots on.” (Their Eyes, 13)

Joe Starks, like Nanny and Logan Killicks associates respectability with power and the accumulation of wealth. As soon as he arrives to Eatonville he starts accumulating property and distinguishing himself from the remainder of society. He establishes himself as mayor and begins to structure a town centred around himself and his store. His constant need of improvement for himself, his store and his life makes the people around him feel more and more uncomfortable with his ways with them. They start comparing his ways with those of the whites. They feel that he has taken advantage of their subordination to reach the position he is in now. “All he got he done made it offa de rest of us. He didn’t have all dat when he come here.” (Their Eyes, 49) Thus, when Starks orders that a ditch be dug to drain the street in front of his store, the townspeople become even angrier, “[they]murmur hotly about slavery being over” and complain that “ the rest of the town looks like servants’ quarters surrounding the ‘big house.’” (Their Eyes, 47) In fact, Joe Starks apes white people in his deeds and words thinking that this would provide him a better position in society. By so acting, he believes he will be as powerful as white people are. In Fanon’s words, Joe Starks “wishes to be acknowledged not as black, but as white.”[96] By doing so, he asserts the inferiority of his own people.

Hurston’s depiction of Janie as a mulatta enables the author to examine the complex history of intergenerational race and class relationships in the United States. Janie is treated as socially and economically inferior to her first two husbands. So she is required to base her life on labor and material production in order to ‘deserve’ living with them. Killicks claims that he has done her a favor by taking her from “de white folks back-yard” (Their Eyes,30) while Starks boasts to her that she “ oughta be glad ‘cause dat makes uh big woman outa [her].” (Their Eyes, 46) In addition to making her work in his store, Joe Starks deprives Janie of any kind of communal interaction. As the mayor’s wife, she is to remain above the activities of the commoners. For Joe Starks, the very fact that she has married a man of social authority separates her from the rest of the community. “The wife of the Mayor was not just another woman as she had supposed. She slept with authority and so she was part of it in the town mind. She couldn't get but so close to them in spirit.”(Their Eyes, 46) Joe Starks’s authority, in fact, replicates the authority by which whites oppress the black community. “[Janie] slept with authority and so she was part of it …like servants quarters surrounding the ‘big house’.” (Their Eyes, 47) As Ryan Simmons expresses it so well, “Hurston uses the oppression of Janie, as both an African American and a woman, as an emblem

96. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., p.63.

of the oppression of African Americans generally."[97] When Starks dies, Pheoby Watson and her husband Sam, Janie's best friends, want to marry the young woman with a well-to-do undertaker in order to protect the estate and the social position she gained when marrying her second husband. When Tea Cake and Janie start going out together, petty gossip starts in Eatonville because of Janie's wealth and Tea Cake's poverty. "Tea Cake can't do nothin' but help her spend whut she got. Ah reckon dat's whut he's after. Throwin' away whut Joe Starks worked hard tuh git tuhgether." (Their Eyes,111) The undertaker is preferred to Tea Cake for no other reason than economic security and social status. In fact, when Tea Cake enters Janie's life, the members of her community do not consider him to be either powerful or respectable, thus, they assume that he is "spendin' on [Janie] now in order tuh make her spend on him later." (Their Eyes,111)

Another instance of economic oppression in the novel is the one existing in the 'Everglades'. It is a hierarchically ordered social system based on the feudalistic landowner/ tenant labor system. Because of the small amount of money and the little benefit people get from their work there, they are "permanent transients with no attachments." At the start of the working season, "they [come] in wagons from way up in Georgia and they [come] in truckloads from east, west, north and south." (Their Eyes,131) At the end of the season, the people "…[go] away like they had come–in droves." (Their Eyes,139) Although we do not find in the novel any direct indictment of the inequity of the economic situation between the white landowners in the Everglades on the one hand and the black workers 'coming in wagons' on the other, we can find in the text references to the economic unbalance between the two social groups. Thus,

> Men made big fires and fifty or sixty men slept around each fire. But they had to pay the man whose land they slept on. He ran the fire just like his boarding place–for pay. But nobody cared. They made good money, even to the children. So they spent good money. Next month and next year were other times. No need to mix them up with the present. (Their Eyes,132)

The last line of the above quotation gives the impression that the people on the Everglades are adventurers, enjoying the present and not thinking about the future, but the reality is completely different. These people love having fun and enjoy their present because it is the only time in their life they are sure of. Their past is left behind with its miseries and the future is uncertain. It seems either gloomy or absent.

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97. Ryan Simmons "'The Hierarchy Itself': Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and the Sacrifice of Narrative." African American Review. 36. 2, (2002) , p. 184.

To conclude, we can say that both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston, while returning to the South for material, have brought images of the black men and women that are muted or avoided authenticity by many of their contemporaries. "They reveal[ed] as a result many elements of a distorted black male identity in their fiction, and complicate notions about black maleness whose expression had lain buried.[98] More than mere depictions of twentieth century African American folks, Toomer and Hurston's works aim at interrogating the conditions of African American people and the barriers that stand against their self-realization. Indeed, both writers have not stopped their depiction at the level of race, but, as we will see in the next chapter, they have raised the issue of gender as an element impossible to dissociate from race.

> The attention that Toomer and Hurston give not only to these elements but also to their imbrications highlights the issues that black men had as outraged, frustrated subjects with limited agency as well as the degree to which these limitations distorted both the visage in the mirror, at the level of race, and where gender was concerned, their relationships with those who would be their closest allies—black women.[99]

Through the invocation of gender, geography and color, Toomer and Hurston invite their readers to rethink their notions of American history as a narrative of collective identity. The intersections of race and gender are at the heart of examining the interdependence of two apparently distinct forms of oppression. Accordingly, Toomer and Hurston offer alternative discourses of race, gender and identity distinguishable from and revisionary with regard to the white imposed discourse.

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98. Nathan Grant. Masculinist Impulses: Toomer, Hurston, Black Writing, and Modernity. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004, p. 11.

99. Ibid.

Chapter Two
The Algerian vs. the French in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma and Assia Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde

Basing her assumptions on the analysis of the Martinican critic, Roger Toumson, Francoise Lionnet has stated that "we must approach the issue of identity with a full understanding of the role that Western philosophy has played in the rationalization of inequality in the subjugation of an 'other' defined and coded negatively vis-a-vis a master who is the only 'proper' person and full subject of history."[1] During situations of unequal power relations, there are always tendencies to present others through binary opposition, as like or unlike the identity of the self, and then to attach judgments to them as we have already seen in the first chapter concerning African American people and their depiction by the white Americans. For the French colonizers, their unwavering predilection for French civilization and dedication to Western values prevented them from looking upon the Algerian 'others' in an unbiased manner. "The West thus conceived of its superiority relative to the perceived lack of power, self-consciousness, or ability to think and rule, of colonized peoples."[2] French values became the filter through which all the Algerian people were assessed. The representations made of them as the 'others' became mirrors hard to break even when these mirrors proved false.

The Algerian people were presented in colonial texts as groups of individuals who shared a certain amount of preconceived characteristics. In the same way as in the representation of African American people by white supremacist Americans in their narrative representations, the French colonizers used binaries in their narrative representations of the Algerian people as an effective means that allowed them to draw conclusions about the natives living on Algerian soil as a mass of individuals similar in nature and temperament. Such stereotypes became fixed within French belief systems and passed onto future generations, making them appear natural and universal. These stereotypes denied to the Algerians their individuality and identity. The colonizers emphasized the idea that Algerian people were an essentially passive and homogeneous mass devoid of subjectivity or individuality. In a

1. Postcolonial Representations , op cit., p.33.

2. Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures: Migrant Metaphors. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 21.

research paper about the image of the Algerian people in the works of Albert Camus, Tayeb Bouguerra states that,

> Fonctionnant à l'intérieur d'une situation coloniale comme signe " discret " pour référer à un homme ou à une catégorie d'hommes bien précis– le/ les algériens, le signifiant " Arabe " s'est rapidement chargé de tout un faisceau de connotations qui sont venues se greffer sur son sens fondamental " Autochtone "pour l'infléchir en le surchargeant de significations secondaires, en l'investissant d'une coloration raciste.
>
> Méprisant le colonisé, le colonisateur est rapidement arrivé à le désigner exclusivement par "l'arabe ", signe sémantisé parasité de traits péjorant : (paresse, fatalisme, hypocrisie, roueries, etc.). Tout se passe comme si dans une perspective " synchronique ", le signe " arabe " avait reçu indépendamment de son codage linguistique, un codage culturel dans lequel entraient bon nombre de mythes, de préjugés racistes, de mépris de " l'autre ".[3]

Very often, these 'Arabs' were depicted as shadowy figures, picturesquely backward at best and hostile and menacing at worst. They were most of the time drawn as dirty, lazy, and unfit for serious work. A good example of the way the Algerians were treated by the French in their literary works would be Xavier Grall's novel, Africa Blues, in which all the hatred that the French felt towards the Algerians was expressed in a very explicit way: "Ce chancre, cette crasse, cette saleté, l'Arabe! Cette obsession légendaire, transmise de père en fils…Tout doux, tout bons, quand ils ne bougent pas et qu'ils baissent la tête. Insupportables, littéralement insupportables comme une vermine dès qu'ils se mettent à remuer, a montrer qu'ils existent."[4]

The authors who wrote about Algeria and the Algerians came from a number of disciplinary backgrounds. Some were historians, sociologists, and anthropologists, while the others were politicians, officers in the army or mere travelers. They very often designated themselves as an authority who viewed Algeria in terms of 'Other' and explained Algerians in stereotypical terms on the basis of their personal beliefs and values. According to Tayeb Bouguerra,

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3. Tayeb Bouguerra, Le dit et le non-dit à propos de l'Algérie et de l'algérien chez Albert Camus. Mémoire de diplôme d'études approfondies. Alger, 1981, p.45.

4. Xavier Grall, Africa Blues. Calmann Levy, 1962, p.137. For more illustrations, we can refer to the book of Philippe Lucas and Jean Claude Vatin. L'Algérie des anthropologues :Textes à l'appui, in which the writers declare: "les premiers officiers ont réagi en touristes. Insensibles à l'architecture et à la société, ils jugent ce qu'ils voient autant qu'ils le décrivent. Avec leurs yeux de vainqueurs et d'étranges. Le climat est bon et l'indigène sale, voleur, paresseux, brutal. De ces présupposées cent années d'appréciation permettront d'en varier à l' infini les nuances. ' Que l'Algérie serait belle s'il n'y avait les Arabes'. Persiflera Théophile Gautier." Paris: Maspero,1975, p.95.

the literature of the colonizer contributed a great deal in the depiction of the Algerian as unworthy of the land on which he was living.

> La littérature coloniale a contribué énormément à figer l'algérien dans un portrait caricatural " physique et morale " (à l'image du Noir ou de l'Asiatique) ou les clichés, les caractérisations subjectives et dévalorisantes prirent l'allure de véritables observations sociologiques, anthropologiques ou ethnologiques et participèrent pour reprendre l'expression de A. Memmi à l'élaboration d'un véritable « portrait mythique du colonisé ». L'algérien analysé à la loupe par les « écrivains de tout bord, (soldats, administrateurs, gouverneurs ou auteurs consacrés tels que Fromentin, Gauthier, A. Daudet, Montherlant qui cédaient à leur tour à l'irrépressible attrait, au charme de la 'grande et brulante Afrique') fut figé dans un « portrait-robot » et livré ainsi pieds et poings liés à la postérité.[5]

When the Algerians were not depicted as negatively as that, they were simply ignored, rendered invisible as was the case with Albert Camus for whom Algeria was just a landscape devoid of people.[6]

As a point of reference, we can mention Edward Said's seminal text, Culture and Imperialism. In the book, Said discusses one of Camus's short stories, "La Femme adultère". In the story, Janine, the main character suffers from emotional and psychological problems. In a desire to find a balance to her internal life, she moves to Algeria as a source of 'solace and pleasure.' Throughout the novella, Janine highly eroticizes the Algerian landscape in an erotic communion with nature. At the end of his analysis of the text, Said concludes that Algeria was often treated as "an exotic locale in which [European protagonists'] spiritual problems . . . can be addressed and therapeutically treated."[7] For a long period of time, French writers used the process of exoticizing and eroticizing the Algerian landscape in depicting the French appropriation of Algerian soil. The French writers' obsession with painting the portrait of an erotic, exotic Algerian landscape shows their

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5. Tayeb Bouguerra, op cit., p. 46.

6. About Camus's use of the "Arab" to designate the Algerian people in his literary works, Tayeb Bouguerra states: " la référence aux algériens par le terme général « l'Arabe » est donc en elle-même un acte idéologique ; elle correspond à la volonté d' A. Camus de ne pas poser l'existence de l'algérien, de le nier dans sa spécificité d'homme, marquée par le droit à la différence , à l'unicité et de le noyer dans l'anonymat , dans une entité indistincte ou les caractères individuels (âge, psychologie, histoire personnelle, vie antérieure, etc.) s'abolissent au profit du portrait mythique et caricatural d'un groupe ." in Le dit et le non-dit à propos de l'Algérie et de l'algérien chez Albert Camus. op cit., p.75.

7. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism. New York: Random House, Inc., 1994, p.183.

preoccupation with an exotic and erotic objectification of Algeria and Algerians.[8]

This has, in fact, its origins in the Western hegemony that had always been equated with the masculine principle, while the dominated group had been equated with feminity. The former had conquered and 'raped' the land while the latter had been defeated and subjected to the colonial act, losing in the process voice and identity. Accordingly, the people, the land, and the culture thus conquered through the use of European male violence became, in symbolic terms, 'feminized'. "Masculinity is equated with strength and rationality and assigned ideologically to the French, in opposition to the feminine, emotional, weak, and ultimately inferior and subordinate residents of Algeria. Ideologies of gender reinforce those of race and nation to authorize and legitimate the imposition of French (masculine, superior, civilized) rule".[9] Moreover, through their naming of all Algerian protagonists in their literary works 'Arabs', the French authors turn the Algerians into faceless, anonymous and uninteresting beings , less important than the landscape to which they devote most of their literary skills.

The tendency to eroticize and exoticize the Algerian landscape extended to include Algerian men and women too. As parts of the Arab world, and not very different from the characters of One Thousand and One Nights, Algerian men were depicted as the masters of harems while women were depicted as sex-slaves subjugated to satisfy the sexual desires of their male masters. These stereotypical depictions often described 'Arab' males as "trotting behind the skirts of women, ogling the ample bosoms of seductive blondes, and squandering their money, or quenching their thirst for alcohol or sex."[10] **'**Arab' females, on the other hand, were described as " twisting and turning in snake-like dances, flaunting their naked bellies and quivering hips, seducing men with the promise of dark passion, playful, secretive and intriguing."[11] El Saadawi refutes such descriptions and explains that the depiction of Arab people as sex-mad is unfounded and incorrect. For the Egyptian sociologist, the main aim of the Westerners in maintaining such a distorted image of the Arab people is "to falsify the true colors of their struggle for independence, progress and control over their destinies, and to facilitate the

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8. For Camus, the invisibility of the Algerian people in his works was due mainly to his belief that there had never been an Algerian nation: "Si bien disposé qu'on soit envers la revendication arabe, on doit cependant reconnaitre qu'en ce qui concerne l'Algérie, l'indépendance nationale est une formule purement passionnelle. Il n'y a jamais eu de nation algérienne" in Albert Camus, Chroniques algériennes 1939-1958. Paris: Gallimard, 1958, p.202.

9. Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, "A Global Feminist Travels: Assia Djebar and Fantasia". Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism. 4.1(2003):173-99, p.180.

10. The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit, pp.198-199.

11. Ibid.

task of conservative, reactionary and imperialist forces that continue to survive and prosper by such means."[12]

In the same context, and surveying the literature produced by French writers during the nineteenth century, Zahia Smail Salhi comes to the conclusion that: "These writers created a literature of exoticism in which the central features were the desert, the palm tree and the camel. As for the native population, they were either presented as just another decorative element in the exotic background, or completely ignored."[13] At best, the Algerians could only be a pale reflection of the colonial other. Developing further the idea of the conception of Algerians as the 'Other', Philip Dine explains the motives behind the belittling and denigrating of a whole people by stating:

> As the object of the colonizer's discourse, rather than a partner in it, the colonized must inevitably be its victim. Indeed, this basic relationship is at the very heart of the colonial mode of speaking (about) the native, and reveals both its psychological motivation and its internal contradictions. Put simply, the colonizer is permanently tempted by the idea of physically exterminating the Other, whose mere existence is a reminder of the daily usurpation upon which colonial privilege is founded. Yet to do so would clearly be to destroy the entire colonial edifice, and an alternative means of deflecting this permanent challenge to the settlers' communal self-image therefore has to be found. The most obvious method of endowing the colonial enterprise's objective usurpation with a mythical legitimacy is the dual one of insisting upon the merits of the colonizer and the demerits of the colonized.[14]

Frequently, Algeria was defined in relation to France. The latter became the norm from which Algeria, as a rule, deviated. In the French texts of the colonial period, there was a clear demarcation between 'them', the Algerians, and 'us', the Westerners. Conclusions about the Algerian people were often made on the basis of fragmentary and sometimes false information. These misconceptions, however, remained part of the French ideology about Algeria and Algerians even when contrary evidence was available. In the eyes of the Algerians, these writings collectively silenced them and became justification for further colonization. [15]

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12 . Ibid, p.200.

13. Zahia Smail Salhi, Politics , Poetics and the Algerian Novel. New York: Lewiston, the Edwin Mellen Press, 1999, p.16.

14. Philip Dine, Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994,pp. 177-178.

15. For Assia Djebar, the plunder of Algeria begins with colonial travel accounts. She argues: "words will become their most effective weapons. Hordes of interpreters, geographers, ethnographers, linguists, botanists, diverse scholars and professional scribblers will swoop down on this new

In both Nedjma and Les Enfants du nouveau monde, the Algerian characters do not fit any of the readymade molds crafted by French writers. Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar challenge colonial ideology and historiography that have robbed Algerians of their individuality and agency. The two writers go to great lengths in order to imagine, invent and rewrite a different collective and personal history for their protagonists. Their narratives weave the personal and the political together, allowing the protagonists to negotiate the conflicting elements of their personal and cultural backgrounds to help them deal with the burden of history. Concerning Assia Djebar's work, Nancy E. Wardle in her PhD thesis states, "At the same time that she [Assia Djebar] brings these new heroes to the awareness of her readers, she reveals the men who have customarily been depicted in heroic terms, the French invaders, not as valiant defenders of French civilization but as cruel and heartless invaders who committed unforgivable acts out of lust for possession."[16] In addition to refuting Western stereotypical portrays of Algerians, these two writers raise the question of nationality as a maker of identity. Indeed, both Nedjma and Les Enfants du nouveau monde call into question procedures of representation. The two texts challenge the idea that the nation can be represented or spoken for by a single individual or group. We shall therefore be considering, in the present chapter, the ways in which Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar seek a path to the liberation of the self and the wider community through the reexamination of history and the relationship of the individual and the collective to their histories. As Djebar made clear, " la repossession de l'identité ne peut passer que par l'histoire. Il faut rétablir la dialectique passé- present."[17]

Through their literary works, Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar combine fiction with historical recollections to present the real situation of Algeria between 1945 and 1962.The Insurrection of 1945 and the War of Independence form the background to the two stories, especially the effects of the political events on the lives of Algerian young people. Through their works, Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar aim at the recuperation of the lost history of Algeria and then the re-composition of this history as an element of collective history and national identity. In, Nedjma, the political consciousness of Lakhdar, Mourad, Rachid and Mustapha corresponds to the political consciousness of Kateb and many Algerian young people during the same period. These characters embody at once the individual and the collective consciousness; that is why they are obsessed with the idea of a national uprising. In the novel, the writer describes again and again the political events, giving every possible

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prey." In Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade. Trans, Dorothy S. Blair. London: Quartet, 1985, p. 45. All future references to the novel will be taken from this edition..

16. Representations of African Identity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Francophone Literature, op cit, p.229.

17. Assia Djebar, "Une femme, un film, un regard" in Demain l'Afrique, n° 1, Septembre, 1977.

detail about the people who were killed, tortured or imprisoned. "Il veut être témoin et dire ce qu'il voit et ce qu'il sent."[18] Kateb himself was a victim of oppression. As such, he denounced the vile practices he witnessed.[19]

Assia Djebar, for her part, although not a participant in the war of liberation, could not ignore the political events happening in her country and the drastic social conditions under which her countrymen were living. As a witness of the events, she could but introduce some of what she heard and saw in her fictional work. In addition to the general political situation in the country and the oppression endured by her countrymen, Assia Djebar's novel is important to our study as it "…uncovers diverse forms of feminine resistance, both overt and tacit, forgotten by most mainstream accounts both of Algerian women's position during the war and of the experiences of the maquisards."[20] Contrary to the works of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston where the white man is almost inexistent physically, although omnipresent through his racist acts, the French colonizer is omnipresent in both Nedjma and Les enfants du nouveau monde. His deeds are closely linked to those of the main characters in the two novels.[21]

II.1- The Algerian vs. the French in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma:

Strictly divided along cultural, religious, and social backgrounds, the European settlers made very few inroads towards an understanding of the Algerian community. In their estimation of the Algerians, these settlers depended too much, as said earlier, on the pictures drawn by soldiers, explorers and literary men who sometimes did not even visit the country whose people they described in their works. The negative images that the settlers drew in their minds, and started to believe about the native population, created a feeling of frustration and anger among the Algerians. In Nedjma, the characters

18. Charles Bonn, La Littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures: Imaginaire et discours d'idées. Ottawa : Editions Naaman, 1974,p.69.

19. Caruth has written that trauma is "not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history". She adds that "the event is not assimilated experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event." Trauma: Explorations in Memory. Ed, Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,1995, pp.4-5.

20. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria , op cit., p. 34.

21. In her analysis of the use of the colonizers in Kateb's Nedjma, Jacqueline Arnaud states that, " a la différence des autres écrivains maghrébins, qui s'attachent a peindre les colonises, mais dont les personnages de coloniaux sont épisodiques ou schématiques, Kateb s'intéresse à plusieurs figures d'Européens ; ses personnages que l'écrivain laisse remonter de son enfance a Lafayette, ou les rapports entre Européens et musulmans étaient nombreux et étroits, sinon sans ambigüité, mêlés à des souvenirs plus récents, de Bône, de Constantine ou d'ailleurs." In Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine de langue française : Le cas de Kateb Yacine ,op cit, p.271.

are fully aware of these images and do not hesitate to confront their opponents with them. Lakhdar, one of the characters in the novel, confirms this feeling when he sees a French sailor helping an Algerian family out of the train. The young man cannot help thinking, " On lui dira: ce sont des voleurs, des ingrats, ils ne respectent que la matraque. " (Nedjma, 63)[22] "They'll tell him: they're thieves, ingrates, all they respect is a bludgeon." (Nedjma, 84)[23] Although the young man is angered by the negative images that are made of his people, he feels frustrated at his incapacity to correct or even negate these long standing stereotypes.

In addition to the portrayal of native Algerians in a negative way, metaphors are bestowed upon them that cast them into roles as animals. In many cases, these 'animals' are confined within chains or in cages.

> … face à l'abreuvoir deux hommes enchainés. Leurs bras pendaient, fixés par des menottes, aux anneaux où les gendarmes attachaient d'habitude leurs chevaux (Nedjma, 233)
> …two men chained up facing the watering-trough. Their arms were fastened by handcuffs to the rings where the police usually tied their horses. (Nedjma, 312-13)

> A présent, il se savait capturé, comme le rossignol, et les canaris…et il ne lui venait plus à l'idée d'en sortir. (Nedjma, 169)
> Now, he knew he was caught, like the nightingale and the canaries…and he no longer dreamed of leaving. (Nedjma, 225)

> …les habitants des mares…sautillent dans cette cage d'enfants gâtés, avec les hirondelles aux chastes épaules…(Nedjma, 208)
> …the inhabitants of the ponds…frolic with the swallows in this cage for spoiled children … (Nedjma, 278)

Though the metaphors used in these extracts come from an Algerian narrator, it is implicit that the frame of mind which brings about this category of figure of speech derives directly from the linguistic racism inculcated by the colonizers. Lakhdar goes as far as asking one of the prison guards he meets during his first imprisonment: "qu'est-ce que vous avez tous, en France, à considérer l'Algérie comme un zoo?" (Nedjma, 62) "Why does everyone in France treat Algeria like a zoo?" (Nedjma, 82) In fact, the colonized people were relegated to the status of animals and described by 'zoological terms'[24] in order to be deprived

22. Kateb Yacine, Nedjma. (1957). Alger: Enal, 1986.
23. Kateb Yacine, Nedjma, trans. Richard Howard. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991. All translated extracts will be taken from this edition.
24. The Wretched of The Earth, op cit., p.42. Fanon develops further the idea by stating that,

of the rights which the European settlers enjoyed in the country. This was due mainly to the original belief in the superiority of the colonial power which provided the ground upon which stereotypes of Algerian people were based. Kateb Yacine was aware of these stereotypes that meant to show the natives as simple-minded, inferior, and unable to govern themselves by themselves, and he used them extensively in his novel.

From an early age, the protagonists in Nedjma become acutely aware of their difference as Arabs in a European-controlled world. They start differentiating between their world and the world of the 'Other'. They innocently repeat disdainful remarks made by Europeans with reference to Algerian natives. A good example would be Mustapha's repeating a conversation he overhears regarding Arabs making pitiful babies. "Moi, en naissant, j'étais obèse. Les touristes me prenaient dans leurs bras. 'On ne dirait pas un bébé arabe! Qu'il est beau!'" (Nedjma, 209) " When I was born, I was fat, the tourists picked me up in their arms. ' he doesn't look like an Arab baby ! how pretty he is ! '" (Nedjma, 279) Although the statement made by the Europeans is repeated innocently by Mustapha due to his young age, the young boy is to some extent aware of the stereotypes that presuppose that Arabs are underweight and ugly rather than fat and healthy babies.

a-The Pervert Role of the Educational System:

Moreover, as schoolboys in the French elementary school, the young Algerians are exposed for the first time to acculturation. Mustapha is fascinated by the 'new' world represented by the French teacher. The latter plays the role of a substitute mother, and the young boy wants to be part of her 'fascinating' world. "Peut-être qu'elle crache des coquelicots dans les mille et une nuits ! Non, des roses. Si elle me laissait sentir ses ongles. Si on changeait de sueur." (Nedjma,205) "Maybe she spits poppies in the thousand-and-one nights ! No, roses. If she let me feel her nails. If we had different sweat." (Nedjma,273) To be part of the fantastic world of the French teacher, Mustapha is ready to change his name, give up his identity for that of the 'Other'. ""Dubac Paule. On boit son prénom comme de l'air. On le fait revenir. On le lance loin. Paule. Malheur de s'appeler Mustapha. Française. France.(...) Moi je suis Arabe.(...) Elle me donnera un nom.(...) Aïe, elle m'a donné le nom des autres !" (Nedjma, 205) ""Dubac Paule. Her name goes own like air. Say it again. Toss it up. Paule. Terrible to be named Mustapha. Frenchwoman. France. .(...) I'm an Arab. (...)She'll give me a name. (...) Ooh, she called me

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"[Colonialism] dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary."

the other name ! (Nedjma, 273-74) In Nulle part dans la maison de mon père, Assia Djebar's narrator lives quite a similar experience with her teacher Madame Blasis who would be the first to initiate her to the fairy world of French poetry.

> [E]lle qui m'a donné, oui, la première à m'avoir donné à boire le tout premier vers français, prononcé comme j'étais auparavant habituée à recevoir seulement les versets du Coran...je reçois un premier ébranlement...Je réentendrai si souvent, plus tard, la voix de cette femme aux ongles rouges, au visage osseux, qui soudain muée en prêtresse, officie dans le silence de nous toutes, de mon cœur qui sourdement bat: *Mon enfant, ma sœur*
> *Songe à la douceur*.[25]

Because of the idealization of the French teacher and all she represents and the resulting replacement of the mother, Arab children's allegiance toward family and home environment becomes divided. They come to judge their parents, who are marginalized linguistically, culturally, and/or financially by the French colonizer. They start seeing their parents and native culture through the lens the French system provides them, one which challenges numerous indigenous mores and values.

By encouraging the colonized children to adopt the linguistic and cultural values and practices of the colonizer, the French colonial system, in fact, aims at making of the young Algerian schoolboys future 'mimic men'[26]. Bill Ashcroft argues that mimicry is : "when the colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values."[27] Thus, the colonized subject's mimicry negates the self by affirming the 'Other', appropriating racist attitudes toward one's own people. In Nedjma , Mustapha starts to reject his own world in an attempt to join the world of the 'Other'. Through a process of comparison of the two worlds, that of the colonized and that of the colonizer, Mustapha can but choose the fascinating world of the 'Other' represented by the French teacher. Indeed, Mustapha starts unconsciously to reject his parents' alterity and feels shame at their being different from the other schoolchildren's parents. "Mon père est instruit. Il a une canne. Ma mère s'appelle Ouarda. Rose en Français. Elle sort pas. Elle lit pas. Elle des souliers en bois. Rose. France. Y a les paroles qui changent. Et les habits. Et les maisons. Et les places dans l'autocar. Quand je serai grand, je monterai devant.

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25. Assia Djebar, Nulle part dans la maison de mon père . Michigan : Fayard, 2007, pp. 102-103.

26. The phrase 'mimic man' has been borrowed from Homi Bhabha's The Location of Culture ,op cit, p.88. The phrase itself has originated with V.S Naipaul in his novel The Mimic Men. New York: Vintage, 2001.

27. The Empire Writes Back, op cit., p.139.

Avec la maîtresse. ” (Nedjma,205) “My father is a learned man. He has a cane. My mother’s name is Ouarda. Rose in French. She doesn’t go out. She doesn’t read. She has wooden shoes. Rose. France. Some words change. And clothes. And houses. And places in the bus. When I’m grown up, I’ll sit in front. With the schoolmistress. (Nedjma,274) Mustapha, like many Algerian schoolchildren of the time, demonstrates a growing consciousness of inner contradictions, social inequities and antagonisms. When assessing the two worlds, the young boy sees his original identity as a handicap. He wants to change it and to assimilate the world of the ‘Other’ to restore a sense of order and identity. As such, he is willing to exchange the image of his mother with that of the French teacher. Rather than list his mother’s good qualities, he concentrates on what makes her different from his French school teacher: “Elle sort pas. Elle lit pas” “She doesn’t go out. She doesn’t read,” and then he fantasizes about Mlle Dubac taking care of him like a son. “ Elle salit pas ses aiguilles. Le tricot est pour moi?...Grandes vacances. Elle m’emmènera. Élève à encourager. Elle a mis ça. Je lui rendrai. Je lui corrigerai le devoir. Elle m’achètera un pantalon. ” (Nedjma, 205) “ She doesn’t dirty her knitting needles. The sweater’s for me ?...Summer vacation. She’ll take me. Student to encourage. She wrote that. I’ll give her something back. I’ll correct the homework for her. She’ll buy me trousers. (Nedjma, 273-74)

In addition, Mustapha becomes painfully aware of his growing alienation from his family members. He is embarrassed by the physical appearance of his father, the Arab, which is completely different from that of his French school mates’ fathers:

> Mustapha ne voit que le pantalon bouffant et le fez. Il rougit.
> Les écoliers s'attroupent devant l'oukil.
> Leurs pères, à eux, ont sûrement des chapeaux et des pantalons longs ; Mustapha sent les larmes venir ; les autres restent groupés autour du Père ; curiosité ou mépris? *Un uniforme pour tous les pères* ; voilà ce qu'implore le regard mouillé de Mustapha. (Nedjma, 216)
>
> Mustapha sees nothing but the baggy trousers and the fez. He blushes.
> The schoolboys flock past the *oukil*.
> Their fathers must have hats and straight trousers; Mustapha feels the tears coming; the others stand clustered around father; curiosity or contempt? *The same uniform for all fathers*; that is what Mustapha’s wet eyes plead for. (Nedjma, 289)

Mustapha is also embarrassed by certain traditional rituals observed by his family, particularly when he learns that such rituals are not practiced by

Europeans. This embarrassment comes to the fore in a scene where the French school teacher calls at his home in order to accompany him to Sétif for an important examination. “Ma mère a conjuré le mauvais sort en nous jetant un sceau d’eau dans les talons; l’institutrice avait ses bas mouillés. Mon père sentait l’eau de Cologne. Je suis parti en maudissant la famille et j’ai réussi !” (Nedjma, 212) “My mother got rid of the bad luck by throwing a bucket of water on our heels; the school mistress had wet stockings. My father smelled of eau de Cologne. I felt cursing my family, and I succeeded!” (Nedjma, 284) From the position of alienation in which Mustapha finds himself, the search for an identity that resembles that of the French teacher becomes a prominent concern for the young boy, even when this entails a rupture with one’s people.[28]

However, the negotiation of the self is not enough to be accepted by the other. The colonized children, in the novel, find themselves rejected by their French schoolmates who imitate their parents in their behavior towards the Algerians. Albert, a young French boy refuses that his Arab schoolmates join him in his games after school: “pas de voyous, pas d’Arabes dans le jardin, dit papa.” (Nedjma, 218) “No gangsters, no arabs in the garden, Papa says.” (Nedjma, 292) With reference to this phenomenon, A. Bouchentouf argues that: “Si l'enfance est l'âge du bonheur, il s'agit chez Kateb Yacine d'un bonheur mitigé, l'enfant est sensible aux différences, surtout lorsque ce sont des inégalités imposées ; la prise de conscience de la ségrégation apparaissait donc très tôt chez l'enfant algérien.”[29] During colonialism, the Algerian children were integrated into French schools, however, the French schoolchildren rejected them. The colonists lived apart from the colonized, creating a segregated community and intended to remain so. They taught their children from an early age all types of stereotypes that depicted the natives. They also forbade them from mixing with their Algerian schoolmates despite the pervading policy of assimilation.

Thus, from an early age, the young protagonists in the novel feel a strong duality due mainly to their allegiance, on the one hand, to their own native culture and language, and on the other hand, to the values and principles learnt at school. Although they remain faithful to their parents and to their native culture, they cannot help being fascinated by the French culture, the French language, the French school teacher and all that is linked to France.

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28. An extract worth pondering about the policy adopted by the French colonizers through the educational system is the one written by French historian Ernest Lavisse in primary school textbooks and that was taught in North African primary schools till the 1940’s . The extract states that, “ La France veut que les petits Arabes soient aussi bien instruits que les petits Français. Cela prouve que la France est bonne et généreuse pour les peuples qu’elle a soumis.” In Histoire de France : cours élémentaire. Ed, Ernest Lavisse. Paris : Armand Colin, 1913.

29. A. Bouchentouf, William Faulkner et Kateb Yacine, écrivains du terroir, Thèse de 3° cycle, Montpellier III, 1982, p.44.

Pears, in her book, Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam explains the process by stating that: "As soon as a language is used as the means for education, an ideological framework is created. The schoolchild will no longer hold his or her own culture in the same esteem."[30] Frantz Fanon, in Black Skin, White Masks, expresses the same idea when he states: "to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization."[31] The duality that Mustapha and the other Algerian schoolboys feel has led to their disruptive psyche as the two worlds in which they live are oppositional and exclusive to one another. They find that they are never fully at home neither in their native environment nor in the foreign context created by the colonizers. However, as we will see in the next sub-section, mimicry as intended by the colonizers has never reached the expected results.

> When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening…Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance…[32]

Thus, mimicry becomes threatening to colonial authority as it generates the seeds of destruction of the whole colonial system.

b- The Beginning of Political Consciousness:

Inexorably attracted toward the Western world they have discovered at school, the young Algerians in Kateb's novel soon become aware that they will never be completely part of it. Although they manage to survive the frustration of an often hostile environment, they start to develop, in the course of their mental, emotional and physical growth, a feeling of alienation and violence. They attribute their sense of rootlessness and painful disjunction to the French educational system that has alienated them from their own people. The gap between the two worlds becomes wider and could only engender more violence. Indeed, the oppressive world in which they find themselves breeds resentment and leads inevitably to revolt and rejection of the colonial power.

Accordingly, the position of the Algerian students, in the secondary school, differs from their position when they are younger. The French civilization and teacher(s) lose their fascination. The young Algerians start to

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30. Pamela Pears, Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam: Women ,Words, and War. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004, p .19.

31. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., pp. 17-18.

32. Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies, op cit., p. 139.

become aware of the real conditions under which they are living. It is in the secondary school that Lakhdar and Mustapha start preparing for the Demonstration of 1945. It is also in the secondary school that Mustapha refuses to take an exam the day of 'Mouloud' as a protest against the French administration's non respect of the Algerian people's sacred and religious feast days. "…Cher Maitre je ne remettrai pas la copie…c'est aujourd'hui le Mouloud…Nos fêtes ne sont pas prévues dans vos calendriers. Les camarades ont bien fait de ne pas venir…" (Nedjma, 221) "…Dear Teacher, I will not be handing in my theme…today is the anniversary of the prophet Mohamed, the Mouloud…Our holidays are not provided for in your calendars. My schoolmates were right not to come…" (Nedjma, 295) In his book, Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End, John Willinsky observes that, "Students can and do turn to their own advantage what they are taught. We need to recognize that for all the cultural domination that Western education came to represent, it proved a useful resource for resisting that very domination."[33] Despite the privileges that Mustapha enjoys by going to a French school, he is aware that he will remain in a degraded social position because of his origins: "On sait bien qu'un musulman incorporé dans l'aviation balaie les mégots des pilotes, et s'il est officier, même sorti de Polytechnique, il n'atteint au grade de colonel que pour ficher ses compatriotes au bureau de recrutement…" (Nedjma, 222) " Everyone knows that a Moslem accepted in the air force sweeps up the pilot's cigarettes, and if he's an officer, even from the Polytechnic , he can only reach the rank of colonel in order to send his compatriots to the recruiting office…" (Nedjma, 297) Despite his integration into the French educational system that is supposed to civilize the indigenous people, Mustapha is aware that as an Algerian colonized man he will never have the same opportunities as the ones offered to French men having the same skills as he has. Thus, the 'mimicry' he has adopted at school becomes a means of contesting colonial presence in Algeria. Mimicry in this way becomes transformative and disruptive to colonial authority.

In White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism, Gail Ching-Liang Low states that, "In the language of the civilising mission, the reformation of the 'native' subject is the object of colonial enterprise; but this reformation must also be continually denied in order to enforce the separation between the coloniser and the colonised. Consequently, education, fluency and intellectual dexterity which mark the civilised man within the colonial space must also be disavowed in order to secure the continuation of colonial occupation."[34] In order to secure their authority in the country, the French

33. John Willinsky, Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p.109.

34. Gail Ching-Liang Low, White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism. New York: Routledge, 1996, p.194.

colonizers made sure that their civilizing mission would make of the Algerian people "almost the same, but not quite,"[35] limiting their chances of real development.

Because of their refusal to conform to the French school's rules, both Lakhdar and Mustapha are put out of school at an early age. When they leave school, the young men have no other alternative than to start work. However, an atmosphere of suspicion and aggressiveness pervades the workplace too. There is no trust between the Algerian workers and the French employer. Kateb depicts this atmosphere when Lakhdar, Rachid, Mourad and Mustapha go to work for Mr. Ernest. We feel that they are at war not at work. Instead of working seriously, the four protagonists criticize their foreman "Ils se demandent si le chef d'équipe ne prépare pas un mauvais coup." (Nedjma, 12) "they are wondering what the foreman's up to." (Nedjma, 17)"Possible que M. Ernest soit un de ces chefs qu'il faut mener à la baguette." (Nedjma, 12) "Maybe Monsieur Ernest is the kind you have to get tough with." (Nedjma, 17) while the foreman tiptoes up, trying to overhear their conversation. "Il [M. Ernest] recommence à les épier." (Nedjma, 13) "He starts watching them again." (Nedjma,17) "M. Ernest s'approche à pas de loup." (Nedjma, 48) "Monsieur Ernest sneaks over" (Nedjma, 63) This atmosphere of distrust succeeds only in widening the gap between the two parties. All the frustration and anger kept under pressure finally explode. Thus, M. Ernest strikes Lakhdar's head with a meter stick while Lakhdar grabs the foreman by the throat and strikes him too.

c- The Clash between the Two Communities:

The same atmosphere of violence and aggressiveness dominates the world outside the working place. The most futile of the encounters between the two worlds, that of the colonized with that of the colonizer, leads to more violence and aggressiveness, even if it remains at the level of the imagination. Thus, the encounter of Mourad, one of the protagonists in the novel, with Suzy, the daughter of the French foreman shows all the hatred, oppression and violence that separates the two communities.

> Et voilà, pense Mourad, le charme est passé, je redeviens le manœuvre de son père, elle va reprendre sa course à travers le terrain vague comme si je la poursuivais, comme si je lui faisais violence rien qu'en me promenant au même endroit qu'elle, comme si nous ne devions jamais nous trouver dans le même monde, autrement que par la bagarre et le viol. (Nedjma, 19)
>
> "And that's all," Mourad thinks, " the spell is broken , I'm her father's workman again, she'll walk back across the empty lot

35. The Location of Culture, op cit., p.86.

> as if I were following her, as if I were offending her just by walking on the same path, as if we should never be in the same world together, except because of violence or rape…" (Nedjma, 26)

The revolt of Mourad can lead only to more violence towards this 'Other', the French woman: "Puis sa pensée n'est plus que de la frapper, de la voir par terre, de la relever peut-être, et l'abattre à nouveau." (Nedjma, 19) " Then all he can think of is hitting her, seeing her on the ground, maybe picking her up and hitting her again." (Nedjma, 26-27) In her analysis of postcolonial literary works about India and Africa, Sara Mills comes to the conclusion that the contact zone between colonized and colonizer is "a problematic arena where the meeting of the two cultures creates conflict."[36] This contact zone is almost always described as a space where there is mutual incomprehension, misunderstandings, conflicts and violence. But the most prominent form of contact that underlies the other relations, according to the critic, is "sexual contact or the threat of sexual attack." [37] The traumatic experience of violence in Mourad when meeting Suzy, in the novel, underlines the depth to which oppression has entered his personal life. On the other hand, the very presence of Suzy on the worksite where the Algerian males are working reminds us of the French stereotypes that portray Algerians as promiscuous. M. Ernest thinks that the native workers have lascivious designs on his daughter. Consequently, he has recourse to violence too, and hits Lakhdar. From this permanent feeling of mistrust between the two races crime generates. It is, in fact, the logical consequence of all that the Algerians undergo. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon states that violence "…is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect." [38] Thus, the best way the young people in Nedjma find to ease the tension and feeling of alienation within themselves is by recurring to violence. Lakhdar hits M. Ernest and Mourad kills M. Ricard.

In an analysis of Kateb Yacine's life and work, Jacqueline Arnaud states that Kateb had found, when reading the works of Faulkner the situation of conflict existing between the whites in the American South and the Blacks similar to that existing between the Algerians and the French. Moreover, the reaction of the Southern aristocracy to their defeat, in the United States, was quite similar to the reaction of the Algerian tribes in the East of the country.

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36. Feminist Postcolonial Theory, op cit., p.708.
37 . Ibid.
38 . The Wretched of the Earth, op cit., p. 94.

> Entre les blancs du Sud des Etats Unis et les noirs existe une ambiguïté de sentiments comparable à celle entre Français d'Algérie et Algériens musulmans, tandis que les aristocrates blancs du Sud, traumatisés par la défaite, ont un comportement un peu analogue à celui des descendants des grandes tribus de l'Est algérien, déstructurées par la colonisation.[39]

Arnaud refers here mainly to Faulkner's novel, Light in August where the main character, Christmas, trespasses the color line and takes a white mistress. But when he discovers that she does not love him, Christmas kills her and is lynched by a white mob. The plot of the story could have been Toomer's in any of Cane's sketches. At the same time, it is not very different from the incident between Mourad and M. Ricard in Nedjma. After a frustrating encounter with Suzy, Mourad kills M. Ricard, her new husband. While Mourad's act, like Christmas's in Light in August is supposed to be a spontaneous and isolated act of violence, it is but an answer to a long enduring oppression.

The Algerian peoples' feeling of frustration and hatred towards the colonizers was also due to the fact that most of the new settlers in Algeria were not all of French origin but still considered themselves and behaved as if they were of a superior race. These new comers were, in reality, the 'dispossessed and damned people of Europe'. One major source of these European settlers was the Alsatians, refugees from the Franco-Prussian war who had been displaced in the land dispute between Germany and France. Mixed with them were many Mediterranean immigrants: Italians, Spanish and Maltese. In addition to all these people of different origins, the French government saw Algeria as a convenient place to send people who came "straight from state orphanages or [who] were prison offenders."[40] Given that most of these settlers were exiles from Europe, poor Europeans looking for a new start, people displaced by war, and even criminals, they had nothing to lose in France as they were at the bottom of the social ladder. Moreover, many of these settlers were lured by the promise of free land and a better life when coming to Algeria. "Il s'agissait de favoriser la dépossession des algériens en pourvoyant les colons de moyens d'appropriation apparemment légaux."[41]

Kateb Yacine, in Nedjma, denounces the practices of the French government which offered the most fertile lands to the new settlers. "Les chefs de l'Algérie tribale, ceux qui avaient la jouissance des trésors, la garde des traditions, furent pour la plupart tués ou dépossédés au cours de ces seize années de sanglants combats (Nedjma, 102) "The chiefs of tribal Algeria , the

39. Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine de langue française , op cit., p.668.
40. Edward Behr, The Algerian Problem. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976, p.28.
41. Pierre Bourdieu. Le déracinement. Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1964. p.16.

ones who had access to the treasures, the guardians of tradition, were mostly killed or dispossessed during those sixteen years of bloody battles." (Nedjma, 134-135) The land rights issue is a perpetual source of anger for the characters in the novel. Rampant anti-colonial feelings are heightened by the fact that a minority group of colonizers owns the biggest part of the arable land. In addition, Kateb Yacine does not hesitate to show how these settlers who came to Algeria almost poor and dispossessed find themselves in a very short time, the owners of the most important buildings and shops in town, in addition to all the land they have taken possession of.

> […] ne disposant pas d'argent liquide ; ni la terre en friche , ni le potager, ni les six chevaux, ni le carré de vigne ne pouvaient être évalués , pas plus que les bénéfices tirés de la première diligence que M. Ricard allait conduire chaque semaine à la ville […] bien qu'il conduise trente ans après un superbe autocar […]bien qu'il possède (en dehors du village où sa maison, le garage, l'atelier, l'étable, la laiterie et d'autres dépendances forment une sorte d'avant-poste des deux côtés de la route) une ferme prospère , mais retirée dont peu de gens connaissent l'emplacement exact… (Nedjma, 16-17)

> […] having no liquid assets at his disposal ; neither the fallow land nor the kitchen garden nor the six horses nor the tiny vineyard could be assessed, any more than the profits from the first vehicle Monsieur Ricard would be driving to Bone each week […] Although thirty years later Monsieur Ricard drives a brand new bus […] although he owns (outside the village where his house, garage, workshop, stable, milk-shed and other buildings form a kind of outpost on both sides of the road) a thriving but remote farm whose exact location is a mystery to most people … (Nedjma, 22-23)

M. Ricard, like many other European settlers, lived in poverty and deprivation before coming to Algeria and taking advantage of the French policy which gave the new immigrants a lot of rights and possessions at the expense of the natives who found themselves landless and jobless, working under the supervision of these new comers.

What is ironic is that these European settlers who suffered in France as social outcasts and unwanted members of society and who were at the bottom of the social ladder became the elite class in Algeria through the usurpation of Algerian land and possessions. In Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam, Pamela Pears states the following: "The indigenous people [were] stripped of their possessions, excluded from land ownership, and relegated to an inferior status by a European minority. Politically, thus, power [had] been re-appropriated by the colonist elite, allowing them to form an identity of

"other-ness" in relation to the native Algerians."[42] To prove their superiority, these settlers treated the Algerians as an inferior class. In fact, they owed their new elevated status to the existence of the Algerians. " Le colon même pauvre, est un privilégié, vu qu'il existe un indigène."[43] Taking advantage of the colonial situation and of the laws issued by the colonizers to benefit their own people, M. Ricard and M. Ernest, another European settler in the novel, find themselves rich of the lands they took from the indigenous people. The two men acquire authority and power and mistreat the natives who work for them. M. Ernest exploits his hand-workers " y'a qu'à faire ce que je dis. Vous travaillez dix heures. On vient le samedi." (Nedjma,45) "Just do what I say. You work ten hours. Including Saturdays. " (Nedjma,59) He even strikes the ones who protest against his decisions. M. Ricard on the other hand exploits the natives he transports on his bus by extracting cigarettes from them. He also terrorizes his house-maid at each and every occasion. The poor woman has no other alternative to escape from her employer's violence than by hiding in the barn among animals.

In reality, the effect of the French settlers on Algerian society was dramatic. To make room for the European influx, native tribes were driven off their fertile land and displaced to unproductive lands. As one of the protagonists in the novel states: "Les personnes déplacées ne manquaient pas dans notre ville de Bône […] des gens de toutes conditions, surtout des paysans sans terre, des montagnards, des nomades." (Nedjma, 92-93) "There were plenty of displaced persons in the city of Bône […] people of every circumstance, especially farmers without land, men from the mountains, nomads." (Nedjma,121) The loss of land and displacement resulted, as we will see later in more details, in the unemployment and poverty of many Algerians "sans terre ni argent, gardien(s) de la smala défaite" (Nedjma, 147) "with neither land nor money, guardians of the vanquished Smala. (Nedjma, 194) They were then forced to seek job opportunities on the settlers' new land that was originally 'their' land. The settlers, accordingly, are delineated in negative terms as agents of destruction who show no respect for Algerian traditions and culture. They aim to banish the Algerian people not just outside their land, but outside human history as well.

In Kateb's novel, these settlers become the 'Other' as the Algerians start viewing these new comers through the same lens with which they were viewed. Thus, the Algerians become humans while the European 'Other' is reduced to a caricature. The Algerians become the subjects through which

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42. Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam, op cit., p.73.

43. Lanza Del Vasto , Pacification en Algérie ou mensonge et violence. Bollene : Vaucluse, 1960, p.51.

history is recounted while the new settlers have a secondary position. This reversal of position is meant by the Algerian writer to empower his countrymen who were, for a long time, classified as 'barbarians' and 'uncivilized' while their version of history classified as myth and never given a place within dominant mainstream history. One of Kateb's most effective techniques in his portrayal of the European settlers is his use of satire and the grotesque. Thus, M. Ricard is despised by all, Algerians and settlers alike. "Sachant tous qui est M. Ricard, les voyageurs ne lui parlent pas. A vrai dire, ils ne manquent jamais de l'injurier gravement pendant le voyage, à voix basse."(Nedjma, 14) " Knowing who Monsieur Ricard is, none of the riders speak to him. Actually they insult him the whole way–under their breath." (Nedjma, 18) M. Ricard is greedy, self-sufficient and violent. "Avant d'ouvrir tout à fait les yeux, il se tâte les poches, caresse le briquet, les clés de son infranchissable appartement ; chantonne devant l'évier, émerveillé par la durée du savon. " (Nedjma, 15) "Before his eyes are completely open he pats his pockets, fingers the lighter, the keys of his impregnable apartment ; hus over the sink , marveling at how long the soap lasts. " (Nedjma, 121) and later, "M. Ricard ne songe d'ailleurs pas à spéculer sur son prestige de propriétaire en rupture de ban ; taciturne, cupide, mal accoutré, il n'aura jamais rien d'un homme d'affaires."(Nedjma,16) "Monsieur Ricard, moreover, would not dream of speculating with his prestige as a wildcat landowner; taciturn, greedy, badly dressed, he will never look like a businessman."(Nedjma, 22) Concerning these characters, Jacqueline Arnaud states:

> Kateb saisit ces ' petits blancs' à la fois de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur, ce qui lui permet de démontrer à travers eux les mécanismes psychologiques et sociologiques du racisme. Ces hommes sont racistes par compensation (par rapport à leur misère originelle) et par peur, parce qu'ils sont des médiocres et que la reconnaissance des capacités réelles des autres les ravalerait à leur vrai rang. Ils vivent dans l'anxiété toujours latente d'être dépossédés de leurs privilèges, volés ou seulement ridiculisés : la crainte qui affleure cache celle, enfouie, d'une mort violente, fruit de l'oppression.[44]

Another good example, in the novel, would be the Italian woman who rents rooms to the Algerian hand-workers but who is so afraid of them that she is reluctant to leave her house to collect rents from them despite her greed. "[Elle] a peur de sortir, osant à peine percevoir les loyers malgré son avarice, l'ombre d'un visiteur suffisant à l'épouvanter." (Nedjma, 250-51) "[She] is

44. Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine de langue française, op cit., p.273.

afraid of going out, just brave enough to collect the rent ; despite her avarice, a visitor's shadow is enough to terrify her. (Nedjma, 336)

This fright that the European settlers feel towards the Algerians develops sometimes into hatred and racism. During the Demonstrations of 1945, the European settlers backed by the police and the Army retaliate massively, invading the 'Arab' sections of major cities. They call for a radical repression of the Algerian community , and despite all the repressive methods used by the French army, they are not satisfied and consider what has been done so far against the Algerians not enough to punish them. " La France est pourrie. Qu'on nous arme et qu'on nous laisse faire. Pas besoin de loi ici. Ils ne connaissent que la force. Il leur faut un Hitler." (Nedjma, 230) "France is rotten. They should give us arms and leave us alone. No need for laws here. They don't recognize anything but force. What they need is a Hitler. " (Nedjma, 308) The European settlers begin to carry arms as a general course of business and increase their acts of violence causing greater distrust between them and the Algerian community. Following the repression of May 8, 1945 and the execution of two Algerians who took part in the demonstrations, Mustapha eavesdrops on a group of French people observing the sun-exposed bodies. The young man is stunned by their conversation as they denigrate his race.

> F…:Qu'est-ce qu'ils peuvent puer !
> (…)
> Mme N… :…Ceux- la quand ils sont vivants, ils puent déjà la crasse. A plus forte raison quand ils sont morts… (Nedjma, 230)
>
> F…: My God they stink!
> (…)
> Mme N… :…When these men were alive , they stank to high heaven. But now that they're dead, it's even worse …(Nedjma, 308)

As a consequence of these feelings of hatred and racism, the Algerian young people in the novel have learnt to be careful and not to trust the colonizers whatever they do.

d- Mass Killings / Torture:

The events following the Demonstrations generated also torture of the native population. Indeed, during the days following the 8th of May demonstrations, there was a massive round up of suspects who were arrested without charges and interned indefinitely without trial. These suspects were interrogated and many were tortured for information about the nationalists' activities, their organization and future plans. Despite their young age and their

passive participation in the Demonstrations, Lakhdar and Rachid are jailed and tortured by the French police. In the novel, a detailed account is given of the functioning of the mechanisms of repression.

> L'inspecteur raccrochait sa cravache à sa ceinture. Il prit une corde humide sur le rebord du bassin. Les coups de pied des deux autres inspecteurs cessèrent. Lakhdar garda sa tête enfouie dans ses bras, à ras du sol.
>
> […]Il ne sentait plus sa tête. Le reste de son corps était apparemment indemne ; seconde par seconde, une douleur lointaine et fulgurante se localisait dans les reins, aux genoux, à la cheville, au sternum, à la mâchoire.
>
> Lakhdar se laissa lier les mains et les pieds. Les inspecteurs fixèrent ensuite, dans les deux liens, une longue perche qui acheva d'immobiliser le prisonnier, qui fut pris à bras-le-corps, et jeté dans le bassin….
>
> Il sentait une chose glacée appuyée sur ses lèvres. Au gout, il comprit qu'on lui engageait une grosse pierre jusqu'au gosier, pour l'empêcher de fermer sa bouche. Puis un autre objet fut appuyé aux lèvres de Lakhdar, qui parvint encore à le définir : c'était l'extrémité métallique d'un tuyau d'arrosage.
>
> L'eau coulait.
>
> Lakhdar ne pouvait pas.
>
> Il ne pouvait pas ne pas boire.
>
> Il lui semblait d'abord que tous ses nerfs se tordaient, et qu'une coulée glacée lui bouleversait les entrailles.
>
> L'eau coulait.
>
> L'officier augmentait progressivement le débit.
>
> Lakhdar se débattait de plus belle. (Nedjma, 60) [45]

> The inspector hung his crop back on his belt. He picked up a wet rope that was lying on the edge of the sink. The other two inspectors stopped kicking him. Lakhdar kept his head buried in his arms, on the floor.
>
> […] He couldn't feel his head any more. The rest of his body was apparently unhurt; second by second, a remote, flashing pain localized itself in the small of his back, his knees, sternum and jaw.

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45. When reporting the torture to which Djamila Boupacha, one of the heroines of the Algerian revolution, has been subjected, de Beauvoir and Halimi describe the same method used by the French when torturing Lakhdar in Nedjma : "Djamila did her best, but the position was a difficult one to describe to the court]. They had trussed up her wrists and ankles, tied her knees and elbows close together, and thrust a large stick through the space between them, horizontally. It was rather like the way a hunter hangs his game. Then two torturers each took one end of the stick and carried Djamila, still suspended from it, over to the bath. The bath was full of water. When the stick was set down across it, Djamila at once sank below the surface. Simone De Beauvoir and Gisele Halimi, Djamila Boupacha : the Story of the Torture of a Young Algerian Girl which Shocked Liberal French Opinion. New York: McMillan & Co., 1968, p.149.

Lakhdar let them tie his hands and feet. Then the inspectors ran a long rod through the two bindings, which immobilized the prisoner whom they grabbed around the waist and threw into the tub…

He felt something cold pressed against his lips. From the taste, he realized that they were sticking a big stone down his gullet to keep him from closing his mouth. Then another object was pressed to Lakhdar's lips, and he could tell what this was too: it was the metal tip of a drain pipe.

The water was turned on.

Lakhdar couldn't.

He couldn't not drink.

At first it felt as if all his nerves were twisting, and that an icy current was filling his guts.

The water flowed

The officer increased the flow little by little.

Lakhdar struggled harder. (Nedjma, 79-80)

We have quoted this passage at length because it provides a detailed rendering of many of the brutal practices used by the French police on the young Algerians. The torture of Rachid is as brutal and inhuman as the torture of Lakhdar. In fact, the methods used by the police in the novel violate every principle of humanitarianism. They relentlessly and unmercifully exercise their power over the young men despite their age by exerting pain and torture. In his insightful article, "Madness and Colonization: Psychiatry in The British and French Empires, 1800-1962", Richard Keller states that French psychiatrists provided scientific justifications for the implementation of violence against the native Algerians. According to him, psychiatrists like Antoine Porot and Don Come Arrii stated that the French presence in Algeria required stronger policing than anywhere else as the Algerians showed psychological predispositions towards violence. They stated that "it is above all through…sanctions that we teach these thwarted and overly instinctive beings that human life must be respected…a thankless but necessary task in the general work of civilization."[46] These supposed scientific assumptions legitimized, accordingly, the use of violence and justified its use as the ultimate solution to the protection of the colony.

Through his novel, Kateb Yacine denounces the unthinkable acts of brutality used by the French police. He describes the techniques to which the prisoners are subjected during torture in order to inform the French population in the 'Métropole', as well as the world at large of institutionalized torture. Torture and the use of different methods of intimidation, in fact, disrupt the colonial ideologies that justify their mission 'civilisatrice'. These acts of

46. Richard Keller, "Madness and Colonization: Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800-1962" Journal of Social History. Washington University in St. Louis. Winter 2001, p.298.

brutality and violence would be described again, as we will see later in Assia Djebar's novel, when war would be at its uttermost. After the bloody events of May 1945, many Algerians became convinced that, due to the brutality of the French retaliation, violence remained the only means for independence. Kateb Yacine, in fact, confesses that it is because of the inhuman behavior of the colonizers towards the Algerians, and the choc that followed his own imprisonment and torture that he became convinced of a need for a revolution.

> Parce que nous avons aussi été accusés d'être des « terroristes ». Toutes les révolutions sont acculées à commettre de tels actes, mais elles se produisent contre quoi ? Contre une violence beaucoup plus hypocrite qui se fait passer pour humaniste. C'est le cas de ces hommes qui ont voulu donner des leçons aux révolutionnaires algériens. Ces mêmes hommes avaient en effet poussé à l'invasion, à la conquête, à la torture, à la guerre, à l'exploitation éhontée des colonies avec le masque de l'humanisme. Ce sont les pires terroristes. Ceux qui poussent les révolutionnaires à commettre des actes terroristes, parce que la violence appelle la violence.[47]

As we will see later, the same conclusion will be reached by Youcef, one of Assia Djebar's characters in Les enfants du nouveau monde after being jailed and tortured by the French.

On the other hand, despite their unity in retaliation against the Algerians, the European settlers had their own interracial problems. Kateb shows that their hatred extends from the 'Arabs' to their own people. Because they come from different social classes and have different religions, they feel superior to one another, and meet only if they have common interests. Even then, they cannot hide their true feelings from one another. A typical example in the novel would be the relationship between M. Ricard and M. Ernest, the two richest men in the village. M. Ricard is despised by the European community in the village because he is of poor and protestant origins while the majority is catholic. But, as soon as he becomes rich, M. Ernest is ready to sacrifice his young and beautiful daughter Suzy by marrying her to the old man.

> Dans le milieu des colonisateurs, privilégié à mauvaise conscience, grouillent les rivalités économiques ou idéologiques, les jalousies mesquines, les haines, les ostracismes prompts à se remuer en avances mielleuses devant la supériorité de fortune. Dans la micro société pied-noir du village, solidaire devant l'indigène comme un

47. Amokrane Arezki, Awal : Cahier d'études berbères. Paris ,1992, p.88.

> seul homme, apparaissent les contradictions : clivages de fortune, luttes religieuses.[48]

Kateb's way of describing the general situation in Algeria did not depend only on his techniques, but also on his degree of involvement in political life. He tried to show his hatred of the situation through his novel. In it, revolt and war play the greatest part. Thus, he has become for many critics "Le Rimbaud de la colère et de la misère, saigné à blanc, il n'a qu'à être lui-même pour se sentir, se savoir nègre, humilié et terrible."[49] Arrests, tortures, mass killings were all represented in his work. They were "inscrit[s] comme au fer rouge dans [sa] mémoire."[50] And the only way to reduce their impact was to write it all down in his novel.

e- Economic Oppression:

In addition to the mass killings, tortures, and imprisonment, the Algerian people in Kateb's novel, in the same way as the black people in Toomer and Hurston's works, suffer from economic oppression. Though the French claimed that they were attempting to bring the Algerians to a higher level of development, socially and economically, the Algerians were always discriminated against. The difference between Europeans and Algerians was continually reaffirmed– economically, politically, and socially. As Yaël Simpson Fletcher states, "…The colony and the métropole were presented as 'almost the same but not quite', one a slightly distorted reflection (rather than imitation) of the other. Since colonial domination required the clearly demarcated difference between "them" and "us," any merger of identities threatened the status quo".[51] The French colonization of Algeria did not just export and implant racist colons and cynical military. Economically, Algeria was a fractured society, a land of enormous contrast between the European settlers and the indigenous population.

In the novel, the Algerian people live in bad conditions and suffer from widespread poverty, unemployment, and hunger. Mustapha spends his early childhood in the close ties of an extended family occupying an apartment in Guelma. Although the apartment was composed of only four rooms, there were four couples living there in addition to the "passif de la tribu (veuves, grand mères, chômeurs, infirmes)" (Nedjma,213) " the clan's liabilities (widows,

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48. Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine, op cit., p.275.

49. Claude Roy, "Un Rimbaud Algérien" in Abdelkabir Khatibi. Le Roman maghrébin . Paris : Maspero, 1968, p. 10.

50. Recherche sur la littérature maghrébine, op. cit., p. 678.

51. Yaël Simpson Fletcher, " 'Irresistible Seductions': Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria Around 1930". Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism. Ed. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda. Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1999,pp. 193- 210, p. 199.

grandmothers, the unemployed, the sick)" (Nedjma,284) who depended all on the good will of only one member of the family. Despite the fact that Maître Gharib seemed to have a prestigious position as a lawyer in the Moslem community, the burden of all the unproductive members of the tribe who were under his charge and lived under his roof was too much for him. A way to escape the misery of the situation in which he was living was to turn to alcohol as a solace.[52]

When they grow up, the four protagonists in the novel become witnesses to the moral and material poverty of the natives. The room they rent in the village does reflect the conditions of the Algerians in general.

> La chambre qu'occupent Mourad et Rachid est moins endommagée par la pluie que celle où Mustapha est installé avec Lakhdar ; aussi dorment-ils tous ensemble ; ils étendent l'un des matelas de crin et se couvrent avec l'autre, disposé en largeur ; ils ont les jambes nues, mais la poitrine et les reins sont protégés…
>
> Jusqu'au matin, le dortoir a laissé passer la pluie.
> Ils grelottent.
> Au réveil, ils toussent. (Nedjma, 23)

> The room Mourad and Rachid share isn't so badly damaged by the rain as the one Mustapha and Lakhdar are in, so they all sleep in the same one; they stretch out one of the hair mattresses and cover themselves with the other, spread crossways; their legs are bare , but their chests and hips covered…
>
> Until morning, it rained into the room where they slept.
> They shiver.
> They wake coughing. (Nedjma, 31)

The drastic conditions in which the Algerians live are also described by Mourad, one of the four characters in the novel, through his reference to Bône, the city where the young people meet.

> Les deux guerres, l'essor du port, avaient depuis longtemps mêlé à nous, aux citadins de naissance, des gens de toutes conditions, surtout des paysans sans terre, des nomades, bref le flot des chômeurs au sortir des casernes ; parti et revenu par le même port,

52. In his description of the situation in which his protagonist Mustapha was living, Kateb was inspired by his own life and his own suffering during the same period he describes in his novel. In an interview to L'Autre Journal in 1985 Kateb Yacine confessed, " Je me souviens qu'à cette époque, mon père était mort, j'habitais avec ma mère, mes deux sœurs, ma tante, mes deux cousins, et je gagnais très peu d'argent, donc on vivait d'acrobaties, j'étais terriblement endetté dans tout le quartier…je ne pouvais plus rentrer chez moi; et quel chez moi? C'était encore une cave." L'Autre Journal n^{0}7. Paris : juillet-aout, 1985.

> ou chacun peut trouver du travail sur l'heure, traiter inopinément quelque mirobolante affaire comme on en réalise que sur un quai ou le pont d'un navire étranger, de même que ce chacun peut rester toute sa vie sans travail , ou mourir de misère au grand jour avant d'avoir pu saisir la moindre chance. (Nedjma,92-93)

> The two wars, the growth of the port, had surrounded those of us who were citizens by birth with people of every circumstance, especially farmers without land, men from the mountains, nomads; and of course the tides of the unemployed were swelled by the discharged soldiers ; it all ebbed and flowed through the same harbor, where anyone can find work by the hour, unexpectedly pull some miraculous deal , the kind transacted only on a dock of a foreign ship, just as anyone can also spend his whole life without work, or die of poverty in broad daylight , never having had one lucky break. (Nedjma,121)

The weight of poverty is among the first motives that lead Algerian men to leave their families and homes behind, and go to seek work in unknown and, very often, hostile cities. Kateb, through his character Mourad does not hesitate to describe the material and moral distress of the native population .The pauperization of the countryside and the breakdown of traditional structures under the colonizers' political and administrative restrictions led to a continuous demographic flow to big cities as a locus of employment. Thus, the streets of Bône are filled with peasants who have drifted in from the countryside pushed by hunger and the hope of alleviating their families' misery. Hungry and bare, they invade the city to join miseries with their urban countrymen. They find themselves trapped in urban tenements, unable to live a morally or materially decent life.

The reader's attention is once again drawn to the themes of poverty and deprivation through the description of another city, Constantine.

> Depuis l'entrée de Lamoricière, ce quartier n'avait guère changé son train de vie : négoce, bureaucratie, mendicité. Les grands chantiers qu'on se proposait de mettre en marche avaient toujours passionné les habitants comme un rêve exotique, digne de l'époque nucléaire, et que la plupart attendaient pour fonder un foyer ou acheter une chemise…quelques immeubles gigantesques et le chômage persistant dans le plus riche des trois départements…(Nedjma,155)

> Since Lamoricière's appearance this neighborhood hasn't changed its way of life: trade, bureaucracy, beggary. The great yards that were supposed to be opened had always excited the inhabitants like

> an exotic dream, worthy of the nuclear age, and which most of them were waiting for in order to start a home or buy a shirt…A few gigantic apartments, a few anarchic factories, and the persistent unemployment in the richest of the three departments. (Nedjma, 205)

The hunger and misery in which the inhabitants of Constantine live suffice to condemn the colonial regime that is responsible for the wretched conditions of Algerian life. The vast difference between the lifestyles enjoyed by the colonizers and those of colonized living in the same city was encapsulated in Fanon's portrait of the colonial city as a site of racially-determined division. While the colonizers' space is well-planned, organized and sanitized, the space inhabited by the colonized is crowded, miserable and hungry. The two peoples live in the same city but different spaces, separated by the police and army whose function is to prevent the colonized from transgressing their disrupted space and invading the colonizers' well- organized space.[53]

As the French did not create sufficient employment opportunities for the natives, the latter find themselves in a continuous state of impoverishment. Throughout the novel, Kateb Yacine makes reference to the dispossession of the Algerians of their land and their wealth while describing and enumerating the new possessions of the European settlers. For in colonial Algeria, opportunities for social promotion were strictly limited to the French and European settlers while the mass of the indigenous population was relegated to a condition memorably described by anthropologist Germaine Tillion as 'clochardisation.'[54]

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53. In The Wretched of the Earth**,** Frantz Fanon draws the image of the generic colonial city: the French colonial city is characterized by a powerful visual character that culminates in the contrasting images of the European and indigenous quarters: The colonial city embodies for Fanon everything that was problematic in colonial occupation, the duality he despised because of its unegalitarianism and hegemony, which left the native inhabitants in miserable conditions: "The settlers' town is a strongly built town,all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them .His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy going town ;its belly is always full of good things .The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there,it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs." Op cit., p.39.

54. Germaine Tillion, Les ennemis complémentaires. Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1960.

> *2.000 pinassiers européens se partagent les bénéfices, et nous buvons de l'eau […] nous marchons à dos d'ânes, et nos minerais de l'Ouenza donnent le meilleur acier léger pour avion à réaction ! Ne parlons pas du liège d'ici…* (Nedjma, 80)
>
> *Two thousand European retailers share the benefits, and we drink water[…] we go barefoot and our Ouenza ores produce the best light steel for pursuit planes! Not to mention our cork.*…(Nedjma,107)

The inequities existing between the French colonizers and the Algerian colonized in the division of the wealth of the country had led to a process of 'clochardisation' of vast numbers of Muslims lacking the means by which to support themselves. Despite the abominable conditions in which most Algerian people lived, in complete destitution, the colonizers never contemplated the possibility of improving their conditions. This shows, in fact, the way the colonizers employed social discrimination to maintain French supremacy in the country. Poverty and destitution, in fact, served as a measure of social control. That is why the colonized people remained trapped in the same confines of poverty, social exclusion, fruitless labor, vain aspirations, bitterness and grief in spite of their efforts to improve their material conditions, while the colonizers were benefiting fully from the riches of the country.

In the novel, the futile effort of the Algerian people to improve their economic and social conditions within a repressive system is shown through the bundle of letters returned to the young protagonists who have been looking for a decent job for so long.

> …un paquet de leurs lettres renvoyées ou restées en souffrance; Rachid les relisait furtivement, dans l'espoir de posséder tôt ou tard une arme à feu:
> " Monsieur le Directeur de l'école du Bâtiment,
> "J'ai l'honneur…
> "J'ose ajouter que j'ai une instruction qui se borne à plus de douze ans d'études…
> "Comptant sur votre large esprit d'équité…
> " Monsieur le Directeur des Docks et Silos,
> "…Ma conduite a toujours été…Famille honorable…Malgré mon jeune âge…
> "Monsieur le Directeur de l'A.A.T.,
> "…un emploi dans vos services comme comptable, secrétaire, réceptionnaire ou guichetier.
> "…soutien d'une famille de quatre personnes…
> "…le directeur de l'institut Pasteur m'a fait parvenir votre lettre par laquelle vous lui proposiez la vente de vos yeux…"(Nedjma, 247-48)

> …a whole carton full of letters returned or unanswered : Rachid re-read them furtively, in hopes of sooner or later possessing a weapon:
> " Monsieur le Directeur :
> " I have the honor …
> " May I add that I have had an education consisting of more than twelve years of studies …
> " Relying on your sense of equity…
> " Monsieur le Directeur :
> "… My conduct has always been …Honorable family…Despite my youth…
> "Monsieur le Directeur :
> "…employment in your services as book-keeper, secretary, receptionist or turnkey .
> "…support of a family of four …
> "… the director of the Institut Pasteur has forwarded your letter in which you proposed the sale of your eyes…"(Nedjma,332)

Despite all their good will and their skills, the young men fail to find a decent job. The jobs offered to them, if any, are most of the time incommensurate with the skills that they possess. In his article, "Kateb Yacine's Nedjma: A Dialogue of Difference." John Erickson summarizes well the situation in which the young protagonists live by stating: "Kateb traces the perimeters of the principles of power of the oppressor. In chapter One the Western reader becomes aware of two dominant loci by which he can orient himself physically and spatially—the *chantier* or workyard, and the prison. The chapter opens with the first and closes with the second. The Algerian's life in colonial Algeria is closed in, literally and narratively, by hard labor, poverty, repression and imprisonment. Images of closure haunt the text."[55] The violence that pervades the novel represents the physical and material realities of living in an oppressive environment. It shows how the expectations, dreams and hopes of the young people are stifled by the oppressing power.

The same world of oppression and racism is depicted in Assia Djebar's novel. As we will see in the following section, the Algerian people in Les Enfants du nouveau monde endure physical and psychological atrocities at the hands of the French colonizers. Because of their opposition to the French presence in their country, the characters in Assia Djebar's Les Enfants du nouveau monde are imprisoned and tortured. They are also left to live in a world of social degradation and economic deprivation.

55. John Erickson, "Kateb Yacine's Nedjma: A Dialogue of Difference." Substance 69 (1992) : 30-45, p.33.

II.2-The Algerian vs. The French in Assia Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde :

In the same way as in the novels studied previously, there is a constant reference in Les enfants du nouveau monde to the stereotypes that are used by the European settlers to differentiate their world from the world of the subjugated 'other'. For the French people, the Algerians would always remain inferior whatever they do to resemble the Europeans: "Quand ces gens-la veulent nous ressembler, il leur reste toujours quelque chose de leur origine."[56] (Les enfants,39) "Even when those people want to look like us, something of their origin always remains." (Children, 18)[57] Algerian women are not exempt from these stereotypes. In front of the racist Europeans, they lose their individuality and become 'Fatma(s)' at the service of French women. "Il faudra que vous choisissiez avec soin la 'Fatma' qui vous servira. "(Les enfants, 38) "You should carefully choose a *fatma* to work for you" (Children, 17) Moreover, in the European's mind, Algerian women, when leaving the space reserved to them, have only one destination: the French house to work as maids there. Any exception would attract their attention and arise their curiosity. Thus, when Chérifa, one of the female characters in the novel, passes through a European café, the European customers sitting there do not hesitate to scrutinize her because of her silk veil and slow walk. They make racist comments about her.

> Un homme du groupe, sort sa pipe : " jamais vu cette mouquère ! "- " elle ne marche pas comme les autres ", répond un autre qui baisse la tête pour scruter la silhouette, puis il se renverse dans un grand bâillement […] " je m'y connais !- continue le premier avec vanité- elle a un voile de soie, un voile léger. Ce n'est pas une boniche ! " (Les enfants, 146)

> One man in the group takes out his pipe, "Never seen that *mouquère* before!" " She walks differently from the others," another man answers, lowering his head to scrutinize the figure, then he leans backward with a wide yawn […] "I know all about women like that!' the first one goes on arrogantly, " Her veil is made of silk, a lightweight silk. She's not just some cheap little kitchen maid!" (Children, 90)

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56. Assia Djebar, Les enfants du nouveau monde. Paris : Editions Julliard, 1962. All future extracts will be taken from this edition.

57. Assia Djebar, Children of the New World: A Novel of the Algerian War, trans. Marjolijn de Jager. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005. All future translated extract of the novel will be taken from this edition.

On the other hand, Lila, Salima, Hassiba, Bachir, Youcef, Ali, Mahmmoud and the others in Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde are not very different from their counterparts in Kateb's Nedjma**.** On the contrary**,** we see them as continuing the fight that Lakhdar and his friends had started in Nedjma. In their double struggle with their past and against the external enemy, the young people in Les enfants du nouveau monde are awakened to the possibility of heroic sacrifice as a fulfillment of their duty towards their country. In the same way as in Kateb Yacine's Nedjma, memory and history play a key role in the formation of the characters' national identity in Les enfants du nouveau monde. The starting point is the 8th of May 1945. In a longue monologue, Youcef, one of the main male characters in the novel, refers to the atrocities caused by the colonizers on that special day. Like Kateb and his characters in Nedjma, Youcef in Les enfants du nouveau monde becomes aware of the French injustices towards the Algerians during the Demonstrations of 1945. The 8th of May, which was supposed to be a day of victory and joy for Europeans and Algerians alike, became for the majority of Algerians a day of death and mourning.

a- Arrest and Torture:

Youcef, like Kateb Yacine and like Lakhdar and Rachid in Nedjma, is arrested on that special day. It is in jail that he has the opportunity to meet other Algerians who initiate him to political and national consciousness.

> Plus d'une trentaine de jeunes avaient été emmenés dans la nuit ou le lendemain. Lui était parti sur une jeep, au petit matin, encadré par deux policiers dont l'un, il se le rappelait, était Martinez. Détail peut-être cocasse mais qu'il n'oubliait pas : durant tout le trajet, Martinez, d'un air froid, vidait la cendre de sa pipe en la frappant à petits coups sur le crâne de Youcef.
>
> –Et la prison, comment était-ce ?–Chérifa ne cessait de le questionner.
>
> –Une chance pour moi ; là où j'ai découvert des frères, où je suis devenu un homme.
>
> Chérifa pouvait alors rêver de l'adolescent qui, pendant vingt mois qu'il avait trouvés courts, avait écouté, dans les cellules, des hommes résolus parler des luttes anciennes, du combat à venir. Le même jour, des massacres avaient eu lieu dans des villes martyres : Sétif, Guelma, Constantine…Le jeune Youcef découvrait ainsi qu'une patrie, ce n'est pas une terre commune, ni même seulement une misère partagée mais du sang versé ensemble et dans le même jour, les mêmes chants interrompus.[58] (Les enfants, 193-94)

58. This passage reminds us of a declaration made by Kateb Yacine when asked about the influence of

> […] More than thirty young men hauled away that night or early the next day. At daybreak he'd been taken away in a jeep, flanked by two policemen, one of whom he remembered was Martinez. Perhaps a comic detail, but he couldn't forget it: throughout the ride, Martinez unfeelingly emptied his pipe on Youssef's skull, tapping it with short little blows.
>
> "What about the prison, what was that like?" Chérifa wouldn't stop questioning him.
>
> "I was lucky; that's where I discovered my Arab brothers, where I became a man."
>
> Thereafter Chérifa could dream of the adolescent who for twenty months, which had seemed short to him, would listen to determined men in their cells speak about earlier struggles and the battle yet to come. That same day, massacres had taken place in martyred towns: Sétif, Guelma, Constantine. Young Youssef was discovering that a native country is not shared land, not even shared misery, but blood, shed together on the same day, the same songs interrupted. (Children, 121)

The 8th of May has also become for Youcef and his fellowmen the turning point of popular opinion toward the acceptance of counter-terror as an act of survival and retaliation.

Torture is another aspect of the war that prevails in Assia Djebar's novel.[59] Saidi one of the characters in the novel is tortured by one of his countrymen, a collaborator for the benefit of the French. The French colonizers in the novel, mainly Martinez, a police officer, justify the torture of Algerians on practical grounds. He argues that torture is 'legitimate' because it helps break up some of the rebels' network. "Naïveté, pense-t-il, de persister à ne pas employer la force; la force d'abord, la force nue est, dans ce pays, la seule politique payante." (Les enfants,155) "It's naïve, he thinks, to persist in not using violence; violence, before anything else, overt violence, is the only policy that pays off in this country."(Children, 96) Although there is disagreement and reservation among some French police and army officers concerning torture on moral, legitimacy and efficiency grounds, nothing is ever done to stop its practice. A good example in the novel would be the inspector Jean. The latter, hierarchically superior to Martinez, protests against the use of harsh methods on Salima, a women detainee, but he does not prevent Saidi

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the events of May 1945 on his future life. For more details see Jacqueline Arnaud, Le cas de Kateb Yacine, op cit., p.275.

59. The war saw widespread use of torture by the French army , as reported by several sources, including, for example, Henry Alleg's La Question, published in 1958 and telling of his writer's being tortured by the French in Algiers.

from being tortured. His objection is based mainly on the fact that Salima is a woman rather than on the principle of torture itself. " Je regrette!- il criait. Il criait donc lui aussi.- je ne le ferai pas sur des femmes. Non ! Pas chez moi. Pas ici !" (Les enfants, 110) " I'm sorry! " he yelled. So he, too, could yell. " I won't do it to women. No! Not in my building. Not here!" (Children, 66)Jean's statement, in fact, reveals two things. The first is that he does not accept practicing torture on women but does not refute doing it on men "je ne le ferai pas sur des femmes" "I won't do it to women" and, worse, that torture on women can be accepted if done in other places than his police station. "Non ! Pas chez moi. Pas ici ! " "No! Not in my building. Not here!"

The proponents of torture, on the other hand, like Martinez in the novel, do not have these reservations and fully feel that the ends justify the means. Martinez and his alike consider all Algerians involved in the movement of liberation of the country as enemies of the French regardless of their sex. They defend the methods used as an essential part of the war effort. Their abuse of suspects is aimed at gaining information on plots and extracting confessions.

> Il déteste la manière froide et désincarnée de Jean de diriger un interrogatoire, d'un air de vous dire : « j'agis en accord avec ma conscience ! » « La conscience, va te faire foutre ! » Le « Vieux » aurait fait un bon directeur d'école et il aurait interrogé de la même façon polie les petits « bicots » au certificat d'études. Résultat, continue-t-il : les cellules nationalistes de la ville restaient intactes. Quand on pouvait avoir un renseignement de quelque importance, c'était le plus souvent trop tard. » (Les enfants, 155)

> He despises the detached , disembodied manner in which Jean directs an interrogation, as if to say, "I act the way my conscience tells me to." Fuck conscience! The old man would have made a fine school principal ; he would have grilled the little Arab boys in the same polite way for their final exams. "The result, Martinez continues to himself, " is that the town's nationalist cells are staying intact.by the time some important information might be obtained, it's usually too late." (Children, 96)

In fact, torture undermines the values and corrupts those who practice it. In the novel, Martinez confesses that he practices torture even if he does not expect any positive result from it. " Cette fois, lorsqu'il avait donné l'ordre d'entreprendre la question sur Saidi, aucun espoir ne le poussait : seulement, la résignation de l'habitude. Il fallait bien que le mécanisme se rode." (Les enfants, 184) "This time, when he had given the order to put Saidi through the procedure of questioning, he was driven by no hope at all; he just resigned

himself to habit. The gears of the machine needed to be kept oiled." (Children, 114) The physical and psychological torture of prisoners can thus be understood as expressive punishment resulting from the frustration of the French and their emotional need to scapegoat persons perceived as enemies.

The cadence of physical violence, on the other hand, increases whenever the interrogators grow frustrated by seemingly ineffective methods.

> - « Idiot, sombre idiot! », râle à présent Hakim ; monte en lui une énergie désespérée de s'accrocher, mais à quoi…car c'est lui, en vérité, qui implore, et Saidi, implacablement, avec son regard mort et ce pli barrant son front, l'ignore. « Un idiot », marmonne Hakim, et il tremble d'impuissance. (Les enfants, 159)

> " Idiot, you prize idiot!" Hakim now growls ; a desperate energy rises inside him to grab at something, but what…for it really is he who's doing the pleading while Saidi unrelentingly ignores him, with his dead stare and the crease across his forehead. " An idiȯt, Hakim mumbles, shaking owerlessly. (Children, 98)

By depicting torture and violence perpetrated by the French officers against Algerian people, Assia Djebar calls into question the French colonizers' claim for civilization and enlightenment. The French colonizers who were celebrated for their bravery in previous historical accounts are shown, in the novel, to be cruel executioners. Their mission is not, as their reports stated, peaceful and selfless. Rather, the intentions that these colonizers show are malicious and their methods brutal. Assia Djebar's portrayal of the Europeans' ways and intentions has helped chip away at their superiority, and has given more voice for the colonized Algerians to talk back.

> Her [Assia Djebar] historical accounts, while based on the evidence, are nevertheless not unprejudiced. The French soldiers and commanders, who had been lauded in their home country, become the villains in Djebar's version of events, ambassadors of civilization recast as heartless murderers. The former enemy to the French, once represented as a faceless mass of people that should be controlled, now has a presence, their deaths pitied and their resistance celebrated.[60]

Through her descriptions of French violence and Algerian resistance to it, Assia Djebar disrupts colonial notions of Algerian passivity and docility contrasted against French mastery and authority.

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60. Representations of African Identity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Francophone Literature, op cit., pp.251-52.

In addition, Assia Djebar's novel penetrates a historical invisibility and uncovers a knowledge which has been buried for a long time: women's contribution to the war of independence and the different kinds of hardships they endured at the hands of the colonizer. In reality, the Algerian writer has had no doubt about the contribution of women to the national cause. For her, their role was very important and this is what she has meant to show in her novel. " Elles ont participé […] dans une société en mouvement dynamique, c'est la femme qui est à l'avant-garde. C'est la conscience féminine qui prend le dessus, lorsque conscience il y a. Du *Repos du guerrier* à *Antigone*, si l'on veut[…]. C'est ce que j'ai voulu raconter dans mon livre Les Enfants du nouveau monde."[61] In the novel, there is clearly the added dimension of gender and the female experience to be considered. Gender as a category of historic analysis, as Joan Scott states, "seem[s] the best way to… bring women from the margins to the center of historical focus, and, in the process, transform the way all history was written."[62] By reconstructing the history of Algerian women revolutionaries, Assia Djebar aims at revising continuing colonial stereotypes of Algerian women as mute and passive victims. The specific aim of the writer, as we will see later in more details, is to awaken the voices of the women who suffered during the war. Fanon has acknowledged the contribution of women to the Algerian war by stating: "Revolutionary war, as the Algerian people is waging it, is a total war in which the woman does not merely knit for or mourn the soldier. The Algerian woman is at the heart of the combat. Arrested, tortured, raped, shot down, she testifies to the violence of the occupier and to his inhumanity." [63] Fanon has also noted how Algerian women's participation in the war has provide them with a sense of agency and altered their "feminine" colonized identities and family relationships in positive ways that have challenged patriarchal and communal traditions .[64]

In the novel, women's contribution starts spontaneously and earlier than the 1st of November 1954. During the Demonstrations of the 8th of May 1945, women fight with the same courage as their men counterparts although they are not prepared to what awaits them.

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61. Sylvie Marion, " 'La Nouvelle Algérienne', entretien sur Les enfants du nouveau monde". France-Observateur, 13eme année, n0 629, 24 mai 1962.

62. Joan Scott , Gender and the Politics of History. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, p. xi

63. Frantz Fanon, A Dying Colonialism. Trans, Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press,1967, p. 66.

64. In A Dying Colonialism, he states that , "In Algerian societies stories we're told of women who in ever greater number suffered death and imprisonment in order that an independent Algeria might be born. It was these militant women who constituted the points of reference around which the imagination of Algerian feminine society was to be stirred to the boiling point. The woman -for-marriage progressively disappeared, and gave way to the women-for-action. The young girl was replaced by the militant…The woman ceased to be a complement for man. She literally forged a new place for herself by her sheer strength," op cit., pp. 108 -109.

> Derrière, les femmes, leurs chants suspendus, s'affairaient soudain, armées de la même ardeur avec laquelle elles devaient, chez elles, rouler tous les soirs la semoule pour le repas de famille ; elles sortaient de vieux couffins, les emplissaient de pierres, en mettaient dans leurs jupes et leurs voiles, entraient ensuite, elles aussi, dans la bataille. (Les enfants, 192-93)

> Behind them, the women stopped singing and were suddenly busy, armed with the same zeal they used at home when rolling semolina dough for the evening meal. They brought out old baskets, illing them with stones, putting some of them in their skirts and veils, and then they, too, entered the fray. (Children, 120)

In the same way as men, women prisoners were tortured as part of the French effort to terrorize and subdue the indigenous population. They were often beaten and even raped by their captors. According to Amrane-Minne, women suffered from different kinds of abuse in detention camps or prisons. They were stripped and slapped, drenched with cold water, deprived of sleep and screamed at, as well as sexually abused.[65] Philippa Levine, on the other hand, states that "Colonial authorities employed sexual violence and torture on women prisoners. Violent genital penetration, genital electric shocks, rape or the threat of rape were all common techniques used against women militants, despite the fact that rape remained technically a crime when committed by soldiers."[66] Although Salima, in the novel, is lucky enough not to face such a fate, she suffers, like her male counterparts, from mistreatment, and 'harsh' questioning methods during her imprisonment.

> [Salima] ne sait ni l'heure qu'il est, ni le jour. Ce matin, on l'a laissée reposer ; enfin. On lui a même apporté un lit. Depuis si longtemps, elle n'avait pu s'allonger. Un lit ! Quelle merveille,

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65. Danièle -Djamila Amrane- Minne, Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie: entretiens. Paris: Karthala, 1994, p.190. Another reference to the suffering of Algerian female prisoners during the war was made by Aaronette M. White in her article, "All the Men are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women are Mourning Their Men, But Some of Us Carried Guns: Fanon's Psychological Perspectives on War and African Women Combatants." In the article, she describes some of the techniques used by the colonizers to intimidate and subjugate their female prisoners: ".. specific techniques target women's sexuality. Male interrogators rely on deep -rooted cultural concepts of shame and honor to break women combatants. Thus, most women are raped when taken as prisoners […]To sleep deprivation, physical beatings, and electric shocks to genitals, male guards have engaged in humiliating body searches and vaginal examinations,[…]most women combatants are ashamed to speak about these incidents, so first-person accounts are few, often kept brief, and confidential." What was worse for some of these women is that some of them were raped or forced into marriage even by their own male fellow fighters. "Among their own comrades, women combatants have been subjected to rape and forced marriage," op cit., pp.17-18.

66. Philippa Levine, « Gendering Decolonisation », Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société, N°11, mai-août 2010, www.histoire-politique.fr, p.9.

> après être restée constamment assise sur une chaise, ou debout pendant ces dix jours d'interrogatoire, ou onze, ou vingt…elle ne sait plus. Sur la couche, elle étire son corps, son dos ; sa douleur aux reins ne cesse pas. Ne plus bouger, ne jamais bouger ! Elle qui voudrait tant dormir, elle ne peut pas. Elle a froid. (Les enfants, 95)

> [Salima] doesn't know what time or day it is. This morning they let her rest, at last. They even brought her a bed. It's been so long since she's been able to lie down. A bed! What a miracle after constantly sitting on a chair or standing up for the ten days of interrogation, or eleven, or twenty; she doesn't know anymore. On the cot, she stretches out her body, her back; the pain in her lower back won't stop. Not to move anymore, never to move! She would so much like to sleep, but she can't. She's cold. (Children, 56)

Through the character of Salima, Assia Djebar defines Algerian women prisoners as strong subjects able to stoically withstand mental and physical torture as they suffer in silence in their persistence to protect their loved ones on the outside. Although physical and mental punishment is intended to break the spirit of the prisoners and bring them into submission, it serves only to strengthen their spirit as well as their belief in the national cause.

b- The Mimic Man[67]:

While supporting and celebrating those who commit themselves to the national cause and sacrifice their lives for the independence of their country, the community brings severe sanctions towards those who mix socially or mimic the colonizer. Two good examples in Djebar's novel would be Hakim and Touma. The latter are rejected by their own people and wished dead.

> Hakim se durcit. Chaque fois qu'il pense à Youssef , la blessure s'ouvre : sentir ainsi dans la même maison, de l'autre côté de la petite cour, vivre un homme qui refuse de lui parler, qui détourne la tête quand il le rencontre, ou qui prend soin de sortir à d'autres heures pour éviter ces rencontres mêmes…chaque jour de cette dernière année, Youssef est devenu pour Hakim le représentant de la ville entière, par lequel tous les autres (et même ceux qui continuent à le saluer, les plus lâches à s'arrêter , à bavarder) entendent lui rappeler qu'il n'est plus leur frère. Plus jamais celui qu'on estimait jadis, qu'on prenait en considération, même quand ce n'était que dans la forme ; et, la forme, pour cette bourgeoisie appauvrie, compte tant encore. Désormais, ni compromis, ni

67. The phrase 'mimic man' has been borrowed from Homi Bhabha's The Location of Culture , op cit, p.88. The phrase itself has originated with V.S Naipaul in his novel The Mimic Men, op cit.

> courtoisie. Hakim est de l'autre bord ; objet valet ou allié de l'ennemi, peu importe. (Les enfants, 91)
>
> Hakim braces himself. Every time he thinks of Youssef the wound opens anew–living in the same house on the other side of the courtyard, sensing the man who lives there and refuses to speak to him, who turns his head when he meets him, or is careful to go out at different hours to avoid meeting him altogether. Every day this past year, for Hakim, Youssef has represented the entire city and through him all those townspeople (even those who continue to greet him, while the most cowardly still stop and chat with him) who want to remind him he is no longer their brother. Never again will he be valued the way he once was, given such consideration, even if it was just a formality; and formality still counts a great deal for the impoverished middle class. From now on,neither compromise nor courtesy. Hakim belongs to the other side; objet, valet, or ally of the enemy, it matters little. (Children, 53-54)

The concept of mimicry, as we have already seen, is based on the colonized subject's attempt at resembling the colonizer. Bhabha defines it as " …the desire for a reformed , recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite…It emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal…[becoming] transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence."[68] While in Kateb's novel, the Algerian schoolboys unconsciously mimic the colonizer's values and principles through the imposed educational system, Hakim , in Assia Djebar's novel willingly attempts to resemble the French officers. He mimics them in their vile treatment of the Algerian people and seeks the approval of those he is mimicking. However, Hakim's attempt remains vain since he fails to become the French 'other' and remains a mere reproduction, a copy of the colonizer. He finds himself, accordingly, performing the identity that the French colonizer has subscribed for him. Thus, Hakim becomes a new 'other' in the colonial system, that is no more indigenous, nor fully westernized. In the novel, the French officers mistreat and mistrust Hakim, who, in turn, abuses the Algerian people with whom he comes into contact. Assia Djebar depicts Hakim in a series of scenes where he observes French officers' tortures of the Algerian people, where they reject him due to his difference, and where he attempts to diminish this difference by recurring to more violence towards his countrymen. His superiors see him as nothing more than a member of the colonized community. Despite all the efforts he makes to satisfy them, they treat him as an inferior regardless of the attempts he makes to reach their expectations. As a result, he replicates the way he is treated. He

68. The Location of Culture, op cit., p.86.

arrests his countrymen and tortures them in the same harsh and heartless way the French soldiers do.

Through the character of Hakim, Assia Djebar shows us a vicious circle of injustice. The oppressive nature of forced subordination has undermined the psyche of the colonized people. Thus, the colonial violence, be it physical or psychic, has led some of the natives to assume the mask of the colonizer and then to turn such violence upon their own people. Hakim, in fact, suffers from what Fanon calls an " internalization/epidermalization of inferiority,"[69] that is , Hakim has internalized the feeling of belonging to the inferior race advocated by the French colonizers. Instead of answering back, Hakim has interiorized this feeling of inferiority and has developed a self-hatred feeling that has extended to the whole race. As a result, he has started identifying with and emulating his French oppressors, turning his anger and frustration against his own people.

When perpetrating violence on his countrymen, Hakim demonstrates his frustration in not assuming properly the subject position shaped to the male subject. He follows the role established by the colonizers, imitating their attitudes and gestures in the hope of being considered by the center of power. This state of mind is the realization of being "almost the same, but not quite."[70] However, Hakim is still oppressed when he tries to imitate the French men's attitudes in order to be included in the mainstream. When attacking his fellowmen, he is indirectly attacking himself, in other words the oppressor within both himself and the other. The violent acts he perpetrates on the Algerian prisoners characterize the condition of oppression which surrounds both of them. Violence is perpetrated by those who oppress and are not able to see or recognize themselves in the other.

c- 'Unveiling' as an Act of Betrayal:

Touma is another Algerian who is hated by her community for her mimicry of the colonizer and her betrayal of her people. However, Touma's position is more complex than that of Hakim. As an Algerian young woman, Touma is also despised by her people for having dared to take off the veil and dress like the Europeans at a time when the veil was used as a 'political weapon' against the French colonizers' attempts at the erasure of Algerian identity and culture and assimilation of the Algerian people to the French values and beliefs.[71] In the context of the independence struggle, Touma has

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69. Fanon, Black Skin, White Face, op cit., p. 4.

70. The Location of Culture, op cit., p.86.

71. The veil represented a clear symbol of the Algerian woman's identity and sense of belonging that the French colonizers attempted, at all costs, to erase. According to Fanon, "The officials of the French administration in Algeria, committed to destroying the people's originality, and under instructions to bring about the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms

internalized the colonizers' prejudice against the Algerians and has implicitly declared her allegiance to France by the very act of unveiling herself. In fact, Algerian unveiled women were often equated with loose or immoral women and flung into the camp of evil and deprivation as Nora Allami points out: "L'avènement de la femme dévoilée dans un monde organisé par l'homme et pour l'homme constitue une effraction pour lui, sa réponse ne peut être qu'agressive ou (et) sexuelle. La place de la femme est à l'intérieur, celle qui s'affranchit est considérée comme «une fille du dehors», équivalent de «putain» et propriété de tous."[72] Touma presents an alien and disturbing image of feminism, closer to the European model than to the traditional one. As such, she becomes the constant target of ostracism from both the French and the Algerians. Moreover, Touma transgresses conventional rules on male-female interaction. Worse, Touma gives up her race and dates French men in order to be accepted by the 'other' at a time when the Algerian woman was considered as the perpetuator of cultural values and tradition, and the visible marker of difference through the practices of veiling and gender segregation. Touma is thus a threat to national identity. Consequently, she is "… banished from the realm of personhood altogether as she is deemed to only mimic the "Western" woman."[73]

Instead of differentiating herself from the 'other', the enemy, Touma wants to pass for a European, to be considered from " Marseille , ou D'Arles." (Les enfants, 147) She lives through the gaze of the French males and hates her own people who become in a reversed state of things the 'others'. Fanon calls this futile attempt of the colonized to identify with the colonizer "dual narcissism."[74]

> Touma aime que ces hommes la violent ainsi ; elle y voit une forme d'estime. Les autres, quand elle passe, ferment leur visage ! « Les autres » ; elle rectifie : « les arabes » et elle prononce ces mots en redressant la tête. Sa haine la secoue. (Les enfants, 147)
>
> Touma likes being raped this way by these men; she sees it as a form of respect. The others make their face a blank when she passes. "The others, she corrects herself, " the Arabs," and

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of existence likely to evoke a national reality directly or indirectly, were to concentrate their efforts on the wearing of the veil, which was looked upon at this juncture as a symbol of the status of the Algerian women." In A Dying Colonialism, op cit, p.23.

72. Nora Allami, Voilée, dévoilée : Etre femme dans le monde arabe. Paris: L'Harmattan,1988, pp. 29- 30.

73. Marnia Lazreg, Questioning the Veil : Open Letters to Muslim Women. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009, p.7.

74. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., p.10.

pronounces the word as she lifts her head. She shudders with hate. (Children, 90-91)

According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is the native's participation in her own death by internalizing the colonial beliefs and values to the point of eradicating oneself from existence as the main objective of colonial mimicry is not to produce sameness but to highlight difference. In the novel, Touma is imitating the hatred of the French towards the Algerians. However, she is not loved by the French either. She is rejected and distrusted by both groups. For the French, she remains the "Arabe". They see in her the exotic woman of their fantasies and want to take advantage of the body she offers to them. "Je n'ai jamais fait pareille demande à une Arabe…lorsque ma mère saura… "(Les enfants, 148) " I've never asked such a thing of an Arab girl before…If my mother knew…" (Children, 91) states one of Touma's European admirers, but his desire to enjoy himself is stronger. "Le jeune homme jette un coup d'œil bref sur la « mauresque ». peu lui importe, après tout, ce mot ; son désir seul persiste, qui l'emplit d'une sorte de somnolence froide…" (Les enfants, 149) "The young man casts a rapid glance at the "Moorish"woman. When all is said and done, that word means little to him. All that matters is his desire, which fills him with a kind of cool drowsiness." (Children, 92) However, at a time of national uprising and a desperate search of identity, it is necessary to belong to one world or the other. Because hybridity is not a viable solution in the determination of one's identity, Touma is a threat to communal stability and order. Accordingly, her final destination, the only possible resolution to her ambiguous identity, is death.[75]

Compared with Touma's 'westernization' and not wearing the veil, we can refer to another feminine character in the novel who is Algerian too and who does not wear the veil either. Hassiba is a young woman who arrives to the city by train: "Une jeune fille apparait, en robe blanche, les cheveux roulés en longue tresse sur le dos."(Les enfants, 200) "A girl in a white dress appears, her hair worn in a long braid down her back" (Children, 125) While Touma is insulted by Algerian men in the street, Hassiba is admired. "Surpris, Bachir la contemple. «Comme elle est belle! » pense-t-il, interdit." (Les enfants, 200) "Surprised, Bachir watches her. " How lovely she is !" he thinks taken aback."

75. A good example of the exotic and erotic objectification of Algerian women can be found in Malek Alloula's analytic work, The Colonial Harem. In his study, Alloula resurrects colonial postcards of Algerian women half naked , gazing at their photographer. Through his analysis of the postcards, he aims at giving the power of voice and gaze back to the models of these postcards as the latter demonstrate the imbalance of power between photographer and subject, colonizer and colonized, man and woman. For more details, see Malek Alloula, The Colonial Harem: Images of a Sub-Eroticism. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.

(Children, 125) In the novel, it is not so much the taking off of the veil that is contested as the purpose in not wearing it. During the last phase of French colonialism, Algerian women's bodies became targets for opposing communities to exert dominance. The colonists attempted to eradicate the roots of Arabo-Islamism from Algeria by initiating a campaign in order to unveil Algerian women, but the French initiative was met with a hardening of men's and women's position towards the veil by openly clinging to it. The latter became a symbol of national identity and culture. It became also a powerful counterweight against the Westernization imposed on Algerian women. But when the veil was taken off for the sake of national independence, questions of familial honor and restricted communal laws faded away in favor of the greater national cause. That is the reason why Hassiba, in the novel is admired by Bachir and the other Algerian men in the city. Despite her unveiling, she remains a figure for national purity as her white dress attests.

Indeed, the veil that was for a long time considered as a marker of national and racial identity proved to be a powerful military tool as well. It allowed women to easily conceal weapons and documents meant to be sent to nationalist members as women carrying them were able to pass through French checkpoints without being searched.[76] However, the national struggle required from some women to go unveiled and to move with more autonomy. Accordingly, the exposure of the unveiled body and the sexual appeal are what differentiate Hassiba from Touma. While Hassiba decides to go to the mountains to help her own people, Touma betrays them by denouncing them to the French officers.[77]

In his essay, "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon discusses the different connotations that the unveiling of Algerian women held for both the colonizers and the nationalist leaders. Thus, for the French colonizer, the baring of the Algerian woman's flesh implied in unveiling reflected not a desire to liberate the weak, cloistered Arab female, but rather a desire to rape and subjugate:

> The rape of the Algerian woman in the dream of a European is always preceded by the rending of the veil...With an Algerian woman, there is no progressive conquest, no mutual revelation, there is possession, rape, near murder. The act assumes a para -

76. In Muslim societies, it is forbidden for any man, except a close male relative, to touch a woman, especially in public. The French avoided, accordingly, having any physical contact with Algerian women, and not searching them at checkpoints, to avoid the wrath of the Muslim community.

77. In her study of women in the work of Assia Djebar, Victoria West states that : " during the war of independence , French authorities encouraged women to go without veils in the hope of undermining Islamic tradition. The consequence was that many of those women who unveiled joined the Algerian forces and became resistance fighters." In "Between the Harem and the Battlefield: Domestic Space in the Work of Assia Djebar" in Signs. Vol 27, N° 03, (Spring 2002), pp.873-879, p.875.

> neurotic brutality and sadism, even in a normal European. This brutality and this sadism are in fact emphasised by the frightened attitude of the Algerian woman. In the dream the woman victim screams, struggles like a doe, and as she weakens and faints, is penetrated, martyrised, ripped apart...The Europeans aggressiveness will express itself likewise in contemplation of the Algerian women's morality. Her timidity and her reserve are transformed in accordance with the commonplace laws of conflictual psychology into their opposite, and the Algerian woman becomes hypocritical, perverse, and even a veritable nymphomaniac.[78]

For the Algerian nationalist leaders, on the other hand, the unveiling of the Algerian women became a necessity for the sake of the liberation movement. In one passage, Fanon describes the reaction of the father of a young woman who challenges her community and decides to go out unveiled, despite the radical nature of such an act:

> The father was sooner or later informed. … Different persons would have claim to have seen "Zohra or Fatima unveiled, walking like a … My Lord, protect us! …" The father would then decide to demand explanations. He would hardly have begun to speak when they would stop. From the young girl's look of firmness the father would have understood that her commitment was of long standing. The old fear of dishonor was swept away… [79]

In a society where women's bodies embodied men's honor, unveiling of Algerian women became a national duty for the liberation of the country. Behind these new unveiled young women "the whole family-even the Algerian father, the authority for all things, the founder of every value-following in [their] footsteps, [became] committed to the new Algeria."[80]

However, while concessions were made from the traditions gate keepers for the sake of the mother country, no mercy or forgiveness was offered to those who betray the national cause. Thus, as Philip Dine states so well in his book Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992:

> In a revolutionary war, such as that fought by the FLN guerrillas against the French, only two positions are possible: pro and contra, with no intermediate stance being recognized either by the forces of

78. Fanon, Frantz, "Algeria Unveiled.", op cit., p.46.
79. Ibid, p.40.
80. Ibid, p. 41.

> colonial order or their insurrectionary challengers. There are thus only friends and foes in the Manichaean universe of this 'dirty' colonial war: who is not with us is, of necessity, against us, while no credence is given by either side to French liberal appeals to spare the innocents. Indeed, the doctrine of guerre révolutionnaire, whether as applied by the FLN or by its French military opponents, denies the very existence of innocence: the original sin of racial belonging, of European and Arabo-Berber ethnicity, determines each individual's role in the colonial drama, each individual's status as Self or Other, once and for all.[81]

Thus, we find in the novel a severe indictment of those, like Hakim and Touma who, in order to obtain and preserve their privileged positions in society, sell themselves and their countrymen without hesitation.

d- Economic Oppression:

Although the main concern of the two Algerian novelists has been to depict the political situation in the country, great emphasis is placed into the two novels upon poverty and exclusion and the real living conditions of the Algerians. While living in the same country, the colonizers and the colonized seem to live in two different worlds that everything separates. Like the black people in Toomer's Cane and Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, the Algerian people in Kateb's Nedjma and Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde live in drastic conditions. Indeed, social and economic grievances are also scattered throughout Assia Djebar's book, Les enfants du nouveau monde. Like Kateb Yacine, Djebar speaks of the many injustices suffered by her native people. The evocation of poverty and alienation with which the novel opens is intended to convey the suffering and the oppression of the colonized inhabitants of the town.

> Dans le vieux quartier arabe, au pied de la montagne, les maisons à façade blanche crépie à la chaux se ressemblent. Dans ces lieux où s'étendaient autrefois , de la ville maintenant agrandie, le seul faubourg- celui où les familles aisées de l'époque aimaient venir, dès la fin du printemps, pour y trouver, près des sources et des vergers proches, un peu de fraicheur- chaque demeure est le fond d'une impasse où l'on fait halte après qu'on s'est perdu dans un dédale de ruelles……(Les enfants, 13)

> In the old Arab quarter at the foot of the mountain the whitewashed houses all look alike. Before the city grew larger, this was the only place where affluent families would come to find a bit of cool air,

81. Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992 op cit., p. 188.

> near the brooks and orchards at the end of the spring. Each home is at the end of a cul de sac, where, after wandering through a maze of silent little alleyways, one must stop. (Children, 1)

While the colonized live in shared houses, the colonizers possess large pieces of land. The Algerian houses, in the novel, are composed of several rooms, each room shelters an entire family at a time whatever the number of its members. The 'colons', for their part, live in beautiful individual houses surrounded by gardens. In her analysis of architecture in Algiers during the colonial period, Zeynep Çelik states:

> Separation plays an important part in defining otherness and allows for a critical distance needed for surveillance. Racial, cultural, and historical otherness constituted the main paradigm that dominated all building activity in Algiers during the French occupation, and spatial separation in the most concrete sense reinforced the difference.[82]

The discrepancy that existed between these 'dual' cities was the most blatant manifestation of the inequality between Europeans and Algerians. As Sara Mills states when describing British colonialism in India, "colonial residences were often set in spacious landscaped grounds and built on classical lines, emphasizing the perceived imperial heritage of the inhabitants. Colonial town planning was an idealized embodiment of colonial relations."[83]

The harsh living conditions of the Algerians led some of the people to desperate actions like collaborating with the enemy and betraying their own people. This is the case of Hakim in the novel who has four children, a wife, a mother, sisters and a brother under his care. Although Assia Djebar does not defend his case, she does not go as far as make a villain out of him. Instead, he becomes a kind of tragic hero doomed to a desolate fate.

> [Chérifa] ne juge pas. Pour un peu, elle plaiderait Hakim. Est-ce sa faute s'il a, voici dix ans, choisi ce métier ? quatre enfants à nourrir, une femme ; de plus une vieille mère, des sœurs non mariées et un jeune frère dans une autre maison, plus délabrée encore que celle-ci et plus humide. (Les enfants, 79)

> [Chérifa] doesn't judge. She could almost feel sorry for Hakim. He's not really to blame for having chosen this profession ten years ago. Four children and a wife to feed; and then there is an old

82. Zeynep Çelik, Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule. California: University of California Press, 1997, p.5.

83. Feminist Postcolonial Theory, op cit., p.706.

> mother, unmarried sisters, and a young brother in a different house, even more dilapidated and humid than this one. (Children, 45-46)

Moreover, Hakim's extreme violence, even with the nearest people to him, shows that the violence perpetrated by the colonizer affects even the deepest recesses of the colonized characters' personal lives.

However, Assia Djebar shows in her novel the Algerian people's will to survive in spite of the physical intimidation, financial deprivation and the undermining of emotional stability in which they live.

> Mon époux me racontait hier qu'il avait rencontré, au marché, un vieux paysan échappé d'un de ces malheureux douars. Il s'était couché dans sa maison, une ferme avec sa réserve de blé, ses deux vaches, son âne, d'autres richesses. A son lever, les soldats étaient là. Une heure plus tard, il n'avait rien : tout brulait. Mon époux me racontait que cet homme parlait de ses malheurs comme s'ils étaient arrivés à quelqu'un d'autre…(Les enfants, 24)

> My husband told me yesterday that he's run into an old farmer at the market who had escaped from one of those wretched *douars*. He'd gone to bed in his own house, a farm with wheat reserves, his two cows, his donkey, and other possessions. When he got up the soldiers were there. An hour later he had nothing: everything was in flames. My husband told me this man was talking about his disasters as if they had happened to someone else. (Children, 8)

They are representatives of numerous Algerians who see their lives defeated by the impact of poverty, discrimination and hardship. Lack of opportunity, and extreme overwork took their toll on them.

Assia Djebar, like her male counterpart, uses fiction as a means of examining issues relating to Algerian identity, but she also explores, as we will see in the following part , the ways in which such issues may be further complicated by questions of gender and sexual difference. Indeed, as it will be shown in the next chapters, the violence and oppression perpetrated by the White/colonizer on the Black/ Algerian colonized people are not limited to public places or actual intercultural encounters between the two races but penetrate all aspects of colonized people's lives and have a direct consequence on their behavior with their own people.

PART TWO

Self and *Other in Gender Relationships*

It is impossible to fully theorize the issue of the "Other" in the colonial setting without taking into consideration one of the most crucial aspects of the problem: the gendered nature of colonialism. Helen Carr draws parallels between the colonized subjects and subjugated women in patriarchal societies by stressing the similarities in the language used to describe the 'other' in both racial and gender oppression.

> In the language of colonialism, non-Europeans occupy the same symbolic space as women. Both are seen as part of nature, not culture, and with the same ambivalence: either they are ripe for government, passive, child-like, unsophisticated, needing leadership and guidance, described always in terms of lack – no initiative, no intellectual powers, no perseverance; or on the other hand, they are outside society, dangerous, treacherous, emotional, inconstant, wild, threatening, fickle, sexually aberrant, irrational, near animal, lascivious, disruptive, evil, unpredictable.[1]

Women in patriarchal societies suffer from the same stereotypes that have 'othered' the colonized men and are placed in the same 'symbolic space' that has distanced the indigenous males from western male norms. Ania Loomba, on the other hand, argues that in the context of colonialism "sexual and colonial relationships become analogous to each other"[2] since feminism and colonialism have become linked in the process of 'othering' the colonized.

For the colonial powers, women of the colonies are often seen as inspiring sexual symbols rendered attractive by their double subjection by both the colonial world and the indigenous patriarchal order. This situation has led to their confinement and invisibility by the communities in which they live, their voices muted and their bodies hidden behind veils. In her introduction to Women and the Colonial Gaze, Tamara L. Hunt states that,

> colonial perceptions of gender – and, more specifically, of women's social, political, and economic role – [are] such an important element of colonial ideology, actions, and policy that colonial studies and women's studies both need to examine this issue in greater detail in order to develop a more complete understanding of the nature of the colonial ethos**…**[and] the complexities and interrelationships of gender and colonialism in their many guises. [3]

Accordingly, this part is aimed at examining gender representation in the works of Jean Toomer, Kateb Yacine, Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar

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1. Helen Carr, "Woman /Indian, the 'American' and his Others." Europe and Its Others. Eds, Francis Barker et al. Vol. 2. Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985, pp. 46-60, p.50.

2. Ania Loomba, op cit., p.151.

3. Tamara L. Hunt, ed. Women and the Colonial Gaze. New York: Palgrave, 2002, p.14.

and see how representation, gender and identity all interlink and influence one another. We will speak of gender as a construct of personal identity and a maker of one's individuality; that is, we will describe the ways in which gender and its own discourses affect one's position within the discourse of postcolonial identity. Moreover, we will examine societal expectations of men/women and the roles they have been assigned (public sphere being assigned to men and private /domestic sphere being assigned to women). We will show how such expectations affect men's / women's involvement in their own lives as well as in the lives of their communities.

This part is divided into two chapters: "Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Men in Toomer's Cane and Kateb's Nedjma" and "Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Women in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde." The analysis of the first chapter aims at reading male discourses as part of a unifying concern towards the definition of boundaries of sexual identities for both men and women as determined by customary values and communal laws. Women have always been regarded as creatures whose interests need to be represented by men. As a result, their voices have been muted, and their bodies hidden behind walls and veils. Thus, we have felt it necessary at this level of our research to examine the role of the female characters in male textuality. It reflects how a patriarchal society, through the lenses of its intellectual sons looks at women, and the vision of womanhood they convey and express through their fictional works. Female characters, as we will see in due course, are often denied a role of resistance in the novels, and are rather confined to subservient roles in which they are expected to be silent and submissive to the males in their lives.

Despite the differences that separate the two male writers chosen for this thesis, whether they are social, cultural, geographic or/ and religious, the literary treatment of the female characters in the works of Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine translates the attachment of the patriarchal society to past values and principles and its refusal to accept any changes to the situation of women whatever the reasons that lead to such changes. In her study of women in the Arab world, El Saadawi comes to the conclusion that:

> The image drawn of women by Arab writers and poets in more ancient times, but also in contemporary literature, does not differ except in details from that which has been depicted in the West. Whatever differences exist are mainly due to the changes in place and time, or some writers being more forward-looking than others. Variations are superficial and in no way influence the essential picture of women who remain subjugated to men by the patriarchal system, whether in the context of an industrial society, or in that of

> an agricultural setting, whether feudal or capitalist, retrograde or advanced, Eastern or Western, Christian or Muslim.[4]

In neither of the two works are the women characters examined by their creators to discover the motivations behind their actions. This is revealed mainly, as we will see in the first chapter, through the efforts of both Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine to conceive of women in symbolic terms, as bearers of racial, communal, and family values. In idealizing women as community and family caretakers and linking feminity to motherhood, the male writers restrict the role of women to that of victims and survivors.

In the second chapter, we will examine the endeavor of the female writers to deconstruct the negative vision of womanhood as framed by the male-dominated discourse. We will accordingly, examine the life of black and Algerian women as they have been presented by the two female writers we have selected for this study, and see how these women, who have been doubly oppressed by patriarchy structure and by colonialism, have been positioned as the "Other" in society, how traditional feminity functions in society, and how these women attempt to declare their subjecthood in a paternalistic society that insists upon their object status. As will be argued in due course, any attempt, from women, to raise the issue of their subordination within the home or to change the drastic situation in which they live, is condemned by the patriarchal system as a blasphemous attempt to trespass the communal laws and destroy the sacred structure of the family. Both Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar, despite their historical, racial and cultural differences, challenge the stereotypically degrading representation of women and try to reconstruct women in their respective communities as full human beings.

4. Nawal El Saadawi, The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.228.

Chapter Three
Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Men in Toomer's Cane and Kateb's Nedjma

In the previous part, we have seen how both Toomer and Kateb Yacine have subordinated the construct of gender to the construct of race by gendering the South/ Algeria feminine. In doing so, they have restricted the range of possible female identity. While the South/Algeria assumed a symbolic feminine embodiment, national identity was strongly influenced by a masculine norm. For Toomer and Kateb, women are the guardians of traditional values and guarantors of cultural identity. The desire to possess them seems rooted in a need to reestablish some connection with the past. To understand the complexity and multiplicity of the 'woman –figure' becomes the key to the liberation of the male characters from the state of alienation and powerlessness in which they live. It marks a return to the natural order of things, a reassertion of the link of continuity with tradition and the ancestral past, which has been disrupted by the colonizer/White. It is also a way to resolve the dilemma posed by a colonial reality which has defeated and undermined indigenous maleness.

Indeed, the indigenous males who have been subjugated and oppressed by the higher colonial power have no other alternative than pushing women further down on the social scale in order to reassert some of their lost virility and power. In speaking about the subaltern women's situations under colonialism, Gayatri Spivak states that, "[B]oth as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."[5] Accordingly, power relations are depicted in terms of female oppression. The patriarchal order establishes women's subordination and dependency as norms to be followed.

As we will see in the present chapter, the female characters in the two novels pay a heavy price in order to maintain society as close as possible to what is believed to be a positive model of womanhood. They tend to be archetypal and serve to fulfill some greater purpose within the male's world, as either the victims or the long-suffering heroines.

5. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory , op cit., pp. 82–83.

III.1- Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Men in Toomer's Cane

If, during slavery, little of male dominance existed in the slave cabins, the years following Emancipation witnessed a rough establishment of masculine authority in the black homes. For the black men, to be able to reconstruct their masculinity, women had to take their rightful place as subordinates to the superior will of men. They wanted them, in fact, to conform to the gender norms set by white society. According to bell hooks,

> Black men wanted to be recognized as 'men', as patriarchs, by other men, including white men. Yet, they could not assume this position if black women were not willing to conform to prevailing sexist gender norms […] After slavery ended, enormous tension and conflict emerged between black women and men as folks struggled to be self-determining. As they worked to create standards for community and family life, gender roles continued to be problematic.[6]

The above statement points to the ways in which both masculinity and feminity might be constructed in conjunction with blackness and whiteness. The black man in America has constructed his masculinity to give himself a measure of control of feminine blackness. The latter has become the passive object-nation. Her subordinate position is caused by the black man's relentless efforts to organize his 'new' world after the dominant structure of patriarchal authority of the white world. Woman's subordination becomes, accordingly, the basis upon which the black man's equilibrium and survival are built. More than that, bell hooks claims that black men oppress black women because they need to release their anger and helplessness caused by the dominant society. As such the oppression of the mainstream society is not destroying the black man but also the black community from within itself.

In Cane, the conflict between men and women shows how deeply white oppression has penetrated the recesses of black life. It has fractured the community, preventing meaningful relationships between its members. It has also prevented the community's successful self-identification and self-esteem. Yet the marginalization of black women stems not only from racism, but also from the sexual and social control of men. Indeed, many of the relationships portrayed in the novel between black women and black men involve cruelty, betrayal and humiliation, and place black men in the position of oppressors.

6. bell hooks, We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity. New York: Routledge, 2004 , p.7.

> It has been functional for the white ruling class, through its ideological apparatus, to create internal antagonisms in the black community between black men and women to divide them and to ward off effective attacks on the external system or white racism. It is a mere manifestation of the divide and conquer strategy, used by most ruling classes through the annals of man to continue the exploitation of an oppressed group. [7]

Victimized by the white ruling system for a long time, and unable to assert his manhood in front of the white man, the black man oppresses the black woman as the only means offered to him in order to prove himself to himself and to others and attain some kind of leverage with the white man even if this is done at the expense of his own people. From 'Karintha' to 'Blood Burning Moon', through the six narratives of the first section of Cane, Jean Toomer explores the controlled images of black women as the 'Other" by invoking the pain that these women actually feel. He identifies African American gender and sexuality stereotypes that have survived centuries of subjugation and oppression. From Karintha, the oversexed prostitute, to Esther, the tragic mulatta, to Louisa and Carma, 'the mules of the world', women are described as beautiful, innocent and sensuous, yet they are vulnerable, misunderstood and 'unpossessable'. These women are representatives of the marginalized due to gender and ethnic heritage. Racial and sexual oppression are responsible for their alienation, madness and death. The women in the novel respond to their oppression in a number of ways. The dramatic ending of each story, nonetheless, suggests that these women are left with no alternative to break free from the racial, sexual, and class oppression in which they find themselves.

In the present section, we are going to analyse the portraits of the different female characters depicted in Toomer's work. It is to be noted, however, that we have divided these characters into categories according to our own understanding of both Toomer's work and the historical context in which it was written and published.

a- The Oversexed Prostitute:

Karintha is a young black woman of extreme beauty. She personifies the physical beauty for which men yearn. "Men had always wanted her, this Karintha, even as a child, Karintha carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down." (Cane,3). Having matured too quickly, Karintha becomes the center of sexual desire of men, old and young.

7. Robert Staples, "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy" in The Black Scholar, Jan-Feb 1970, p, 15.

> Old men rode her hobby-horse upon their knees. Young men danced with her at frolics when they should have been dancing with their grown-up girls. God grant us youth secretly prayed the old men. The young fellows counted the time to pass before she would be old enough to mate with them. (Cane, 3)

'Karintha' thus, incorporates one of the most humiliating aspects of southern black women's lives, that of sexual oppression. This form of oppression, has been, as already mentioned, for long centuries, part of the life of black women, first as slaves, then as victims of white men's racism and stereotypes. These women bear the brunt of racialized and sexist ideas about them as "everybody's mother(s) and nobody's wom(e)n". The reductive gaze to which they have been eternally subjected has made of them sex objects rather than full human beings.

The objectification of black women as creatures of sex has, nonetheless, not been used by white people alone. In the story of Karintha, Toomer depicts another aspect of black women's sexual oppression, that of their abuse by members of their own community, the black men who are supposed to defend and protect them but who, in reality, objectify them, in the same way as their white counterparts, as a way to legitimize their sexual and social exploitation. "[Toomer] demonstrates how a community horrendously oppressed from the outside further oppresses itself by destroying its most valuable assert–the psychological and emotional health of the young women who later become the bearers of its sons and daughters."[8] Karintha, in fact, stands for the powerlessness of women in a society where men dominate. As victim and objet of male exploitation, Karintha is deprived of her own humanity. Men's actions have degraded, dominated and humiliated her. Her beauty and attractiveness, instead of being sources of joy and happiness in her life, meant 'no good to her' and foreshadowed misery and unfortune for her. Unable to protect herself against the desire of men, she responded naturally and instinctively to their urges, regardless of the attitude of society or the consequences of her acts on her own life.

At twenty, Karintha has reached her full womanhood, she still carries 'beauty perfect as dusk when the sun goes down' (Cane, 2) but she has lost an important aspect of her personality. Karintha changes from an innocent child to a cynical and alienated woman. She has had many men, but no one got her warmth and tenderness. Unmarried and pregnant, Karintha is incapable of mothering. Her only alternative is to leave her child to die: "Karintha is a woman, and she has had a child. A child fell out of her womb onto a bed of pine-needles in the forest. Pine-needles are smooth and sweet. They are elastic to the feet of rabbits…." (Cane, 4) Rudolph Byrd explains that "Karintha feels nothing for the child she leaves to die in the forest, because experience has

8. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p, 91.

taught her that life, particularly female life, is neither sacred nor meaningful."[9] In fact, Karintha offers her body to men who will never understand her soul. "Men do not know that the soul of her was a growing thing ripened too soon. They will bring their money; they will die not having found it out." (Cane, 4) Men who seek the feminine essence of Karintha ignore her soul and concentrate only on her body and what it can offer as temporary pleasure.

Karintha becomes hardened by men's exploitation and corruption. To revenge from society, from men, and from her, Karintha prostitutes herself. In her study of 'Karintha' in her book, Jean Toomer, Artist**:** A Study of His Literary Life and Work, Nelly Y. McKay comes to the conclusion that:

> In "Karintha," Toomer examines three strands of oppression in black southern life: the oppression of black women by black men, the communal self-destructiveness of intraracial oppression, and the oppression of the weaker black community by the stronger white community. The first serves as a metaphor for the internal breakdown of moral responsibility, which leads to the second, and together they have an impact that makes the third even more devastating than it would be alone.[10]

By killing her baby and refusing to engage emotionally with any of the men she meets, even though she offers her 'body' to them, Karintha defiantly voices her absolute sovereignty over her body and what it produces.

b- The 'Virgin' Prostitute:

Fern, another woman character in the novel, is also perceived as a sexual object rather than a flesh and blood person with feelings and desires of her own. Fern is a 'creamy- colored solitary girl' whose power of attraction is in her eyes. "Face flowed into her eyes. Flowed in soft cream foam and plaintive ripples, in such a way that wherever your glance may momentarily have rested, it immediately thereafter wavered in the direction of her eyes. (Cane, 14)Men looked into Fern's eyes and 'fooled themselves' thinking they saw their sexual needs mirrored in them. But her eyes were indifferent, they 'desired nothing that… [the men] could give her; there was no reason why they should withhold." (Cane,14)

When she was very young, 'a few men took her', but as in the case of Karintha, 'they got no joy from it'. Their frustrations generated feelings of obligations to her, 'they felt bound to her', and yet, they did not know how or what to do to assure themselves they were paying their debts to her. Baffled and ashamed in their failures, they vowed to do "some fine thing for her", send

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9. Rudolph P. Byrd, Jean Toomer's Years with Gurdjieff: Portrait of an Artist 1923– 1936. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990, p. 27.

10. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p. 94.

her money, buy her expensive gifts, or rescue her from an unworthy husband or a white lover. Then, because 'men are apt to idolize or fear that which they cannot understand', they worshipped her instead and 'she became a virgin'. (Cane, 14) In fact, the men who wanted to help Fern were all unable to see her as a person rather than only as a woman. They were completely incapable of perceiving her any other way than as a sexual object. Although the narrator claims that he is attached to her for spiritual rather than sexual reasons, he too fails to understand her, and wishes, like the other men, to secure her future for her. In response to their protection and love, Fern has to nullify her social life and dedicate herself to the men around her. Throughout the story, Fern is felt as a spiritually inferior creature unable to think or to decide for herself. Fern tries to resist male sexual urges and oppression through music, but eventually resorts to silence as a means to protect herself. She gropes for a spiritual realization which she does not discover in the physical realities of sexual intercourse. With time, she becomes exhausted with the futility of her struggle and loses consciousness. In some ways, this allows her to take control of her identity and protect her soul from destruction.

c- The Unconventional Wife:

Contrary to the other feminine characters in the novel, Carma is neither frail nor dependent. Her unconventiality defies all the standards of what a wife should be 'Carma in overalls, and strong as any man, stands behind the old brown mule, driving the wagon home.' (Cane,12) The narrator himself is mesmerized by the vision of this woman full of force and vitality, symbol of African heritage and ancient glory. Her rejection of the gender roles as sweet and docile imposed on southern women is seen through her actions. She is strong and practical and her gender does not dictate her deeds. Carma illustrates even more effectively her deviance from society's norms and from conventional standards of housewifery by being unfaithful to her husband. Indeed, while Carma's husband, Bane has been away from home, working with a contractor, Carma has been out with other men. When Bane faces her with the accusations, she denies everything. Bane insists and his anger grows. When the couple fights, Toomer shows Carma's first display of weakness: "Words, like corkscrews, wormed to her strength. It fizzled out." (Cane, 13) Thus, despite her physical strength, Carma too is a victim of the sexual politics prevailing in the black community.

Unable to reduce her husband's anger or to convince him of her innocence, Carma grabs a gun and flees from the house into the canebrake. Her husband fears to follow her until the sound of a gunshot tells him she has shot herself. Asking assistance from neighbors, they search for her and find her. Her posture, when they find her, leads them to believe that she has killed herself, and they feel that they are returning home with 'dead weight'. Later, they discover that Carma is just playing dead. Being deceived and furious at her

trick, Bane slashes one of the neighbors who have helped in finding her. "Twice deceived, and one deception proved the other. His head went off. Slashed one of the men who'd helped, the man who'd stumbled over her. Now he is in the gang. Who was her husband? Should she not take others, this Carma, strong as a man…?" (Cane, 12-13) Now Bane is on the chain gang, and the townspeople wonder what will become of Carma.

Carma's husband, who is obliged to leave his beautiful wife for long periods of time in order to provide food for his family, feels frustrated and oppressed by the conditions around him. Unable to better his situation, he transmits his hopelessness to his wife. In an attempt to regain his power and self-confidence, he victimizes his wife. bell hooks claims that African American males are oppressing females because they need to release their anger and helplessness caused by the dominant society. They impose violence and silence on women as a means to reclaim their maleness and masculinity as a result of being subjugated by the white counterparts. However, the oppression does not end with women as women oppress their children. This sequential oppression with the mainstream society as the first oppressor is thus never-ending and destroys the African American society from within itself. In the novel, despite Carma's physical strength and economic independence, the young woman cannot free herself from sexual oppression. Being unable to bear any longer the unbridled anger of her husband, she recurs to deception. Carma's disappearance into the cane brake signals her distress, for she must find a way to deceive her jealous husband, Bane; the gunshot in the canebrake is Carma's cry of desperation.

Carma's story, in reality, sheds light on another aspect of black people's life,that of domestic violence perpetuated on black women by their black husbands or lovers. Very often, these victims and survivors of physical, sexual, or/and psychological violence are silenced in the name of racial solidarity. They are made to believe that complaining about their male partners' violent acts would elicit criticism against the race and perpetuate white people's stereotypes about black men as brutes and rapists. In his research work on Black families in the South, Jack Temple Kirby states that domestic misery and violence were frequent components of everyday life in the rural South. Based on thousands of oral and written testimonies documenting the interpersonal lives of black people during the first half of the twentieth century, Kirby concludes that: "There are assuredly scenes of satisfaction, security, sometimes bliss .... But the corpus of this large, if haphazard, collection of testimony contains far more instances of unhappiness, especially among women. Marriage was a cruel trap, motherhood often a mortal burden; husbands were too often obtuse, unfaithful, drunken, and violent. The collective portrait is less one of bliss than of pathos."[11] In

11. Jack Temple Kirby, Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987, pp.169-70.

Toomer's novel, the picture is not very different. The writer represents Southern black women as isolated or destroyed because they have ignored society's restrictions on women. Indeed, there is little support for women from a community oriented towards mores of dominance and domesticity, towards validating only speaking men and silent women. Thus men cause pain and psychological downfall of women, but there are no sanctions enacted against them.

d- The Outcast Woman:

Esther comes from a community whose people either ignore or victimize her because of her skin color. Being self-conscious, she does not have a chance to perceive herself differently from the picture drawn of her by her community. As such, Esther retreats into frigidity after offering herself and being rebuffed and humiliated. Half-white, sex starved, Esther is forced from her world of sexual fantasies. At age nine, she is oblivious to both black and white men of the town, but one day, she sees Barlo, "a clean-muscled, magnificent black-skinned Negro" as he drops to his knees in a trance at a spot called, for its value as a communal spitting place, the Spittoon. The white men who are spitting there are oblivious of Barlo's presence and thus continue spitting, covering his face with tobacco juice. At this moment Barlo becomes Esther's sexual, social and spiritual savior. In Esther's confused state, a dreamy delusional aloofness, she believes that sexual union with Barlo will help her win the respect and security she longs for from the townsfolk. Instead of flourishing under Barlo's love, Esther's inexpressible desire corrupts her appearance: "her hair thins. It looks like the dull silk on puny corn ears. Her face pales until it is the color of the gray dust that dances with dead cotton leaves."(Cane, 25) Esther becomes synonymous with dust, an allusion that denotes the body's inevitable decay and return to the earth.

When Esther's dream of attaining blackness and sexual fulfillment through her romanticzation of King Barlo proves absurdly unattainable, she goes mad. Yet, Esther's mental illness gives her clarity of vision: she finally perceives Barlo as "ugly and repulsive" but it is too late. Because of the multiple factors that position Esther as inferior, the young woman moves from being the outcast through despair and destruction to a complete loss of her mind and identity. While comparing Esther with Karintha in Cane, Nellie McKay comes to the conclusion that: "They have one thing in common: they are girls in a world in which the attentions of men have crucial impact on their lives. Karintha's soul is destroyed because at an inappropriate time of her life men shower her with inappropriate attentions; Esther's has a similar fate because they never pay her any attention."[12]

12. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., pp.111-12.

e- The 'Sexual Object' Woman:

Louisa in "Blood-Burning Moon" is another woman whose physical beauty stirs the sexual desire of men. Louisa is "color of oak leaves on young trees in fall…breasts firm and up-pointed like ripe acorns." (Cane, 30-31). As we have already seen, Louisa is the apex of René Girard's triangulated desire, whose other angles are her two lovers, white Bob Stone, son of her employers, and black Tom Burwell. Both men claim her as their personal possession and compete for winning her. However, neither of them asks her opinion or gives her the chance to choose the partner with whom she wants to stay. Her own desire and will are irrelevant to the two men. In fact, Louisa is simply an object of desire in the interracial love triangle of power. Offended that the woman he wants would make love with a black man, Bob Stone goes to Louisa's home, where he finds her in the arms of Tom. Incapable of defeating Tom physically, he draws a knife, but Tom skilled at such fighting cuts Bob's throat. In self-defense, Tom has killed a white man, for this he is lynched beneath the blood-burning moon. While Bob is slashed and Tom is lynched, Louisa loses her mind. As a woman, she is the final victim of abusive male sexual power and control.

Many feminist critics have accused Girard of reinforcing women's passivity and objectification in his triangle of desire by casting the female/object as a commodity of exchange lacking action, power, and intelligence. In fact, the role of the female object in the French theorist's triangle is reduced to something of almost no importance, with no space for her, while all the emphasis in the triangulated relationship is on the two male rivals' mimetic double. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for example, states that the triangulated desire oppresses women through a strengthening of male bonds.[13] Since the bond between the two male rivals becomes stronger than any feeling toward the female object, women are forced to figure both objectively and symbolically as contested property. On the other hand, Arthur Brittan explains in his book, Masculinity and power, that making a woman an object of desire places her in a physically and politically subordinate position like that of an exploited colony in the hands of its colonizers since men seek mastery and domination over each other through women.[14] Thus, in Toomer's story, Bob Stone' competitive rivalry over Louisa is more about preserving his hierarchical status and proving his masculinity to his rival than a real desire for the young woman. At the same time, Tom Burwell aims at showing Bob that he is his equal, if not superior to him, at least physically speaking. In this sense the love triangle between the three young people can be read in allegorical terms. Bob Stone represents a fading system of control of the black people/ black woman's body, Tom Burwell stands for the emerging new Negro,

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13. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p.66.

14 . Arthur Brittan, Masculinity and power, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

fighting to restore his lost manhood, while Louisa symbolizes the eternally oppressed and subjugated female body.

F- The Frustrated Woman:

'Box Seat' tells of Dan Moore, whose dreams of being a militant Messiah fade into his impotence. Frustrated because Muriel, a school teacher, resists his impassioned advances, and infuriated by a world that categorizes people as the accepted or the freaks, Dan challenges the traditions of that world, but forgets that he has offered the challenge. 'Bona and Paul' on the other hand is located in Chicago, where the two protagonists attend a college of physical education. Paul Johnson is black; Bona is white and southern-bred. After striving to repress their mutual attraction, they yield during ecstatic dancing. Too self-conscious however, they cannot realize themselves spiritually or physically. Seeing mockery in the eyes of a black doorman, Paul poses to assure the man that he and Bona are going outside for spiritual rather than physical consummation. By the time Paul reaches the street, Bona has disappeared.

Although both central characters of "Theater" are Afro-American, they stand on different social levels. John is the brother of theater manager, Dorris is a dancer. Despite their mutual attraction, neither can free himself sufficiently to translate desire into action. Dorris tries to express her feelings by dancing before John. But john's mind "contained above desire of his body. He wills thought to rid his mind of passion" (Cane, 92-93). Fearing that Dorris will ridicule him if he relinquishes this self-control, he dreams of their union, but he does not act. Black men, thus appear to lose opportunities for redemption and endure instances in which a bewildered, isolated soul is forced to make crucial choices and experience his consequences as failures. They are the cause of the distorted way in which they relate to women. In The New Negro Woman, Cherene Sherrard-Johnson affirms that: "The logic of Cane argues that women's oppression can be relieved only if men become more spiritually aware. Indeed, the women's stories of betrayal, abuse, and the misunderstandings of white and black society constitute a microcosm of oppression."[15] In analyzing women characters in Cane, McKay comes to the conclusion that:

> He [Toomer] saw the oppression of women as a microcosm of a larger oppression—that of the entire social system. What many men did not perceive, he thought, was that in restricting women's options to fulfill themselves, they too were oppressed. For men to be free, women had to have similar opportunities to develop creatively.[16]

15. The New Negro Woman, op cit., p. 122.
16. Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p. 71.

Through his depiction of the suffering of black women within their community, Toomer recognizes that interracial differences based on class gender and geography lead only to a continual strengthening of the black-white racial dichotomy. This is most evident in the ways in which Toomer explores internal difference within the African American community.

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that from Karintha to Louisa, Toomer's women find themselves on the periphery of their communities because of their longing for and partaking of sexual encounters. They are ruined by the masculine 'other' as their gender makes them simultaneously possessable. As a consequence, they become connected in their difference and their isolation. However, the unregenerate nature of the men in their lives is derivative by a system that has been unfair to them. While women are shown as primitive beings, instinctively seeking gratification and realization, men are shown as repressed and frustrated beings. They live mainly in fantasies and dreams.

As women represent, most of the time, the ancestral roots, men can only dream of them and imagine a sexual relationship with them. No one can really face the hardships of their lives and treat them as flesh and blood beings. This inability of men to understand women proves their inability to find their true identity:

> Toomer goes on to make the South the 'other' at another important level by figuring geography as female in relation to his northern male narrator(s)…the male narrators try to come to some deeper understanding of the South by observing its women, but difference in gender almost always precludes any bridging of the geographic gap.[17]

On the other hand, in trying to reconstitute their own ancestral past through women, men trap them into restrictive roles, reconstituting a type of slavery. Their lives become overwhelmed by the horror of racial injustice and oppression. The figure of the "Portly Negress" clearly illustrates this intersection between women bodies and history.

> A soil-soaked fragrance comes from her. Through the cement floor her strong roots sink down. They spread under the asphalt streets. […] Her strong roots sink down and spread under the river and disappear in blood-lines that waver south. (Cane, 62)

In fact, the black men in Cane behave in the same way the white masters used to behave towards black women during slavery, and even after. Black men, in

17. Authentic Blackness, op cit., p.68.

the sketches, imitate the whites in considering black women as temporary sexual objects.

> The very unnaturalness of slavery—the blind chaos of a disenfranchising economics, of industry, and of unfree labor—forced an unnatural development of African America with a result that is itself naturally chaotic, vengeful, and self-destructive. To this end, the men in "Karintha" and in most of the first part of Cane are shadowy, even amorphous figures, without identity, without conscience or sensibility. Their development has been fragmented, splintered by both the heritage of slavery and the urgencies of a new, industrializing twentieth-century America that can find no place for them. The dehumanizing effects of slavery behind and the lure of the Northern metropolitan milieu before had distorted those elements of African American culture which at one time could have fortified African American manhood. Now these elements appear only as signposts to his defeat, portions of a self to which he is now not admitted, or of which he often is not even aware.[18]

These feelings of impotence and frustration are best seen in Toomer's second series of stories in Cane, mainly, 'Box Seat', 'Bona and Paul', and 'Theater' where men are shown as not being able to live up to the expectations of women. In the three stories, as we have already seen, the protagonists are frustrated by the conflict between will and desire.

It remains however that despite the fact that Toomer emphasizes the need for African American women to liberate themselves from the repressive forces of their patriarchal society, he fails to give them the appropriate tools to do so. Throughout Cane, the women characters are mute, either silenced by the men in their lives or by the environment in which they live. We do not even know what happens in their minds. They do not seem to have the will to fight or to try and change the condition in which they find themselves.

III.2- Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Men in Kateb's Nedjma

> Avec Nedjma, quand j'ai voulu camper le personnage, je me suis rendu compte à quel point nous ignorons pratiquement tout de nos femmes, de nos propres sœurs. Et avec la mère, la rupture a lieu dès l'enfance. Ce monde des femmes reste une grande inconnue et il est temps de le mettre en lumière. Evidemment, la première chose est l'histoire. Elle, l'histoire remonte au passé.

18. Nathan Grant, Masculinist Impulses, op cit., p. 24.

> Elle éclaire déjà une grande partie du vécu, on arrive à l'actualité à travers elle, et là, on peut y voir un peu plus clair.[19]

In the Algerian male fiction, too, society is partitioned along the rigid lines of gender. Each gender has different sex-roles and assumes different functions so much that the worlds of men and women are completely different. Men's domain is the public life whereas women are confined to the private space of the home.[20] Women stand for the model of a womanhood which has been forged by culture and ideology. Accordingly, they bear the burden of preserving the distinct, non-western identity of national culture as well as the meaning and cohesion of society.[21] The Algerian people's longing for the affirmation for everything that was 'authentically' Algerian and that was previously negated by the French colonizers trapped women in roles confined by traditions and patriarchy. They "…became the double prisoners of this nationalist antithesis of everything French."[22] Women's voice and visibility were, accordingly, sacrificed on the altar of national identity.

In the same way as in the previous section, we have felt it necessary to divide women characters in Kateb's work into different categories according to our own understanding of the writer's portrayal of Algerian women and their evolution from the Insurrection of 1945 to the beginning of the war of independence in 1954.

a- The Woman as the Keeper of Traditions:

Although very few details are given in Kateb's novel about the lives of women and the upbringing of female children, the writer's work is no exception. Kateb distinguishes between the function of men and that of women in society. Women are not absent from the world of men, but they are absent from the political action to which men give the greatest importance. Instead of being depicted as political or military actors in the unfolding of their country's

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19. Antoinette Fouque, Kateb Yacine, Parce que c'est une femme. Paris: Editions Des femmes, 2004, p. 38.

20. In an article for the newspaper El Moudjahid in May 1957, Fanon described the position of the Algerian woman as 'Dans la famille algérienne, la fille est toujours à un cran en arrière du garçon [...] la jeune fille, dans l'ensemble, n'a pas l'occasion de développer sa personnalité ni de prendre des initiatives. Elle prend place dans le vaste réseau de traditions domestiques de la société algérienne. La vie de la femme au foyer, faites de gestes séculaires, ne permet aucun renouvellement [...]La femme dans une société sous développée et principalement en Algérie est toujours une mineur et l'homme , frère , oncle et mari , représente d'abord un tuteur'. Cited in Sociologie d'une revolution. Paris : Maspero, 1965, p. 91.

21. Winifred Woodhull writes, "women are the guarantors of national identity, no longer simply as guardians of traditional values but as symbols that successfully contain the conflicts of the new historical situation" in Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p.11.

22. Peter R. Knauss, The Persistence of Patriarchy: Class, Gender, and Ideology in Twentieth Century Algeria. New York. : Praeger Publishers, 1987.p .xiii.

nationalist cause, Algerian women in Nedjma are relegated to a very reductive and minor role, and are credited with a minimal importance.

This distinction between men and women has its roots in the colonial discourse which depicts the colonized territories as subdued and passive women "available for plunder, possession, discovery and conquest" while women's bodies "symbolize conquered land" [23]. In addition, the colonizer is almost always portrayed as a powerful masculine figure while the colonized is often bestowed with femaleness. The father/husband who has been defeated and made to suffer daily humiliation at the hands of the colonizer vents his frustration and feeling of castration on his wife and daughters. He looks back with fondness and nostalgia to the pre-colonial days when there was strict segregation between the sexes and when women were passive and invisible "The devastating effects that this 'age of surrender' had on the defeated men's sense of honor nurtured nostalgia for a 'golden age of the past' in which male prerogatives were unquestioned."[24] As a consequence, the strict segregation between the sexes has drawn its foundations and impetus from indigenous pre-colonial and religious sources. It has sprung to light under colonial pressure that has 'feminized' the colonized male.

In her article, 'All the Men are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women are Mourning their Men, but Some of us Carried Guns', Aaronette White states that nationalist conflicts allow colonized men to restore 'both imaginary and real status' they had held before colonial rule. However, this revival often necessitated articulating dominion over women.[25] This can perhaps explain why the patriarchal grasp on Algerian women cannot be easily slackened or eroded. Rachid, one of the protagonists in Nedjma, illustrates well this idea when he says, "Le prophète a raison. Faut pas mélanger les femmes et les hommes." (Nedjma, 211) " The prophet's right. Men and women should be kept apart." (Nedjma, 282) In reality, the difference between the two sexes develops very early in the Algerian people's minds. Young men are excluded from the 'world' of women at a very early age. They are also encouraged by their community to hide any feelings which might be described as feminine, or at the worst, effeminate. A good illustration in the novel is Rachid's desire to kiss his sick father that is obstructed by the presence of his two sisters in the room. " Je voudrais l'embrasser quand il dort, tranquillement, sans que les filles me voient" (Nedjma, 209) " I'd like to kiss him when he's asleep, quietly, without the girls' seeing me. " (Nedjma, 279) This distinction between the world of men and that of women in the Arab world is well-explained by Nawel El Saadawi. The Egyptian sociologist explains that:

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23. Ania Loomba, op cit., pp.151-152.

24. The Persistence of Patriarchy, op cit., p .17.

25. Aaronette M. White, 'All the Men are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women are Mourning their Men, but Some of us Carried Guns: A Raced-Gendered Analysis of Fanon's Psychological Perspectives on War,' Signs, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2007, p. 862.

> The male child is taught from the very beginning to project his personality and how to prepare for a man's life involving strength, responsibility, authority , and a positive attitude in the face of difficulties. A girl, on the other hand, is trained and educated right from the start to shrink into a corner, to withdraw and to hide her real self because she is a female and is being prepared for the life of a woman, a life where she must be passive and weak, and must surrender to the domination of the man and be dependent on him.[26]

Such a situation is mainly revealed by the efforts of patriarchal discourse to conceive of women in symbolic terms as a repository of collective memory. In the context of Algeria, Peter Knauss states:

> In order to reclaim the sense of manhood of which they believed colonialism had deprived them, Algerian males often demanded their traditional "right" to dominate the domestic sphere of Algerian life. They were ripe for appeals reaffirming traditional male prerogatives and reaffirming Islam as central to their identity.[27]

Restoring masculinity for the Algerian males has entailed restoring the right of an older order of social organization that prevailed under ancestral patriarchy, and that would bestow on women the values of a-historical and invisible. Thus, the drive to return to the past and the evocations of its golden preeminence has served males' desire to keep women under patriarchal control. In the light of this argument, it is interesting to note that Kateb Yacine's Nedjma falls into the trap of reproducing a traditional segregation operating on the pattern of the gender binary division, reproducing women as voiceless and invisible as well as the eternal keepers of traditions and societal values.

Indeed, although Kateb Yacine seems progressive in so far as his views on social justice and his advocacy of the emancipation of women are concerned, his depiction of women and his attitude towards them in his novel, do not differ much from those of his predecessors. El Saadawi's comments on Arab contemporary writers' depiction of women in their literary works fit perfectly Kateb's description of Algerian women in his novel, mainly Nedjma. According to her,

> […] contemporary men of letters in the Arab world have not travelled very far from the position held by their ancestors hundreds of years ago, nor does the image they paint of women differ much from the exotic curves of the slave women heroines in the ' classic' *A Thousand and One Nights.* Woman continues to appear on the scene as a capricious vamp, a playful and beautiful slave, a she-

26. The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.120.
27. The Persistence of Patriarchy, op cit., p.25.

> devil imbued with cunning and capable of a thousand artifices, an explosive danger versed in all the arts of deceit and conspiracy, a seductive mistress captivating in her passion. She is as positive and dynamic as Satan and his evil spirits, wherever matters of love and sex are concerned.[28]

Such traditionalist and negative descriptions of Arab women are not different from the image of women Kateb draws in his novel. As we will come to see, the male characters in the literary work accuse Nedjma, the main female character, of being seductive, deceitful, unfaithful, and a danger for the sanity and well-being of the males who fall preys to her seductiveness and charms.

b- The Inaccessible Woman:

The woman who had the greatest impact on Kateb's life was certainly his cousin Nedjma. Kateb met her just after the events of May 1945; when his father sent him to pursue his studies in a secondary school in Bône/Annaba. A lot of stories have been written about this mysterious woman. Nonetheless, all critics seem to agree that she was the real model for the Nedjma of the novel and the plays. Nedjma was a married woman with whom Kateb fell in love. The same details, slightly altered are found in the novel. "Nedjma" says Kateb " n'est pas une création de l'esprit, c'est une femme qui a bel et bien existé."[29] But for Kateb, Nedjma was his impossible love, strong and hurtful at the same time "Il s'agissait d'un amour impossible […] par conséquent il y a eu rupture."[30] The impact of Nedjma's love is to be found in all of Kateb's works, especially in Soliloques and in Le Cadavre encerclé.

Accordingly, the same feminine figure that is flesh and blood, as well as symbol of Algeria, becomes the central figure in Kateb's work. Nedjma which means 'star' in Arabic is the name of a mysterious and inaccessible woman who haunts the lives of the male characters who seem unable to reach the star and free themselves from her obsession, chained forever to her myth.

> Visage de Prison qui prononçait son nom de cellule en cellule, sans parler de Mourad et sans parler du bagne, sans parler de l'aveugle, un nommé Mustapha qui poursuivait son ombre en une autre prison, lui qui avait pourtant franchi les portes mais il ne savait pas qu'il était libéré. (Le polygone étoilé, 149)

In contrast to the conventional feminine roles prevailing in Algerian literature during the colonial period, Nedjma projects an ambiguous image of womanhood, away from the traditional view of women as essentially

28 . The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.238.

29. Kacedali kheddar Assia, L'Espace comme enjeu chez trois écrivains d'Algérie : R. Randau , A. Camus, Y. Kateb . Alger: OPU, 1988, p. 217.

30. Ibid.

subordinate, silent and passive. Indeed, as a flesh and blood figure, Nedjma would like to escape the traditional woman's role imposed by society. From her early girlhood, she develops a strong desire for independence and refuses the submission which the society expects of a female.

> …la féminité de Nedjma est ailleurs; le premier mois de l'école, elle pleure chaque matin; elle bat tous les enfants qui l'approchent; elle ne veut pas s'instruire avant d'apprendre à nager; à douze ans, elle dissimule ses seins douloureux comme des clous, gonflés de l'amère précocité des citrons verts; elle n'est toujours pas domptée; (Nedjma, 78)

> …Nedjma's feminity is elsewhere ; the first month at school, she cried each morning ; she hit all the children who came near her; she wouldn't learn her lessons before learning to swim; at twelve she concealed her breasts that were as painful as nails, swollen with the bitter precocity of green lemons;her spirit is still unbroken; (Nedjma, 104)

At the age of twelve, Nedjma seems already conscious of the limits her gender impose on her , so she conceals her breasts, symbols of her feminity in an attempt to reject the role assigned to her by tradition. When Mustapha sees her, years later, Nedjma dresses as the emancipate woman she would like to be, in a costume that hides her breasts, but which allows her unveiled face to show all its expressiveness:

> *Elle était revêtue d'une ample cagoule de soie bleu pale, comme en portent depuis peu les marocaines émancipées; cagoules grotesques ; elles escamotent la poitrine , la taille, les hanches tombent tout d'une pièce aux chevilles ; pour un peu, elles couvriraient les jambelets d'or massif (la cliente en portait un très fin et très lourd)…Ces cagoules dernier cri ne sont qu'un prétexte pour dégager le visage, en couvrant le corps d'un rempart uniforme, afin de ne pas donner prise aux sarcasmes des puritains[…]elle m'a parlé en français. Désir de couper les ponts*… (Nedjma, 72)

> *She was wearing a wide hood of pale blue silk, the kind emancipated Moroccan women wear now; funny hoods; they cover the breast, the waist, the hips, fall straight to the ankles; a little more and they'd cover the gold anklets(the customer was wearing a very fine and heavy one)…the new hoods are only an excuse to show the face by covering the body with a uniform rampart, so as not to give any excuse for prudish criticism[…]she spoke to me in French. Trying to cut off all communication.*… (Nedjma, 96)

Nedjma even offers herself in marriage to her cousin Mourad if the latter would take her to Algiers where she would realize her dreams of emancipation. However, and despite her ability to manipulate the male protagonists in her quest towards empowerment, Nedjma is caught in the network of patriarchal traps. Within a culture where women remain closely guarded within the family if not within the walls of the house and is given little responsibility beyond housekeeping and bearing and educating children, Nedjma, in the novel, is left with little means of escape from the narrow role to which she is condemned. Her fate has been to be forced into marriage.

Although Nedjma's marriage to her cousin Kamel curtails her dreams of emancipation, she conducts herself as she pleases and refuses to act pleased for her husband's sake.

> Invivable consomption du zénith. Ce matin, Nedjma s'est levée tout endolorie; elle n'a pas fait honneur aux aubergines mijotées de Lella Fatma; Kamel est rentré sans faire de bruit, le cœur lourd de journaux invendus et de tabac vendu à crédit ! Contenant sa faim, l'homme décroche le luth ; il tente de s'associer au spleen conjugal. Nedjma s'enfuit au salon, les sourcils froncés. Le musicien sent fondre son talent dans la solitude ; il raccroche le luth ; le calme de Kamel ne fait que l'affubler du masque de cruauté que Nedjma compose à qui ne tombe pas dans son jeu ; elle pleure sans prendre garde aux protestations de Lella Fatma :…un homme si bon, tout en miel… (Nedjma, 68)

> Unendurable consumption of the zenith. This morning, Nedjma woke up sore all over; she has not done well by Lella Fatma's simmering egg-plants; Kamel has come home without making a sound, his heart heavy with unsold papers and tobacco sold on credit! Satisfying his hunger, the husband takes down the lute; he tries to associate himself with the conjugal spleen. Nedjma flees to the living room, frowning. The musician fels his talent collapsing in the solitude; he hangs the lute up again; Kamel's passivity merely thickens the mask of cruelty Nedjma assumes against anyone who doesn't fall into her trap; she weeps, ignoring Lella Fatma's protests: "such a good man, so sweet…(Nedjma, 91-92)

What is more is that despite her marriage, Nedjma demonstrates liberties with her cousins that are not supposed to be permitted in such a conservative society. An example of the liberties which Nedjma exercises is when she comes back from the aborted pilgrimage finding her cousins having dinner in the villa. Taking Lakhdar by the hand, she dances in the direction of her bedroom, having singled him out to fulfill her amorous impulses. "Elle n'entra pas, dansa en direction de la chambre nuptiale, entrainant Lakhdar par la main[…] L'étreinte fut d'une intensité jamais atteinte ; Nedjma pleurait."

(Nedjma, 244) " She did not go in, danced off toward the nuptial chamber, gaily leading Lakhdar by the hand[…]The embrace had an unheard of intensity; Nedjma cried". (Nedjma, 327-28) In the same way as Carma in Toomer's Cane, Nedjma escapes the unhappy marriage in which she finds herself by having extra conjugal relationships with other men.

c- The Woman as Myth:

At the mythical level, all the male characters are cast into the spell of Nedjma whose power and beauty paralyze them. They all seek her love and a passionate relationship with her. They dream about her and they become mad because of her. But this passionate love that each of the male characters feels for the same woman means also their love for a country that no one can keep for himself alone, not even Kamel, her husband. Nedjma "embodies Algeria's repeated conquest, resistance, and cultural renewal […] and fuels the male protagonists' revolutionary activity.[31] Cloaked in shadows, she appears mainly in the memories and fantasies of the young men. The rivals for her attention see her in many lights ; as she evades their grasp , their imaginations supply them with protean fantasies of her. Although raped and sullied many times by succeeding conquerors, she is seen and dreamed of as a virgin, "vierge après chaque viol."[32] Kateb enforces this point with a powerful deployment of images and symbols. Thus Nedjma is both " un astre impossible à piller dans sa fulgurante lumière,[33] and "l'ogresse au sang obscur,[34] "notre perte, la mauvaise étoile de notre clan.[35]

The rivalry between the young people over the love of Nedjma is meant by Kateb to show the dissension existing between the Algerian political parties at that time. Indeed, the text reads as a political fable. The rivalry between the male characters is analogous to the political rivalry of the parties fighting for national freedom. Kateb Yacine implies that history can be explained more effectively by myth and fiction rather than by historiography and reportage. The mystery that surrounds Nedjma can be traced in the image that she reflects through her people. The violence of her birth, on the one hand, hints at the violence of the nation's birth, suggesting that a new, independent state demands sacrifice from all members of society.

> Un siècle passera et tu seras Nedjma
> L'étoile d'un charnier
> Les hommes qui te verront
> Briller et disparaître

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31. Woodhull, Winifred, "Rereading Nedjma: Feminist Scholarship and North African Women." SubStance 69, 1992, pp. 46-63, p. 50.
32. Kateb Yacine, Le polygone étoilé. Paris : Éditions du Seuil,1997, p.144.
33. Ibid., p.107.
34. Ibid., p.179.
35. Ibid., p.188.

Tu les verras mourir et perdre la raison.[36]

Violence, as described, is a rite of passage on the way to a new type of society. Nedjma, in Kateb's work is associated with a violent, symbolic transition both in her birth and in the acquisition of her identity. All the incidents in the novel converge on Nedjma as a subject of a love quest. The analogy with Algeria is clear. In this regard, Bernard Dort observes:

> La femme mystérieuse à la recherche de laquelle s'enroule le roman, masque de son visage une autre réalité que d'abord elle incarne: l'Algérie. Mais si cette Nedjma demeure une énigme que le roman ne résout pas c'est qu'elle incarne plutôt le passé de l'Algérie ; ainsi le roman lorsqu'il nous amène à dissocier cette femme du pays qu'elle symbolise en la rejetant dans le passé tribal auquel elle appartient, fait déboucher sa recherche sur la révélation et la promesse d'une algérienne libérée.[37]

d-The Silenced Woman:

In spite of all that is said and done against her, Nedjma in the novel remains an inert and voiceless character that exists primarily in the memories of others. Her participation in the action is minimal. Her words, in the form of short conversations and interior monologues form less than two pages in the whole novel. She remains also doubly exiled: She is exiled within her own country by the colonizer, and further exiled in her own soul by the climate of violence around her.

> En ne parlant pas, elle [Nedjma] fait référence à toute une tradition ancestrale de silence des femmes et, sans y adhérer, elle laisse entrevoir, par son mutisme même, l'opposition aux hommes et à leur façon de concevoir à la fois l'oralité et la société. [38]

Nedjma of the novel does not have voice to speak her own words. The narrator is responsible for presenting her inner thoughts, feelings, emotions and her disillusionment with the world. Nedjma is not powerful enough to speak up. Everything related to her is perceived through the narrator's lenses. And the narrator makes no room for her direct words or for any verbal exchange with the other characters in the novel. He provides certain details about her

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36. Ibid., p.302.

37. Bernard Dort in Représentation de la féminité dans le roman algérien de la langue française, ed. Nadjet Khada. Alger :Office des Publications Universitaires, 1991, p.73.

38. Noémie Martineau, Ecriture du féminin ou écriture au féminin ? Autour de la question de la femme sauvage chez Kateb Yacine et Helene Cixous. Master II de Lettres Modernes. Université Lumière, Lyon 2, 2005,p.61.

early childhood and her present condition, but the information supplied remains abstract and vague due to her allegorical presence. In her unique emancipatory breach of silence in the novel, Nedjma, the character expresses her revolt, her obsession with escape and her desire to revenge all those who have imprisoned her. " *Ils m'ont isolée pour me vaincre, isolée en me mariant…puisqu'ils m'aiment, je les garde dans ma prison…à la longue, c'est la prisonnière qui décide…* " (Nedjma, 67) " *They've shut me up to defeat me, isolated me by marrying me…Since they love me, I keep them in my prison…In the long run, it's the prisoner who makes the decisions…* " (Nedjma, 89-90) However, such a short-lived rebellion does not liberate Nedjma the woman. By agreeing to keep silent and letting the people around her decide for her life and future, Nedjma becomes, in a way, an accomplice in her own oppression.

Nedjma remains mute because she is a figure of the past. The Algeria she incarnates, superstitious and overcome by the fatality of failure, has to change. It must be incarnated in new beings.

> […] le silence de Nedjma s'apparente pour le poète à l'invisibilité : de par son silence, l'amante est inaccessible. […] si Nedjma est muette, c'est aussi parce qu'elle est «l'amante amnésique » : non seulement il y a rupture avec le présent puisque inaccessibilité pour le poète, pour l'amant, mais la jeune femme est coupée également du passé, et de tout ce qui la rattache à la tribu, à la patrie, aux ancêtres, au pays. A partir de là, il semble impossible pour cette figure de Nedjma de prendre position dans une quelconque lutte pour l'avenir : absence de parole et de mémoire sur le passé signifient absence de projection dans le futur.[39]

Even when she is kidnapped by Si Mokhtar and Rachid, Nedjma shows no resistance thinking that her kidnapping would provide her with avenues of escape from the restrictive traditional role in which she finds herself. "le rapt n'avait guère fait scandale"(Nedjma,136)"the rape had made little or no scandal…"(Nedjma, 179) Because Nedjma cannot flourish and reproduce in such regime, she remains "stérile et fatale (Nedjma, 188) "sterile and fatal"(Nedjma, 252) However, later Nedjma escapes the tribe which pretends to protect her. Its strict adherence to tradition gives it no effective power to protect its own. Nedjma, as we will see later in more details, would look for other ways to express herself as an independent being and to impose her will and identity. She becomes fertile only when the struggle for freedom begins in earnest.

At this level we can compare Nedjma with Toomer's women, mainly Karintha. In fact, the similarity between the two female characters is striking. Both arise the sexual desire of men; both are very beautiful and stirred men

39. Ibid, pp. 60-61.

from a very young age and both have many lovers. They are also passive and do not occupy any active position. However, their very passivity provokes men to cover them. In the case of Nedjma, the young men who come into contact with her are drawn to murder and madness. Thus, for Lakhdar Nedjma is "la forme sensible, l'épine, la chair, le noyau, mais non plus l'âme , non pas l'unité vivante où je pourrais me confondre sans crainte de dissolution… " (Nedjma, 247) " the tangible form of the mistress who waits for me, the thorn, the flesh , the seed, but not the soul, not the living unity where I could blend myself without fear of dissolution…(Nedjma, 331) For Mustapha, Nedjma is "la femme fatale, stérile et fatale, femme de rien, ravageant dans la nuit passionnelle tout ce qui nous restait de sang." (Nedjma,187) " the fatal woman, sterile and fatal, a woman worth nothing, ravaging in the darkness of passion all we had of blood." (Nedjma,250) while for Rachid, she is "l'ogresse au sang obscure comme celui du nègre. " (Nedjma, 179) "the ogress of obscure blood, like that of the black man. " (Nedjma, 240) The protagonists reject Nedjma as soon as she represents a threat to them. In fact, the male characters in the novel are all trying to win her heart and attention. But while she is at the center of their lives, she is also the source of their quarrels and separation.

This mixed feeling towards Nedjma is well expressed by Lakhdar in his description of her.[40]

> Une seule femme nous occupe
> Et son absence nous réunit
> Et sa présence nous divise.[41]

The young men in Nedjma are united by the common objective of overthrowing colonialism. As such, ties between them are crucial to their survival as well as to the success of their cause, and their relationship with Nedjma, the woman, becomes an obstacle rather than an impetus to accomplishing their objective. The young men's recognition of Nedjma's negative interference with their revolutionary cause comes, on the other hand, from patriarchal ideological notions of female inferiority within the military realm. El Saadawi explains that "Segregation and the veil were not meant to ensure the protection of women but essentially that of men. And the Arab woman was not imprisoned in the home to safeguard her body, her honour and her morals, but rather to keep intact the honour and the morals of men."[42] This can perhaps explain why Nedjma, the female character in Kateb's novel, is sent back to the Nadhor, veiled and imprisoned. Indeed, Nedjma has always

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40. Fanon states that 'The history of the French conquest of Algeria... gave rise to a highly sexualized discourse in which violence crystallized around and before the body of the veiled Algerian woman' cited in ' Algeria Unveiled' , Studies in Dying Colonialism. London: Earthscan, 1989, pp. 44-45.

41. Le polygone étoilé .op cit., p.147.

42. The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.151.

been a threat to the young male characters. They are all in love with her and constantly fight one another for her sake. By sending her back to the ancestors' land, where traditions and customs are still respected, and where a woman's rightful place is at home, Kateb aims at protecting his male characters from her power and negative influence. Her cloistering will help them seek a forward moving path rather than remain in the dead-end of her love.

Although Kateb Yacine claims his opposition to patriarchy and misogyny, and rejects patriarchal myths about female inferiority and male superiority, his novel Nedjma replicates conventional gender roles and minimizes Algerian female agency. By taking Nedjma back to the Nadhor, by the end of the novel, and by accepting that she be cloistered and veiled by the members of the tribe, the Algerian writer shows his ambivalence toward Algerian women's' empowerment and independence from males' domination. We have to wait till the publication of his trilogy, Le Cercle des représailles to witness the new empowering roles that Kateb grants his female characters.

e- The Revolutionary Woman:

Indeed, in Le Cercle des représailles, Nedjma finally emerges from the shadows to become a dynamic political presence. Unveiling and taking part in the national struggle, Nedjma symbolizes Algeria as it moves to modernity. However Nedjma remains a contradictory character who represents the semi-emancipated women of the new generation. To some extent she is quite free in her movements. She wears the veil when she goes out, but she has become more politically conscious. While in the novel she makes fleeting appearances, in the play she attends the militants' meetings and participates in the political debates. She is no longer a mysterious, enigmatic figure; she has taken a more lifelike role. However, Nedjma as a woman is not totally independent. She is still emotionally depended on her man for her happiness and well-being. In the play, Nedjma resents bitterly having to share Lakhdar's love with the national struggle, and regards the national cause as a rival. She wishes it out of the way so she might enjoy undisputed, undisturbed the monopoly of Lakhdar's love. Nedjma is plunged into anguish at the thought of her love being replaced in Lakhdar's heart by something else.

In Les Ancêtres redoublent de férocité, the old social order has been disrupted, women have taken up new roles. The women's contribution to the revolution has allowed them to become visible and recover their voice. The young Nedjma has now grown to maturity. She has finally become aware of the historical/political dimension of her existence. This has led her to enter the arena so far exclusively reserved for men. The tribeswoman becomes a modern Algerian woman, a woman participating in the war, defending the nation as a whole.

Sa noirceur native avait réapparu
Visage dur lisse et coupant
Nous n'étions plus assez virils pour elle
Sombre muette poussiéreuse
La lèvre blême et la paupière enflée
L'œil à peine entrouvert et le regard perdu
Sous l'épaisse flamme fauve rejetée sur son dos
Le pantalon trop large et roulé aux chevilles
Et le colt sous le sein.[43]

Nedjma thus becomes 'La femme sauvage', but first and foremost the 'revolutionary' woman. She has undergone a profound metamorphosis. Her new name of 'femme sauvage', she owes it to the hard times of the country and to the new image in which she has emerged as a fighter.

In her analysis of the role of women in Kateb's plays, mainly Les Ancêtres redoublent de férocité, Ahlem Mosteghenemi states: " Dans sa pièce, le symbole de la femme se précise. Il n'est plus aussi vague que celui de Nedjma car il s'identifie d plus en plus à la lutte armée qui a atteint son paroxysme vers la fin des années 50. On voit alors 'la femme sauvage' s'insurger contre les ancêtres, libérer les autres femmes et les inciter à rejoindre le combat pour la libération."[44] The anger and frustration of Nedjma have filled 'La femme sauvage' with a freeing force and the strength to take young women to war. Accordingly, she shows the young women how to find weapons by following the flight of the Vulture which soars above mass graves. Kateb, in fact, thinks that a movement of emancipation, really revolutionary has emerged. But only emancipated women could take part actively in the national liberation struggle. This meant that Algerian women had to take the veil off, and this did not happen without reticence.[45] Frantz Fanon gives a description of the process and shows how the stiff opposition from certain quarters took time to be overcome.

> Jusqu'en 1955, le combat est mené exclusivement par les hommes. Les caractéristiques révolutionnaires de ce combat, la nécessité d'une clandestinité absolue obligent le militant à tenir sa femme dans une ignorance absolue […] La décision d'engager les femmes comme éléments actifs dans la révolution algérienne ne fut pas prise à la légère […]. Il faut allier harmonieusement l'entrée en guerre des femmes et le respect du type de la guerre révolutionnaire. Autrement dit, la femme doit répondre avec autant d'esprit de sacrifice que les hommes.[46]

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43. Le polygone étoilé, op cit., p.148.
44. Ahlem Mosteghenemi, Algérie, Femmes et Ecritures. Paris : L'Harmattan, 1985, p.176.
45. Because of the length and intensity of the war, Algerian men eventually had no choice but to allow women to join the resistance in 1955, an unthinkable step for a patriarchal society.
46. Frantz Fanon, Sociologie d'une révolution op cit., p.30.

Once they took the veil off, Algerian women quickly grasped all aspects of clandestine existence and undertook a number of important missions. In this context, Fanon wrote:

> Porteuse de révolvers, de grenades, de centaines de fausses cartes d'identité et de bombes, la femme algérienne dévoilée évolue comme un poisson dans l'eau occidentale. Les militaires, les patrouilles françaises lui sourient au passage, des compliments sur son physique fusent çà et là mais personne ne soupçonne que dans ses valises se trouve le PM qui, tout à l'heure, fauchera quatre ou cinq membres d'une des patrouilles françaises. [47]

By joining men in their struggle against colonialism, Nedjma has transformed herself from mythical object into historical agent. Her appearance after sequestration in the novel, and her speaking words after her mute role prove that confinement and sequestration are not necessarily the fate of Algerian women.[48] Accordingly, she has become a strong woman fully aware of the source of her subjugation and oppression, and is too eager to dismantle it.

f- The Sacrificial Woman:

In addition to the portrayal of Nedjma as a female character in his work, Kateb Yacine depicts, at a more realistic level, the conditions of women in Algeria through the description of the life of the young men's mothers. Indeed, Kateb provides in his work a range of maternal portraits who suffer from abuse and abandonment by their husbands. These women are regarded as little more than property that passes from the father to the husband on the wedding day, virtually invisible as independent human beings with no feelings and priorities outside of their many wifely duties.

> La mère de Mourad, paysanne pauvre, nommée Zohra, rencontrée par Sidi Ahmed au cours d'une équipée dans les Aurès, est ravie à quatorze ans, moyennant une somme qui éblouit ses parents ; le droit musulman interdisant le mariage à toute jeune fille n'ayant pas atteint quinze ans, Sidi Ahmed prend livraison de sa femme sans autre cérémonie qu'une Fatiha lue par un prêtre occasionnel… (Nedjma, 77)

> Mourad's mother, a poor countrywoman named Zohra whom Sidi Ahmed had met during a trip in the Aurès, was carried off at fourteen, in return for a sum dazzled her family; since Moslem law

47. Ibid, p.41.

48. For detailed studies on the roles of women in the Algerian war, see Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne, Les Femmes algériennes dans la guerre; Des Femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie; and "Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day."

> forbids any girl under fifteen to marry, Sidi Ahmed took possession of his wife with no ceremony beyond a Fatiha (the first sourate of the Koran) read by a chance priest. (Nedjma, 103)

These mother figures have to deal with the restraints imposed upon them by their patriarchal societies. They not only find themselves marginalized as women, but oftentimes relegated to a purely domestic role with little contact outside the family unit.

> Elle [ma mère] s'appelle Ouarda, Rose, y a une chanson sur elle, une drôle de chanson où elle devient jeune et dévergondée. C'est pourtant pas le cas ; sa vie, c'est de rêver qu'elle sort avec mon père, rien qu'en écoutant s'éloigner sa canne ; même quand elle pleure, elle a des yeux malins, et elle travaille. (Nedjma, 211)
> Her [my mother's] name is Ourda, Rose, there's a song about her, a funny song where she turns young and shameless. But that's not the way things are; she spent her life dreaming she's going out with my father, just when she hears his cane tapping away; even when she cries, her eyes are dry, and she works. (Nedjma, 282)

The mothers in all of Kateb's work meet in disaster and suffer together. They reach the extremes of anxiety and fear for their sons and become mad because they cannot bear the idea that something bad happens to their children. In the novel, Kateb has chosen to associate the insane mother with Mustapha but using all the time memories of his own mother.

> [...] forme allongée. Désordre de cheveux blanchis.
> - Il y a longtemps que mère dort, s'éveille et se rendort.
> [...] Mère ne sait plus parler sans se déchirer le visage, en levant ses prunelles taries au ciel. Elle parle aux oiseaux et maudit ses enfants. (Nedjma, 236-237)
> […] a prone shape. Tangle of white hair.
> " mother keeps waking up and going back to sleep."
> [...] Mother can't talk anymore without tearing her face. She speaks to the birds and curses her children. (Nedjma, 317)

In the novel, Mustapha's mother goes insane not only from the fear of her son's execution due to his participation in the May 8th demonstrations, but also from grief due to the loss of many family members in the same events. Though Kateb's mother was ill long before the rebellion, it was during the traumatic events of May 1945 that her condition worsened. "Le 8 mai 1945, elle crut son fils fusillé ; aliénée, errante, 'femme sauvage', elle dû être internée pendant de

longues années à l'hôpital psychiatrique de Blida."[49] Kateb has endowed the mothers in his novel devotion, self-sacrifice, and unconditional love, the attributes generally associated with archetypal motherhood.

The mothers in Kateb's work are essentially depicted as the innocent victims of forces beyond their comprehension and control. They are left alone with their pain and anguish, without understanding the issues at stake in the national conflict. "… Chez Kateb, les mères disent, par la folie, l'impossibilité de dire l'Histoire de leur pays, de leurs enfants, cette Histoire trop incompréhensible, trop cruelle."[50] These mothers are depicted as passive and submissive bystanders in the national struggle. They are foregrounded as helpless figures, subjected to every conceivable form of anguish and torment. However, and more than anything else, the relation with the mothers reflects the relation of the colonized people with the world around them.

Motherhood becomes the recipient of cultural identity and the ultimate refuge to which the self, especially in conditions of crisis, aspires. "L'histoire est celle d'une séparation d'avec sa culture première, d'avec la mère, d'avec soi-même. "[51] Guilt and unspoken love are the feelings that the young people nourish towards their mothers. The difficulty to establish any normal relationship with the mother, and the bitterness and suffering which result from it, shows the world of alienation in which the young people in Kateb's work live. Sonia Ramzi-Abadir expresses the mother's omniscient presence in the male's conscious and unconscious, as he will seek her in the faces of all the women he will meet later in his life, as the Arab woman's revenge over society. The critic states that: " la mère règne sur l'inconscient de son fils, même devenu grand, influant ainsi sur ses rapports avec les autres femmes. C'est sa revanche inconsciente sur le monde des hommes qui 1'a toujours écrasée."[52] The mother as a source of tenderness and warmth stands in an oppositional position to the patriarchal world in which the young male is expected to cut all his ties with the feminine world as soon as he reaches early adulthood. The mother remains an abstraction in the minds of the young people that is personified in the country that men love and worship while the mother of flesh and blood is ignored and left to suffer alone. As such, the novel can be taken as an indictment of the glorification of the abstract idea of motherhood while ignoring completely the painful position of real mothers. At another level, the attachment of the male characters to their mothers, in Kateb's work, indicates refusal of the young people to accept the present ambiguous situation in which they find themselves, seeking refuge in the more stable past, symbolized by the world of the mother.

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49. Littérature maghrébine de langue française, op cit., p.11.
50. Ecriture du féminin ou écriture au féminin ? op cit., p.12.
51. Aimé Césaire cited in Présence Africaine, 2eme trimestre, 1963, p.188.
52. Sonia Ramzi-Abadir, La femme arabe au Maghreb at au Machrek: Fictions et Réalités. Alger: ENAl,1986, p.167.

F- The Fatal Seductress:

Alongside the 'Othering' of the Algerian woman, there comes the 'Othering' of the European woman settler who projects on the Algerian males an ambiguous image of womanhood, completely different from the traditional views of women as essentially nurturing, loving and passive. These foreign women engender both admiration and repulsion from the Algerian males. They are very often endowed with positive connotations. As such, they are admired and desired as 'erotic objects of sexual pleasure' as they allow the indigenous male characters to play out their fantasies and to experience a kind of sexual freedom that is not permitted with their fellow women. But at the same time, these foreign women are repulsing because of their direct association with the colonial world. Suzy, the daughter of the foreman for whom the young people work is a good example to mention at this level as she is both admired and despised by the Algerian protagonists.

At another level of analysis, these women colonists are seen by the Algerian males as castrating by virtue of their association with the hostile world of colonization. But at the same time, their possession of them will help the colonized males to regain their virility and manhood. One basic explanation of the desire to possess them lies in the 'feminization' of the colonized males by the colonial powers. By possessing the female colonist, the Algerian males, unconsciously, elude the threat of castration or the menace of emasculation. Their involvement with the female colonists works as a retaliation against colonization. According to Fanon, the colonized man's lust for the European woman does not arise from his love for her but rather from his 'dreams of possession' of her and all what she represents. It is at the same time defiance against the colonizer's power over the colonized. "I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these white breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilization and worthiness become mine." [53] It remains however, as we will see in the following part in more details, that the French woman is a seductress with the power to lure away the Algerian man, the gatekeeper of traditional culture, from his origins.

Men, on the other hand, especially of an older generation than the four protagonists in the novel, have been reduced by the colonizer to a humiliating stance. Their anger and frustration are vented on their wives and families revealing the long-lasting reverberations of violence against women in patriarchal societies. Maitre Gharib, Mustapha's father drank heavily and beat his wife due to guilt felt from his close association with French colonialists. During the celebrations of their son's seventh day of birth, Mustapha's father broke his mother's leg. Although the episode is narrated by Mustapha in a comic way, it reveals the frustration of the Algerian males because of colonialism, and how these males find no other way to ease the pain caused by

53. Black Skin , White Masks, op cit, p.45.

their frustration except turning against their own people and family members. Moreover, instead of taking care of their families and children, they go in pursuit of the French woman, the cause of their loss.

> Oui, la Française avait échappé à ton père pour suivre le puritain dont l'épouse était alors la maîtresse de Si Mokhtar, qui la gardait comme un otage, car lui aussi s'était épris de la Française dans la même ville d'eaux où ton père, son ami le plus proche, exhibait sa conquête, avant que le puritain n'eût à son tour séduit la Française [...]
> Au tournant se tenait mon père, le quatrième soupirant... (Nedjma, 100)

> Yes, the Frenchwoman ran away from your father to follow the puritan whose wife was then Si Mokhtar's mistress, and Si Mokhtar was keeping her as a hostage, because he was in love with the Frenchwoman too, and in the same town where your father, his best friend, was showing of his conquest, before it was the puritan's turn to seduce the Frenchwoman [...]
> "At the crossroads my father was standing, the fourth suitor… (Nedjma, 133)

Their decadence, as we will see later, causes confusion of the paternal blood lines. Nedjma's paternity is uncertain, and Si Mokhtar, her most likely father does nothing to prevent her marriage with a man who may be her half-brother. Accordingly, the biological fathers, in the novel, are eliminated one by one.

As a conclusion to this chapter, we can say that both Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine have reinforced traditional gender stereotypes of female voicelessness and powerlessness by depicting the women in their respective communities as the eternal victims of patriarchy and the will of men around them. As such the two writers have served to further marginalize women. It is true that Kateb Yacine has modified this image of Algerian women in this trilogy, Le Cercle des représailles, especially in Les Ancêtres redoublent de férocité, where they are depicted as strong and courageous, participating in the liberation movement by the side of men; it remains however that even in the trilogy these women are seen as the unspoken heroines who have willingly transformed themselves into silent tools of war.

Chapter Four

Self Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Women in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde

> We lived as though in two social spaces. One was a world without the father, when he would go to work, and that world was full of speech ... We could express ourselves loudly, passionately, outrageously. The other world was a male-dominated social space where sound and silence were dictated by his presence ... we would adjust our speech to his mood.[1]

In the previous chapter, we have spoken at length about the works authored by Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine and have engaged in a thorough examination on how gender discourses affect one's position within the discourse of postcolonial identity. As we have remarked, these discourses maintain the binarism of Western representations, defining an essentially patriarchal community favoring male domination. The call to maintain ancient traditions that were destroyed by the White/ French colonizer have privileged patriarchal conservatism in its treatment of women as well as the glorification of the benevolent but silent Mother country. As a matter of fact, both African American and Algerian women have been eroticized in colonial narratives, but while the African American woman was described as the tempting 'other' whose body is accessible through its nudity and availability as a white man's possession, the Algerian woman was the 'imagined' other whose veiled body had to be uncovered at whatever cost. This led to the double oppression of women in both communities as they became the means through which the subordinate males could recover their manhood and patriarchal authority.

Accordingly, women in the works of Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine have been represented in ways that would reverse the stereotypical images made of them by the oppressing powers. They are depicted in the works of the male writers under study, as we saw in the previous chapter, as subservient, passive objects, with no status of their own, and dependent upon the will of men in their lives for survival. When trying to determine their own actions, these women are often considered as deviant, a threat to their community, and their trajectory as an anomaly to the roles prescribed to them by patriarchy. In fact, the colonized woman bears the brunt of double oppression: as a colonized

1. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, op cit., p.128.

subject and as a gendered subject. Given the limitations of the male writers' approach to the issue of women in their literary works, our task in this chapter, is to identify what in women's writings is distinctive about the subjectivity of women and their experiences in a patriarchal society.

Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar are aware of colonial gendered discourse. They use the category of gender as a central one in their critiques of colonialism and express that which was not said before; they verbalize the experience of double oppression – as gendered subjects and as colonized subjects and make the postcolonial woman visible to the world. Accordingly, in the present chapter, we aim at showing how women are perceived by the dominant group and how they perceive themselves and others in works written by women.[2] We will also analyze the techniques used by Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar to show ways women are silenced, ways they use their silence, their ability to control their destinies, and their ability to learn from past experiences.[3] Examining the similarities found in the representation of the postcolonial woman in the two bodies of literature will help us see how the two novelists have succeeded in creating postcolonial female subjects who are able to negotiate their positions within their patriarchal communities.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her text, Le deuxième sexe, was the first to state that women function in society as men's 'Other'. As the feminist critic notes, women historically have been positioned as men's complement or as the 'Other' while men represent the absolute human type and dominant figure of the male-female dichotomy.[4] As such, the traditional dialectic of male-female is embodied by the unbalanced power of the traditional couple. Woman has been devalued in the consolidation of a patriarchal monotheist society in which she is no longer an individual but rather an extension of her husband who acts as the subject to her object. On the other hand, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, in his seminal work, Sexuality in Islam, describes the world of women as seen by men in Arab countries as "a 'sub-world', devoid of seriousness and all too easily treated with the contempt that boosts the male's confidence in himself."[5] The above extract is very informative about the way women and their world are perceived by men as it confirms Simone de Beauvoir's statement. According to the Tunisian critic, women's world is seen as trivial, secondary and superfluous. While women's subjugation is a socially constructed concept,

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2. Showalter considers that "Women's writing is a 'double-voiced discourse' that always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant." In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in 20th Century Literary Criticism. Ed, David Lodge. New York : Longman, 1972, p.348.

3. "...The themes of otherness and of the Body merge together because the most visible difference between men and women, and the only one we know for sure to be permanent...is indeed the difference in body. This difference has been used as a pretext to "justify" full power of one sex over the other" Ibid, p. 338.

4. Simone de Beauvoir. Le deuxième sexe. (1949) Paris: Gallimard Folio, 1976, p. xxi.

5. Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, Sexuality in Islam . London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985, p.169.

it has been so accepted and perpetuated throughout time that it has taken on the appearance of normality. The more women are praised for their passivity and silence as fundamental characteristics of their identity, the more women who show resistance to their condition are rejected by society. "a positive and strong woman is necessarily an abnormal person or a freak of nature, and merits vilification or hatred, or at least a measure of criticism and sarcasm."[6] Strength and resistance are considered by patriarchal societies as contradictory to the innate characteristics of women.

Both Hurston and Djebar refuse the image in which they are depicted by their male counterparts in the dominant mode of discourse. These women writers are of interest in our study because they create a narrative with which various types of women from within their communities can identify and refuse, as has so well been expressed by Gayatri Spivak, 'to be always spoken for or about'. Their roles as writers give them the opportunity to express their own concerns, their own feminism as it applies specifically to their own circumstances. They are rendering obsolete "discussions about the essence of women [that] have usually taken as that essence the experience of white, heterosexual, middle-class women."[7] Through their novels, the two female writers deconstruct representations of women as 'exotic sex objects' available for use. They aim at dismantling the negative connotations of women as exotic symbols, and childish women completely lacking in agency by acknowledging the ways in which such connotations limit the lives and opportunities open to them. They also attempt to rewrite history and subvert dominant discourses from a feminine, insider perspective.

Through an examination of historical facts, coupled with the representation of women's roles in the works of Hurston and Djebar, we will demonstrate, in this chapter , how the effects of war/ emancipation have helped create a postcolonial female subject who attempts to transcend the stifling confines of past, patriarchy and colonialism by shaking off the chains of seclusion and the shackles of stifling traditions. Both Hurston and Djebar strive to inscribe women in the histories of their respective countries, to make them visible and to show the complex relations between the oppressor/colonizer, the men of the colonized community, and the women of the colonized community.[8] They are convinced that as long as women remain silent they will remain outside the historical process, thus, they transform the patriarchal restraints in which they are confined through "the body of [their] writing and not the writing of [their] body."[9]

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6. The Hidden face of Eve, op cit., p.233.

7. Mariniello Silvestra, Gendered Agents: Women and Institutional Knowledge. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998,p.4.

8. Author Alexis De Veaux notes that there is a " great exploration of the self in women's work. It's the self in relationship with an intimate other, with the community, the nation and the world" quoted in Black Feminist Thought, op cit., p.112.

9. Nancy K. Miller in Women and Language in Literature and Society , ed. Sally McConnell- Ginet,

While the mother remains a central figure in patriarchal male discourse in general given that it is the mother who perpetuates male hegemony in the traditional patriarchal family by inculcating patriarchal tradition in her children; both Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar refuse to grant their heroines the role of mother. Thus, it is not surprising that none of the main feminine characters depicted in the novels under study has children despite the social position of many of them as married. Janie, in Their Eyes Were Watching God despite her three marriages has no children. Salima in Les enfants du nouveau monde is not married, Lila loses her first baby and Chérifa is unable to have children after three years of marriage with her first husband. The two writers, in fact, reject the trap of traditional motherhood as they are aware that their feminine characters' ability to have children would be used to limit their position in society. It would also prevent them from claiming selfhood. As Carol P. Marsh-Lockett points out in her analysis of Hurston literary works, "Study of her novels reveals that motherhood is a presence therein but that it exists in a marginalized, politically powerless form, the mothers themselves lacking communities of women and rarely finding their own voices except to uphold a patriarchal superstructure."[10] This statement is confirmed by Judith Butler when she declares: "This question of being a woman is more difficult than it perhaps originally appeared, for we refer not only to women as a social category but also as a felt sense of self, a culturally conditioned or constructed subjective identity."[11] Thus, Hurston and Djebar's novels represent an effort to speak out in writing, to overcome obstacles, and to break the distorting mirror of the 'Other', be it the white, the colonizer, or patriarchy.

Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furnam. New York: Praeger, 1980, p.271.

10. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett "Whatever Happened to Jochebed? Motherhood as Marginality in Zora Neale Hurston's Seraph on the Suwanee." pp. 100–110 in Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing. Ed, Warren Nagueyalti and Sally Wolff. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999, p.100.

11. Judith Butler, "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse," in Feminism/ Postmodernism. Ed, Linda J. Nicholson. New York: Rutledge, 1990, p. 324.

IV.1- Self and Other as Seen by Women in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God :

The novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God is about an African American female character called Janie Crawford. Having been forced to marry a much older man so that she will not give herself to worthless men, sixteen year old Janie runs away with Joe Starks, a charming, ambitious, traveling salesman. Although Starks becomes a respected and prosperous mayor in Eatonville, Florida, he disappoints Janie by offering her wealth and prestige instead of love and understanding. After his death, Janie finds true love with Teacake, a twenty-five year old gambler. However, after a short time of happiness with him, Janie is forced to kill him to protect herself when he attacks her in a delirious rage resulting from the rabies he contracts while saving her from a mad dog. After his death, Janie returns to Eatonville to defy the gossips who had predicted that Teacake would abandon her after stealing all the money she inherited from her previous husband Joe Starks.

Hurston, through Janie, explores the possibilities of being black and female simultaneously. She wants to break the stereotype of the black women of the South who have to suffer, struggle and be silent. She wants also to show the specificity and uniqueness of the black woman experience. Thus, she examines the discourse of blackness as it functions in conjunction and at cross-purposes with the discourse of womanhood and tries to deconstruct this 'image' of the black female as constructed in the white patriarchal discourse. Hazel Carby states that:

> Black women, in gaining their public presence as writers, would directly confront the political and economic dimensions of their subjugation. They had to define a discourse of black womanhood which would not only address their exclusion from the ideology of true womanhood but, as a consequence of this exclusion, would also rescue their bodies from a persistent association with illicit sexuality. [12]

The main concern of the black women writers has been the black woman herself. By analyzing her aspirations, her conflicts, and her relationship to men, they have looked at the black woman from an insider point of view. Their claims are present in the fragmented worlds in which their female characters live. These black women writers, moreover, needed to be careful not to exoticize and eroticize their black female characters because of the hyper-sexualization placed on the black female body. Thus, while there were black

12. Hazel V. Carby , Reconstructing Womanhood, op cit., p. 32.

women writers who employed the exotic and erotic, such as Pauline Hopkins' Of One Blood (1903) and Contending Forces (1900) and Nella Larsen's Quicksand and Passing (1929), Hurston's desire has been to exceed the black woman's image as hyper-sexual and primitive.

However, the task has not been easy. The black women writers have often suffered bitter attack for their focus on gender oppression in the lives of black women. In their treatment of contentious issues of intragroup conflict, they could but face aggressive reactions from their male counterparts. In an interview she has made, Gloria Naylor has expressed her feeling of uneasiness in her treatment of black men in her first novel, The Women of Brewster Place.

> I bent over backwards not to have a negative message come through about the men. My emotional energy was spent creating a woman's world, telling her side of it because I knew that hadn't been done enough in literature. But I worried about whether or not the problems that were being caused by the men in the women's lives would be interpreted as some bitter statement I had to make about black men.[13]

Naylor, who draws so much on the work of Zora Neale Hurston, cannot but admire the courage of her predecessor in treating such contentious issues.

a- The Black Woman's Body:

It is through the representation of a woman's body that Zora Neale Hurston figures sexual autonomy in her work. Thus, the opening pages of Their Eyes Were Watching God describe the 'body' of Janie Crawford, a forty-year old black widow. Janie's clothes, hair and body defy conventions and communal expectations. Dressed like a working man in overalls and a work shirt and built like the dream of every 'natural man', Janie arrives to Eatonville after an absence of a few months, transgressing all kinds of societal codes and refusing to occupy a settled gender type. "The transgression that is at explicit issue is not just one of sexual mores (though it is that); it is a matter of class-appropriate behavior, age-appropriate behavior, gender roles, and money sense."[14] In their book, New Essays on Life Writing and The Body, Christopher Stuart and Stephanie Todd argue that presentations of the body, 'black corporeality' are of increased importance in minority writings since minority groups have traditionally been identified with their bodies. Thus, " it is not surprising that those most responsible for restoring the body to visibility[…] are those—women, people of color, the disfigured and the disabled—who historically have been identified with their bodies and who

13. Angelyn Mitchell, "Naylor, Gloria and Toni Morrison: A Conversation." Southern Review 21.3, July 1985, pp. 567-93, p. 579.

14. Tom Mc Clamery, Protest and the Body in Melville, Dos Passos, and Hurston, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2004, p.96.

were thus relegated to silence and invisibility in the context of a paradigm that privileged the disembodied mind."[15]

The scrutiny to which Janie's body is subjected already divides the community along gender lines. Men respond with masculine desire " [They] noticed her firm buttocks like she had grape fruits in her hip pockets; the great rope of black hair swinging to her waist and unraveling in the wind like a plume; then her pugnacious breasts trying to bore holes in her shirt. They, the men, were saving with the mind what they lost with the eye." (Their Eyes, 2) Women, on the other hand respond with envy and fear that this 'body' becomes a threat to their marriage and well established status. "The women took the faded shirt and muddy overalls and laid them away for remembrance. It was a weapon against her strength and if it turned out to be of no significance, still it was a hope that she might fall to their level some day." (Their Eyes, 2) In Tom Mc Clamery's words, "This beautiful woman, in refusing to 'stay in her class,' threatens the stability of the community by challenging its class, gender, and domestic structures."[16]

Carla Kaplan in "The Erotics of Talk: 'That Oldest Human Longing' in Their Eyes Were Watching God," states that Hurston wrote during a time when African-American writers in general and African-American women writers in particular were strenuously encouraged to avoid the erotic and anything that might feed stereotypes of blacks as primitives, sexually promiscuous, or otherwise slaves of the flesh.[17] "Racist sexual ideologies" of the period, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, "proclaimed the black woman to be a rampant sexual being, and in response black women writers either focused on defending their morality or displaced sexuality onto another terrain."[18] Hurston moves beyond the use of gender as a mere literary trope. Gender and its construction become factors that define black identity rather than metaphors describing blackness. The feminine and masculine are as much performable subject positions as blackness and whiteness. Thus, Hurston attempts to give a distinct and independent voice to the feminine, thereby bringing the discussion of racial and interracial relations to an even more complex level. In fact, the writer herself had already experienced what it meant to be 'a black female sexual body' instead of a female human being in sexist and racist America long before she wrote her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God. In her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road, she narrates her experience with a white employer when she was young, poor, and looking for a job. Instead of being offered a job, Hurston was proposed something completely different, but

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15. Christopher Stuart and Stephanie Todd, eds. New Essays on Life Writing and The Body. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, p.9.

16. Protest and the Body in Melville, Dos Passos, and Hurston, op cit., p.96.

17. Carla Kaplan, " The Erotics of Talk: 'That Oldest Human Longing' in Their Eyes Were Watching God." American Literature 67 ,1995, pp. 115–141, pp.122-123.

18. Reconstructing Womanhood, op cit., p. 176.

that was recurrent in the South. The white employer told her: "All I need is a young, full-of-feelings girl to sleep with and enjoy life. I always did keep me a colored girl…I want a colored girl and I'm giving you the preference."[19]

Their Eyes Were Watching God reveals a good deal about the reality of being an African-American woman and how women are seen not only by men but also by their women counterparts. In Hurston's words:

> Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the watcher turns his eyes away in resignation. That is the life of men. Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly. (Their Eyes, 1)

Women in the novel have the doubly difficult task of coming to terms with not only two aspects of identity, blackness and feminity, but also two marginalized aspects of identity. They must continually struggle against both patriarchal and racial oppression, often confronting them in concert. Accordingly, the novel helps us to see the submissive and degraded role that many women are forced into by a male-dominated society. The men learn for example that there is a certain way women should be treated, and the women are conditioned to accept their condition as being their fate that it is easy for men to dominate them. In her book, We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, bell hooks explains the position of African American men towards women as follows:

> Transplanted African men, even those coming from communities where sex roles shaped the division of labor, where the status of men was different and most times higher than that of women, had to be taught to equate their higher status as men with the right to dominate women, they had to be taught patriarchal masculinity.[20]

Men have imposed rigid moral codes on black women as a way of reversing the stereotype of the promiscuous, morally loose black woman that originated in slavery. Thus, black women are described as the most subordinate, silenced, exploited, and repressed creatures. Yet, they are the strongest and most enduring. Although prisoners of oppressive customs, they have the resilience to adapt and the strength to survive.

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19. Zora Neale Hurston, Dust Tracks on a Road.(1942) New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, p.96.
20. We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, op cit., pp. 2-3.

b- The Black Woman as "the mule" of the World:

In Their Eyes Were Watching God we can see several instances where women are portrayed as something lesser than men and not able to comprehend even the smallest of things. Janie Crawford, the main character, is oppressed throughout her journey. She is held down by her grandmother, and by her first two husbands. Nanny, in fact, is the first character to describe the position of the African American woman "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see." (Their Eyes, 29) Hurston argues that the African American women are lowest on the chain of subjugation, and frequently refers to them as "the mules of the world". This trope found in many of Hurston's works was first introduced in Of Mules and Men. Here, diverse people, but mainly black women are used as some might a dumb animal, to increase social and economic standing. In fact, women's status fell even lower after emancipation because they became 'slaves of slaves'. In other words, while the women were once slaves of white men, they became after their 'presumed' freedom subordinates to black men, therefore falling even further down on the social scale. This status is confirmed by Gaytari Spivak when she states: "[B]oth as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow."[21] Black women had to fight a double struggle to be able to come out of this shadow.

In order to reflect the powerful influence of patriarchal values, Zora Neale Hurston plots Janie's spiritual growth with the context of marriage to three different men, Logan Killicks, Joe Starks and Tea Cake. Janie was forced into her first marriage to Logan Killicks by her grandmother Nanny. However, the very thought of marrying him is "desecrating" to young Janie's association of love with the pear tree blossom. For the most part of her first marriage, Janie's experience as a wife is typical of what many women go through, at least in terms of the roles that she is cast in. Logan Killicks, her husband, wants a domestic help rather than a lover or partner. After a very short time of their marriage, he begins to force her to help him with the hard labor of the farm. In fact, Logan introduces Janie to the physical bondage that is expected of a wife. He tries to force her into the traditional wife role by having her do more and more of the demeaning work around the farm. Indeed, "Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband had stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair and finger it."(Their Eyes, 26) Janie is expected by Killicks to chop the wood " If Ah kin haul de wood heah and chop it up fuh yuh, look lak you oughta be able tuh tote it inside. Mah fust wife never bothered me 'bout choppin' no wood nohow. She'd

21. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" , op cit., pp. 82–83.

grab dat ax and sling chips lak uh man. You done been spoilt rotten." (Their Eyes, 26)

Nanny who had more experience in life than Janie knew that Killicks's good treatment of her granddaughter at the beginning of their marriage was not going to last long.Thus, when Janie confessed to Nanny that Killicks "He chops all de wood he think Ah wants and den he totes it inside de kitchen for me. Keeps both water buckets full" (Their Eyes, 23). Nanny quickly predicts that this situation is not going to last long and that Killicks's behavior towards his wife is going to change soon. "Humph! don't 'spect all dat tuh keep up. He ain't kissin' yo' mouf when he carry on over yuh lak dat. He's kissin' yo' foot and'tain't in uh man tuh kiss foot long. Mouf kissin'is on uh equal and dat's natural but when dey got to bow down tuh love, dey soon straightens up." (Their Eyes, 23) Soon, Janie wakes up to find out her romantic illusions shattered.

During the whole period of her marriage to Killicks, Janie feels isolated and confined in "a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been."(Their Eyes, 21-22)There is no place for romance and passion there. Analyzing Janie's marriage to Killicks , Sally Ann Ferguson comes to the conclusion that "Hurston signals that the problems with the Killicks' marriage stem from Janie's fear of Logan's plow– that potent symbol of slavish female labor and oppression."[22] bell hooks explains the behavior of such men as Logan as follows:

> A large majority of black men took as their standard the dominator model set by white masters. When slavery ended these black men often used violence to dominate black women, which was a repetition of the strategies of control white slave-masters used. Some newly freed black men would take their wives to the barn to beat them as the white owner had done. Clearly, by the time slavery ended patriarchal masculinity had become an accepted ideal for most black men, an ideal that would be reinforced by twentieth-century norms.[23]

Controlling his wife is the sole way for the black man of securing his manhood after suffering from racism because only by so doing can he be the dominant figure instead of the subordinate, although his domination is merely performed within the domestic sphere.

22. "Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God" , op cit., p. 188.
23. We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, op cit., p.4.

c- The Wife as a 'Doll-Baby':

Although he does not stand for the blossom tree she dreams of, Joe Starks is at least a chance to escape the mistreatment of Killicks. "Janie pulled back a long time because he did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees, but he spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance." (Their Eyes, 29) However, Janie's second marriage proves more of a hardship on her than her marriage to Killicks. Although Starks presents, at first, security and a new horizon for the young woman, the dream becomes a nightmare of gender and class oppression as she begins to see the consequences of selling herself as a commodity to such a rich and powerful man. He wants her to become his sexual chattel, reminiscent of white male slaveholders who exploited and abused black female slaves. While she is 'the mule' for 'master' Killicks, she becomes 'a pretty doll-baby' for 'Ah God' Stark. The latter aims at molding and shaping her into 'his' woman. First, he orders her to tie up her long flowing hair, symbolically tying up her spirit, and then he forbids her from participating in the substantial social life that occurs on his store's front porch. Indeed, throughout their twenty years of marriage, Joe insists that Janie keep her hair tied up when she is around the store and the post office. Although "this business of the head rag irked her endlessly, Jody was set on it. Her hair was NOT going to show in the store" (Their Eyes, 55). This is quite ironic in the novel, especially since the first thing Joe admired in Janie when they met was her hair. "He didn't look her way nor no other way except straight ahead, so Janie ran to the pump and jerked the handle hard while she pumped. It made a loud noise and also made her heavy hair fall down. So he stopped and looked hard, and then he asked her for a cool drink of water. (Their Eyes, 27)

Later, during his courtship to her, Joe tries to convince Janie to leave her husband Killicks by referring to the beauty of her hair. "You come go wid me. Den all de rest of yo' natural life you kin live lak you oughta. Kiss me and shake yo' head. When you do dat, yo' plentiful hair breaks lak day." (Their Eyes, 30) Bertram D. Ashe in his article "Why don't he Like My Hair?" : Constructing African-American Standards of beauty in Morrison's Song of Solomon and Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God", states:

> Janie and Joe were locked in a power struggle over her hair, and for twenty years, Joe won out. Because Joe was aware that Janie's hair symbolized her "self," Joe began to communicate to the people of Eatonville that he "owned" Janie's hair as a means of demonstrating that he, in effect, "owned" Janie. And the public got the message.[24]

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24. Bertram D. Ashe, "Why don't he Like My Hair?" op cit, pp: 581-82. Bertram D. Ashe adds later in the same article: " The tying up of Janie's hair is clearly an exertion of power on Joe's part. Not only does he seek to send a message to the men of the town, through Janie's hair, that Janie is for him and him alone, but in the process he also sends a message to Janie that her hair is not hers to wear the way she wants. Her hair, like everything else in their lives-and, virtually, everything else in the town-belongs to him. The lack of freedom for Janie's hair, then, becomes for her a symbol

As a matter of fact, Starks does not even let Janie speak in public or participate in any social event. “Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge.” (Their Eyes, 53) The scene where Joe Starks is elected mayor illustrates this point, as the crowd wants to hear from “Mrs. Mayor Starks” but Starks responds by declaring that : “Mah wife don’t know nothin ‘bout no speech-makin’. Ah never married her for nuthin’ lak dat. She’s uh woman and her place is in de home.” (Their Eyes, 43)

In fact, Joe Starks wants Janie to conform to the gender norms set by white society. He forces her to withdraw from “such trashy people” to a position of “honor and respect’. This removal from the community in which she lives is, ultimately, a form of imprisonment for Janie. Indeed, it soon becomes apparent that Starks will never treat Janie as his equal. Janie has the desire to make her voice heard. “Ah knows a few things and women folks thinks sometimes too!” (Their Eyes, 71) but Starks never fails to put her right back into place, “Aw naw they don't. They just think they's thinkin'. When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one.” (Their Eyes, 71) When she complains about his refusal to consider her ideas, he replies that, “Somebody got to think for women and chillum and chickens and cows. I god.” (Their Eyes, 71) And when she shows her ability to think and speak wisely, he summons her with, “you getting’ too moufy, Janie.” (Their Eyes, 75) These are but some of the many remarks that Starks makes about women being inferior. John L. Hodge observes, “An individual’s relation to oppression is typically very complex, since an individual may belong, simultaneously, to both oppressed and oppressor groups.”[25] Certainly Joe Starks, in the novel, falls into this category. Starks’s quest for marital and social dominance stifles the couple’s sexuality and destroys their marital life. “So gradually, [Janie]pressed her teeth together and learned to hush. The spirit of the marriage left the bedroom and took to living in the parlor. . The bed was no longer a daisy-field for her and Joe to play in. It was a place where she went and laid down when she was sleepy and tired. (Their Eyes, 71)

By the very fact of controlling Janie’s movements and thoughts, Starks wants to be recognized as “man”, as “patriarch” by the other men in his community. As his wife, Janie is displayed as a sign of his masculine sexual potency. She is the keystone in his desire to establish himself as ‘Ah God’ in Eatonville. As the wife of Joe, Janie, on the other hand, can obtain the position and the things that money can offer, but she herself becomes an object within that system of discourse. In fact, the need for economic security and social recognition often conflict with the need for spiritual growth. By giving up her

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not only of Joe's domination, but of her lack of freedom to join Eatonville's social circle.” op cit., p. 582.

25. John L. Hodge, "Equality: Beyond Dualism and Oppression," in Anatomy of Racism, ed. David Theo Goldberg. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 91.

birthright as a woman-subject, Janie gives up her right to speak for herself, and most importantly, the right to control her body. Sally Ann Ferguson argues that "When Janie leaves Killicks to become the wife of Starks, eventually the mayor of and richest man in an all-black town; she certainly rids herself of the menacing image of the mulish plow. At the same time, though, she stunts the development of her soul for the next twenty years." [26] The same idea is expressed by Donald R. Marks in his article, 'Sex, Violence, and Organic Consciousness in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God' when he declares, "For Janie, her work in the store is a "waste of time and life." The "head-rag" which "irk[s] her endlessly" and which Starks insists she wear while working, signifies Janie's confinement both in the store and in her marriage." [27] After Starks's death, Janie recalls her life with him and the dear price she paid to be the prominent but silenced Mrs. Mayor. She tells her friend Pheoby: "So Ah got up on de high stool lak she [Nanny] told me, but Pheoby, Ah done nearly languished tuh death up dere. Ah felt like de world was cryin' extry and Ah ain't read de common news yet." (Their Eyes, 114)

Hurston attempts to develop, through Their Eyes Were Watching God a framework in which to discuss the social, political, and economic consequences of black womanhood. According to her, the progress of the race is intimately tied to and measured by the progress of the black woman. In the novel, Janie continually struggled to repress her power to stand behind Joe even though she was continually questioning this positionality. bell hook's argument in this context is worth mentioning here. "Like black men, [black women] had contradictory positions on gender. On one hand they did not want to be 'dominated', but on the other hand they wanted black men to be protectors and providers."[28]

d- The Wife as Possession:

Janie's first thoughts of Tea Cake, her third husband, drive us again to her first dream under the pear tree. "He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom-a pear tree blossom in the spring. He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took. Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God." (Their Eyes, 106) Tea Cake expresses his love for Janie by glorifying in her beauty and encouraging her to realize her own abilities. Instead of requiring her to tie her hair as Starks did, he runs his fingers through

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26. 'Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God', op cit., p.189.

27. Donald R. Marks, "Sex, Violence, and Organic Consciousness in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God." Black American Literature Forum, Vol. 19, No. 4 ,Winter, 1985, pp. 152-157, p.154.

28. We Real Cool, op cit., p. 8.

it saying, “It feels jus’ lak underneath uh dove’s wing next to mah face.” (Their Eyes, 103)

Tea Cake also offers Janie the opportunity to love and to play. He allows her to break the constraints which Starks and his position of authority imposed upon her. He starts by teaching her to play checkers, a game Joe Starks claimed she was too stupid to learn. “He set it up and began to show her and she found herself glowing inside. Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it natural for her to play. That was even nice.” (Their Eyes, 96) In fact, checkers, while a mere game, allows Janie to enter the world of men dominance on an egalitarian foot. Janie is booming under her new life. However, she cannot prevent herself from comparing her new life, among people, with the life that Joe Starks imposed on her in Eatonville.

> Sometimes Janie would think of the old days in the big white house and the store and laugh to herself. What if Eatonville could see her now in her blue denim overalls and heavy shoes? The crowd of people around her and a dice game on her floor! . . . The men held big arguments here like they used to do on the store porch. Only here, she could listen and laugh and even talk some herself if she wanted to. She got so she could tell big stories herself from listening to the rest. Because she loved to hear it, and the men loved to hear themselves, they would "woof" and "boogerboo" around the games to the limit. No matter how rough it was, people seldom got mad, because everything was done for a laugh. (Their Eyes, 134)

Hurston uses rich natural imagery to treat the theme of relationships between black men and women. For instance, she uses the tree imagery to show the ideal emotional and sexual relationships between Janie and the three men in her life. Thus, as soon as the novel opens, Janie’s vision of the pear tree underlies her own conception of the relationship she aspires to have.

> She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the audible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. (Their Eyes, 11)

However Killicks is no pear tree. His house is “a stump in the middle of the woods” (Their Eyes, 21) and Joe Starks does not “represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees”. Worse, with time, his big voice takes the “bloom off things”. When the relationship deteriorates between Janie and Joe, Janie shuts herself off him. “She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her

man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be." (Their Eyes,72)

It is only with Tea Cake who seeks a partner in Janie rather than a 'hand' that Janie seems the most content. He becomes, thus "a bee to her blossom". Yet, even in such a relationship Hurston shows the violence inherent in heterosexual relationships. Although the two characters are deeply in love with each other, Janie and Tea Cake have a series of violent quarrels fueled by jealousy. Tea Cake tries to control Janie, bragging to a friend, "Janie is wherever Ah wants tuh be" (Their Eyes ,141) and even resorts to physical violence in order to reassure himself of his ownership of his wife. Tea Cake, threatened in his masculinity by the presence of Mrs. Turner's brother, wants Janie to know that he is 'the man' in the couple. "When Mrs. Turner's brother came and she brought him over to be introduced, Tea Cake had a brainstorm. Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her assured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss." (Their Eyes ,147) Although Tea Cake encourages Janie to discover and realize her inner self, he reveals himself to be vulnerable to peer pressures and ends up asserting his male dominance at home. He becomes too an unreliable and violent man. His violence does not stem only from his fear of losing Janie to another man, but also from his love of dominance , his patriarchal belief that as a 'man', he is necessarily the 'boss' in the couple. Tea Cake has not just beaten Janie, and he has not done so because of any wrong doing of hers but he has beaten her simply to show their acquaintances that he controls her. As such, Janie moves in the relationship from the position of 'equal' to that of 'possession'. As soon as Tea Cake proves not very different from the previous men in Janie's life, Janie must kill him. Ferguson states that "…Tea Cake, like Logan and Jody before him, also needs to feel superior to–not equal with–his woman […] before long, his problems with machismo and color consciousness cause him to become violent toward her."[29]

Violence against Janie recurs again and again in the novel. Whatever the relationship that Janie has with her husbands, they all recur to violence when they feel that she has stopped to be the subjugated and docile wife. On the day Janie had left her first husband Killicks, he had threatened to "take holt uh dat ax and come in dere and kill [her]" if she dared to "change too many words" with him. Later, her second husband Starks slaps her because of his dissatisfaction with her dinner. He slaps her again when she declares in front of his friends that he is all talk and no sexual action. Tea Cake, as we saw earlier, slaps her because of her relationship with Mrs. Turner. By the end of the novel, he tries to kill her. The topic of patriarchy and sexist violence has been

29. "Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God", op cit., p.194.

discussed by bell hooks in her essay. "Feminism: a transformational politics" that merges feminist theory with her own experience of male domination. In the essay, hooks analyses how dangerous patriarchal values are to a harmonious social order. She considers that "coercive adult male authority as more immediately threatening, as more likely to cause immediate pain than racist oppression or class exploitation." [30] she also shows how white supremacy and domination might have aggravated gendered relationships in the African American society. The critic argues that in order to get rid of the oppression that threatens their life and freedom, the African American women have to fight domination within their personal relationships: "It is necessary to remember that it is first the potential oppressor within that we must resist – the potential victim within that we must rescue – otherwise we cannot hope for an end to domination, for liberation."[31] Although Janie's third marriage is the happiest of the three experiences she has had and although Tea Cake seems as Janie's true salvation in that he is the only one of her husbands who participates and allows her to participate in the African American oral tradition, it remains however that the idyllic image that Janie offers of Tea Cake is based less on objective fact and more on her own unconscious decision to make her dream come true and fit the orgasmic vision of love she had under the pear tree.

Accordingly, in the novel, Janie cannot find real peace of mind and body until she has killed Tea Cake and she is free from any of her other husbands. This inner peace that Janie is to experience must be found in isolation, far from the people she has lived with, whether it is in Eatonville or 'in the muck.'

> […]in Their Eyes, [Zora Neale Hurston]not only exposes the character flaws that keep each man from becoming Janie's Prince Charming, but also radically defines the black woman's quest in life. The black female had better be about the task of providing for her own spiritual and physical survival because an oppressive, male-dominated world conspires to make her its beast of burden.[32]

In fact, Janie like many other female characters who appeared in works of literature at the wake of the twentieth century , are meant by their female creators at challenging systems of domination that were keeping them exploited and oppressed as a group. They sought to establish the self that challenged the claims others sought to impose. As Ferguson puts it again, "Zora Neale Hurston suggests that black females should stand ready to love yet

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30. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, op cit., p.21.
31. Ibid.
32. "Folkloric Men and Female Growth in Their Eyes Were Watching God", op cit., p.186.

defend themselves even against their own men, who occasionally place their fragile manhood above the woman's personal safety."[33]

e- The Liberated Woman:

From the very beginning of the novel, Janie displays qualities that transgress the traditional boundaries of gender and continually challenges norms of behavior expected of women. In fact, Janie refuses to fit in the various codes established by her community and prefers to continue her quest to realize all the aspects of her self-perceived identity. However, in trying to assert control over her own body and resist roles ascribed to her by a patriarchal and racist hegemony, Janie is continually faced with the danger of either losing her life or her freedom. Finding herself alone by the end of her journey, Janie resorts again to dreams as a tactic to transcend pain and "mask the ultimate disillusionment of [her]life- the discovery that there is no bee man."[34] In analyzing Hurston's novels, Nathan Grant comments: "In the novels, then, Hurston's cosmic system enters the lives of men and women to restore order, but that restoration depends on the destruction of the black male body, an instance that seems at best uncharitable since black men are but the instruments of the structures and ideologies that control them." [35] As author, Hurston confronted an ideology that denied her very existence as a black woman, and therefore, she had to formulate a set of meanings that implicitly and fundamentally questioned the basis of true womanhood. Through Their Eyes Were Watching God, she points at the intersections of race and gender and, in doing so, demonstrates the ways in which the discourse of black identity often restricts the range of possible female identity. She uses Janie in her novel to stand for the African American woman as the spirit that refuses to be enslaved, the mind that rejects to be colonized and the woman who does not submit her soul to patriarchal egotism.

It is worth noting however that although Hurston seems more concerned with the politics of sex and gender than with the question of race in Their Eyes Were Watching God, it remains that the two issues are interlinked and inseparable. Indeed, the sexism suffered by the black females in the United States, especially in the Old South, is incontrovertibly a direct consequence of racism. Hurston's novel discusses the frustration caused by the mainstream oppression to the African American males who tend to relieve their stress on their spouses, lovers, and children. The latter are consequently oppressed by both the mainstream society as well as their family members. Though oppression does not come from the external white world in Hurston's novel, gender, as seen earlier, seems to be a very powerful category in the debate of

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33. Ibid, p.194.

34. Lloyd Brown, "Zora Neale Hurston and the Nature of Female Perception." Obsidian 4 ,1978, p.45.

35. Masculinist Impulses, op cit., pp. 119-120.

double or even triple repression in the writer's work. It was an essential element in the rethinking and rewriting of the majority/ minority relations. As Barbara Christian highlights:

> The effect of the multiple oppression of race, class and gender is not merely arithmetic. That is, one cannot say only that in addition to racism, black women have had to confront the problem of sexism. Rather, we must recognize that issues of class and race alter one's experience of gender, just as gender alters one's experience of class and race.[36]

The black males who have endured the oppression and suffering of cultural and institutional racism turn their anger and frustration towards their female counterparts for the sake of reclaiming their lost masculinity.

In the same way as the black males who improperly turn their anger against slavery towards their female counterparts, the Algerian males in Les enfants du nouveau monde convert their irritation and resentment towards colonialism into sexism. Their oppression of their female counterparts can be understood as their revenge on colonialism, as well as their resentment against the suffering they have undergone. Their mistreatment of their female counterparts parallels, as we will see in the following sub-chapter, the mistreatment of black females by the black males.

IV.2- Self and Other in Gender Relationships as Seen by Women in Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde

> Bref…, son langage, comme celui des bêtes , se réduit, pour l'homme, à l'expression des émotions et pas plus qu'on ne discute avec un perroquet, on ne parle à une femme…non, on ne parle pas, on ne discute pas avec une femme, simplement on l'informe (ce soir, il y'a des invités), on la convoque (toutes sur l'esplanade de l'Afrique), on la commande (tu ne sortiras pas), et pêle-mêle on l'épouse (on la marie) ou on la répudie, on la siffle ou on la chasse, on la bat ou on la flatte, jamais ou presque on ne voit en elle un autre aussi positif que soi et qui aurait comme tout un chacun quelque chose a donner .[37]

36. Barbara Christian, "Notes for Yet Another Paper on Black Feminism , Or Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up" in Conditions.5 . Brooklyn, New York: 1979-1980, p.123.

37. Fadela M'Rabet, Les Algériennes, Paris : Maspero, 1979, p.14.

Assia Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde , in the same way as Hurston's novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, deals with the condition of women as 'Other' within their own community and shows how these women are pressured by their own race and relegated to a subordinate position. In the novel, the Algerian males occupy an authoritative role and embody the patriarchal values of their community. Women, on the other hand, are expected by the gatekeepers of communal traditions to remain passive and submissive to the will of men. Assia Djebar did not need to go very far to look for the material necessary for her depiction of women in her society as patriarchy and male authority were an integral part of the world of women around her. The patriarchal norms of society 'surrounded' her from a very early age. As Accad remarks:

> The lives of North-African women would seem to provide 'natural' material for the novelist. Born into families where they are neither welcomed nor cherished […] and perpetually aware that they have neither respect nor freedom in society at large, the life-long struggle of the North–African woman has seemed to offer a splendid arena in which to view human spirit in its agonizing struggle for dignity and self-recognition.[38]

Accordingly, Assia Djebar's narrative, in the same way as Hurston's novel reveals the tensions of power which regulate male/female relations, and how women's identities are mediated by men's motivations. In the novel, a sharp criticism of the separation of the sexes within Algerian community and its consequences for relations between them is evident from the opening of the text. The social space is carefully drawn into dual spheres. "Les maison ne sont pleines que de femmes car leurs époux sont déjà parti à leur travail." (Les enfants, 16) " only the women are at home, because their husbands have already left for work." (Les enfants, 3) Women spend most of their time alone or in the company of other women like themselves, devoting their energies to the trivialities associated with their prescribed roles as mothers , wives, and daughters . Men, for their part, have their work in the daytime, and the street, with its open markets, its cafés and its open spaces for the rest of the day. These are the exclusive spaces of men from where women are excluded. "The opposition between the inside and the outside... is expressed concretely in the sharp division between the women's space–the house and its garden... a closed, secret, protected space, away from intrusions and the public gaze– and the men's space– the place of assembly, the mosque, the café , the fields and the market."[39] These boundaries separating the world of men from that of women

38. Evelyne Accad, Veil of Shame: the Role of Women in the Contemporary Fiction of North Africa and the Arab World . Quebec: Editions Naaman, 1978, p.32.

39. Pierre Bourdieu, Algeria New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 121.

contribute, as said earlier, in structuring gender and delimitating the interrelationships between men and women.

a- Woman as a Trustee of National Identity:

To Algerian males living under French occupation, home carried a special meaning as the private realm where they found refuge from colonial humiliations they confronted daily in public spaces. It represented the impenetrable aspect of Algerian life protected from the gaze of the colonizer.

> [...]Quand il rentre chez lui, le soir, et qu'il regarde sa femme que l'autre, le maître tout- puissant du dehors ne connaîtras pas 'cloîtrée', dit-on d'elle, mais l'époux pense 'libérée' tandis qu'il lui parle ensuite, sans s'adresser directement à elle, selon les convenances– et c'est pourquoi, juge–t-il, elle est sa femme. (Les enfants, 18)

> [...] when he comes home at night and looks at his wife, whom the other one, the omnipotent master outside, will never know. They call her sequestered, but, while he speaks without addressing her directly, as tradition prescribes, the husband thinks of her as freed. And that, he decides, is why she is his wife. (Children, 4)

The home was, in fact, the only space where the Algerian males whose identity was estranged within the colonial process recovered part of their manhood. Like the domestic space, women represented the unconquered part of the country. Because the pervading metaphor during colonialism was that of the body of Algeria as the body of a woman, a body that was highly eroticized under the gaze of the invader, the Algerian woman became subject to competing claims from the two masculine cultural systems prevailing in the country which were the traditional Algerian society, and the European colonial one. These two systems fought each other for the control of the Algerian woman who became a territory to conquer and possess much like the land of the country. The colonial powers, for instance, believed that controlling the behavior of the Algerian women was an important component of successful rule as the main goal of their policy was to indoctrinate these women with the cultural values of the French oppressor and promote their loyalty to France. In response, Algerian nationalists countered this policy by promoting the image of women as the teachers and guardians of the nation's culture and identity whose main role was to raise a new generation of patriotic Algerians, and inculcate to them Algerian culture in order to be able to oppose French colonialism.

Indeed, in its effort to resist the colonial desire to conquer the Algerian woman both literally and symbolically, the Algerian nationalist discourse ascribed to women the roles of chaste patriotic icons. Accordingly, the

Algerian patriarchal society had chosen to confine women's bodies, restricting their physical presence in public space, and obliging them to keep silent.[40] That is why the gaze is crucial. "the prohibition against women seeing and being seen is at the heart of Maghrebian patriarchy, an ideological system in which the master's eye alone exists. Women challenge the phallocentric system by appropriating the gaze for themselves."[41] Thus, both women and country became victims of aggression, never fully becoming one or the other, but always doomed to the condition of duality. In this light, as Rafika Merini states so well:

> It becomes easier to understand why Maghrebian women are seen as the guardians of tradition, albeit, a tradition that oppresses them in at least as many ways as it liberates them. They are to nurture and sustain aggressive males able to defend the tribe; these males, as a consequence, look down on everything "female" as threatening since it has the potential of making them weak, and unable to resist invaders. Women also had to be protected from the invaders, which meant that, when their presence on the battlefield was no longer required, they had to be cloistered, unless they were peasant women, as they traditionally carried out most of the agricultural tasks. Women had to accept this male oriented view of themselves for the sake of the survival of their people.[42]

Thus, in the eyes of customs and tradition, domesticity and housework have become a natural state for women and the purpose of their existence. In order to make sense of the new order imposed by colonialism, men seek refuge in an 'authentic' cultural system and an Islamic heritage that position women as guardians of male honour. Accordingly, women's identities have become fixed by the attribution given by the 'other', the fathers, husbands and brothers who embody the sexist conventions of society, and their seclusion reinforced to avert any shift in the status quo. The patriarchal hold manifests itself not only in the legal apparatus and social organization, but also in the daily behaviour of men with women.

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40. Miriam Cooke in Women and the War Story states that "The Algerians were well aware of the ways in which the French were trying to infiltrate their homes, trying to tear apart the fabric of their culture. Women disappeared from spaces where the French might appear." University of California Press, 1997, p.120.

41. Mildred Mortimer, "Assia Djebar's 'Algerian Quartet': a study in fragmented autobiography." Research in African Literature, June 22, 1997.

42. Rafika Merini, Two Major Francophone Women Writers, Assia Djebar and Leila Sebbar: A Thematic Study of Their Works. New York: Peter Lang. 1999, p. 90.

b- The 'Man-less' Woman:

In the novel, Assia Djebar makes visible the mechanisms of social control that reduce women to an absence, or to silence. As a matter of fact, women are not given many possibilities. They are seen by men as inferior beings, immature and incapable of taking care of themselves or taking decisions for themselves. Cherifa's first husband is sure that his wife will never rebel against him whatever he does to her because she has no male relative to protect her. "encore un espoir, un ultime puisqu'elle était sans ressources, sans parents, avec un frère trop jeune pour se charger d'elle." (Les enfants, 35) "a final spark of hope because she had no resources whatsoever, no parents, and a brother who was much too young to take charge of her." (Children, 16) This conviction of the necessity of a male relative to protect women is being held by women too. Because of the conventional social codes, women have to conform to the patriarchal authority. Salima, one of the female characters who seems quite independent compared to the other women in the novel, as she works outside the home and circulates freely in the streets, feels the need of the protection of a male relative in order to start her political activity: "Mahmoud aussi lui était un proche parent, si bien qu'elle n'avait pu être gênée de travailler au début avec lui, car les liens de famille la protégeaient." (Les Enfants, 101) "Mahmoud was also a close relative, so working with him wasn't a problem for her at the beginning, because the family bonds protected her. (Children, 60) Thus, the narrative shows how women's actions are determined by the power of men. Women are circumscribed by a patriarchal ethos which offers protection in return for conformity. More than that, women have internalized the male ideology of the feminine. They do not question their submission to male counterparts.

Sara Mills states in a different contexts what seems to describe so well Algerian women's state of mind: "women learn to situate themselves and move in space in a way which is significantly more restricted than men–even simple actions like sitting or walking are ones where the female subject is self-consciously not allowing herself to transcend the limits of the body as an object."[43] As a matter of fact, the entrance of women in the domain of work outside the house has not altered society's traditional attitude towards womanhood and domesticity since the domestic space is positioned as primarily a woman's space, and her access to the 'male' public space is seen as exceptional. Accordingly, Salima's role, in the novel, as a protector within the family and her engagement in the national cause are socially accepted only if they fit her resolution to "se conduire en homme." " behave like a man."

> Salima se tendait encore, ayant choisi une fois pour toutes de persévérer, de continuer en dépit de tout, du mépris de ces filles étrangères, de l'indifférence des siens, de tant d'autres obstacles.

43. Sara Mills, "Gender and Colonial Space." in Feminist Postcolonial Theory, op cit., p.697.

> […] Etait-ce vraiment hier, cette époque ? Voilà quinze ans, ou seize…Elle était alors, de la ville, la seule musulmane à poursuivre ses études. Un père mort à l'âge où elle aurait dû, comme les autres, se cloîtrer ; une chance, en somme. […] Elle se revoyait alors à quinze ans, décider, le jurer, puisqu'elle était l'aînée, de "se conduire en homme." (Les Enfants, 106-107)

> Salima would tense up again, having chosen once and for all to persevere, to continue in spite of everything–the contempt of these foreign girls, the indifference of her own people–in spite of so many obstacles.
> […] Was that period really only yesterday? It was fifteen or sixteen years ago. At the time she was the only Muslim girl in town to continue her studies. Her father died when she was at the age to be cloistered like the others; a bit of luck , in short[…] She saw herself again at age fifteen , deciding, swearing, since she was the oldest, that she would "behave like a man." (Children, 63-64)

In spite of the new appearance and values adopted by Algerian women, the latter are expected to remain unadulterated by historical events, faultless and flawless in the face of an alien culture and alien values. In addition, they are required to uphold Islamic values and maintain the moral and social cohesion of the community. To show signs of change amounts to an act of betrayal. Although Salima tries to bring a meaning to her life by reinserting her voice into a male dominated structure, she cannot free herself completely from the stereotypes of society.

While women are expected to be submissive, supportive and compliant toward men, men are expected to be the protectors of women. They are also expected to teach and control women whenever women try to rebel and need to be shown again the path of submission and passivity. First, they keep their wives, their possessions, under lock and key. Then, any tentative rebellion brings immediate retribution. Men do not hesitate to beat their wives whenever they feel any kind of resistance to their will. In the novel, Cherifa's first husband does not think of another way to prevent his wife from leaving him than by beating her. "…oui, la battre; crier et la battre; n'était-elle pas sa femme?" (Les enfants, 30) "…yes, beat her up; bellow at her and beat her; she was his wife, wasn't she?" (Children, 12) Thus, women's bullying and beating is interpreted as a vindictive treatment of females whose cultural and religious 'disloyalty' is accused of causing social disarray.

Thus, as seen earlier, Touma in the novel is rejected by both men and women in her society. In addition to the fact that she is a collaborator, working for the enemy, Touma is seen as a danger for her community by the very fact that she does not comply with the "traditional values". While women are required to be the trustees of national identity and the custodians of Arabo-

Islamic values, Touma is seen as an incitement to rebellion against the well-established order of patriarchy. Her actions, conduct, and dress are hostile to the traditional norms of feminity and thus threatening to the patriarchal system. In addition to the young woman's refusal to play the role prescribed to her by men, she dares to cross the forbidden boundaries of sexual segregation. Touma's triple crossing, of male space, women's code of dress, and sexual relationships, bans her from the community of women to which she is supposed to belong. Her multiple transgressions make of her an eternal 'Other' that is lost to her community and to her own self. Touma's efforts of assimilation to the French culture have caused her to stray so far from her Algerian traditions that she can no longer identify completely with her own people; yet she is not accepted by the French either. The progression of her journey leads her to a no-man's land that is a part of neither French nor Algerian society. Belonging to neither, she is, in fact, nothing. As such the only thing she deserves is death. " Tu es la honte de cette ville ! Tu mérites cent fois la mort". (Les enfants, p.152) "You're the shame of this town! You deserve to die a hundred times over!" (Children, 94)

In The Hidden Face of Eve, Nawal El Saadawi describes the reaction of the Arab community in general, and Egypt in particular to women's attempts at emancipation and freedom of movement and action. She states in this context: "Segregation between the world of men and that of women was so strict that a woman who dared to go outside the door of her home was liable to be maltreated at the hands of men. They might limit themselves to a few rude and insolent glances, or resort to coarse sexual remarks and insults, but very often things would go even further."[44] Accordingly, a woman must know her place or else she may find herself reprimanded or punished for her actions. Touma's experience is not very different. Her status as a 'man-less' woman makes her open to advances from strangers viewing her as a sexual object. Her body is perceived by men as public property, to be openly touched, coveted, and discussed.

c- The 'Unveiled' Woman:

Strict Islamic laws requiring women to be chaste and virtuous have only made of Touma's actions a blatant insult to the Muslim community. Touma's experience, in fact, clearly illustrates that any attempt, from a woman, at forging an identity cut off from the community is doomed. At a more symbolic level, Touma stands for the success of the colonial policy at disavowing men's traditional virility and authoritative status. By leaving the private realm traditionally assigned to women and by 'unveiling' her body, Touma blurs the traditional boundaries that have always helped to fashion and classify gender. In order to restore men's status of virility, and the right of an

44. The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.219.

ancestral patriarchy, Touma and all she represents and stands for, have to disappear.

In a 1987 interview, Djebar explains that she had used Touma to exemplify the ways in which the French were trying to westernize Algerian women. She adds that the only outcome of such a program was to turn the seduced women into prostitutes and traitors. She calls Touma one of the "misguided" feminists who thought that it was enough to look western; worst of all she believed that she had the right to sacrifice the nationalist cause for personal reasons. Because of his sister's sexual behavior, Touma's brother felt symbolically castrated and his manhood questioned by the rest of society. As such, he was "compelled" to kill her to redeem his lost honor and gain acceptance.[45] He felt that he failed in his role as the guardian of the family's honor, so he did not deserve the status of 'man' nor membership in the National Liberation Army. The community's rejection and condemnation of Touma can be better understood through Fanon's analysis of women's role in his seminal work, "Algeria Unveiled" Fanon explains that:

> After each success, the authorities were strengthened in their conviction that the Algerian woman would support Western penetration into the native society. Every rejected veil disclosed to the eyes of the colonialists horizons until then forbidden, and reveals to them , piece by piece , the flesh of Algeria laid bare […] every new Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defense were in the process of dislocation, open and breached. Every veil that fell, every body that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the *haïk*, every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer.[46]

In light of what has been said, Touma's erratic behavior is seen as threatening in the eyes of the communal group. Her devious nature has made of her a woman unworthy of respect, and deserving not just punishment but death.

d- The Nameless Wife:

At another level, the novel defines the relationships between men and women as husbands and wives as determined by social prescriptions of gender roles as well as psychological conditionings. Because of the subordination of women to the will of men, women do not feel any kind of intimacy or closeness in their relationships with men. Throughout the novel, the female characters describe their husbands as the Ultimate or Absolute Other. The

45. Cited in Women and the War Story , op cit., p.128.
46. Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled" in A Dying Colonialism, op cit, p.42.

husbands are not given names, nor personalized in any way. Most of them are referred to by their wives as 'the master' as is the case of Amna, Cherifa's neighbor: "je ne suis pas de ces femmes hypocrites qui prennent plaisir à cacher tant de choses à leur **maître**." (Les Enfants, 85 (emphasis mine)) " I 'm not one of those hypocritical women who take pleasure in hiding all sorts of things from their **master**." (Children, 50) In other cases, the husband becomes 'the man' as is the case of Chérifa "elle percevait la voix rauque de **l'homme** qui murmurait des mots confus" (Les enfants, 31)"She had listened to the hoarse voice of **the man** mumbling gibberish. "(Children, 14), " Qu'avait-elle connu tout à l'heure dans les bras de **cet homme** ? "(Les enfants, 33) "What had she experienced just then, in the arms of **that man**?" (Children, 14) He would also become in certain situations, 'the stranger'. "lui , son mari? Lui **plus étranger** qu'un étranger?" (Les enfants, 31) "He, her husband ? He, who was **more of a stranger** than a stranger to her." (Children, 13) For Lila, another female character the relationship reaches the extreme as the supposed partner becomes not only 'the stranger' , but also 'the other', 'the enemy': "A chaque incident de son amour, quand Ali semblait disparaître, et avec lui toutes les attaches , quand il devenait **l'autre, l'ennemi, l'étranger**… " (Les enfants, 118) "With every incident in her love life, when Ali seemed to be vanishing and with him all connections, when he was becoming **the other, the enemy, the stranger**…… " (Children, 72) At best, they remain nameless individuals who are alluded to in the masculine gender. On the other hand, women lose their personal identity, for their husbands do not refer to them by their names but as "femme", "Femme, dis ce que tu sais! Je te l'ordonne." (Les enfants, 87). " Woman, tell me what you know! I order you to do so." (Children, 51)

The fact of not being called by their proper names may be considered as a sign of exclusion of women from the society where they live. Indeed, not having names represents the lack of space and recognition from the outside world. These words used by women and men to describe their partners give expression to the relationship between men and women in the novel. They reveal how far removed women are from the community of men. In her analysis of Assia Djebar's early fiction, Mildred Mortimer states:

> Brutality inflicted upon Algerians by an external enemy, the European colonizer, is refigured. Turned inward and self-destructive, this violence harms society and family life, transforming the Algerian nation into a divided society and the Algerian home into a prison where interrogation and intimidation replace communication and understanding.[47]

47. Mildred Mortimer, "Reappropriating the Gaze in Assia Djebar's Fiction and Film." World Literature Today, Volume: 70. Issue: 4, 1996, p.863.

In their attempts to forge frames of identity for themselves, and escape the threat of castration and/or emasculation, the Algerian men had no other alternative than vent their frustration and anger on their women by controlling their bodies and muting their voices.

e- The Resigned Woman:

In the novel, Assia Djebar analyses particular forms of oppression of women in an attempt to define the social and political parameters of gender and patriarchal authority. She feels that the Algerian men ignore the needs and desires of women. Women are relegated to 'tradition', their inferiority naturalized by the ahistorical identity men have constructed for their gender: women as passive objects, acted upon, never acting in their own right. For the men in the novel, the purpose of a woman's being is to keep one's husband pleased. Her duties focus entirely on caring for the household, and bearing and rearing children. All kinds of aspirations and desires that go beyond the home sphere have to be repressed. Zineb, Youssef's sister is a typical example of the powerless woman who had to submit to the law of the brother and accept the fate chosen to her by the others.

> Sa dernière sœur, Zineb, lui avait bien causé quelque souci : parce qu'elle avait pu faire des études, apprendre le français, aller au collège jusqu'à seize ans, elle avait difficilement accepté ensuite de se retrouver cloitrée, comme les autres, puis un jour mariée à un inconnu…des tiraillements, c'était normal…non, inutile de se mentir, pense Youssef, cela avait été plus grave, il le sait mais veut l'oublier, car il se croit responsable–responsable du malheur d'une jeune femme qui ne s'arrête de pleurer le jour de ses noces, et les mois qui suivent[…] celle-ci s'était enfin habituée à son mari qui 'l'approchait', à ses enfants qui grandissaient. S'il n'y avait eu cette ombre qui flétrissait ses traits (à vingt-trois ans, déjà, alors que quelques années plus tôt elle était d'une joliesse si ronde, si éclatante), on pouvait dire que son ménage allait sans histoires, comme tant d'autres. On croit étouffer un jour; on se résigne ensuite, plus ou moins vite. (Les enfants, 54-55)

> His younger sister, Zineb, had caused him quite a bit of concern. Since she had been able to attend school, learn French, and go on to secondary school until the age of sixteen, she had trouble accepting being closeted like the others and one day being married off to someone she didn't know; it was normal for there to have been some struggle. No, there was no point in lying to himself, Youssef thought, it had been much more serious than that. He knows but wants to forget, for he feels responsible–responsible for the unhappiness of a young woman who wouldn't stop crying on her wedding day and throughout the months that followed […] she had

> finally grown accustomed to her husband, who "came near her, " and to her growing children. Were it not for that shadow that darkened her features (even at twenty-three, when only a few years earlier she had been so pretty and plump, so dazzling), one might say her household was without any problems, like so many others. One day you think you're choking; then, sooner or later, you're resigned . (Children, 28-29)

Zineb's plight underpins a culture of repression whereby women are prevented from exercising their right to choice of spouse. Moreover, her resignation to her brother's decision seems to indicate women's inability to escape the constricting fetters of culture, tradition and patriarchy. When silencing her voice, Zineb demonstrates her weakness in resisting social and marital pressures. There is no effort from her to struggle for her own ideals. As a subservient woman, Zineb maintains the order that is controlled by the male dominance represented by her brother.

On the other hand, internalization of gender roles allows men to define themselves as the possessors of authority with regard to women. Zineb's brother, Youssef, stands for the authoritarian brother who feels called upon to redeem his sister because she has chosen to adopt an independent behavior in her choice of spouse. Youssef, in fact, stands as an example of the authority granted by society to men to rule over women's lives. Men seem to retain this authority in shaping and defining the world of women, and also in arranging it in the way that suits them best without taking into consideration the dreams, aspirations and hopes of women.

Hakim is another example of a man who expects subordination and passivity from his wife. "Il a pris depuis longtemps l'habitude de sa présence silencieuse, un être pale qui écoute les ordres, courbe la tête, s'en va, écho fidèle." (Les enfants, 86) "He had long ago become used to her silent presence, a wan person who listens to orders, bends her head, goes away, a faithful echo." (Children, 50) The way Hakim psychologically and physically mistreats and abuses his wife has destroyed her beauty, body and also her soul. Whether she disobeys her husband or not, Amna is punished but for daring to review her life and redefine it. Her home has become a frightening prison where interrogation and intimidation replace communication and understanding between husband and wife. Her husband inflicts violence upon her body in order to control her. Amna, in fact, has been entrapped by the institution of marriage and by motherhood. She is not free to choose a new life for herself and not powerful enough to make her private world conform to her own reality. Unable to change her reality, she uses adaptation as the weakest form of defense against her husband's oppression. However, the more adapted she becomes, the more dominated she becomes too. By accommodating herself to the circumscribed limits of the ideology of womanhood, Hakim's wife has become a product of what society and its norms have established as a woman.

As such, she has taken part in the process of her own oppression, reinforcing her inferiority.

f- Forms of Women's Resistance:

The more silenced or voiceless women are, the more powerful men become. By deciding to present unfortunate women with extremely disturbing destinies like Amna, Assia Djebar aims to show how difficult it is for Algerian women to fight against patriarchy and the values the community has imposed on them. One way to check the subordination of women is by controlling the gaze. Only men have the right to look at women. Women speak with lowered eyes; they do not have the right to look back at men. For men, gaze is viewed as an act of resistance. Thus, when women look at men, it becomes for them a desire for rebellion, a means of challenging the power of men's gaze. It becomes a confrontational challenge. When Chérifa decides to leave her husband, and to free herself from his oppression, she transmits her message through the gaze. She dares to look back at her oppressor as a way to say 'no'. "Devant lui, des yeux qui ne se baissaient point, un simple mouvement de la tête pour rejeter une mèche noire, et la bouche de Cherifa qui lentement s'ouvrit mais pour dessiner un sourire d'une douceur impitoyable, le sourire du triomphe." (Les enfants, 36) "…her eyes were not lowered ; a simple movement of her head shook back a lock of dark hair ;her mouth opened slowly only to trace a merciless gentle smile, the smile of triumph." (Children, 16) The same surprise is seen in Hakim when his wife refuses to tell him the truth and looks back at him. "Ces yeux brillants…Elle n'a jamais répondu sur ce ton comme…comme ceux que j'interroge et qui me bravent." (Les enfants,87) "Her eyes shining. She's never answered in that tone before like…like the people I interrogate and who then challenge me." (Children, 51)

Women's defiance to their husbands and to the harshness of seclusion in which they find themselves is expressed also through female bonding and forging of a chain of solidarity between them. When Amna is interrogated by her husband about the activities of Youssef, she does not hesitate to lie to him in an act not of resistance, but of solidarity with Youssef's wife, Chérifa. When she reports to Chérifa what happened, the two women sharing in this subterfuge feel themselves strengthened by their opposition to the corrupt law, personified by the husband.

> N'aie pas peur; je te le dis comme je le pense. Ai-je un jour parlé contre mon cœur ? As-tu, un jour, surpris ma bouche contredire mon cœur ? Tu es ma sœur…les hommes, eux, ont leurs affaires, leurs soucis. Quelquefois, ils se dévorent comme des chacals affamés. Mais moi, je l'affirme, quand une femme comme toi (…) est proche de mon cœur, je me comporte avec elle comme si un même sang nous liait, comme si nous avions bu le même lait d'une même mère. (Les enfants, 84)

> Don't be afraid; I'm telling it as I see it. Have I ever spoken against my own heart? Have you ever caught me saying things that contradict what's in my heart? You are my sister. Men have their own concerns, their own worries. Sometimes they devour each other like starving jackals. But I promise you […]when a woman like you is dear to my heart, then I treat her the same way I would a blood sister, as if we'd drunk the same mother's milk. (Children, 49)

This passage is remarkable for its profound insight into the plight of the Algerian women in the face of men's constant imposition of patriarchy. Amna's lie to her husband Hakim about Mahmoud is an act of sisterhood in the face of tragedy. She calls Chérifa her sister because it was as if "the same blood joined [them], as if [they] had drunk milk from the same mother." Linked by blood and milk in a powerful sisterhood, these two uneducated women isolated in their homes, personify the powerlessness of the women caught up in a historical drama in which they are the forgotten victims.

The bond of female friendship is, judging from the event mentioned above, unquestionably a means of gathering strength and assistance among the female characters. It relieves the harshness of confinement and oppression Amna's words, on the other hand, seem to suggest that women can be connected to each other and thus be empowered as if they can replace the corrupting old world of men with a harmonious one of sisterly kinships. In fact, this kind of solidarity between women becomes a significant part of the female universe. These women become pillars of strength and support to one another. They are all linked together by a common experience, female survival in a gender structured society, and by the desire to combat oppression and create individual identities for themselves. The central message communicated is that by helping another woman, they are also helping themselves. By living in the margins, and uniting against one common 'enemy', women form a bond that will only be broken by death.

This new sense of bounding is also linked with the colonial situation in which these women live and their constant fights to save their lives and the lives of their beloved. According to Marnia Lazreg, these Algerian women, "[…]forged bonds with one another that transcended the usual episodic solidarity that characterized their relationships during peacetime. Second, they gained a sense of responsibility and purpose as well as another perspective on their lives. Third, confidence in themselves and a sense of partaking in history is evident. Fourth, they were exposed to the similarities between men and women, despite differences."[48] For Assia Djebar, women's bonding is neither linked with race nor with religion. It is the bonding of women, as the weakest

48. Marnia Lazreg, The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question. New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 140.

gender against the double oppression of the domineering male and the foreign colonizer.

Another illustration of the bond of women's friendship in the novel would be the one linking Lila to her friend Suzane. Despite all that seems to separate these women in terms of education, social status, culture, and even race, they become pillars of support to one another, healing their emotional wounds with loving attention. This underpins a culture of female bonding and solidarity in the face of threatening internal breakdown. They let themselves retreat into a world that is unhinged from male authority and oppression. The main reason of their interrelationships is the need to care and be cared for, the establishment of power and, above all, the survival. These women show to their female friends that life without men is possible, that they only need to find the strength to fight against the societal pressures and take full responsibility of their own lives. In fact, Assia Djebar's female bonding reminds us of another kind of women's bonding, that of Alice Walker African American women's bonding that she developed in her collection of essays, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose by Alice Walker.(1984) In her text, the African American writer coins women's bonding 'womanism', that is, "Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behaviour."[49] Despite the fact that womanism was initially meant as exclusively representative of women of color, particularly African American women, Walker is generally accredited with developing the concept to extend over the experience of black women to "[a]ppreciate (s) and prefer(s) women's culture, women's emotional flexibility. . . and women's strength[…] Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female."[50] Thus, despite the different experiences that seem to separate African American women from Algerian ones, Walker seems to believe, in the same way as Assia Djebar, that there are at least some aspects that all oppressed women share whatever their race, origins, or religion.

On the other hand, while silence has always been considered as a manifestation of oppression, in some cases, it is not to be interpreted as submission. It can become a tool of empowerment and self-assertion. It does not imply weakness, helplessness, submission and withdrawal. Silence, when chosen rather than imposed, may be an act of defiance and resistance. That is why Assia Djebar's women in the novel choose silence when they are asked to speak. They feel stronger when they choose to keep silent. Indeed, very often, it is the same people, men, who expect them to be silent, passive and non-resistant that ask them to speak. Men, in fact, are more afraid of them because they cannot understand what is happening in their minds: "…quel soulagement de voir qu'elle s'était enfin découverte; enfin! Que son silence méprisant s'était fêlé; enfin."(Les enfants, 29) "…it was so comforting to see that she had

49. Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, op cit., p.xi.
50. Ibid.

finally exposed herself, at last! That her contemptuous silence was broken, at last!" (Children, 11-12)

Although "of all the sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced, and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct...the warrior still seems to be a key symbol of Masculinity."[51] War serves for the women characters in Les enfants du nouveau monde as a way to affirm and define one's self, and more importantly, to question prescribed identities within their community. In the novel, women join the male fighters in the struggle for national freedom. However, it remains that women have been permitted to enter the masculine realm on men's own terms. They unquestionably fulfill the traditional roles offered to them by society. They were not always allowed to participate in the same capacity as men or perform exactly the same functions. Phillip Naylor has argued that, "when women engaged in anti-colonial activity, they did so largely at the bidding of men, that it was a male decision to bring them into the fighting, and it was men who adjudicated what activities they could and could not undertake."[52] Thus, when joining the male freedom fighters, Algerian women followed the orders of men. They acted as nurses and cooks, and rarely hold arms to take part actively in battles. In their introduction to Gendering War Talk, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott explain the importance of war in the production of gender meaning:

> A culturally produced activity that is as rigidly defined by sex differentiation and as committed to sexual exclusion as is war points to a crucial site where meanings about gender are being produced, reproduced, and circulated back into society. After biological reproduction, war is perhaps the arena where division of labor along gender lines has been the most obvious, and thus where sexual difference has seemed the most absolute and natural.[53]

Thus, the image of the women fighters carrying the banner of freedom has not served a feminist propaganda but a political one. Women's issues were subordinated to the overall revolutionary cause. Worse, women's role during the war of independence has been ignored by both French and Algerian patriarchal narratives.

> These courageous individuals [women fighters] have subsequently been forgotten at once by politics, by social organization and by

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51. David H. J. Morgan, "Theater of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities." Theorizing Masculinities. Ed, Harry Brod and Michael Kauffman. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994, pp.165-182, p.165.

52 . Philippa Levine, "Gendering Decolonisation" , op cit.

53. Miriam, Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds. Gendering War Talk. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. ix.

> collective memory. Although Fanon predicted in 'L'Algérie se dévoile' that women's active contribution to the war effort would lead to their increased and long-awaited emancipation in Algerian society, successive governments since independence have limited rather than promoted the liberation of women. Social expectations regarding women's roles in the home and their rights in relation to their husbands have become more rather than less restrictive. Ironically, though they helped to free their country from occupation and oppression, the activity and agency of the female combatants was quickly seen as a threat to Islamic values and as collusion with what was seen as Western individualism. As a result, after the war women were forced back into traditional roles, their achievements were forgotten, and they became again invisible.[54]

Even though it was the intention of the war to allow women more freedom and responsibilities, the law of the father continues to limit these freedom and responsibilities at all levels of society.

It is to be noted that although Algerian women are depicted as oppressed and subjugated by the patriarchal society in which they live, Assia Djebar tries, through her novel, to invalidate the sustained belief that Algerian women are passive harem inmates or willing partners in their own oppression. By challenging this stereotyping of Algerian women in general, Assia Djebar offers her readers a picture of the Algerian woman as a strong willed individual, ready to fight in order to recover both her voice and her individuality. Regardless of their motivations, Algerian women have transgressed the patriarchal law in entering the military realm; a male space defined by the struggle for power and dominated by masculine discourse. They have refused to keep silent and have rejected the limited space allocated to them.

Fanon confirms the statement by writing in Sociologie d'une révolution : "La guerre révolutionnaire n'est pas une guerre d'hommes [...] c'est une guerre totale où la femme ne fait pas que tricoter ou pleurer le soldat. La femme algérienne est au cœur du combat. Arrêtée, torturée, violée, abattue, elle atteste de la violence de l'occupant et de son inhumanité."[55] Thus, the female protagonists of Les Enfants du nouveau monde become the children of a new world, free of colonialism and other forms of oppression and segregation. They dream of a day when no obstacles would block their path. Assia Djebar, in fact, thinks that a movement of emancipation has emerged. Hassiba, in the novel, despite her young age has already understood that. She expresses the novelist's opinion about women and about the revolution: "La Révolution, c'est pour tout le monde, pour les vieux, pour les jeunes. Je veux donner mon sang à la Révolution." (Les enfants, 235) " the revolution is for

54. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria, op cit., p.35.
55. Sociologie d'une révolution, op cit., p. 50.

everybody, for the young and the old. I want to shed my blood for the revolution." (Children, 148)

It is worth noting however that even though Assia Djebar rejects patriarchal society in Les enfants du nouveaux monde, she does not collectively reject Algerian men in opposition to Algerian women. She does not feel the need to put down men in order to raise her women up. Even though some of the female characters in the novel stand against men, they are rather doing it to protect themselves than to demean the male characters.

PART THREE:

THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE AS A RITE OF PASSAGE

Many obstructions had inhibited black Americans and Algerians from developing knowledge of their history, identity and culture. One of these obstructions was the attempt of the White/ colonizer to erase the existing native cultural identity and to let the subjugated peoples in a psychological void. Stuart Hall in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" defines 'cultural identity' as one shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self." This notion , according to him , played a key role in the anti-colonial struggles, and continues to be " a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation amongst hitherto marginalized peoples" as "[their] cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide [them], as 'one people' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting division and vicissitudes of [their] actual history."[1] This "shared cultural identity" has enabled the oppressed peoples to survive and struggle against the colonizing forces that have deemed them savages and uncivilized. Edward Said agrees with Stuart Hall in that oppressed and subjugated people need to reclaim an identity of their own, separate and independent from that of their oppressors. He states in this context:

> Much of the early cultural resistance to imperialism on which nationalism and independence movements were built was salutary and necessary. I see it essentially as an attempt on the part of oppressed people who had suffered the bondage of slavery, colonialism, and – most important – spiritual dispossession, to reclaim their identity.[2]

This has predominantly been achieved, as we will see in the following chapters, by the marginalized peoples' revealing of the deep cultural values and systems that existed prior to the inception of colonization, and at the same time, through the fashioning of new versions of their history in which they have become active subjects rather than passive objects of the White/ colonizer's imposed history.

However, the search of one's identity requires, in addition to the use of a 'shared cultural identity', the preservation of memory as the maker of a collective identity and the preserver of culture. Walter Benn Michaels, in his seminal work Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism, states that national identity depends on accumulated memory: "identity is a function of inheritance, but what gets inherited is not just biology, it is a culture."[3]

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1. Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. Ed, Mongia Padmini. London: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 43.

2. Edward Said, Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays . London: Granta Books, 2001, p. 377.

3. Walter Benn Michaels, Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995, p.37.

According to Michaels, this inheritance is inescapable, "if to belong to a culture you must be able to encounter it in the form of memory, as a tradition that is already yours, then no one can ever cease to belong to his or her culture or begin to belong to some other culture."[4] As the natives' past is available only through memory and oral transmission, storytelling and the (re)connection with one's forefathers become an important tool for the preservation of cultural memory. It follows then, that the colonized people need to revisit the sites where their ancestors' past took place and thereby identify themselves with them in order to (re)connect and (re)discover the present and the future. Maryse Condé voices the hardships and complexities of examining history for people of color as follows:

> For a black person, history is a challenge because a black person is supposed not to have any history except the colonial one. We hardly know what happened to our people before the time when they met the Europeans who decided to give them what they call civilization. For a black person from the West Indies or from Africa, whatever, for somebody from the Diaspora, I repeat it is a kind of challenge to find out exactly what was there before. It is not history for the sake of history. It is searching for one's self, searching for one's identity, searching for one's origin in order to better understand oneself.[5]

Slavery in America meant not only loss of freedom for the black people, but also loss of identity, loss of origins, and loss of self. It not only stripped the black people of their lives and humanity, but it also stripped them of their culture that was a strong element in defining their identity. The project of depicting their people as subjects of their own histories, and not as passive figures in the history of others has become the main objective of African American writers. They have attempted, through their literary works to deconstruct Eurocentric assumptions and reconstruct history from their own perspective.

The same objective lies behind the literary works of the Algerian writers. The latter have aimed at reconstructing pre-colonial Algerian history in order to reveal the tragic consequences of colonization upon the psyche of their countrymen. They have also aimed, through the revision of the image of pre-colonial Algeria, to strengthen the Algerian people's sense of dignity and pride. By dismantling the hostile colonial narratives about their people and their country, they have transformed their works into a protest mechanism challenging the French repressive forces which attempted to erase the collective historical memory of their people.

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4. Ibid, p.80.

5. Ann Armstrong Scarboro, "Afterword." I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem. New York: Ballantine, 1992. pp.187-225, p.203.

While the theme of the journey characterizes, as we will see, the novels of Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine whose protagonists travel to the land of the ancestors in search of their lost identity, the same theme appears in the works of the two female writers too, except that Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar explore this theme in ways that are characteristically feminine. Indeed, in both novels, the female characters must break free from the values imposed by their communities in order to assert their personal and cultural independence. However, these characters' journeys take personal and psychological forms as the two writers prefer, as we will see in the present part, to make their protagonists travel inwards in search of self-definition and voice. These women's journeys involve, as Audre Lorde puts it, "the transformation of silence into language and action"[6] in order to be able to pass down to the younger generation of women a tradition of resistance to oppression. Because of communal and patriarchal constraints, the female characters in the two novels under study do not enjoy the same freedom of movement as their male counterparts. These physical limitations on their mobility, nevertheless, do not limit them, as we are going to see, in terms of self-empowerment and recovery of one's voice as they come back from their inward journeys enriched and more spiritually grounded.

The present part is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, we will see how both Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine insist on the reconstruction of historical myths on which official history thrives. Through their literary works, the two male writers deconstruct the Western myths of the 'Other' as devoid of culture and history by replacing them with assertive cultural ones. They try, accordingly, to establish a restorative connection with that which the White/ French colonizer's discourse had denied. By deconstructing their oppressors' myths and replacing them by their own, the two writers try to restore the spiritual essence and dignity of their peoples as myths become cultural affirmations of native identity and culture. The struggle for survival, the connection with the ancestors and the search for one's origins and identity have become, as we will see, shared themes between the two male writers. On the other hand, women have a double struggle to lead, their oppression stemming both from the colonizer and the oppressor from within their community. Thus, in the second chapter we will see how Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar empower their women characters in order to regain the voice that has been stolen from them. The aim of the two female novelists, as we are going to see, is to make visible what was absent from representation and to make heard what was silenced.

In both chapters, travel serves as a powerful tool for the writers under study, operating as a trope for the discovery/ recovery of one's identity and/ or voice. The journeys undertaken by the characters in the literary works whether

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6. Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Michigan: Crossing Press Feminist Series, 1984, p.40.

literal or metaphorical, allow them to find who they really are, and help them make their voices heard. Storytelling too serves as an important means to establish a link between the past generations and the ones that are to come. Both the writers and their characters depend on the tradition of storytelling to recover what has been buried for long centuries under the weight of slavery and colonialism. Storytelling is important in the recovery of one's culture because stories transmit group history and serve as guidelines. Stories inherited from the ancestors and transmitted to the offspring pass on the values as well as the collective identity from one generation to the next.

Chapter Five
The Search for One's Identity

> For those of us just emerging from marginality and persecution, nationalism is a necessary thing: a long-deferred and–denied identity needs to come out into the open and take its place among other human identities.[7]

The spiritual /ancestral quest that dominates and enriches the narratives of both Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine recreates historical events through a consistent initiative of the characters to reread their historical heritage using collective memory passed down from the ancestors. This collective memory employs the notion of a continual memory transmitted through informative, spiritual, and legendary community stories. For the Black American and Algerian novelists, the past becomes inescapable. They present racial identity as a constant concern in national and personal identity, past and present. Countering European historical constructions of their peoples with attempts to reconstruct their own history becomes, accordingly, the best way for the two writers to empower their peoples and at the same time assert their unique identities. Boehmer says in this context that, "for a people shipwrecked by history, a story of the past even if wholly or in part a fiction, again offers a kind of restitution."[8] The reinterpretation of popular myths and legends becomes, for the two writers under study in this chapter, a legitimizing strategy that allows their peoples to break the rules established by the White/colonial power and find their true self/ identity. Myth is one of the means whereby they can comment upon the present and transcend the oppression and segregation they experience.Myth for them is timeless in that it sheds light on contemporary behavior and attitudes and explains past deeds and attitudes. It becomes a cultural affirmation of a native identity.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we will analyse the way Toomer confronts and questions the myth upon which racial supremacy is based wherein the white race is constructed as superior–mentally, morally, and otherwise while blacks are constructed as inferior and often condemned to a life of slavery and servitude. Myth is a defining element of Algerian identity too. However, instead of being a source of oppression, it is, for the Algerian people, an empowering element that connects them to their ancestors and to their land. Thus, in the second section, we will analyse the journey of the young people to the land of their ancestors in search of a better

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7. Edward Said, Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays, op cit, p. 402.
8. Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, op cit., p. 198.

understanding of the myth of Keblout and their acceptance of sharing responsibilities in their colonization by the French.

V.1 - Cane or the Search for Racial Identity:

> I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination- indeed, everything and anything except me.[9]

To understand the African American writers' works, it is first necessary to explore the historical development of racism in America and the pervasive omission and estrangement of African American history from mainstream American 'History'. Indeed, racism in America had been, for a long time, considered as just a "black problem." Understanding some of the specific conditions and experiences of the African American writers as inevitably a part of the broader, collective moments of a people engaged in a struggle for freedom, equality, and respect can provide insight into a historical and cultural understanding of black and white identities in the United States. It will also help to show the impact that all these factors had on twentieth century African American writers, mainly Jean Toomer.[10] History is also of importance to the African American writers as it allows them to understand the present and forge a better future for their people. Elleke Boehmer associates the interest in history by postcolonial writers with "the quest for personal and racial/cultural identity, the belief that writing is an integral part of self-definition, the emphasis on historical reconstruction."[11] It is to be reminded, however, that our aim in this section is not an analysis of the development of racism in the United States. Rather, we will review briefly the main social and political events pervading in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, with a special focus on their relation to the black people's search for racial identity.

a- A Long Standing Fight:

For long centuries, black men and women in the United States had been exploited, segregated, physically and verbally abused, and denied access to all kinds of economic, social and educational opportunities. African

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9. Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man. New York: Modern Library, 1952, p.7.

10. According to Omi Michael and Howard Winant, "race is indeed a pre-eminently socio historical concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. In Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s, New York: Routledge, 1994.p, 60.

11. Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures. Migrant Metaphors, op cit., pp.228-229.

American social and intellectual history is replete with examples of the struggle of black Americans over the redefinition of racial identity as a way to combat racism. As a matter of fact, the turn of the century witnessed the emergence of a group of black Americans whose aim was to bury old stereotypes of inferiority and brutality associated with the Negro man, and claim a new race-proud and independent identity. Many factors helped in shaping the personality of this "New Negro". The political and economic implications of this "shaping" can be understood best in the light of what went on in Black America in the two decades preceding World War I. Scholars have cited, among other events, the Great Migration, international revolutionary movements, the growth of a radical black press, and the participation of black soldiers in the First World War.

In fact, the turn of the twentieth century witnessed deterioration in the political and social condition of the black people, especially in the South. Racist ideology was a dominant theme at the time. The predominant racial theory, in the South, depicted Blacks as an inferior and immoral race that would never achieve parity with Whites. Slavery, it was argued, had Christianized blacks and restrained their baser tendencies, but freedom had resulted in a rapid reversion toward barbarism.[12] Northern social scientists were hardly more tolerant than their Southern counterparts. Armed with theories of Eugenics, they expressed concern about the intellectual and physical inferiority of blacks. More threatening to the blacks was the almost complete acceptance of these scientific and pseudo-scientific theories of racism by the whites in the United States. As a matter of fact, some Southern white writers went as far as to justify lynching as the only effective check against the black men's increasing barbarism. They argued that the only solution to the race problem was either colonisation or extermination.[13]

Accordingly, the direct violence of slavery was replaced by the random violence of the strict disciplinary society of the Jim Crow South. The black community in the South lived permanently with the fear of lynching and the threat of lynch mobs invading their homes as white mobs generally attacked blacks indiscriminately, burning their houses and driving them out of towns. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, there had been more than 2,500 lynchings and they continued at a shocking rate into the twentieth century. Before the outbreak of the First World War, the number reached more than 1,100. As a form of racial violence, lynching was fostered by an ideology of white supremacy that developed in the United States after the abolition of slavery, and could be seen as one of the strongest indicators of the black-white

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12. Gary Wintz, Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance. Houston: Rice University Press, 1988, p.12.

13. Mentioned in "Vanguards of the New Negro: African American Veterans and Post-World War I Racial Militancy." By Chad L. Williams in The Journal of African American History. Volume: 92. Issue: 3, 2007, p, 347.

divide at the beginning of the twentieth century.[14] Lynching, as Gary Wintz explains, was used to serve as an example for all blacks. It expressed a highly advanced form of racial prejudice.[15] With such barbaric acts, slavery appears to have been abolished in name only. Lynching, thus, reveals the powerlessness of Blacks to protect themselves from White brutality. Indeed, while lynching, for black people was a matter of life or death, the whites generally reacted to it either by acceptance or indifference.

What was worse than lynchings and exclusions was the fact that Whites succeeded in inscribing the values of bestiality and inferiority on Blacks. The latter started the process of internalizing these stereotypes and seeing themselves in the same way as they were seen by the whites. Hall says in this context:

> The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of know1ede of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'.[16]

The subjugation of the black people by racist white America, in fact, was not just physical but psychological as well. Very often, the psychological pressure the black people were made to go through was as damaging as physical oppression, if not more. The black people were made to view the world from within the white men's system where they were depicted as primitive, savage and devoid of any kind of history or civilization. Pauli Murray states in this context that, "a system of oppression draws much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims, who have accepted the dominant image of themselves and are paralyzed by a sense of helplessness."[17] As a consequence, many black people started devaluing themselves and their history; they were so impregnated with perverted views of their past that they turned away from their own culture and emulated the supposedly superior white one.

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14. In " Racial Violence and Representation: Performance Strategies in Lynching Dramas of the 1920s" Judith L. Stephens defines lynching as "the racially motivated murder of black individuals (primarily black men) by white mobs with no repercussions for the perpetrators. Victims of lynchings were hung, beaten, burned, or stabbed to death; they were commonly tortured and/or castrated before they were killed." In African American Review. Volume: 33. Issue: 4, 1999, p. 655.

15. Gary D. Wintz declares " lynching , as barbaric as it was, constituted violence committed against an individual in response to a specific transgression , real or imagined. Lynching targeted 'bad' blacks to serve as an example for all blacks." In Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance, op cit., p.9.

16. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", op cit., p. 394.

17. Pauli Murray, Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage. New York: Harper and Row, 1987, p.106.

Jean Toomer was among the important individuals who struggled to come to terms with tensions within themselves. He embraced his sense of self at a time when darkness of skin and African physical features had long been associated by whites with depravity, stupidity, and immorality. Questions of race, racial identity, and racial prejudice were the core concerns of the young novelist. He grew to understand that the prejudices he confronted were deeply rooted in the social and intellectual soil of western culture. Accordingly, one of his ongoing concerns had been to define the Black's situation in American society. The search for an identity for the New Negro necessitated the rediscovery of his heritage. This heritage was to serve as a justification for the new vision of the self. The quest for Negro identity, then, was to find one's roots in the homeland, the South, and acknowledge the painful and traumatic experiences in black history as one's own, without fear or shame. By integrating the past into the present, the black people could finally develop a sense of identity. In Cane, this quest for identity is textualized as the subject of longing, bereavement, and pain. Most compellingly, it is conflated with desires for ancestral communion.

b- The South as a Repository of Cultural Heritage:

Geographies of blackness seem, for Toomer, the key elements in the discourse of black identity, an identity unmarred by a failed civilization. Indeed, several scholars have made a link between geography and racial identity. In his research on the slave past of people of African descent in America, Bernard Bell states, in The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition, that the roots of Afro-American folklore, the unique blend of a significant number of African survivals with elements of white American culture, are embedded in the Old South.[18] Concerning Cane, Favor states that "geography is a key issue in the cultural history of African Americans, particularly in the post-World War I era during which Cane was written and published."[19] In an essay about Toomer's Cane, Charles T. Davis, too, draws attention to the centrality of geographic position to racial identity. In the essay, he suggests that voice cannot be whole without going South and embracing the type of black culture found there. Concerning Cane, the critic states that Toomer "sees the necessity for regional connection, for the Northern black to acquire the emotional strengths that black Southerners still possess, though they may be rapidly losing them."[20] Accordingly, Toomer's Cane opens with a call to the land of origins, to the South with its fading black culture. The poem "Song of the Son" appeals to the sense of cultural heritage, and articulates responsibility

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18. Bernard Bell, The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987, p.17.

19. Authentic Blackness, op cit., p, 59.

20. Charles T. Davis, "Jean Toomer and the South: Region and Race as Elements within a Literary Imagination." Studies in the Literary Imagination 7 , Fall 1974, p. 31.

to that heritage. In the poem, there is a stress on the fact that with rapid cultural changes, much of black culture is threatened. Moreover, the essence of authentic black life can easily be corrupted by the influence of a growing industrialism, and the black people would not be able to resist too long the pervasive and seductive influence of the North. That is why the sons have to catch some of the beauty of the Southern black culture while it still exists. However, to be able to understand and appreciate their southern cultural roots, and to become receptive to their past, the sons must first be stripped of their external symbols of separation, mainly the white cultural values they have assimilated at the expense of the traditional values of black community.

c- The Search for Wholeness:

One of the South's sons who have been seduced by the North's materialism, and who are reluctant to go back to the land of their forefathers is Ralph Kabnis, around whom the action of section three of the novel revolves. Kabnis, despite his reluctance and uncertainty, undertakes a spiritual and physical journey from North to South in search of his identity. Kabnis is a Northern Negro with a Southern ancestry but who rejects any connection to his heritage. Western conceptions of individualism and materialism inhibit him from developing a viable sense of black identity. The American environment in the South during the slave era has reinforced in the black Americans feelings of shame and repulsion about their African heritage. Kabnis is alienated and fragmented from his cultural roots; for him, African–American identity is an elusive and ephemeral thing. His sole ideological focal point is a crippling sense of racial inferiority, worsened by the sense of lack of cultural heritage.

Thus, spiritually impoverished and physically alienated from self and community, Kabnis remains throughout the story locked within his private fears, unable to achieve the inner strength needed to face his internal tensions. Kabnis, in fact, stands for the contemporary black man caught between two worlds. His fragmented soul moves between the post–slavery South and the alluring industrialized North with no avail. He experiences a sense of inner dividedness which refuses to go away and which causes him to feel as if he is other than himself. In order to attain spiritual life and unity of soul, Kabnis has to break away from the engulfing white culture and accept all the aspects of his race. However, such an acceptance is not an easy task for it must include the pain and suffering of the past along with its beauty. Thus, Kabnis experiences impotence and uncertainty in the land of his forefathers. He is unwilling to embrace the pain and suffering that have become an inseparable part of his heritage.

Kabnis is depicted as a fragmented individual who struggles to give primacy to his mind and spirit over his body, "I've got to get myself together", "Come, Ralph, old man, pull yourself together." (Cane, 85) However, all his efforts are futile since he feels trapped in the South, chained like a slave in

prison. He thinks of the place where he is as a "mud-hole" or a "mud-hole trap". He can neither leave nor accept his fate. His psychological situation is one of turmoil and rage. Kabnis's state of mind, in fact, is similar to that of his creator, Jean Toomer when he first visited Georgia. In his later writings, the writer confesses that : "Life had me in a knot, hard and fast. Even in Georgia, I was horribly conflicted, strained and tense… The deep releases caused by my experiences there could not liberate and harmonize the sum of me… In truth, [*CANE*] was born in an agony of internal tightness, conflict, and chaos."[21] In the novel, Kabnis's failure to achieve the self-integration he is seeking is rooted in the culture of dominance that initially produced slavery, and later a racial hierarchy that constructed black people as a race of bodies valued only for its market value in the southern economy.

The racist culture that emphasized the representation of the blacks as material bodies deprived them of minds and rational intellects, representing them as "less intelligent, barely human, and incapable of grasping even the most basic concepts of the English language."[22] Chester J. Fontenot, Jr. in his article, "Du Bois's 'Of the Coming of John', Toomer's 'Kabnis' and the Dilemma of Self-Representation" explains that the mind/ body binary is rooted in Christianity and the European Enlightenment spirit. He states:

> This mind/body binary is grounded in Christianity since it first evolved from the Apostle Paul's assertion that Christians must mortify the flesh in order to achieve spiritual purity and was later refined by St. Augustine who, in his Confessions, argues that the body is sinful and must be negated in order to reach spiritual communion with God. This body/spirit binary gives rise to the body/mind paradigm, since the European Enlightenment, heavily influenced by Christianity, held that the intellect endowed Europeans with the ability to deny the body, resist its natural carnal nature, and impose the order of human agency on an object that resists such restrictions. Conversely, the balance of mind and body indicated the inability to control the body as material subject; it was perceived as a sign of intellectual weaknesses, cultural backwardness, and savagery.[23]

Kabnis, in the novel, is so overburdened by the dominant culture brought with him from the North that he seems deprived of all the vitality that typifies the people of the South. He is unable to face a history of suffering and an ancestral memory of agony and pain. Unable to surmount the confusion placed in his

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21. Cynthia Earl Kerman and Richard Eldridge, The Lives of Jean Toomer: A Hunger for Wholeness. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987, p. 100.

22. Chester J. Fontenot, Jr. "Du Bois's "Of the Coming of John," Toomer's "Kabnis," and the Dilemma of Self-Representation" in The Souls of Black Folk One Hundred Years Later, ed. Dolan Hubbard. Columbia, Missouri: Missouri University of Press, 2003, p. 133.

23. Ibid, p.132.

mind by the fragmented tropes of racist discourse, Kabnis's sense of self-worth is thwarted.

Kabnis wishes to write poetry as he sees that black people in the South are able to transcend adversity and darkness through artistic expression, mainly music. He feels that through poetry he can cope with evil and transcend his painful past. "God, if I could develop that in words…if I , the dream (not what is weak and afraid in me) could become the face of the South. How my lips would sing for it, my songs being the lips of its soul" (Cane, 83-84) He delves into his racial heritage for sources of inspiration but discovers that he cannot write poetry, not yet. "Soul. Soul hell, There aint no such thing" (Cane,84) In fact, Kabnis is unable to write poetry because he rejects the soul as the core of black identity. He considers that the black people should take direct action against racism instead of being "preacher-ridden race. Pray and shout. Theyre in the preacher's hands…And the preacher's hands are in the white man's pockets." (Cane, 90) Kabnis can neither represent himself from the point of view of his own cultural traditions nor free himself from the tropes of the mind/ body binaries.

d- Resistance to Integration:

To transcend this cultural assault of the black man as a fractured, incomplete, and inauthentic being, Kabnis has first to realize where he is and who he is. In fact, as Todd Lieber expresses it so well in his article, "Design and Movement in Cane", Kabnis's internal conflict is:

> [the] conflict between two life-styles and systems of value, that of the South, which Toomer associates with the "soul of slavery" and to which his being responds, and that of the North, the industrial, white culture that threatens to create an unbreachable gap between the black man and his world as it destroys the inherent value of his racial heritage. The two are juxtaposed at virtually every point: the North is cold and passive, the South warm and full of emotion; sexual sterility and perversion are opposed to sexual consummation, cynicism to faith, transience to endurance, and spiritual death to the possibility of spiritual resurrection through an acceptance of self and race.[24]

Although Kabnis has returned to his native soil in the South in search for a communion with the heritage of his racial past, he chooses to resist being affected by racial experience. The pain and suffering of the racial past continue to exist as an immediate reality, and he is not yet ready to face and accept them as part of his heritage. "Denial is his refuge, and throughout the story Kabnis is

24. Todd Lieber, "Design and Movement in Cane" in Critical Evaluations, op cit, p. 182.

never able to accept his situation, others, the South, or himself."[25] His position of denial is embodied in his rejection of the emotionalism of the black church. His reaction to the black woman's emotional frenzy in the church indicates his tendency to otherize his own people. "that stuff gets to me. . . .Couldnt stand the shouting, and thats a fact. We dont have that sort of thing up North. We do, but, that is, someone should see to it that they are stopped or put out when they get so bad the preacher has to stop his sermon for them" (Cane, 91). In Blues Legacies and Black Feminism, Angela Y. Davis shows the importance that music had in the life of black slaves. The latter used music to express conditions and situations too sorrowful for words to articulate. Music was , in reality, the only means left to them to express their deeper feelings and emotions when everything else, from customs and traditions, to religion and language were taken from them. Davis states in this context:

> Of all the art forms associated with Afro-American culture, music has played the greatest catalytic role in awakening social consciousness in the community. During the era of slavery, Black people were victims of a conscious strategy of cultural genocide , which proscribed the practice of virtually all African customs with the exception of music.[26]

Kabnis's distance from the blues and the songs of the black community become the measure of his cultural and spiritual alienation.

Kabnis consistently rejects markers of race; even those others have found empowering. He rejects all that the South has to offer. He rejects African-American worship and music, and he rejects any connections with the southern blacks and with slavery. In fact, Kabnis's position indicates that he privileges his mind over the emotiveness attributed to the black body. As such, he places a psychological and physical distance between himself and the people in the town. "Seems as if they cant control themselves out in th world; they cant control themselves in church." (Cane, 91) Eric Sundquist states that " those who disdain the spirituals are *not* those who are "still too close" to the conditions of slavery but rather the post-emancipation generation, those who hope they have escaped the stigma of slavery or who aspire to white middle-class values."[27] Through his negative reactions, Kabnis shows that he has interiorized the others' view of himself.

In the novel, Kabnis is offered three alternative attitudes to adopt toward his past. These attitudes are represented by the three men Kabnis is

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25. Mark Helbling, The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many. Greenwood : Westport, CT, 1999, p. 142.

26. Angela Y. Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday. New York: Pantheon, 1998, pp.200-201.

27. Eric J. Sundquist, The Hammers of Creation. Folk Culture in Modern African-American Fiction. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006, p.2.

going to meet during his stay in Georgia. Halsey, Hanby, and Lewis are three Southern people of an older generation than Kabnis and who have fixed attitudes and positions towards their race history. Through his interactions with the three men, Kabnis has to choose which attitude of the three men fits better his own convictions.The first alternative presented to Kabnis is the school principal Hanby who asserts his power over black people while bowing to white men "without ever completely humbling himself". Hanby, in fact has been absorbed into the white frame of reference, accepting the position of inferiority in which they have put him. Hanby's main concern is to make black men as "white" as they can by aping the white people's thoughts and behaviour. He tells Kabnis:

> The progress of the Negro race is jeopardized whenever the personal habits and examples set by its guides and mentors fall below the acknowledged and hard-won standard of its average member. This institution, of which I am the humble president, was founded, and has been maintained at a cost of great labor and untold sacrifice. Its purpose is to teach our youth to live better, cleaner, more noble lives. To prove to the world that the Negro race can be just like any other race.(Cane, 186)

Hanby, in fact, represents the black people's difficulty in countering the negation of their self-worth by the white community that continues to see them through nineteenth century racist discourse. He has internalized the stereotypes that depict his people as inferior and uncivilized, and is ready to accept the role of the racialized other. Because violence is erratic and unpredictable, Hanby has developed a mode of behavior that allows him to avoid violence or at least to minimize its effects. Rather than confront racial issues, Hanby tries to take advantage of the little opportunities offered to him, even in the midst of oppression and segregation.

Fred Halsey represents a second and more worthy alternative to Kabnis than Hanby. He is a dignified artisan who takes pride in his work and refuses to be humbled by Hanby. But while Halsey is courageous and dignified, he is not above bowing before whites too. In the same way as Hanby, though to a lesser degree, Halsey has been absorbed into the conception of reality put forth by the Southern whites. He embraces black subjecthood, working with his hands and rejecting higher education for blacks. He appropriates the language of the nineteenth century racist discourse that asserts that higher education is improper for the black people because it disrupts the racial hierarchy that insists on the superiority of whites and servility of blacks. Halsey is convinced that the Whites have made a social construct of the black subject as a brute and savage whatever his class, social status, physical appearance, or intellectual capacities. This belief is reinforced by Layman's statement to Kabnis when the latter implied that the white men would never lynch someone like himself,

Layman or Halsey by saying: “Nigger’s a nigger down this way, Professor. An only two dividins: good and bad. An even they aint permanent categories. They sometimes mixes um up when it comes t lynchin. I’ve seen um do it.” (Cane, 89)

Halsey is firmly rooted in his place and is satisfied to be there. His thoughts describe well his character, “Give me th work and fair pay an I aint askin nothin better. Went over-seas an saw France; an I come back. Went t school; but there aint no books whats got th feel t them of them there tools. Nassur. An I'm atellin y.” (Cane, 200-201) Halsey’s position is, in fact, coupled with a sense of homelessness born out of the feeling of being persecuted in the country where he lives as a victim of the legacy of racism and slavery. Although he is aware of the injustice and segregation perpetuated against his people, he is not willing to take any ‘risky’ positive action to change the situation. He conforms remorselessly to the white man’s racist system simply because he does not believe in any possible improvement for his people.

Of the three alternatives presented to Kabnis, Lewis is the only one who has rejected black subjecthood and retained the pride and dignity of his manhood. “ain’t bowed t none of them. Nassur. T nairy a one of them nairy an inch nairy a time. An only mixed when he was good an ready.” (Cane, 98) Lewis is unwilling, even unable to behave according to the rules and disciplines dictated by the white majority in the South. He alone has a sense of the importance and value of race consciousness and of the black heritage. Like Kabnis, Lewis is a Northern black intellectual who has come South. But unlike Kabnis, Lewis has forged a strengthened sense of his identity by confronting the pain and suffering of the past. Described on several occasions as Christ-like, Lewis is proud of his black heritage.

In fact, the three different characters, Hanby, Halsey and Lewis present different views on the African American dilemma, whether to accept the white supremacist values or preserve one’s African heritage. Through these three characters, Toomer exposes the complexity of the choice proposed to Kabnis, whether to cherish his ancestral roots or submit to the white values. At another level, Hanby, Halsey and Lewis’s attitudes towards their past are exemplified in the novel in their attitudes and reactions to Old Father John, an old black man who lives in a cellar below Halsey’s workshop. Father John stands as a link between past and present, a living illustration of the past and a prophetic warning of the difficulties of the future. Father John’s haunting presence is representative of the black man in his contemporary state, caught between two worlds. The old man, a bridge from past to present, passes judgement on the condition of black people in a world that has systematically denied them access to a decent life and that perpetrates the myth to exclude them. He reveals a fundamental truth about American culture through his lamentation that white people have made the Bible lie.

e- The Destruction of the White Man's Myth:

According to Father John, the great sin of the whites was in their distorted interpretation of the Bible that was made in order to secure slavery to the whites and exclusion to the blacks.[28] Because of this 'lie', black people accept an inferior role, and lose the ability to make poetry of living. Delia Jarrett-Macauley explains this exclusion of black people from 'humanity' by stating that from the middle of the sixteenth century the African's skin colour was seen in a negative way. "The concept of Blackness was equated with sin and flirtatiousness. Indeed Blackness was the antithesis of 'whiteness'. 'Whiteness' symbolized purity, virginity, virtue, beauty, beneficence and God. In contrast Blackness connoted filthiness, sin, baseness, ugliness, evil and the devil."[29] Kabnis himself is an example of what can happen when a black man is filled with self-doubt and cannot accept the ambiguity and complexity of his race's history. By negating Christianity, considering it as a religious system that has failed to generate social justice and serve the interests of black people in their attempt to represent themselves through the tropes of sacred discourse , Kabnis loses contact with the positive aspects of his own culture.

Father John deconstructs the white people's myth by stressing the fact that black people were enslaved not because they were savages and lacking civilization but rather because the white people were greedy. By reinterpreting the origins of slavery, Father John seeks to reverse the sins of the past and convert the young people from fragmented beings in search of themselves and their origins into strong people powerfully resisting white oppression. Through his interpretation of the past, Old father John aims at reconstructing and redirecting the black people's faith in their spirituality. According to him, the past should be visited and accepted in order to forge a future. Through the interpretation of Father John, there is no idealization or romanticising of the past as such actions are akin to denying reality. Rather, there is a legacy of oppression, violence and subjugation that should be confronted so that a pathway to the future could be forged.

Both Hanby and Halsey are unaware of the significance of the old man. The two men's inability to assert their identity as upwardly mobile black subjects leads them to view him simply as an unpleasant memory that is best kept buried and concealed and discussed as little as possible. Lewis, on the other hand, is aware of the importance of Father John. Of the three men, Lewis is the only one who has a full sense of communion with him.

> Lewis, seated now so that his eyes rest upon the old man, merges with his source and lets the pain and beauty of the South meet him

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28. One of the nineteenth-century ideas that justified American slavery was the Biblical allusion to Noah's cursed son, Ham, who was said to be the forefather of Africans.

29. Annecka Marshall, "From Sexual Denigration To Self -Respect: Resisting Images Of Black Female Sexuality" in Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism, op cit., p.6.

> there. White faces, pain-pollen, settle downward through a canesweet mist and touch the ovaries of yellow flowers. Cotton-bolls bloom, droop. Black roots twist in a parched red soil beneath a blazing sky. Magnolias, fragrant, a trifle futile, lovely, far off...His eyelids close. A force begins to heave and rise.(Cane, 214 -15)

Lewis draws strength and sustenance from the old man. Father John, in fact, empowers Lewis by providing a sense of pride that could pierce the myths and lies that had grown around the antebellum period. Thanks to Father John, Lewis comes to the realisation that the problem with African-American culture and identity is not African-America's lack of heritage, but rather the refusal of white America to acknowledge the validity of that heritage. It is through this old, blind prophet that Lewis receives spiritual enlightenment and renewal.

Old Father John might bring about the spiritual healing of Kabnis too, but he is scorned and rejected by the young man. To Kabnis, Old Father John "like a bust in black walnut", is merely a "tongue-tied shadow of the old", a symbol of the hell he wants to forget and disown. In her analysis of the relationship between Kabnis and the old man, Susan L. Blake comes to the conclusion that, "Kabnis is both fascinated by and abusive of Father John because the mute old man represents all that he both needs and fears. Father John is the incarnation of the silence of the universe that torments a man who cannot depend on himself."[30] However, for Kabnis, the possibility remains of resurrection through an acceptance of the past that is represented by the old man. The choice that Kabnis must make is put to him explicitly by Lewis. Referring to the old man, he says to Kabnis: "Black Vulcan? I wouldnt say so. That forehead. Great woolly beard. Those eyes. A mute John the Baptist of a new religion--or a tongue-tied shadow of an old." (Cane,211) Lewis, in fact, is giving Kabnis the choice between accepting his racial heritage, and thus reawakening the sustaining, spiritual force of the racial past, or rejecting it and letting by the way the black people's heritage die an impotent and meaningless death.

The main difficulty for Kabnis about truth stated by Old father John lies not in recognition but acceptance of the past with all its suffering and degradation. In fact, Kabnis lacks the necessary strength for such an acceptance. Lewis reaches out spiritually toward him, encouraging him, but Kabnis decisively rejects him.

> There is a swift intuitive interchange of consciousness. Kabnis has a sudden need to rush into the arms of this man. His eyes call, "Brother." And then a savage, cynical twistabout within him mocks

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30. Susan L. Blake, "The Spectatorial Artist and the Structure of Cane" in Critical Evaluation ,op cit, p. 209.

> his impulse and strengthens him to repulse Lewis. His lips curl cruelly. His eyes laugh. (Cane, 191 -92)

Kabnis refuses to accept the old man as anything but an 'old black fakir'. He does not even want to admit that his blood is related to Old Father John's, a former slave's: "he reminds me of that black cockroach over yonder. An besides, he aint my past. My ancestors were Southern blue bloods." (Cane, 217). In his desire to distinguish and differentiate himself from Old Father John and from lower class blacks, Kabnis insists that his ancestors were southern blue-blooded upper-class blacks who could have passed for whites. But Lewis mocks Kabnis's denial stating that there is no much difference between blue and black especially for the white people.

In the final part of the novel, Kabnis comes closest to confronting the truth made up of distortions which both black and white people have accepted. Although he remains till the end contemptuous of Father John and unwilling to hear him, Kabnis slowly comes to realize the beauty of a culture from which he had earlier hoped to dissociate himself. As the novel closes, there is a clear sign of hope for healing, and a full, positive self-acceptance in the future. Kabnis wears the old robe which hangs on the wall, an object that suggests the dignity of the past and also the possibility of deliverance. It may also suggest an ability to write poetry for Kabnis. Indeed, as he leaves the cellar where he spent the previous night, "Light streaks through the iron-barred cellar window […] the sun rises. Gold-glowing child, it steps into the sky and sends a birth song slanting down dust streets and sleepy windows of the southern town. (Cane, 239) By embracing the aspects of race and historicity, Kabnis will presumably be liberated from the entrapments of the past.

As a conclusion, we can say that Jean Toomer, through his novel Cane, tries to bring back to life a history of the black people that has been buried under centuries of dust and neglect, hidden in the murky corners of History. By bringing it to light, he emphasizes that black culture is strong enough to surmount temporary degradation, and that imprisonment or denial cannot suppress the strength of Black Americans. The rising of a new sun at the end of the novel symbolizes the rebirth and resurrection of the Negro spirit.

V.2- Nedjma or the Search for Ancestral Roots:

In the previous section, we analyzed the way Jean Toomer has interrogated the myth upon which racism and the subjugation of black people was built. We have also seen the different alternatives proposed to the African American people in their quest for identity. In the present section, we will see how Kateb Yacine, through his novel Nedjma, revises the stereotypical myths with which his people were circumscribed. In Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, Elleke Booehmer argues that,

> […] historical retrieval , including the reclamation of oral memory, was believed to be the process through which historically damaged selves could be remade. Whether in fiction, narrative poetry, literary epic or transcribed oral tale, once-colonized writers could represent themselves as subjects of their own past. To cancel colonial stereotypes , they searched for evidence of a rich and varied pre-colonial existence, tales of military victory against colonial forces, portraits of defiant or self-determining leaders.[31]

Accordingly, the Algerian writer has reached down to the roots of Algerian history, and endowed his writing with images of myth and pre-history in order to restore a sense of order and identity to his characters and to the nation they are trying to (re)build. Interconnecting strands of myth and historical fact, Kateb Yacine emphasizes the importance of the quest as a means to achieving a sense of individual, group and even national identity.

In the novel, we are faced with an account of people as fragmented beings in conflict with themselves and with the forces that shape their identities. Their self-hatred and angry confusion are related to a historic dispossession and to a psyche cut off from ancestral roots. Because of the oppressive nature of French colonialism, it is impossible for them to know their true capabilities and the capabilities of their countrymen. Through a stream of consciousness technique, Kateb uses multiple narrative voices to provide us with fragmented hints from the minds of the young people in their struggle to reconstruct a portrait of their past, both individual and communal, in order to recover their lost identity. Kateb uses also memory in his narrative as a tool that enables his characters to recover parts of their fragmented selves. Thus, the young people in the novel try to understand some aspects of their identity through a retrospective look at both their past and the past of their country. As they remember some significant events that shaped their childhood, the young men feel able to confront some of the obstacles that face them in their present life and to find the true way for future endeavors.

a- Coming of Age:

The four protagonists, in the novel, have grown up in a society disturbed by the colonial situation. They struggle to establish identity out of the remnants of their past. The young people, in reality, occupy a transitional phase of life suspended between childhood and adulthood. Their participation in the protest march, and later their imprisonment and torture mark their violent initiation into the adult world. They also mark their mystical union with their people's cause, in the collective experience of suffering and death. Their experience of violent confrontation and repression, in fact, resembles the rite of passage that transforms the boys into men. Each of the young men, like most

31. Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, op cit., p.185.

heroes of traditional tales, makes a circular journey in an attempt to achieve self-understanding. Nevertheless, Kateb Yacine transforms the traditional coming of age tale into a story in which his main characters, rather than maturing primarily on a psychological or emotional level, must come of age politically by confronting their oppressors and affirming their national identity.

Indeed, Lakhdar and Mustapha's participation in the protest march leads them to feel one with the crowd and thus acquire a sense of tremendous power. The merging of their consciousness with the mass consciousness marks their entry into adulthood. The two boys begin merely by marching with a passing banner, but are then carried along in the mass enthusiasm, feeling a sense of community and solidarity with the protesting crowd. Mustapha's ego merges into the crowd, envisioned as one invincible giant centipede made of moving human parts, "Mustapha se voit au Cœur d'un mille-pattes inattaquable. On peut, fort de tant de moustaches, de pies cornus, toiser les colons, la police, la basse-cour qui prend la fuite." (Nedjma, 227) "Mustapha sees himself at the heart of an impregnable centipede. With the strength of so many mustaches, so many hard feet, they can stare down the colons, the police, the fleeing rabble." (Nedjma, 304) Soon, the young people's search for individual gain is forgotten, and the quest for collective identity prevails. Nothing less than machine guns are required to stem the massing movement of oppressed people in rebellion. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire states that the rebellion of the oppressed is almost always as violent as the acts physically or verbally perpetrated on them. As members of the oppressed group, Lakhdar and Mustapha break with the humiliating methods of the colonizers in order to reestablish their dignity and manhood. They participate in the revolt and commit themselves to fight on the side of their people.[32]

After the events of May 1945, Lakhdar, Rachid, Mourad, and Mustapha find themselves without their former affiliations and identities. Separated from their families' protective circles, their studies halted, with no chance of returning to school, the young men become preys to a historical disorientation. They suffer from internal as well as external fragmentation. They have difficulties situating themselves historically. The repression of May 8th marked a turning point in their political consciousness. In her dissertation, The Development through Play of the Poet's Personality in Kateb Yacine's 'Nedjma' (1956), 'Le Cercle des représailles' (1959), and 'le Polygone étoilé' (1966), Joanna Lisabeth Alexander Sullivan states that, "this turning point may have arrived somewhat prematurely in the life cycle of Kateb Yacine's young characters for them to act effectively as adults, yet they precociously espoused the nationalist cause while still dealing with crises in their personal identities."[33] It is worth noting at this stage of our analysis that although

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32. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Trans, Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1993, p.56.

33. Joanna Lisabeth Alexander Sullivan, The Development through Play of the Poet's Personality in

Lakhdar and Mustapha seem to have a family name or a full name compared to the two others, Mourad and Rachid, who are known by their first names only, Lakhdar loses his "carte d'identité" (Nedjma, 11) "papers" (Nedjma, 15) at one stage of the novel while Mustapha spends his school years hoping that his French teacher "lui donne […]un nom." (Nedjma, 205) "will give [him] a name." (Nedjma, 274) Accordingly, they are seeking, throughout the novel, something that would bring them a personal sense of unity and worth. In order to recreate for themselves a sense of worthiness and meaning, each character in the novel engages in a personal quest for identity, contesting the honor of French colonialists, and affirming his people's own worth. To be able to construct their racial and historical identity, the young people have to free themselves first from the crippling weight of prejudice and racial inferiority that have long passed for truth.

To do so, the young people in Nedjma first have to understand their place in the world and to undergo a revolution of the mind which would allow them to craft a separate identity outside of the values promulgated by the French colonizers. The later, as Boehmer states "…held the conviction not merely that the world could be understood in its terms, but that the rest of the world also could and indeed should be encouraged to interpret reality in a European way."[34] To get rid of the stereotypes that have tagged them as 'savages' and 'uncivilized' , Lakhdar, Mustapha, and the others reclaim a past even if this past is in fragment form in order to be able to better understand and confront the present. They do not need to invent a glorious past for their country but rather to search and appreciate what had actually taken place. They need to prove to themselves and to the colonizers that achievements and lack of achievements of their people are the result more of historical and social conditions than mental ability.

b- The Burden of the Past:

After the Demonstrations of 1945, Lakhdar is liberated from prison where he had been tortured by the French police for his participation in the insurrection. His arrival to Bône occasions the first grappling with the problem of history in the novel as he wanders in the city for months, frustrated and disoriented, in an unconscious quest for palpable traces of history. The young man is confronted with the historical reality of conflict between two civilizations, providing for him a constant source of tensions. His memories are torn between a yearning for the past his people lost to colonization and a violent modernized world of continuing warfare. He feels that the colonizers' continuing domineering presence causes the country's political reality to remain stagnant, cyclical rather than forward moving. In an attempt to erase

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Kateb Yacine's 'Nedjma' (1956), 'Le Cercle des représailles' (1959), and 'le Polygone étoilé' (1966), Houston, Texas : Rice University, 1997, p.77.

34. Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, op cit., p. 76.

the colonizer's presence and oppression from his consciousness, Lakhdar turns back to the past of the city. However, the legacy of colonialism is apparent everywhere around him. It is fully revealed through the new architecture of the city. As Graebner states so well describing the young man's 's arrival to the city, "A character like Lakhdar, who had consciously tried to break step with the colonial order, has no chance here: Bône, the city of colonial modernity, offers no future to such a person. Its glittering architecture is broken up into incoherent blocks, offering only "oubliettes" to those coming out of historical trauma."[35] By destroying the historical landmarks of the country, the colonial order has not only destroyed the culture of the natives but also brought anarchy and chaos to the land. The new landmarks established by the colonizers in the city are architectural instruments of repression. They have no place in the memory of the young man; as a consequence, they have disoriented and destabilized him. Through the description of Lakhdar's fragmented mind, Kateb highlights the tragic psychological consequences of invasion and colonisation on Algerian people's psyche, underlining the deep scars left on those involved in direct confrontation with the enemy.

Although Rachid has grown up in Constantine, he faces a similar problem when arriving to his native city. His home is located on the site of one of the most devastating battles of the French conquest. The streets in which he spent his childhood and most of his adulthood too are full of traces of French conquest and invasion.

> ... un quatrième immeuble rasé par l'artillerie de Damrémont, au cours du second assaut qui se termina par les quatre jours de bombardement […] ce fut alors la conquête maison par maison […] pulvérisant les nids de résistance l'un après l'autre […] l'entrée de Lamoricière en personne, la hache d'une main et le sabre de l'autre... (Nedjma, 154-155)

> …a fourth building razed by the Damrémont artillery during the second assault that ended with four days of shelling […] then it was conquest, house by house, […]pulverizing the resistance nests one after the other; […] the entrance of Lamoricière himself, an axe in one hand, a saber in the other…(Nedjma, 204-205)

This pattern of conquest, partial destruction and stagnation that overwhelms the city seems to have disoriented him too. Like Lakhdar in Bône, Rachid in Constantine wanders in the twisting streets of his city in search of traces of his people's history. He seems at the mercy of the external forces created by the colonizer. He links his own life cycle with that of the two cities. The quest for

35. Seth Graebner, "Kateb Yacine and the Ruins of the Present", in SubStance #112, Vol. 36, no. 1, 2007. p.149.

identity through the glorious past of Bône and Constantine, the "villes-mères" proves a failure as the two cities, once great cities of Numidia, have only their ruins to speak for their past greatness. They have become expanding major cities in the French colony. Rachid, like his friend Lakhdar, is lost between the antiquated past, the colonized present and an uncertain future.

> …la gloire et la déchéance auront fondé l'éternité des ruines sur les bonds des villes nouvelles, plus vivantes mais coupées de leur histoire, privées du charme de l'enfance au profit de leur spectre ennobli, comme les fiancées défuntes qu'on fixe aux murs font pâlir leur vivantes répliques ; ce qui a disparu fleurit au détriment de tout ce qui va naitre…Constantine et Bône , les deux cités qui dominaient l'ancienne Numidie aujourd'hui réduite au département français. Deux âmes en lutte pour la puissance abdiquée des Numides. Constantine luttant pour Cirta et Bône pour Hippone comme si l'enjeu du passé, figé dans une partie apparemment perdue, constituait l'unique épreuve pour les champions à venir… (Nedjma,175)

> …glory and defeat have founded the eternity of ruins upon the growth of new cities, more alive yet severed from their history, deprived of the charm of childhood to the benefit of their ennobled specters, like pictures of dead brides that make their living replicas grow pale; what has perished flourishes to the detriment of all that is yet to be born… Constantine and Bône, the two cities that dominate ancient Numidia, today reduced to a French department…Two souls struggling for the power abdicated by the Numidians. Constantine struggling for Cirta, and Bône for Hippone, as if the stake of the past, petrified in a region apparently lost, constituted the only ordeal for the future champions. (Nedjma, 233)

The weight of the past on the present is vivid in the life of the young people. They are left with the burden of undoing more than a century of negative stereotyping and cultural devaluing aimed at confirming their inferior social, cultural, and political status. They feel as outcasts in their own country, excluded from initiative, their existence limited to a pattern of aimless wanderings. Their minds are fixated on memories so that they never seem to be focused on the here and now and are instead constantly looking back.

In wanting to dissociate themselves from the colonizer and his humiliating history, the young people in Nedjma turn back to their past in an attempt to find their roots, and return to an earlier, purer state of being. In fact, in choosing to seek refuge in the past, they long for return to a pre-colonial Algeria, uncorrupted by colonization. They refuse to embrace, or even acknowledge the recent humiliating history of their country. Their search for their origins both serves to reconcile their experience of dividedness and

contributes to the formation of their identity. Alexander Sullivan defines the young people in Nedjma as 'the nation in microcosm'. Thus, Algeria as the writer depicts it "…emerges as a collectivity of peoples, engaged in the process of creating their own identity from their previous status as a non-nation. On a symbolic level, Kateb's characters represent the developing nation."[36] However, the return to the origins is quite beyond reach for the young people because they are orphans, and therefore separated from their roots, which are necessary for the fulfillment of their aspirations.

c- The Betrayal of the Fathers:

To be able to return to the ancient Algerian tribal identity, the young people in the novel need to look for male models beyond their fathers. The latter, who are traditionally responsible for passing on historical and cultural experiences to the younger generation, have relinquished their function as cultural bearers. Worse, these fathers are the ones who have caused the blurring in the path to national origins. Indeed, the fathers who are supposed to show the way to the young people are decadent, selfish and morally degraded. Their decadence has engendered a series of violent defeats that do not amount to a glorious or monumental past, or even to a coherent one. They have made concessions to the French colonialist system. Thus, the fathers have contributed as much to the colonial encounter as have the colonizers. They share as much guilt as the colonizers do. The fathers have, accordingly, failed the young people.

> Les héritiers des preux se vengeaient dans les bras des demi-mondaines; ce furent des agapes, des fredaines de vaincus, des tables de jeu et des passages en première classe à destination de la métropole; l'Orient asservi devenait le clou des cabarets ; les femmes des notaires traversaient la mer dans l'autre sens, et se donnaient au fond des jardins à vendre... (Nedjma, 103)

> The heirs of the valiant took revenge in the arms of *demi-mondaines*; there were *agapes*, banquets of the defeated, gaming tables and first-class passages to France; the enslaved Orient became the cynosure of cabarets; notaries' wives crossed the sea in the other direction and surrendered themselves in gardens up for sale…(Nedjma, 136)

The ancestral land is a source of strength and unity for the members of the tribe. By conserving the land and protecting it from possible usurpers, the members of the tribe keep their power, the key to their survival. Unfortunately, the fathers who are supposed to be the custodians and keepers of ancestral land

36. The Development through Play of the Poet's Personality, op cit., p.4.

and values have betrayed their people and broken the natural order of things. As a result, they have been shunned for the part they have played in granting concessions that have given a spurious legality to French colonization of Algeria. Without the presence of the fathers able to provide a link to a usable past relevant to the harsh conditions of the present, the young people feel a sense of loss and that their souls are under siege by destructive forces. They long for a time and place that foster a feeling of harmony and peace with one's history, one's self and one's present in order to resolve their psychological and social dilemma. Accordingly, Kateb's characters define themselves in opposition to the French colonizers and to those Algerians who have sold out the country to the French. These are no others than their own fathers .

Kateb embodies the temptation to abandon one's family and people in a seductively beautiful and intelligent foreign woman, who, at a certain level, symbolizes French civilization. While dying, Lakhdar tells of this father's and his own unbridled passion for this French woman. The absence of the fathers is painfully lamented by Lakhdar in Le Cercle des représailles.

> Parmi tous les absents que rien n'excuse, un seul
> me pèse encore :
> Mon père dont on rapporta le corps dans une
> couverture.
> Alors que j'attendais de lui la fin d'un conte
> et d'un rêve confondus. (Le Cercle, 66)

While Lakhdar's father is dead, Mustapha's father is still alive. However, he seems to be sleeping all the time "le père de Lakhdar est mort; mon père, à moi, roupille." (Nedjma, 209) "Lakhdar's father's dea; my father's snoring." (Nedjma, 280) Because of the lack of activity of the father, Mustapha almost envies Lakhdar for his fatherlessness "…**lui au moins**, il a pas de père." (Nedjma, 209, emphasis mine) "…he **doesn't even** have a father." (Nedjma, 279, emphasis mine) Mustapha feels it as a burden or a shame to have such a father. With the loss of his father, Rachid, on the other hand, does not feel any continuity with his past. He concludes his existence in a fondouk, smoking hashish and looking down at the grotto where his father was murdered.

d- The Need to Go Back to One's Roots:

Rejecting or re-evaluating the father and all that he symbolizes is essential to each of the young people in the novel in order to be able to develop self-identity. Because of their fatherlessness, Mustapha, Lakhdar, and the others feel the necessity to search for male models beyond their collaborative fathers in order to return to the Algerian ancient tribal identity and affirm their spirits over the forces that threaten their integrity and development. Their communion with their past through their ancestors will reestablish the necessary intergenerational link broken by the decadent fathers. The ancestors

have less contact with the French colonizers, and for this reason they continue to lead a more authentic life. As a consequence, their past remains an ongoing part of their living present. The ancestors, a people rooted in the land, possess, in fact, an inner harmony with the world around them. In their rootedness in history, they become the vital link between the past and the present. They can point the way into the future. The symbolic presence of the ancestors in the life of the young people is necessary at this stage of their psychological development as they will help them solve the problem of a dubious identity framed by the colonizer.

Accordingly, it is necessary for the young people in the novel to turn to their ancestors to help them fully accept theirs and their people's historical experience, and avoid the spiritual impotence they feel with the absence of the fathers. Thus, they become haunted by their ancestors' souls and bound to their shadows. They must resurrect them.

> ce sont des âmes d'ancêtres qui nous occupent, substituant leur drame éternisé à notre juvénile attente, à notre patience d'orphelins ligotés à leur ombre de plus en plus pâle, cette ombre impossible à boire ou à déraciner, l'ombre des pères, des juges, des guides que nous suivons à la trace, en dépit de notre chemin, sans jamais savoir où ils sont... ressusciter sans sortir de la terre ni revêtir leurs silhouettes oubliées, ressusciter rien qu'en soufflant sur les cendres chaudes, les vents de sable qui nous imposeront la marche et la soif, jusqu'à l'hécatombe où gît leur vieil échec chargé de gloire, celui qu'il faudra prendre à notre compte, alors que nous étions faits pour l'inconscience, la légèreté, la vie tout court... (Nedjma, 97)

> We have ancestors' spirits in us, they substitute their eternal dramas for our childish expectations, our orphan patience bound to their paling shadow, that shadow impossible to dissolve or uproot–the shadow of the fathers, the judges, the guides whose tracks we follow, forgetting our own way , never knowing where they are, whether they're suddenly going to shift the light , ambush us, resuscitate without even coming out of the ground or assuming their forgotten outlines, resuscitate just by blowing on the warm ashes, the desert wind that impose the journey and the thirst upon us, until the hecatomb where their old, glory-laden failure lies, the one we'll have to bear after them, even though we were made for unconsciousness, for frivolity–in other words, for life ... (Nedjma, 127-128)

Through their renewed bound with the ancestors, the young people find their own voice to tell their story, not withholding the feelings of shame that result from life long silence and conformity to suffering, humiliation and oppression.

What makes the contact with the ancestors so important is the fact that there is no written history of Algeria. All that the young people know about their country they have learnt it through the distorted written narratives of the colonizers. The fathers whose function has been the oral transmission of the history of the nation have failed the young men, it has become, consequently, necessary for them to reestablish the link with the past through the remaining tribesmen. "Car l'histoire de notre tribu n'est écrite nulle part, mais aucun fil n'est jamais rompu pour qui recherche ses origines." (Nedjma, 146) "For the history of our tribe is written nowhere, but no thread is ever broken for a man who seeks out his origins." (Nedjma, 192) Si Mokhtar, as we will see later in more details, acts as a tribal storyteller by recounting to Rachid the history of the Keblouti tribe as told to him by his own father: " tout ce que je sais , je le tiens de mon père, qui le tient de son père, et ainsi de suite." (Nedjma, 124) "All I know I heard from my father, who heard it from his, and so on." (Nedjma, 165) Accordingly, it is from the ancestors that the young characters in the novel learn the true secret of life. It is only through mystic identification with them that the young people are able to understand life in its depth and to live it with intensity.

The ancestors, in fact, are the guides and protectors able to overcome the colonial dismantling of national unity. "Il suffit de mettre en avant les Ancêtres pour découvrir la phase triomphale, la clé de la victoire refusée à Jugurtha, le germe indestructible de la nation écartelée entre deux continents." (Nedjma, 175) "it is enough to set the Ancestors forward to discover the triumphal phase, the key of the victory refused to Jugurtha, the indestructible germ of the nation spread between two continents". (Nedjma, 233) The ancestors offer a history steeped in accomplishments that Europeans at a comparable period in time had yet to achieve. The ancestors are the only force that will unite the Algerians and overcome their disunity as separate squabbling tribes. Only in their renewal with their past can the young people find clues for the future survival of their country. Indeed, the ancestors are the ones who can help forge a sense of collective identity.

e- The Ancestral Land as a Site of Renewal :

It is no coincidence that the young people in Nedjma are deprived of two fundamental characteristics of their identity. They are homeless as well as fatherless. As such, they feel a lack in their lives that leads to the denial of both a sense of genealogical continuity as well as a spacial center of reference. Accordingly, the search for one's roots involves uncovering one's genealogy in addition to a return to the land of origins that would permit the recovery of a past and an identity that preceded colonialism. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, a principal feature of postcolonial literatures is the concern with 'place' and 'displacement' as the colonized people's sense of self or identity is destroyed by 'dislocation'. This dislocation can be in the form of cultural

denigration and the suppression of the natives' set of values and beliefs. It is at this stage that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being, the concern with the construction or recovery of an identifying relationship between self and place.[37] By reconstructing the image of Algeria as the land of history and civilization, Kateb Yacine refutes the myth of a country devoid of any history or civilization predating colonial conquest. He challenges French imperialistic mythology which aims to erase Algeria's pre-colonial history and attempts, at the same time, to uncover the tragic consequences of colonialism on the psyches of the Algerian people. "Nous ne sommes que des tribus décimées. Ce n'est pas revenir en arrière que d'honorer notre tribu, le seul lien qui nous reste pour nous réunir et nous retrouver(Nedjma, 128) "we are only decimated tribes. It is not a step backward to honor our tribe, the only link that remains to us by which we can unite and restore our people. (Nedjma, 171) Kateb aims, through the young people's journey to the Nadhor to dismantle colonial narratives denouncing oppression and colonization. He aims at creating a binary opposition between pre-colonial Algeria and the destruction brought by the colonizers. While a return to pre-colonial time is an absolute impossibility, making sense of it can help the young people better understand the present situation in which they find themselves, and seek a path for the future.

The Nadhor, in fact, plays a significant role in reversing the detrimental effects of negative imaging and cultural inferiority in the mind of the Algerian people. It provides the beginning of a special historical reinterpretation. Albert Memmi argues that, "la carence la plus grave subie par le colonisé est d'être placé hors de l'histoire et hors de la cité."[38] This statement explains why Kateb is preoccupied, in his novel, with the question of locating a cultural past and insists on the effort of the young people to recover and take possession of their own history. The Nadhor is the heart of the country's resistance against its many invaders. It is also the region that was inhabited by the Numidians in antiquity. More than that, the Nadhor is the place where the remnants of the young people's tribe still survive. Si Mokhtar explains the importance of the Nadhor to the young people as follows:

> La situation du Nadhor est déjà un indice. C'est une position retranchée qui permet de tenir un territoire gardé à vue depuis longtemps par les conquérants […] les habitants du Nadhor étaient restés insoumis. Ils n'attaquaient pas, mais s'enfonçaient dans la forêt, affectant d'ignorer les nouveaux conquérants ; les décades passaient sans que les français aient pu éteindre leur influence. C'est alors que la tribu fut décimée. (Nedjma, 125)

37. The Empire Writes Back, op cit., p.9.

38. Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur. Paris : Payot, 1973, p.121.

> The situation of Mount Nadhor is already a clue– it's a sheltered site that makes it possible to hold a territory long coveted by the conquerors […] The Nadhor inhabitants had remained unsubdued. They didn't attack, just pushed deeper into the forest, pretending to ignore the new conquerors; the decades passed without the French being able to extend their influence. It was then that the tribe was decimated. (Nedjma, 166)

The Nadhor is one of the last regions that the French colonizers have tried to dominate because of its geographical position. At the same time, its inhabitants have succeeded in resisting domination for many decades. They have been , in a certain way, untouched by the French presence in the country. In their search for identity, the young people must return to the ancestral land since this land has the power to become 'the site of renewal' for its members. They find meaning in this cultural heritage as interpreted by the ancestors. In their quest for their country's past, boundaries between the living and the dead are erased. The ancestors are resurrected to guide the young people and try to repair what has been destroyed by the fathers.

The Nadhor resists the projection of a linear history and becomes the construct of memory. By the use of the myth of the Nadhor, the protagonists' quest is represented as a ritual process which the young people are compelled to experience if they are to learn the meaning of their lives. In his description of the trip to the Nadhor, Kateb erases any trace of normal linear time; the sense of time being stereotypically associated with occidental society. Instead, he rearranges time to give it a non-linear flow. In fact, the non-chronological order of time and the emphasis on the psychological time of the characters' mind reflect the tense condition within which the young people exist. Instead of narrating the whole history of his country, Kateb Yacine concentrates on specific moments in the development of the Algerian nation, and that had a direct impact on the lives of his characters, and implicitly on his own life.

f- The Destruction of the French Colonizers' Myth:

Like Old Father John in Toomer's Cane, Si Mokhtar in Nedjma is the one who will establish the link between the two groups of people by reciting the legend of the Keblout tribe, their wandering from Arabia to Spain, and finally their settlement in the Nadhor. Like Father John who states the great sin of the whites was in their distorted interpretation of the Bible that was made in order to secure slavery to the whites and exclusion to the blacks, Si Mokhtar states that the sin of the French colonizers lies in their distortion of the Algerian people's past. "L'enterr'ment di firiti/ i la cause di calamiti." (Nedjma, 122)[39] "The burial of truth/ Is the cause of calamity." (Nedjma, 161)

39. Kateb Yacine gives the proper proverb in a footnote "l'enterrement des vérités/ est la cause des calamités " in Nedjma, op cit., p.122.

Despite the seriousness of the meaning of the proverb, and the message it conveys, Si Mokhtar states the French proverb with a marked Algerian accent, deforming the French pronunciation on purpose in an ironic way to show the contradictions existing between the French beliefs and their deeds in Algeria. Si Mokhtar, in fact, is a trickster figure who escapes the fixity of the roles formed within colonial discourse. He makes use of a series of tricks and ruses in order to defy colonial presence in Algeria and insure the survival of his own people. In her book, Writing Tricksters. Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature, Jeanne Rosier-Smith defines the trickster as "A parodist, joker, liar, con-artist, and storyteller, [who] fabricates believable illusions with words."[40] As a trickster figure, Si Mokhtar defies colonial authority by means of deceptive strategies. He "…both exercises and exorcises the negation of the Cultural Other"[41] He ironically criticizes the French distortion of the Algerian identity and culture by repeating in a strident voice: "Mon père Charlemagne /Ma mère Jeanne d'Arc." (Nedjma, 121) "My father Charlemagne /My mother Jeanne d'Arc." (Nedjma, 161) This second extract that was taught to Algerian school children in the French schools, starting with "Nos ancêtres les Gaulois…" "Our Ancestors the Gaulois…" is also used by Si Mokhtar to show the colonizers' cultural chauvinism in their desire to erase completely Algerian history and cultural heritage and replace them with their own.

The French colonizers deliberately used the educational system as a subtle weapon to obscure the past of the natives, erasing their history and culture while privileging European values and ideals. As Frantz Fanon sarcastically observed, "The settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey. He is the absolute beginning … The settler makes history and is conscious of making it."[42] The French educational system and its legacy imposed upon the natives a vision of the world in which the colonizers were the supreme masters. The school children colonized by the French learned, consequently, that their own past was of little value and hardly qualified as history at all. The colonial educational system, in fact, was designed to transform indigenous subjects, through the refashioning of their minds, to serve colonial desires and embrace French ideals. As a result, the natives felt alienated from their own history and language, and lost the sense of who they were.

> As long as he tolerates colonization, the only possible alternatives for the colonized are assimilation or petrification. . . . Planning and building his future are forbidden. He must therefore limit himself to the present, and even that present is cut off and abstract . . . [and] he

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40. Jeanne Rosier-Smith, Writing Tricksters. Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature. London: University of California Press Ltd., 1997, p. 11.

41. Spinks , C.W. Jr. Semiosis, Marginal Signs and Trickster. A Dagger of the Mind. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991, p.178.

42. The Wretched of the Earth, op cit., p.51.

> draws less and less from his past. The colonizer never even recognized he had one; everyone knows that the commoner whose origins are unknown has no history.[43]

Thus, colonial dominance depends heavily on the control of history. Without knowledge of their own past, the colonized are indeed lost.

Although the French educational system may have silenced all discussions of an indigenous past in the school, the ancestors insisted on preserving and transmitting their personal memories of colonial oppression to their progeny. Thus, central to the work of Kateb Yacine is the assumed power of collective memory for defining identity. Such power is often embodied in storytelling. Si Mokhtar, in the novel assumes this role. He recounts the dramatic tales of the Keblout ancestors , the fathers of the male protagonists, the drama of their families, and the conquest of Algeria by the French, starting from the conquest era in which a couple was found stabbed in the tribal mosque. According to Si Mokhtar, no one knew who the couple were and why they were murdered, but the French used the crime committed against the couple as an excuse for a punitive expedition in the tribe. The Keblouti tribe, which prospered in the previous historical periods, was decimated by the colonizers. According to legend, six of the tribal leaders were executed. When the telegram pardoning them arrived, it was too late, the leaders had already been killed. To avoid any kind of revenge from their sons in the future, the French granted them the title of 'caids'. They then divided the Keblouti families into four groups. One group was given lands which were soon expropriated; the second and third groups were given administrative posts while the fourth group remained in the ancestral land to guard the ruins of the mosque and the little ancestral land left by the French.

Si Mokhtar, one of the direct descendants of the tribe, is called upon to assume the position of spiritual father among the young protagonists. He becomes the young people's mentor because of his ability to speak to them about tribal tradition and past. Rosier-Smith states that "Tricksters appear at moments of identity crisis,"[44] they function as guides or catalysts and are present in order to assist the hero in his quest and show him the way. Through his teachings, Si Mokhtar, in Kateb's Nedjma, influences the development of the young characters' personalities. " Tous les proverbes, toutes les farces, toutes les tragédies étaient de Si Mokhtar. " (Nedjma, 108) "all the proverbs, all the jokes, all the tragedies were Si Mokhtar's." (Nedjma, 142) Although he does not participate directly in the process of political consciousness of the young protagonists, Si Mokhtar helps the new generation take up the cause of the defeated fathers thanks to his teachings. Si Mokhtar helps restore the dignity and responsibility to the young people by depicting to them the

43. Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur, op cit., p.102.
44. Writing Tricksters. Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature , op cit, p.9.

colonial possession of the Keblouti land not as a result of colonial supremacy and civilization. Rather, responsibilities were shared between colonizers and colonized. By failing their duties in guarding the ancestors' land, the fathers helped in their own subjugation and oppression. This perspective of history is both healing and enabling to the young people for it empowers them to get past their fathers' betrayal of their ancestors. Because Si Mokhtar stands for the irresponsible and despicable fathers, his position as mentor of the young people is temporary. As soon as he kidnaps Nedjma and reaches the ancestral land, he is killed and replaced by a more 'authentic' father figure, Si Mabrouk, the black man.

As he feels guilty because he deserted the tribe in its time of trouble, Si Mokhtar engineers the kidnapping of Nedjma as part of his dream to restore the wholeness of the decimated and scattered tribe. Taking Nedjma to the Nadhor would join the embodiment of national identity with national origins located in the site of keblouti resistance to colonial rule. Nedjma would then be rooted at the source of national identity.

> Il faut dire que nous étions tous les trois, enfin! Dans la période de repos que nous avions toujours souhaitée, depuis des années de perpétuel exil, de séparation, de dur labeur, ou d'inaction et de débauche ;enfin nous retrouvions les derniers hectares de la tribu, la dernière chaumière (nos parents vivaient toujours sous la tente et nous avaient isolés là non sans mépris, nous dont les pères s'étaient laissés tromper par les français en quittant le Mont des Jumelles pour les cités des conquérants) ; cependant, on nous avait accueillis, et les liens de sang se renouaient peu à peu… (Nedjma, 135)

> After all the three of us were taking the rest we had always longe for during the years of perpetual exile, of separation, of hard labor, or of idleness and debauchery; finally we came back to the last acres of the tribe, the last hearth (our relatives were still living in tents and had isolated us here, not without contempt, we whose fathers had let themselves be deceived by the French , abandoning the Twin Peaks for the cities of the conquerors); still we had been greeted, received , and the ties of blood gradually bound us close…(Nedjma, 178)

Before reaching the Keblouti tribe where she would take her traditional place as the symbol of the country, Nedjma has to cleanse herself from the stains of the past. Thus, the scene in the novel that shows her taking a bath in an old cauldron suggests a ritual of purification from her previous promiscuous life. At the end of her ablutions, Nedjma is expected to step out of the cauldron having rid herself of her "dépouille de vipère." (Nedjma, 138) "cast-off skins of vipers." (Nedjma, 182) However, the males accompanying her to the land of

the ancestors are soon condemned by the tribe members whom they consider as impotent musicians, drinkers and hashish-smoking buffoons who have failed the ancestors. “ Il n y a pas de haschich ici, pas de vin, et nul n’appréciera votre musique […]Keblout a dit de ne protéger que ses filles. Quant aux mâles vagabonds, dit l’ancêtre Keblout, qu’ils vivent en sauvages, par monts et par vaux, eux qui n’ont pas défendu leur terre… ” (Nedjma, 148, 151) “There is no hashish here, no wine, and no one will appreciate your music […] Keblout has said to protect only his daughters. As for the wandering males, the ancestor Keblout has said, let them live as savages, in the mountains and the valleys, those who have not defended their land… ” (Nedjma, 195, 199)

Despite her apparent loss of personal freedom in her return to the Nadhor, Nedjma becomes a collective promise of rebirth and victory over the disaster of historical fate. In spite of her captivity and servitude, the experience of having returned to the ancestral homeland binds the young woman to her pre-colonial heritage. Nedjma is likened to the “ veuves conservatrices qui transforment en paix la défaite, n’ayant jamais désespéré des semailles. ” (Nedjma, 183) “the conserving widows who transform defeat into peace , never having despaired of the sowing. ” (Nedjma, 245) Her stay in the Nadhor is seen as a project for collective freedom, empowerment and an agent of revolution and regeneration. However, it is to be noted that the revolutionary drive of the young people in the novel has little impact on the status of Nedjma as a woman. The historical development of the Algerian identity has not succeeded in undermining gender inequalities and patriarchal values. As Malika Mahdid states, concerning Algerian women during the colonial period, “woman becomes an idea or spirit, that is denied reality and flesh, disincarnated or even derealized and her passivity becomes a requirement of the allegorical value bestowed on her.”[45] Nedjma finds herself again in the position of prisoner closely watched by the guardians of the tribe, with no alternative for her either to speak or to act.

45. Malika Mehdid, Tradition and Subversion: Gender and Postcolonial Feminism, the Case of the Arab Region (with particular reference to Algeria). University of Warwick : Centre for British Cultural Studies 1993, p.70. http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/34641. [accessed on March17th, 2012]

Chapter Six
The Search for One's Own Voice

In The Empire Writes Back, Gayatri Spivak states that many women have been marginalized and relegated to the position of 'Other'. These women, according to the Indian critic,are doomed to the same future of mute or silenced 'subalterns', and that there is no possibility of them ever coming to voice or of anyone else ever speaking for them. As 'subalterns', these women have their voice silenced since there is a lack of place from which they can speak.[1] On the other hand, bell hooks asserts that silence is the condition of one who has been dominated and has been made an object while talk is the mark of freeing, of making one a subject. In this sense, bell hooks suggests that oppressed women are transformed by the act of speaking. When speaking, women assume the role of subject and are able to define their identities and nominate their histories. "For women within oppressed groups…coming to voice is an act of resistance,"[2] an act that challenges patriarchy and the politics of male dominance. According to her, "moving from silence into speech is a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back', that is no mere gesture of empty words that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice."[3] When silenced, one ceases to exist. Thus, women fight against their spiritual and emotional death by asserting their identities through their voices. Accordingly, voice becomes, as Maria Racine states so well, "more than speech; it is a state of mind--a positive sense of self."[4] Voice allows women to take their place within society. However, the female place in society historically presents its own unique set of issues: "For a woman, social options are often so narrow that they preclude explorations of her milieu."[5] When trying to make representable the female voice, Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar create characters who seek to learn how to speak by questioning the historically voiceless subjects. They provide the context for crafting alternatives to prevailing images of womanhood.

This chapter investigates the recognition of the female characters acceptance or rejection of the conventional norms of womanhood, their claims for new social roles, and the sources of their physical and psychological exploitation by focusing on the ways in which the female protagonists question

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1. Gaytari Spivak in The Empire Writes Back, op cit., p.175.

2. Talking Back. Thinking Feminist. Thinking Black, op cit., p.12.

3. Ibid.

4. Maria J. Racine , "Voice and interiority in Zora Neale Hurston's 'Their Eyes Were Watching God." African American Review. Volume: 28. Issue: 2, 1994, p.291.

5. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983, p.7.

or accept the parameters of "the cult of true womanhood" such as submissiveness, subservience, purity, weakness, and the limited satisfaction to the private sphere of the house. Questions like: who speaks for whom and under what circumstances? Who has the capacity to speak? How are women silenced? How do they use their silence? Can the woman as a 'subaltern voice' ever been heard? How are women empowered to break the rules imposed upon them? Who imposed these rules? And finally, what do women say when they are allowed to speak? will be answered.

Many female writers' desire is to speak on their own behalf, in their own language, to resuscitate their history and to represent those who tend to be absent from narrative. As critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar reinforce, "the woman writer…searches for a female model not because she wants dutifully to comply with male definitions of her 'feminity' but because she must legitimize her own rebellious endeavours."[6] Zora Neale Huston and Assia Djebar are no exception. The two female writers question, in their works, the traditional definitions of gender roles that would reduce men to the public and women to the private spheres. In the case of Zora Neale Huston, Mary Helen Washington states that the writer is intentionally illustrating in her novel "women's exclusion from power, particularly from the power of oral speech;"[7] while Assia Djebar aims, through her novel, Les enfants du nouveau monde, to uncover various forms of feminine resistance, insisting on the emergence of the feminine subject, unafraid to affirm herself against silence and cloistering.[8]

Despite the fact that transgressing the social boundaries established by patriarchy is sanctioned, transgression for a number of Assia Djebar's female characters remains a strategy of resistance. An assessment worth pondering here would be the one made by Ahlem Mosteghanemi in her empirical study, Algérie, Femme et Ecritures where she evaluates the contribution of Algerian women writers as follows:

> Il faut noter, cependant, qu'il ne suffit pas de s'être penché sur le problème de l'émancipation féminine pour en avoir vraiment servi la cause. La déformation des revendications féminines et la quête de personnages débouchant sur des issues négatives ... comme c'est le cas dans les deux romans de Djamila Debèche . . . ou, encore, le défi lancé à la société, à la manière de Aïcha Lemsine dans *La Chrysalide* (où l'héroïne revient vivre dans son village avec un

6. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Ninetheenth Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, p.49.

7. Mary Helen Washington, "I Love the Way Janie Crawford Left Her Husbands: Emergent Female Hero" in Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present. Ed, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K.A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993, pp. 98-109, p.98.

8. In Miriam Cooke words, "It is the growing understanding of the ways in which patriarchy seizes and then articulates women's experiences so that they will be seem to be marginal and apolitical that now drives women as creative artists and as critics to re-member their pasts and then to write them." Women and the War Stories, op cit., p.5.

> enfant dont personne ne veut reconnaître la paternité). Tous ces "scenarii" ne servent pas réellement la cause de l'émancipation féminine. Seuls quelques romans comme *Les enfants du nouveau monde* et *Les Alouettes Naïves* de Assia Djébar . . . optent pour une solution positive, à savoir: l'engagement politique de la femme dans le but de bouleverser les structures socioéconomiques du pays. Sans cela, toute émancipation reste aléatoire.[9]

In Les enfants du nouveau monde, Djebar considers the confinement of Algerian women and the silencing of their voices as the two main aspects that disempower her country women and lead to their invisibility and erasure from their country's history. Her work becomes, accordingly, "a political act that foregrounds representation as the necessary prelude to women claiming their heritage of resistance."[10] Although the female characters in the novel come from different social, political and intellectual backgrounds, they share the same desire for a more independent and fulfilling life.

This chapter is divided into two sections: In the first section we will deal with the ways Zora Neale Hurston deconstructs the one dimensional view of womanhood to which African American women have historically been submitted.[11] By granting her female character in Their Eyes Were Watching God voice and mobility, Hurston challenges, as we will come to see, the notion of black women as victimized others, stereotyped and silenced.[12]Through her presentation of Janie Crawford in her novel, Zora Neale Hurston refuses to depict African American women as victims of the oppressing forces around them. Rather, Janie is depicted, as we will see in the present chapter, as a survivor who has succeeded in opposing her objectification as "de mule uh de world" and who has transcended the confines of intersecting oppression of race, class, gender , and sexuality. In the same way as Zora Neale Hurston, Assia Djebar in Les enfants du nouveau monde challenges the stereotypical Algerian women characters as presented in both French and Algerian male fiction that have denied the experience of Algerian women and silenced their voices. Thus, we will see in the second section how the Algerian novelist brings her country women from the margin to a more central place by granting them a voice and depicting the multiple forms of their resistance.

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9. Ibid, p. 227.

10. Steadman, Jennifer Bernhardt , "A global feminist travels: Assia Djebar and Fantasia" , op cit.

11. Hazel Garby considers that the Harlem Renaissance in America had been constructed as a 'masculine affair' where the aspirations of black women were completely relegated to the margin.

12. Barbara Christian claims that, "to be able to use the range of one's voice, to attempt to express the totality of self, is a recurring struggle in the tradition of [Black women] writers" in Black Feminist Criticism, Perspectives on Black Women Writers. New York: Pergamon, 1987, p.7.

VI.1 - Their Eyes Were Watching God or the Novel of Self-Discovery:

> If you try to talk sense, they [a lot of darkish men] look at you right pitifully as if to say, "What a pity! That mouth that was made to supply some man (and why not me) with kisses, is spoiling itself asking stupidities about banana production and wages!" It is not that they try to put you in your place, no. They consider that you never had any. If they think about it at all, they think that they are removing you from MAN's place and then granting you the privilege of receiving his caresses and otherwise ministering to his comfort when he has time to give you for such matters.[13]

In Eurocentric culture, Black women carried a double burden as they were devalued by being black and women. They were the most peripheral of the marginalized as they felt excluded not only from the white American mainstream but also from the black mainstream. They experienced various forms of oppression or discrimination according to the stereotypes that had been imposed on them through history. Because of these stereotypes, the black woman has not been recognized in her totality. In an interview with the literary critic Mary Helen Washington, Alice Walker states that women at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century were 'suspended' by the pressures in society. The content of their lives was pain, suffering, and oppression. Walker appropriates the term 'mules of the world' created by Zora Neale Hurston to classify women who belonged to that era. According to her,

> Women were suspended in a time in history where the options for Black women were severely limited…and they either killed themselves or they are used up by the men, or by the children, or by…whatever the pressures against them. And they cannot go anywhere. I mean, you cannot, you just cannot move, until there is room for you to move into.[14]

When these margins started looking for their own definition, they resisted and transcended the imposed racial and sexual stereotypes so that the constructions of womanhood were redefined. As a consequence, oppositional hierarchies were destabilized.

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13. Zora Neale Hurston, Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica. (1938) New York: Harper and Row, 1990, pp.57-58.

14. Mary Helen Washington, "interview with Mary H. Washington". Jackson, Mississipi, June, 17, 1973, p.6.

In Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston focuses on the life of her female character Janie, via flashbacks that reveal where she has come from and what she has gone through in her quest for voice. She makes use of her work as a way of questioning the conditions of black womanhood in an attempt to make visible the process of black women's liberation from the racist and sexist constraints of their society. The story dwells on power relations between the sexes, and on the plight of black women through whom men fulfill their expectations regarding their masculinity. Beneath its simple narrative surface, it strikes a critical note on the social mores that legitimize a code of manhood in which violence, oppression and ruthlessness are justified means by which one can prove his virility. In such a context, women are assigned a lower status, and are viewed as no more than objects of personal property and tokens of men's pride with no possibility of attaining personhood.

Accordingly, Hurston's female character, Janie is discussed, in the present chapter, in relation to her status below that of white men, white women, and black men within the structures established by 'colonialism'. Janie is first shown as caught in the worlds of racism, patriarchy and sexism created by the people around her. In the worlds of Nanny, Logan Killicks, and Joe Starks, Janie is reduced into an unfeeling piece of property: her sexuality repressed, her labor capacity exploited, her humanity constrained and her own autonomous voice denied. In her desire to find an authentic voice free from the constraints of others, Janie has to go through many ordeals and hard times. In her process of apprenticeship, Janie learns to resist the alienation fostered by the politics of male dominance, recaptures her own will, and finally, after two marriages, enters into a relationship that breaks out of the prison of traditional sexual roles and allows for the integration of her sexuality with her potentialities as a human being. She herself conceives of her life as "a great tree in leaf with the things suffered" that contains not only birth and growth but also decline and death. "Dawn and doom was in the branches." (Their Eyes, 8)

a- The Beginning of the Spiritual Journey:

Appropriating the Bildungsroman form, Hurston presents the growth and development of Janie as an agent of female empowerment. The narrative of the novel is structured as a journey. Janie's maturity is defined as the final stage of self-consciousness. African American women writers of the early twentieth-century, in fact, appropriated the bildungsroman to address race, gender, and class in relation to the emerging "New Woman", who struggled to negotiate her way through changing perceptions of women's roles as wives, mothers, and career women.[15] It must be noted, nonetheless, that the novel

15. During the 1920s and 1930s, the bildungsroman by women writers flourished as illustrated by Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse (1927), Nella Larsen's Passing (1929), and Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz (1932). The bildungsroman served as a useful vehicle for racializing the

breaks the rules of the genre as it deviates from the traditional form by presenting a female rather than a male protagonist who accomplishes maturity resulting in a new outlook on life. It remains, however, that in both the male and female forms we witness "the emergence of a powerful, vocal, and increasingly self-directed individuality." [16] As in the traditional male Bildungsroman, Janie in Their Eyes Were Watching God has developed a unique subjectivity through a journey of self-knowledge.[17] Moreover, unlike Becky's children, Esther, and most of Toomer's characters of racially mixed heritage, Janie, in Hurston's novel, does not fall into the trap of her society's denigration and rejection. The story of her finding of voice and individuality is a far deviation from the trope of the tragic mulatto.

In Rereading the Harlem Renaissance: Race, Class, and Gender in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West, Sharon L. Jones states:

> Hurston may have incorporated and fictionalized her own experience as a black female artist attempting to express her own voice in a racist, sexist, and class-conscious society. The inspiration stems from the emotional turmoil surrounding her love life and her failed attempt to negotiate a relationship with a graduate student she met in 1931 who wanted Hurston to give up her career. The depiction of Janie's three marriages and struggle for voice, empowerment, freedom, and autonomy may stem from Hurston's own attempt to negotiate her role as artist with a desire for a heterosexual relationship.[18]

Accordingly, the novel begins with a third-person omniscient narrator documenting the community's reaction to Janie's return to Eatonville after the death of her third husband Tea Cake. Then, the novel switches to Janie's first person explanation of her life experiences to her friend Pheoby and her growth as an individual. The third person omniscient narrator returns at the end of the novel to reveal the effect the story has on Janie and her listener. This complex narrative structure allows Hurston to more fully explore the psychological, spiritual and emotional development of the protagonist and her relationship

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problems of sexual and class oppression and fictionalizing their own experiences as black women writers who often faced the tripartite oppression of race, class, and gender.

16. Eva Boesenberg, Gender-Voice-Vernacular: the Formation of Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag , Winter, 1999, p.2.

17. According to Smith and Watson , the Bildungsroman is a traditional genre that "has been regarded as the novel of development and social formation of a young man, […] And yet the form of the Bildungsroman has been taken up more recently by women and other disenfranchised persons to consolidate a sense of emerging identity and an increased place in public life" in Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, eds. Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p.189.

18. Sharon L. Jones, Rereading the Harlem Renaissance: Race, Class, and Gender in the Fiction of Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002, p.81.

with her community. More than just a fictional strategy, the narrative structure is the means by which Janie, via Pheoby, is reintegrated into the context of the folk community. Through Pheoby, who mediates between the individual and the group, Janie feels she is part of a racial community. Her telling becomes a measure of her awareness of and response to the social rituals that regulate communal life.

In addition to Nanny's instructions, Janie's marriages to Logan Killicks, Jody Starks and Tea Cake are the most crucial elements in her development as a woman. Through her three marriages, Janie behaves in response to a 'masculinist' tradition in which visual power often objectifies women. With each of her three marriages, Janie challenges this imposed stereotype. Janie's marriage to Logan Killicks was the first stage in her development as a woman. It was also the beginning of a long tedious journey. Janie's lack of knowledge that comes from firsthand experience makes her believe her forced marriage with Logan would end her loneliness and desire for love, but she soon discovered that she cannot find anything to love about him. Thus, Logan Killicks is the starting place in her evolution as a woman. From him, she learns that she is missing love. "She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead, so she became a woman." (Their Eyes, 25) In The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development, Elizabeth Abel explains that it is only "after conventional expectations of marriage and motherhood have been fulfilled and found insufficient"[19] that women are able to begin their own journey. Susan Rosowski describes this new phase in a woman's development as "an inner, imaginative sense of personal value [that] conflicts with her public role."[20]

b- Breaking of the Established Rules:

With her next husband Joe Starks, Janie believes that the voids of loneliness and love she felt with her first husband would be filled. For weeks, Janie believes that Jody "spoke for change and chance." (Their Eyes, 29) Not long after her marriage, Janie realizes that her new husband is not the same man she ran off with to marry. Joe Starks soon assumes his superiority and reduces his wife to an object of his power and command. Most of his visible faults lie in his domineering and abusive attitude toward her. He does not treat her as equal. He would not let her speak in front of people, teach her to play checkers, or let her participate in other community events. The psychological violence he perpetrates on her violates her autonomy, dignity, and the right to determine things for herself. She has been deprived of choices by being threatened and manipulated. She realizes that she has become a prisoner of the pretty picture of "whut a woman oughta be and to do." In the same way as

19. The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development , op cit., p.7.
20. Ibid, p. 68.

Matt Bonner's tired mule, Janie is trained by her husband Joe Stark to work in dumb obedience and silence.

However, Janie, unlike this beast of burden, breaks with the rules of order established by her husband and rebels against her present situation. She refuses to remain a passive observer in the restricted space allowed her by her husband, excluded from participating in her community's most important activities and opens up a new space for her transformation. She starts defending herself in her own way, gradually becoming stronger and able to confront her husband and the conventions to which she is expected to adhere. First, Janie realizes that she cannot be open with her husband and express her resentment and bitterness to him. "She found out that she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to him" (Their Eyes, 72) Thus, Janie starts consciously suppressing what she truly feels and behaves in the way Joe wants her to. Consequently, She starts wearing the 'mask' her husband wants her to wear by saying and acting in the way he wants. This strategy of masking is, in fact, a way of hiding untold truths and a device to protect Janie from her husband's abusive acts: "She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them." (Their Eyes, 72) Ralph Ellison asserts in his book Shadow and Act, that the masks are worn for the purpose of "aggression as well as defence…the motives hidden behind the mask are as numerous as the ambiguities the mask conceals."[21] Janie is not permitted speech but she cannot stop feeling resentment and disgust. Silence, in this way becomes the character's mask.

In her article, "Voice and interiority in Zora Neale Hurston's 'Their Eyes Were Watching God'", Maria Racine is positive in her analysis of the moment when Janie divides herself. She sees the act as "a step toward attaining her own voice and, thus, control over her life."[22] Indeed, Janie has been growing for years in silence under Joe's oppressive authority, and her newly mature spirit is growing too large to contain all the oppression and humiliation he makes her endure. The most obvious account of this growth happens when Janie makes a mistake in cutting tobacco in the presence of her husband Joe. The latter starts yelling at her in front of people in the store, stripping her verbally, symbolically violating her body in public. Instead of accepting his wicked criticism in silence, Janie is not afraid to talk back. She rises up out of herself and speaks up her mind.

> Janie took the middle of the floor to talk right into Jody's face, and that was something that hadn't been done before.
> "Stop mixin' up mah doings wid mah looks, Jody. When you git through tellin' me how tuh cut uh plug uh tobacco, then you kin tell me whether mah behind is on straight or not." (Their Eyes, 74)

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21. Ralph Ellison, Shadow and Act, New York: Random House, 1964, p.55.
22. "Voice and interiority in Zora Neale Hurston's 'Their Eyes Were Watching God'", op cit., p.287.

Instead of suffering silently as she used to do, Janie blasts Joe with stored-up irritation. According to bell hooks 'back talk' or 'talking back' is not just the use of words without meaning. Rather, it is the expression of the movement from object to subject–the liberating voice.

During her marriage to Joe Starks, Janie has been able to hide her true identity under the clothes he has forced her to wear. Nevertheless, Joe puts an end to her using clothing as a protective shell by metaphorically undressing her in public. This action has freed Janie rather than further imprisoning her. It has allowed her to move without restrictions and to speak up her mind. She uses her unveiled power to defend her body and soul from further humiliation and oppression. In this scene, "Janie's ability to speak out in self-defence is a major step towards self-expression,"[23] thus, this is a landmark in Janie's quest for self-discovery. She is finally speaking up for herself. At the wake of his death, Janie confronts her husband on his deathbed and allows her suppressed emotions to surface again. Following his death, Janie's subtle changes in action and appearance anticipate the emergence of her new identity. Even if the latter is not yet fully developed, it remains that it has greatly influenced Janie's thoughts and deeds. Indeed, soon after Joe's death, Janie burns the head rags he had forced her to wear for almost twenty years; sits on the porch and talks to her people instead of running the store, and more importantly, enjoys herself as much as she can insisting that " mourning oughtn't tuh last no longer 'n grief". (Their Eyes, 93)

c-The Healing Process:

Janie's marital experience with Joe Starks shows that there is no way to female self-fulfilment within a male-dominated community. Despite the material stability, security and protection Joe Starks offers Janie, he fails to complete her development as a woman through his mistreatment of her. Accordingly, he lets her expect another man to help her construct herself as a voiced subject. "she was saving up feelings for some man that she had never seen." (Their Eyes, 72) In addition, Janie has come to awareness that Nanny, by trying to make her live like whites, had pointed her in the wrong direction. Her grandmother's best intentions have led to her divided self.

> She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of people; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her. But she had been whipped like a cur dog, and run off down a back road after things. It was all according to the way you see things. Some people could look at a mud-puddle and see an ocean with ships. But Nanny belonged to that other kind that loved to deal in scraps. Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing

23. Josie P. Campbell, Student Companion to Zora Neale Hurston. Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.66.

> God ever made, the horizon - for no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you - and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughter's neck tight enough to choke her. (Their Eyes, 89)

Nanny's well intended actions to keep Janie sheltered against material need and servitude have stood as a barrier preventing Janie from searching for an authentic place where she could express the autonomy and independence of her consciousness. Through her realization of what Nanny's choice has done to her, Janie starts her process of healing her divided self. That is the reason why Nanny has to die in the novel. Indeed, as a vestige of slavery, Nanny has to die so that Janie become stronger and more confident in her choices. Her first step in the process of finding her own united self and voice leads her to reject the material security which Nanny, Logan and Joe Starks sought to provide, and enters into a new kind of relationship with a man considered by her community as socially inferior to her. Henry Louis Gates, for example, claims that Janie discovers her own narrative power when she rhetorically "kills her husband" Joe.[24]

Janie's marriage with Tea Cake represents the third and final movement in her march toward self-definition. Tea Cake finishes her development as a woman and becomes the catalyst for the final stage of her coming to voice. Through her marriage with him, Janie undergoes a process of emotional healing and physical rejuvenation; she enters a world of unbridled expression, interaction and self-indulgence. Tea Cake helps her to discover that sexual and emotional gratification is only possible through a partnership between equals who "partake wid everything". From him, Janie learns to love and what it feels like to be loved as an equal. He becomes the objectification of all that she has ever desired. He also becomes the embodiment of the freedom which her divided mind has long sought. This is something, she believes, very few people have experienced. Tea Cake, in fact, stands in direct opposition to the values Nanny had attempted to instill in Janie. By marrying him, Janie deliberately situates herself in that marginal area that defies conventions and where she can pursue her right to self-expression in spite of the pressures of the folk community that espouses traditional assumptions of what a woman ought to be, think and do. After his death, Janie attains a new form of cultural power, the ability to shape her own story.

Moreover, and despite her three marriages, Janie bears no children. This element of not having children differs from what is expected of a woman in a patriarchal society. This has been confirmed by Hazel Carby when she notes that the true discourses of feminity, wifehood, and motherhood are "the purpose of a woman's being" in a black context.[25] Motherhood, in fact,

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24. Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present, op cit., p.192.

25. Hazel Carby explains that the black woman in Southern society has been constructed as a 'mother'

reinforces the dichotomy in a patriarchal society as well as the fixed notion that a woman has to be a mother. Hurston considers that having children in a male dominated society like the one in which Janie lives would become an obstacle for her to assert her own identity and recover her voice. In Carol P. Marsh-Lockett's words, Hurston's works "[reveal] that motherhood is a presence therein but that it exists in a marginalized, politically powerless form, the mothers themselves lacking communities of women and rarely finding their own voices except to uphold a patriarchal superstructure."[26]

d- The Recovery of One's Voice:

However, despite the great contribution of Tea Cake in fostering Janie's sense of independence, and despite his help in the creation of her identity and the assertion of her voice, Janie does not hesitate to kill him when she feels that her own life is at risk. Nellie McKay explains that "the relationship with Tea Cake help[s] to shape [Janie's] self-knowledge, but in his death she is free to discover security in herself, and the courage to speak in her own black woman's voice, no longer dependent on men."[27] Although Tea Cake has helped Janie forge her new identity, it is nevertheless important for her to carry on her new life as a woman firmly in control of her voice and identity, without depending on any man for her future happiness. With the shot that kills Tea Cake, Janie severs any remaining ties with the passive and submissive woman/ object she was and emerges anew as an assertive and powerful subject.

In addition to granting Janie an identity and a voice through her journey of self-discovery, Hurston re-appropriates the once negative image of the conjure woman by attributing to Janie the power to conjure. As we will see in the next part in more details, the conjure tradition was used as a tool of resistance for enslaved Africans. It helped those in bondage to resist absolute subjugation by proving that there was a limitation to the power of the master. The conjure woman, on the other hand, was often seen as the most adept agent of mobility, resistance and self-determination in the realm of African American womanhood. By granting Janie the power to conjure, Hurston provides her heroine with a symbolic weapon that will help her fight the oppressive forces that want to subjugate her. In Conjuring Moments and Other Such Hoodoo: African American Women & Spirit Work , Kameelah L. Martin states that, "the conjure woman figure is often an autonomous figure disrupting ideas of gender, exercising self-determination, defying authority when she sees fit, and

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in a period in which slavery was the economic pillar and child bearing was the main task of a woman. In Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist, op cit, p. 26.

26. "Whatever Happened to Jochebed? Motherhood As Marginality in Zora Neale Hurston's Seraph on the Suwanee." , op cit., p. 100.

27. Nellie McKay, " 'Crayon Enlargements of Life': Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God as Autobiography" in New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God, op cit., p. 63.

western ideologies of cultural supremacy, seldom forgetting her otherness is often the source of her autonomy."[28] While Tea Cake, in the novel, possesses a gun that he hides under his pillow and intends to use it against his wife, Janie is bestowed with the power to conjure and uses it as a shield against any eventual evil.

Janie's return to Eatonville in soiled overalls and her hair swinging on her back like a young girl, are offensive because they are in complete defiance of that which is acceptable within her community and do not fit the standards of propriety and decorum required by her class, age and sex. Hurston here shows that choice of clothing plays a crucial role in gender politics within the black community as Janie's sight shocks the people of Eatonville. Because of her status as widow of ex-mayor Joe Starks, the community expects her to act and dress in a way befitting her class and age. Her insistence on marrying Tea Cake and ignoring the censure of the community represents rebellion and immaturity in their eyes. It is a violation to the black female parameters of womanhood. But for Janie, the construction of her identity and the recovery of her voice require the celebration of the presence of the female black body. "The visible presence of Janie's material body reflects the complex historical and cultural forces which have created her and offers her a unique individual identity."[29]

By the end of her story, Janie learns to be free in her thoughts and to respect what she thinks and feels. Unlike her grandmother, victimized by her master, and her own mother, raped by a school teacher, Janie can place the integrity of the self against the system that presses her to acquiesce to man's needs. Thus, she self-consciously reacts against the legacy of both a collective and a personal history of degradation. Having returned from the horizon, Janie represents the mature voice of experience and wisdom. Her maturity has been strengthened by her suffering as she has gone through a process of internal change. Through suffering, she has achieved personal wholeness. Her marriages' experience, in fact, has given her the tools to break the chains of oppression. She is finally able to grow, blossom, change, and become mentally free. She ceases to care what society and people think of her.

e- Woman as an Agent of Female Empowerment:

More importantly, Janie is able to use self-expression to overcome her confinement as an African American woman. She has become an agent of female empowerment as she retrospectively tells her story to someone less experimented than herself. She uses the voice she finally recovers to convey her experience to her friend Pheoby and empower her as an African American

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28. Kameelah L. Martin, Conjuring Moments and Other Such Hoodoo: African American Women & Spirit Work. The Florida State University, 2006 , p.8.

29. Deborah, Clarke, " 'The Porch Couldn't Talk for Looking': Voice and Vision in Their Eyes Were Watching God." African American Review Vol. 35, No. 4 ,Winter, 2001, pp. 599-613.

female. Her aim is to revise the patriarchal vision of seeing the world through a male dialectic. Elizabeth Meese states that Janie's identity "finally begins to take shape as she throws off the false images which have been thrust upon her because she is both black and a woman in a society where neither is allowed to exist naturally and freely."[30] Janie's empowerment process becomes positive when Pheoby, who aspires "to sit on de front porch", undergoes a transformation. She responds excitedly to Janie's call to break with hierarchies of representation and to stop seeing herself as a silent subject.

> "Lawd!" Pheoby breathed out heavily, "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie. Ah ain't satisfied wid mahself no mo'. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin' wid him after this. Nobody better not criticize yuh in mah hearin'." (Their Eyes,192)

In reality, Janie's friendship with Pheoby helps the two women develop a feeling of self-worth. Mary Helen Washington points out that one main feature of African American women's literature is that it is about women. "Their friendships with other women-mothers, sisters, grandmothers, friends, lovers– are vital to their growth and well-being."[31] The presence of Pheoby in Janie's life, in the novel, is very important particularly when considering the importance of voice in Black women's lives. Without the presence of Pheoby to listen to Janie's story and to retell it to the community waiting outside, Janie's experience would be worthless.

By the end of the novel, Janie triumphs in her quest for freedom and wholeness. She achieves personal fulfillment but also assumes a communal role traditionally reserved for males. Her action of empowerment through storytelling represents a break from gendered silence. By choosing another black female character to whom she tells her story, Janie's decision is significant. In her analysis of black women's relationship to one another, Patricia Hill Collins contends that: "…the act of using one's voice requires a listener and thus establishes a connection. For African-American women the listener most able to pierce the invisibility created by Black women's objectification is another Black woman. This process of trusting one another can seem dangerous because only Black women know what it means to be Black women. But if we will not listen to one another, then who will?"[32] In addition, she appropriates tropes of creation in order to insert her voice into

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30. Elizabeth Meese, "Orality and Textuality in Their Eyes Were Watching God." Ed. Bloom, Harold. Modern Critical Interpretations: Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes were Watching God. New York : Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.p.60.

31. Mary Helen Washington, ed. Invented lives: Narratives of Black Women1860-1960. Garden City. New York: Anchor, 1987, p.XXI.

32. Black Feminist Thought, op cit., p.104.

history. “She had given away everything in their little house except a package of garden seed that Tea Cake had bought to plant.” (Their Eyes, 192)

At another level, Janie’s marriage experiences can easily fit into the Campbellian model of the hero’s journey. Janie’s story begins with the young woman’s dream to break past the horizon for change. Her normal existence is disrupted when she sees a blossoming pear tree and her sexuality is awakened. This incident in Janie’s life is important in order for the ‘call to adventure’ in Campbell’s heroic journey to make sense. “[t]he familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.”[33] The passing of a threshold includes losing one's way innumerable times, as well as entanglements and confrontations with something of great and often frightening magnitude. This can be explained in Janie’s case through her failed experiences of marriage with both Kellicks and Joe Starks. Campbell points out that coming through such struggles causes the person to be infused with more vision, and to be strengthened by the spiritual life principle which, more than anything else, encourages one to take courage to live with effrontery and mettle. Both marriages as well as the ordeals experienced through them have shaped Janie in some way.

After he has successfully overcome these trials, the hero, in Campbell’s journey enters another stage in which he meets with the goddess. ‘The meeting with the goddess’ is the point at which the hero encounters the experience of unconditional love within the heroic journey. This meeting is often represented by the hero finding a person who is his true love. However, there are also trials associated with this stage. In the novel, Janie must kill Tea Cake despite her love for him. In the final stage of the heroic journey, the hero must return back home with the wisdom that he gained during the journey and is willing to share his experience with the other members of his community. Janie, in the novel returns to Eatonville and tells her story to her best friend Pheoby who is going to retell it to Eatonville community.

However, not all critics seem to agree that Janie attained a degree of maturity and empowerment by the end of the novel. The fact that Hurston uses a third person narrator who often speaks in free indirect speech to paraphrase Janie’s thought has, according to them, stolen Janie of the very voice she has

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33. Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces.(1949) Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968, p.51. Campbell saw the heroic journey marked by three major stages, each made up of several steps. The first stage is the separation. This is where the hero feels a pull to change. This change pushes the hero across the threshold and into the unknown, the beginning of the second stage, initiation. The hero passes through a number of challenges as his mettle is tested until finally he is thrown into the abyss and has to face his greatest fear. If he is successful, he gets the boon or gift and is transformed. The final stage is called the return. The hero now must return with the gift and use it to help his community or world. So the journey continues even after the “transformation.” the result is always for a greater good, “the wisdom and power to serve others”, p. xiv.

spent her life seeking. Robert Stepto, among others, argues that Janie fails to achieve identity and voice of her own since she is not able to narrate her story in its entirety, "Hurston's curious insistence on having Janie's tale...told by an omniscient third person, rather than by a first-person narrator, implies that Janie has not really won her voice and self after all."[34] Since there is a lack of a consistent first person point of view in the novel, especially during Janie's trial following Tea Cake's death, Janie fails as the protagonist of a bildungsroman. In response to the problematic use of the third person narrator, Alice Walker has defended Janie's silence, insisting that because Janie is in full control of her voice and identity, she chooses when to tell her story and to whom–an act clearly indicative, as the African American writer states, of the power and authority of the female character as a powerful vocal protagonist.

It is worth noting however, that Hurston was writing about woman's oppression at a time when this issue was generally ignored and when the number-one avowal of the Renaissance was the reconstruction and the proclamation of black manhood. In her essay, "The Task of Negro Womanhood," Elise McDougald states: "On the whole, the Negro woman's feminist efforts are directed chiefly toward the realization of the race, the sex struggle assuming the subordinate place."[35] Hurston, as we will see in the next chapter, had been severely criticized for her choice of themes that were considered irrelevant to the lives of black people by the advocates of race uplift. Moreover, Janie's cultural assimilation shows certain obliqueness. She sits not on the front porch where males assemble to tell stories but on the back porch, as if a woman's story, with herself as subject and object, cannot yet be considered a proper subject for traditional porch activities. It is here that Hurston has established the area of friction between black and female identities, without suggesting their compartmentalization. Part of Janie's struggle is precisely to do away with man-made conventions and discriminatory practices that create a chasm between blackness and female identity. For Hurston, this chasm can be overcome by kinship, solidarity and support. These elements may engender a new way of seeing, a new way of relating that can, ultimately, alter the social relationship between the sexes and within the group.

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34. Robert Stepto, From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991, p. 166.

35. Elise Johnson McDougald, "The Task of Negro Womanhood," in The New Negro**,** op cit., p.381.

VI.2- Les enfants du nouveau monde or the Search for Self-Fulfilment:

> Les vrais martyrs ne sont peut-être pas les morts, mais certains survivants. Je pense aux femmes dont le rôle pendant la révolution a été considérable et qui, aujourd'hui souffrent de discrimination, demandent leur place.[36]

In Les enfants du nouveau monde, Assia Djebar presents several women who are involved in a conflicting relationship with the husband, brother, and/or traditions. These women are sometimes relegated to the most narrowed and confining lives. They do not have many perspectives in such an oppressive society. Evelyne Accad in her article, "Assia Djebar's Contribution to Arab Women's Literature: Rebellion, Maturity, Vision", describes women's position as follows: "The pattern is brutally simple in most parts of North Africa and the Middle East: women are born to fill the roles of daughter, wife, and mother, to be successively subservient to their fathers, husbands, and sons. Education for women is in most cases regarded as superfluous, few occupations outside the home are open to women, and in most cases the legal status of women is determined by the *shari'a* or Muslim religious code."[37] In fact, the Westerners in general, and the French colonizers of Algeria, in particular, considered the seclusion of women as a form of sexual slavery and a sign of extreme oppression that indicates the savagery and barbarity of the cultural practices of the native people. As a matter of fact, the colonizers linked the seclusion of women with their stereotypical and negative views of Islam. Leila Ahmed states in this context that "The peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the Western narrative of the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam."[38]

The colonial power that withdrew authority from the Algerian males, fostered, as seen in previous chapters, deep feelings of bitterness and frustration in them at being reduced to mere colonial subjects. Under these conditions, the Algerian males developed anxieties about their status, their identity and their self-worth. A good way to restore their virility and lost manhood was by maintaining their control over their wives, sisters, and daughters. They fixed women as passive and subservient subjects, confined to marriage, home and domestic chores. In the novel under study, the domineering power of the father, husband, brother, or any other male figure in

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36. Kateb Yacine in L'Autre Journal, op cit.

37. Evelyne Accad, "Assia Djebar's Contribution to Arab Women's Literature: Rebellion, Maturity,Vision". World Literature Today, Vol. 70, No. 4.

38. Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of the Modern Debate. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992 , p. 149.

the family over women is explicitly evoked. Although some of the female characters achieve a certain degree of autonomy and appropriate male's space through education or a profession, they remain, as we will see in the present chapter, under the tight control of the patriarchal laws.

Assia Djebar, in Les enfants du nouveau monde, tries to disrupt this traditional order. She delves into the politics of intimacy and portrays the life of Algerian women who are physically and emotionally abused. She also depicts their emergent consciousness which leads them to throw off their conditioning and stand for their rights. Accordingly, this section looks at the ways in which the Algerian women, bound to the narrow parameters of society, liberate themselves from the oppressive system of the established patriarchal power. Djebar uses the devices of stream of consciousness and interior monologue in her novel to represent the growth of consciousness and self-awareness of her female characters in their struggle for self-assertion and self-achievement in a male dominated community. Her aim is to make their voices heard as they emerge from silence. The conflicts that face these characters are daily, immediate living concerns including how to maintain dignity in the face of routine oppression and prejudice. These female characters, in fact, strive to rise above social bias against women and create identities for themselves. Thus, the novel embodies Algerian women's struggle for empowerment in defiance of patriarchal constraints. It actively asserts Algerian women's right to define themselves, resisting their historical role as victims of colonialism and patriarchy**.**

Although womanhood is assumed to be unchanging, consisting of fixed traits, attributes and sex roles, El Saadawi considers women's inferiority to men as an artificial construct established by patriarchal societies that fear and therefore reject feminity. She explains in this context that "…this innate resilience and strength of the woman bred fear in the heart of primitive man. And it was this fear , or even terror, that led him to oppress and subjugate her with all means at his disposal, be they economic, social, legal or moral."[39] Consequently, women found themselves forced to observe borders that their patriarchal communities had erected, with no agency to create their own identity. Assia Djebar's female characters in Les enfants du nouveau monde are engaged in the creation of new possibilities for themselves within the narrow conditions of their community. Despite the fact that society imposes restrictions on the development of women's potentialities, many of the female characters in the novel fight for their freedom and individuality. They assume different subject positions even though the journey to gain one's own voice is intricate, and it takes a lot of courage to reach the finish line.

39. The Hidden Face of Eve, op cit., p.151.

a- The Beginning of Self-Questioning:

Like Janie in Their Eyes Were Watching God, Chérifa in Les enfants du nouveau monde remains silent under her first husband's oppressive control for several years. Marriage which is supposed to be a bond of love between men and women becomes for her a tie of obligation, frustration and resentment. Although oppressed by her husband, she is not able to escape such a negative relationship. Chérifa, in fact, succumbs to societal pressure on women which demand loyalty, self-abnegation and idealization of marriage by maintaining silence on fundamental issues germane to their happiness. She has been taught that suffering and keeping silent are the necessary price that women pay for social security. Caught in this network of societal traps, she has been rendered incapable of action. Rather than fighting against the humiliating situation in which she lives, Chérifa tries to adjust.

> Elle savait, depuis le début, qu'elle n'aimait pas cet homme ; elle savait aussi effacer de sa mémoire tout souvenir de leurs furtifs contacts nocturnes, «son devoir d'épouse», disait-on. Le jour il ne lui en restait rien ; même pas l'ennui inévitable. Si ordinaire à la majorité des femmes qu'elle connaissait, qu'elle voyait autour d'elle ne s'épanouir, ne se découvrir que dans les limbes éclairées d'aurore de la maternité, ou pour certaines , dans la vanité possessive qui les saisissait de se sentir maitresse enfin d'une maison, une simple chambre d'ailleurs le plus souvent ; et toutes de s'en aller alors dans le cours du temps, de s'y engloutir auprès de l'homme qu'elles devaient respecter, ou craindre, ou estimer même, sans, pour cela, se demander jamais s'il pouvait les atteindre une fois, une seule, dans cette partie obscure de leur être qui serait le fond de leur ventre, de leur âme et de leur cœur, tout à la fois. Non, une telle découverte risquait d'ouvrir quelque blessure, quelque angoisse, un trouble dont l'ambiguïté, croyaient-elles, était réservée aux «autres», et ce mot englobait aussi bien les femmes de mauvaise vie que les étrangères dont il était évident que les mœurs, l'apparente liberté les faisaient d'une autre race.(Les enfants, 32-33)

> She had known from the beginning that she didn't love this man. She had also known how to erase from her spirit any memory of their future nocturnal contacts–her "duty as a wife, " as they say. During the day none of it remained, not even the inevitable boredom that was so common in most of the women she knew, whose blooming and self-discovery she saw only when they reached the illuminated regions of the dawn of motherhood. Or, for some of them, it lay in the possessive vanity that seized them to be mistress of a house, which was often nothing more than just a room. And all of them then disappeared into the flow of time, to be swallowed up by the man they had to respect or fear, or even value,

> without even wondering whether he might join them once, just once , inside that dark part of their being that would be the depth of their belly, their soul, and their heart, all in one. No, a discovery of that nature would run the risk of opening some wound, some anxiety, a problem whose ambiguity, they believed, was reserved for "other women ," an expression that encompasses both women of easy virtue and foreign women whose morals, whose ostensible freedom , obviously made them members of another race. (Children, 13-14)

Chérifa is aware of the social restrictions on her place in society, so she knows that she has no other alternative than to conform. Accordingly, she endures life with her first husband and repudiates her inner urgings for a fuller life despite the fact that her marriage becomes for her a source of unbearable anguish.

However, though not moving from the domestic space and continuing to satisfy her husband's sexual needs as a duty, Chérifa ironically refuses the traditional notion of womanhood defined by motherhood. "Après trois ans de mariage, Chérifa n'ayant pas eu d'enfants et s'étant aisément familiarisée avec l'idée qu'elle ne saurait en avoir de cet homme, le divorce avait été, somme toute, facile. Auparavant, il s'était accroché soudain à l'espoir de la lier à lui par une maternité, après tout nécessaire dans leur monde." (Les enfants, 28) "After three years of marriage Chérifa still had no children, and quite comfortable with the idea that she wouldn't have any with this man, she found that the divorce was actually easy. Before, he had suddenly clung in a moment's flash to the hope of holding on to her through a pregnancy, which was after all a necessity in their world. (Children, 10-11) Chérifa refuses motherhood as offered to her by her first husband as for her motherhood will form the basis of her double oppression in being a wife and mother.

Still early in her journey, Chérifa lacks the experience she needs to articulate her desires, but knows she must speak and in a new way. Eventually, she starts questioning her position within the domestic sphere. She finds her denials intolerable and rebels against the system. "Elle ne pouvait rester ainsi; elle jugea que se remettre à sa couture, à ces frivolités l'empêcherait de terminer cette courbe d'elle-même inscrite quelque part là dans l'air, encore inachevée ." (Les enfants, 34) " She couldn't go on this way; she knew that going back to her sewing and other such frivolities would prevent her from completing the arc she herself had inscribed somewhere up in the air, an arc not yet finished. " (Children, 15) She refuses to adopt any longer the attitudes of compromise and silence. A re-evaluation of her marriage gives her the strength to defy her abusive husband. "C'est alors […] qu'une intuition violente lui révéla qu'elle n'avait plus de place dans cette maison. « Je dois partir », et elle songea avec véhémence que ce serait un mensonge de continuer à vivre là". (Les enfants, 34) " That was the moment […] when a violent insight told her she no longer had a place in this house. "I have to leave," and

she realized fiercely that to go on living there would mean living"a lie. (Children, 15)

No longer content with what she endures, Chérifa is looking further, a necessary precondition for finding an expressive voice and moving from a passive spectator to an active doer. Sandra Frieden describes what women like Chérifa go through as a movement "from the recognition of restrictive social roles, through a rejection of arbitrary standards, to the generation of a counter-figure who creates a role and a new, positive lifestyle into which she becomes integrated."[40] This incomprehensible desire Chérifa is experiencing forces self-questioning and self-examination. Wanting to be different from what society wants her to be, she refuses the constraints of what is expected of her and wishes to break with the traditional community of women. Her long process of suffering ends when she breaks with, and consequently speaks out against the chains of subservience that have enslaved her to her community's conventions and norms. "elle avait besoin de concrétiser son refus; elle répéta «non» et s'étonna de ne plus y voir qu'un mot, non un cri".(Les enfants, 34) " She needed to give form to her refusal. " No," she repeated and was surprised to find that it was not a cry anymore, it was just a word." (Children, 15) It is only once she emerges from the couple relationship, in which she has been designated as the inferior, silent and self-effacing party, that Chérifa is able to speak in her own words.

b- A New Life Cycle:

With her second husband Youssef, Chérifa seems happier. However, she still lives in a 'milieu' of confinement, seclusion and lack of freedom of movement. Indeed, her reliance on her husband indicates that she still lacks the authority to change her own life. Her predicament, like that of the other women in the novel, goes beyond physical confinement to include psychological incarceration as well. Her journey outside the house can be seen as an opportunity for her to define her fate as a woman, and also to learn more about herself and the others. Her ultimate goal is to find her place in the world around her, understand who she is, and be at peace with her environment. Although her political awakening remains vague and linked to her love and fright for the well-being of her husband Youssef, she is pressed by a strange desire to do something, "s'empare d'elle un désir étrange et qui l'inquiète, de faire quelque chose, quelque chose d'audacieux dont l'éclat étonnerait Youssef". (Les enfants,136) "A strange desire overtakes and worries her, to do something, something daring whose luminosity will astonish Youssef. (Children,84) This strong feeling marks nonetheless a crucial time of her shift

40. Sandra Frieden, "Shadowing/ Surfacing/ Shedding: Contemporary German Writers in Search of a Female Bildungsroman" in The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development , op cit., p.7.

away from passivity to active action, even if her 'heroic' action consists in stepping outside the family home unattended.

Thus when she challenges the danger of the world outside in search of her husband, Chérifa is in search of her 'self' first.

> Elle a oublié le danger lui- même ; peut-être n'est-ce pas lui, en vérité, qui la poussée, mais un désir sournois de savoir soudain si elle ne peut être vouée qu'à l'attente dans sa chambre, à la patience et à l'amour. Ainsi, elle a traversé la ville entière, cette présence pour elle aux yeux multiples, hostiles et aux termes de cette marche, elle a découvert qu'elle n'est pas seulement une proie pour la curiosité des mâles- une forme qui passe, mystère du voile que le premier regard sollicite, faiblesse fascinante qu'on finit par haïr et sur laquelle on crache- non, elle a existé ; une pensée dure l'a habitée et l'a ainsi rendue insaisissable. (Les enfants, 228)

> She'd forgotten the danger itself. In truth, it's perhaps not that which drove her, but rather a gnawing desire to suddenly know whether she could really spend her life waiting in her room, in patience and love. That's why she crossed the entire town, bared her presence to so many hostile eyes, and at the end of her trek discovered that she was not only a prey for the curiosity of men–a passing shape, the mystery of the veil accosted by the first glance, a fascinating weakness that ends up being hated and spat upon–no, she now knows that she has existed. She's been inhabited by one inflexible thought that has made her untouchable. (Children, 143-144)

More than simply a movement forward, Chérifa's traveling half of the city in search of her husband implies a transformation in the process, a progression. The end of the trip represents the end of the character's inner conflicts and the beginning of a new cycle in her life. On the other hand, Chérifa's act shows the possible transformation of 'traditional women' and that women can achieve equality with men if only they develop the will power to do so and if men can recognize their worth and give them the support they need.

c- The Search for Wholeness:

Lila, another female character in the novel is too in search of her true self. Unlike Chérifa who has spent her whole life cloistered in her house, and who has chosen neither of the two husbands she has married, Lila lives a quite westernized life and enjoys freedom of movement and action beyond the home environment. Unlike many girls of her age, Lila has been fortunate enough to go to school and university. Lila also dresses in a European way and has had a love story with her husband before marrying him. Lila, in fact, stands for the newly educated women in Algeria who have become more adventurous in

terms of dress and behavior, and who have completely discarded the veil. However, despite all the privileges that Lila enjoys, she lives an internal seclusion and has difficulties liberating herself from the alienation she feels she is living in. Embodying in her behavior the characteristics of dependency, passivity and weakness usually associated with women, Lila feels completely isolated. "Lila commença donc par faire l'expérience de l'abandon, de la passivité amoureuse; elle se plia, avec moins de reconnaissance que de plaisir ébloui, à cette ambition d'Ali, sans voir qu'en voulant la construire, il la limiterait en même temps. " (Les enfants, 45) "Lila began to surrender to amorous passivity ; she yielded to Ali's ambition more with radiant pleasure than with gratitude, not noticing that by wanting to mold her he would also limit her. (Children, 22) Lila deliberately conforms to the myth of the sensual and subordinate female. She seems to happily fit the traditional convention of a woman as a mother and nurturer. Moreover, she cannot define her individual self apart from her husband's. The latter becomes the mirror through which she sees herself. She cannot separate herself from him and cannot imagine life without him.

Despite her education and her family background, Lila is too influenced by the societal dichotomy of male dominance /female silence. That is why her self-questioning starts only after the departure of her husband. She has never imagined that he could leave her or that she could survive without his presence near her. "Qu'est- ce que le temps, depuis le départ d'Ali? un océan noir étalé devant elle, que ne sillonnait rien, aucune voile, où ne s'ouvrait rien, aucune route." (Les enfants, 37) "What did time mean since Ali's departure? A black ocean sprawling before her with nothing moving across it, not a sail in sight, no open view, nowhere to go. (Children, 17) Feeling rejected by her husband and excluded from his world, Lila nullifies herself and conforms to the female norms of society. "Seule maintenant, ou plutôt abandonnée, elle s'interrogeait, doutait. N'était-elle pas responsable, elle, et non pas Ali seul, de leurs déchirements. (Les enfants, 46) " Alone now, or abandoned rather, she questioned herself and had her doubts. Was she , too, not responsible for their rift, and not just Ali alone? (Children, 23) At first glance, Lila seems suspended, since she is not able to heal her wounds in order to grow. She does not seem powerful enough to change and become a whole, complete subject. "Lila se voyait désormais comme un objet défait, livrée au désespoir de vivre ainsi immobile. Pour toujours ? La question n'avait aucun sens. L'envahissait une indifférence totale alors que dans les cahots d'autrefois, une force la poussait de retrouver Ali, malgré la tourmente et malgré la haine. Maintenant, rien en elle que la résignation. (Les enfants, 48) "Hereafter Lila saw herself as an unraveled object, handed over to the despair of living motionlessly. Forever? The question made no sense. Absolute indifference took over, while during the earlier ups and downs a force would

push her to take Ali back again, in spite of the torment, in spite of the hate. Now she felt nothing but resignation. (Children, 24)

Ali's departure allows Lila to analyze her previous life with her husband, to question her aspirations and her true self. It allows her also to go to the source of her loss and seek an identity for herself. To be able to do so, Lila has to undergo a rite of passage too. She has to leave everything behind her and to bury her old sorrows, beliefs and convictions before starting anew. Lila's decision to ignore traditions and to live alone at the other side of the city without the 'protection' of a male relative, be it father, brother or husband and her desire to "s'ouvrir au nouveau monde qui ne serait plus seulement celui des autres" (Les enfants,73) " be open to the new world that would no longer belong to the others alone" (Children,40) is a true defiance to patriarchy and a positive transition from the life of an emotionally dependent woman to that of a more independent one. Lila awakens to the limitations of the roles she has chosen and begins to consider the possibility of finding fulfillment in other roles.

By suffering at the death of her baby and the departure of her husband, Lila has become a better person and has grown as individual. Her ordeals have awakened her to her condition and have made room for her personal transformation. She has awakened to the realization that she can be an agent for her own change and transformation. Her psychological rebirth indicates a new start. Moreover, the emergence of Bachir, her cousin, in her life by the end of the story is the catalyst that allows her to discover her true self and separate her life from that of her husband Ali. She finds new objectives and aims to her life that are not limited to her individual self but include the society in general. By the end she has grown from dependence for her identity on the conventional female roles of wife and mother into a self-authenticating woman. Her determination to surmount the past illustrates the theme of female strength as convincingly as the active struggles that mark the narratives of other female survivors. "devant l'épreuve qui commence, elle pense qu'une seule certitude l'attend: le triomphe de son orgueil et la fierté du duel, alors qu'il s'agit désormais de sa naissance–ou d'un véritable réveil." (Les enfants, 310) " Facing the ordeal that's beginning, she thinks that one single certainty awaits her: the triumph of her arrogance and pride in the duel, while from here on in it's actually a question of her being born–of a true awakening. " (Children, 198) Lila has moved from a shallow, self-centered female to a woman with a new awareness of her potential for a different and more constructive role. She has become the controller of her own destiny.

d- The Self-Realized Woman:

Of all the Algerian women depicted in Assia Djebar's novel, Salima is the one that seems the most self-confident and free in her movements and actions. As seen in the chapter dealing with gender relationships, Salima does

not wear the veil when going out, and she works in close relationship with men, mainly Mahmoud who has frequent meetings with her 'alone' even very late at night. Moreover, and contrary to the other women in the novel, Salima does not depend on any man, neither financially nor emotionally. Even if she seems sad sometimes at not having a family of her own, like the other women around her, she knows that the fact of not having a male relative to 'protect' her , be it a father, a husband, or a son has opened to her the doors of men's world and avoided to her seclusion and gender oppression.

> Elle était alors, de la ville, la seule musulmane à poursuivre ses études. Un père mort à l'âge où elle aurait dû, comme les autres, se cloitrer ; une chance, en somme […] De ce temps, elle ne se rappelait pas seulement cette volonté qui l'avait sculptée–non défigurée en l'obligeant, alors qu'elle serait devenue comme tant d'autres une femme effacée et douce, à prendre son indépendance malgré elle–mais un sentiment de fierté. (Les enfants, 107)

> At the time she was the only Muslim girl in town to continue her studies. Her father died when she was at the age to be cloistered like the others; a bit of luck in short […] What she remembers of that time is not just the willpower that sculpted her–no, that disfigure her by forcing her to become independent in spite of herself, while like so many others she would otherwise have become effaced and sweet–but a sense of pride. (Children, 64)

Salima has known how to take advantage of her freedom of movement in order to implement the same deeds expected from men. She is described as a strong-willed woman of exceptional courage and ambition. She does not hesitate to enter the dangerous arena of politics and to see herself as the representative of her people. "Toujours l'avait saisie la vanité de se croire la déléguée des siens auprès d'un autre monde." (Les enfants, 107) "She'd always been gripped by the conceit of believing herself to be the delegate of her people to another world. (Children, 64)

More than that, Salima considers that her strong will and her pride have not been inherited from the men around her, even though she imitates them in their deeds, but rather from the countless voiceless women she has encountered throughout her life, "de toutes les femmes muettes qu'elle connaissait." (Les enfants, 108) " from all the silenced women she used to know."(Children, 64)What is ironic, however, is that although Salima is the only Algerian woman in the novel who is not in search of herself and who has a voice to speak up against racial and gender oppression, she is also the only woman who is asked or rather begged not to speak and whose silence is a source of respect and admiration rather than oppression: "Ô ma sœur, ma

sœur!...je te remercie. Tu n'as pas parlé…" (Les enfants, 99) "Oh , my sister, my sister!... I thank you for not talking" (Children,58)

Salima and the others in the novel challenge the narrow domestic lives prescribed for them. They are aware of the physical and societal boundaries which imprison and oppress them. Although positioned within a society that genders female submission to male authority, the female characters in the novel strive to attain self-realization. Through their search for identity and voice, they try to be women without feeling any compulsion either to conform to external norms of feminity or to ape the norms of male authority. They finally understand, through their movement from passive observers to active participants that to change one's way of thinking, they must first change their perception of the world. However it is to be noted that these female characters do not live without men because they are feminists; they are either strong enough or forced to step out of the imposed patriarchal ideology and become responsible for their own life by themselves.

e- Women of the New World:

By the end of the novel, Algerian girls are permitted to dream about a better future than the one that their grandmothers, mothers, and even elder sisters came to experience as adults. Their life is no longer condemned to follow along a prescribed path and confined exclusively to the sphere of the home. Their new emancipation as a result of less social opposition to bending traditional customs has bestowed them with a sense of happiness and optimism that had been previously unknown to generations of Algerian women. In fact, these young women are delighted by these changes in patriarchal society, giving them promise for a brighter future in which they would walk the streets unveiled, free and eager to live.

> […]les jeunes filles, celles qui commençaient à s'émanciper, à acheter des magazines, à lire des romans qu'elles cachaient sous l'oreiller, et les plus jeunes à pouvoir espérer ne jamais mettre le voile ni être cloitrées à la maison, mais au contraire à continuer à aller au collège puis, un jour, qui sait, à oser travailler (déjà deux ou trois dans la ville s'étaient ainsi affranchies), toutes ces adolescentes donc, quelque peu vaniteuses et bruyantes, tant la chance d'arriver à un moment où les mœurs se déchiraient leur paraissait leur propre victoire.(Les Enfants, 26)

> […]the young girls beginning to be emancipated , buying magazines and reading novels that they kept hidden under their pillow–the youngest of them could hope never to wear the veil or be locked up inside the home but, on the contrary, continue school and then, one day, perhaps dare to go out to work (two or three of them had already liberated themselves this way)–all these adolescents

> slightly vain and boisterous , because their luck in having grown up at a time when the customs were coming apart seemed to them a personal victory. (Children, 9-10)

They make the most of their oppressive situation and assert their individual freedom through small rebellious acts such as reading 'forbidden' novels and hiding them under their pillows. These small acts seem like moments of empowerment for them that allow them to dream of a better future. This implies that women are no longer physically and emotionally weak, or that they are restricted to the domestic sphere as infused in traditions. They not only deviate from cultural norms on dressing and behaving, but also wish to pursue careers and do things that are not traditionally feminine. This extract illustrates, in fact, the writer's primary concern with the liberation of women from all incumbent traditions that privilege communal interests based on patriarchal norms over women's individual freedom.

Djebar also feels strongly that the most efficient counter to patriarchal domination is to be developed through the education of Algerian women. Education, according to the Algerian writer, holds possibilities for the empowerment of Algerian women who will then be able to shape the future of their society and forge a better place for themselves and their sisters within their community. Thus, Assia Djebar's narrative is an attempt to transform the experience of female oppression. The female characters in the novel seem more confident in their own identities; they struggle for wholeness and autonomy in a patriarchal society. They also try to construct alternative notions of womanhood in contrast to the traditional ones. Although Djebar is critical of the ways in which women's seclusion within the confines of the home limits their physical mobility as well as their access to education and autonomy, she remains optimistic about their condition, showing, in the novel, women finding their voices and attempting self-empowerment even within the limits of the physical space allowed to them by both patriarchy and traditions. By showing the individual experiences of cloistered women like Chérifa and Amna, who have never been to school, and who are financially dependent on their husbands, but who 'dare' challenge the proscribed rules and seek their independence, Djebar is confident in the future and what it will bring to women in terms of autonomy, voice, and self-realization. The writer stresses various ways of feminine self-fulfillment in the novel by insisting on representing Algerian women in all their multiplicity and variety. Beneath the image of the abused women, there lies the psychological and physical resistance, the will of the female characters to throw off servility and the potentiality for action that inspire their quest for happiness. Their determination means an historical break with the heritage of Algerian women's vulnerability to male concupiscence and exploitation.

Analysing the role of women in the novel, Jane Hiddleston comes to the conclusion that "In *Les Enfants*, women subtly balance the search for a self with an ongoing engagement with social conventions, and with the construction of a network of activists transforming their patterns of interaction as a result of the war. Female characters question the entrenchment of traditional relationships and begin to redefine themselves by establishing alternative connections with a more open-ended community."[41] From the cloistered and submissive housewife to the radical combatant in the Algerian National Army, all the feminine characters undergo changes that challenge patriarchal and colonial powers. These women face the possibility of making choices while they mature and develop between the conventional roles they are asked to play and the women they want to be.

Trained as a historian, Djebar would later in her career undertake an oral history project that would probe Algerian women's collective memory. She would interview Algerian women who had participated in the independence struggle. In L' Amour, la fantasia, she juxtaposes these histories provided by women about their own experiences in the Algerian war of independence with historical accounts of the French conquest of Algeria taken from French archives in which women's participation in the war is either overlooked or ignored. Although the painful accounts of these female combatants indicate their awareness of their subordinate status as Algerian women doubly oppressed, the historical context of the time did not allow the full development of their identities, at least not yet. As Jane Hiddleston expresses so well, "Women learn to step outside the communal norms imposed on them by society, but this process of singularisation and relational self-construction remains tentative and incomplete rather than assured."[42]

As a conclusion, we can say that the representation of women's lives ruled by patriarchy is a recurrent theme in both Hurston's and Djebar's works. The latter nourish from the open rebellion of their heroines against the domineering traits of patriarchy. Many of their characters (Janie, Chérifa, Lila, Salima and Touma) choose to transgress taboos created by patriarchal tradition. They appear not just as extensions of men nor their playthings and objects of pleasure but as individuals in their own right, striving to achieve greater autonomy. They foreground themselves as subjects of a discourse, overthrowing the traditional dichotomy woman/object. However, in Hurston and Djebar's works, womanhood is differently constructed within patriarchal, racial and gender relations of power. The female characters have distinct identities, different histories, and live different experiences of gender oppression. Under the shell of their ideological rebellion lies their individual struggle for survival, their fears and their silences.

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41. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria , op cit.,p.22.
42. Ibid, p.34.

PART FOUR

THE WRITER AND HIS/HER TOOLS

In the previous parts of this research work, we have seen how the colonial forces have tried to subjugate the oppressed peoples that have been under their control not only by usurping their land and limiting their freedom of movement and speech, but also by emptying their cultural space using both military and ideological weapons. In Black Skin, White Masks Frantz Fanon argues that colonized people are not simply those who have economically and politically been oppressed, but those "in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality."[1] Since colonialism has not been able to eradicate the colonized people, it has perpetuated the agony of their culture by trying to erase their native pre-colonial culture. Thus, what used to be a living culture, open to the future has been forced to become subaltern, closed, fixed and caught in the shackles of oppression.

The intellectuals and writers of the oppressed groups have always challenged the invisibility in which the oppressing powers have put them and that have stripped them of their subjectivity. They have promoted native culture as a means of sustaining strength while under oppression. "Intellectuals and activists who fought against colonial rule, and their successors who now engage with its continuing legacy, [have] challenged and revised dominant definitions of race, culture, language and class in the process of making their voice heard."[2] Their culture has been meant to become the tool they would use to fight back the 'empty' space in which they have found themselves. "They [have] consistently raised the question of their cultures, both as the sites of colonial oppression, and as vital tools for their own resistance."[3] They would use their culture as a means to craft a separate identity that would empower them and enable them to recover some of their self-worth and subjectivity both on an individual and group basis.

In the present part, we will see how both African American and Algerian peoples were reduced to invisibility by the oppressing powers that controlled their lives and reduced their freedom of movement and speech. In the two peoples' souls, to use Frantz Fanon's words, "an inferiority complex ha[d] been created" that had a devastating effect on their psyche. In the case of African American people , the latter were doing themselves, as seen in the previous chapters, a lot of psychological and spiritual harm by seeing themselves through white eyes and internalizing white stereotypes that belittled the manhood of their men while degrading and dehumanizing their women as erotic subordinates. In The Future of the Race, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Cornel West state that "This unrelenting assault on black humanity produced the fundamental condition of black culture— that of black

1. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., p.18.
2. Colonialism/Post colonialism, op cit., p.22.
3. Ibid., p.26.

invisibility and namelessness."[4] A cultural counterweight was needed, a means to counteract this "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others."[5] Accordingly, the project of the Harlem Renaissance, during which Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston lived and wrote their works, was to validate and celebrate African American artists and their works. In the face of centuries of systematic denigration and belittling of black people, the design of this new movement was to create a black aesthetic that would elevate the social and political condition of blacks in America.

The leaders of the new movement were aware that dominant cultural representations of black folklore were used as a means of "Othering" African Americans. Thus, as active subjects of the movement, they aimed at celebrating all that had been identified as negative and inferior by the dominant whites. The movement would rely on literature and the arts as a means for dispelling racism and cultural inferiority. It depended on the contribution of African American artists to "humanizing" a group of Americans that had "been more of a formula than a human being—a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be 'kept down,' or 'in his place,' or 'helped up,' to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden."[6] In their desire to dismiss the pervasive and loathed stereotypes of the black people and uplift their race, this new emerging black movement called for the creation of a black aesthetic influential enough to "dispel the prevailing notion among most Whites of Blacks as not only physically and culturally inferior but without much hope of improvement."[7] Generally speaking, this new black movement sought more militant, social protest literature that criticized the continued racism that undergirded American life.

In the same way as with the African American people, erasure and forced invisibility were among the most effective oppressive mechanisms adopted by the French colonizers to eradicate the existing Algerian culture. As we have been able to see in the previous parts of this work, the Algerian people were forced to swallow a rhetoric that stressed the pride of being under the care of the 'Mother' country while their own history and language were denigrated as inferior. As the loss of cultural memory would lead to a loss of the colonized people's identity, a whole generation of young writers became involved in the movement of developing the discourse of 'littérature de combat' as a reaction against the colonizer's policy of silencing and subjugating them. No longer willing to remain in the shadows of the colonizer's literature that had subjugated them and belittled their culture, these

4. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Cornel West, The Future of the Race. New York: Knopf, 1996, p.80.
5. The Souls of Black Folk, op cit., p. 215.
6. The New Negro, op cit., p. 3.
7. Arnold Rampersand, "Introduction," in The New Negro , op cit. , p. xv.

writers, in the same way as the African American writers mentioned earlier, recognized the importance of rehabilitating their once-destroyed history.

Thus, the Algerian writers of the period extending between the Revolt of May 1945 and the independence of the country in 1962, reached toward a cultural identity apart from that bestowed by the colonial 'Other' by stressing the special nature of their society and by incorporating indigenous materials in their works. They were aware that culture held the ultimate power of definition. Fundamentally, they saw culture not just as a tool, but as a weapon that could be used for shaping a new identity in opposition to the existing colonial system. Their aim was to provide a means by which identities detached from French stereotypes might be formed. As we will see in this part in more details, their ability to oppose the colonizer's cultural and military subjugation through the use of the French language was considered as the greatest subverting of the French educational system that intended to make of them compliant Europeanised Algerians, loyal to the French colonial presence.

In reality, many postcolonial theorists have advocated that one of the main constituents of a national identity is language. Simon During, for instance, declares that "the drive towards identity centers around language."[8] Thus, the mere act of writing in the colonizer's language, whether chosen or imposed, is in itself a political act. The authors that use this 'foreign' language to express their inner feelings and thoughts create works that are inevitably political due to the history of their people and to the way they have acquired the language they have used as a tool to their writings.The colonizer's language becomes "a linguistic tool and a sociopolitical dimension very different from those available through native linguistic tools and traditions."[9] For the Algerian writers adopting the language of the colonizer, their works have become, as we are going to see, a response to the colonial repression. "La littérature qui voit le jour va devenir bientôt une littérature de combat au service de la nation."[10]

This part is divided into two main chapters. In the first chapter, we are going to see the degree of involvement of both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston in their people's cause. We are going to analyze the different ways the two African American writers challenge, on the one hand, the white perceptions that have constructed black people in racist and dehumanizing terms and, on the other hand, the predominance of the privileged "folk" identity they have inherited from the previous generation of black writers. These two writers, focus, as we are going to show, on the African American cultural expressions which offer the most pronounced and significant challenge to white American cultural dominance. We will also deal in the first chapter

8. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. The Post-Colonial Studies Reader. New York: Routledge,1995, p.125.
9. Ibid, p.293.
10. La Littérature maghrébine d'expression française, op cit., p.25.

with Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar. The two writers' literary works appeared at a time when the National Liberation Front, 'FLN', called for a more political involvement of Algerian intellectuals and literary men in the nationalist cause and required them to use their works as forms of resistance to colonial domination. The two Algerian writers were highly interested in keeping with the political agenda of the time in which their works were written. They openly condemned French colonization in their works.

In the second chapter, we will deal with double consciousness and cultural dualism as experienced by the four selected writers. We will see the consequences of the oppressor's educational system and set of values on the psychological development of the four writers as well as on their political/racial positions both in their literary works and in their general pronouncements. While the feeling of double consciousness had a devastating effect on the identity and life of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston, Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar suffered from cultural dualism and alienation from their own people.

Chapter Seven
The Spectatorial Artist vs. the Engaged Activist

The study of the works of Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Kateb Yacine, and Assia Djebar reveals, as we have already seen, racial attitudes held and acts committed. Each writer shows an awareness of racial constructs and colonial inequities. The study of their works has revealed how politics has affected the literary forms used by the two pairs of novelists. It remains, nevertheless that even though African-American and Algerian novelists alike have written about oppression and segregation endured in their respective countries, personal experiences in race relations and economic conditions have made them perceive them in different ways**.** While the works of Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar are about direct political confrontations between French and Algerians, both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston practice more subtle forms of resistance to the 'Jim Crow laws' of the South in which they lived by adopting culture-centered modes of resistance.

Part of our objective in the present chapter is to locate these forms of resistance by analyzing the attitudes of the writers under study towards race and colonialism and their own involvement in their works either through their characters or through the message, if any, that is conveyed by their novels. We will try to answer questions such as: what is the position of the novelists under study concerning the self and the other? What is their own definition of identity? Do they feel that they belong to the people they depict in their works or do they feel that they come from a different world and deserve, consequently a particular/higher status? Moreover, do their works have another objective beyond the literary one? Do they feel that their "mission" is to transmit what they see and hear within their society or do they have to transcend reality to keep their literary works within the confines of art?

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, we are going to see how much the two African American writers are involved or removed from the concerns and plights of their people. Accordingly, we will analyse on the one hand, the different ways Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston challenge the white perceptions that have constructed black people in racist and dehumanizing terms. In the second section, we will see the way(s) Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar express, in varying degrees, their native identity and their belonging to their people.

VII.1 Racial Alienation/ False Integration :

"I am of no particular race. I am of the human race,
a man at large in the human world, preparing a new race.
I am of no specific region. I am of earth.
I am of no particular class. I am of the human class,
preparing a new class.
I am neither male nor female nor in-between.
I am of sex, with male differentiations."
Jean Toomer, *Essentials*, xxiv.[11]

The years after Emancipation in the United States witnessed the rise of a Negro middle class who enjoyed a freer access to white culture than the previous generations of African American people living in the country. They often learned to read and write, and even acquired the advantages of high education. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that this new middle class had to adjust themselves to the dominant white culture and model their ideology after that of the whites. Their attitude was assimilationist in character as they tried to identify with the whites in their manners as a way of minimizing the color line between the two races. This ideology caused more harm than good to the black masses as the Negro middle class showed hostility and a feeling of revulsion towards them. For this emerging middle class, to behave like a middle class white person, one had to eradicate one's 'Negroness'. "This denial is accompanied by a contrived absence of race consciousness and a belittling of caste barriers. By minimizing the color line, the assimilationist loses touch with the realities of Negro life."[12] In the course of rising on the social scale, this privileged group tried to erase all traces of 'blackness'. Their identification with the majority of whites and their appropriation of the dominant culture led the assimilationist Negroes to direct more hostility towards other Negroes than toward the oppressing white majority. Thus, the black characters in their works were akin to minstrels. Their presentations of black people in their works were meant to satisfy white men's racist views of blacks as silly, simple-minded, and self-mocking.

In fact, during that period, the black middle class novelists or 'Talented tenth'[13] had no scruple to strengthen their position at the expense of the black masses. An illustration of their appropriation of the anti-black masses' prejudices is to be found in Otis Sackleford's novel, Lillian Simmons, (1915) where the heroine, Lillian Simmons, comes to the conclusion that: "[I] could

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11. Werner Sollors, 'Jean Toomer's Cane: Modernism and Race in Interwar America' in Jean Toomer and the Harlem Renaissance. Ed, Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith . New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001, p. 30.

12. Robert Bone, The Negro Novel in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969, p.4.

13. The name refers to the new emerging black intellectuals and was coined to them by Du Bois.

understand why Jim Crow cars and all other forms of segregation in the South were necessary, but [I] could not feel that it was fair to treat all colored people alike, because all were not alike."[14] The color line was unfair to this group of black people not because it despised blacks as a race, but just because it was unable to make a distinction between a black person from the masses and a black one from the middle class. The black middle class believed that they were a privileged minority and had to be treated accordingly by both the black folks and the whites. While trying to reduce the color line between them and the whites, they created , as we have already seen, adversarial relationships that took the form of inter and intra community distancing and feeling of alienation. The black middle class believed they were superior to the rest of black people in both race and class. The fact that lighter–skinned black people were identified as having white ancestry created a discrimination that was divisive within black communities. They thought they were more privileged than dark-complexioned black people and deserved a better treatment. While grovelling before those who had more power than them, they often demonstrated cruelty to those they saw as inferior and darker.

The second generation of black novelists emerged just after the First World War, and their adjustment to the dominant white culture was marked by a conflicting pattern of identification and rejection. They were at the same time alike and different from their white counterparts. On the one hand, they had to be conversant with western culture, especially with the traditions of English literature. Their pride and self–esteem suffered, on the other hand, from the unpleasant image of themselves they received from the white people and the black middle class. Thus, this group of young writers foresaw a different future for the black people. Since culture was viewed by many of their contemporaries, white and black alike, as the true measure of civilization, this group of black writers saw literature not only as an art, but as a political force with which to bridge the gap between the races and gain equality. Their starting point was rebellion against the first generation of educated Negroes. In their rebellion and defiance, the Negro writers of the 1920's aimed at destroying the literary barriers raised by the guardians of the Victorian tradition. They also aimed at giving positive portrayals of black life and black people. They tried to rebuild what had been torn down by the whites and the middle class blacks. "The very idea of the "New Negro" implie[d] an "Old" negro who [was] somehow outdated, inadequate, or insufficient for the new cultural moment; the question of what constitute[d] blackness [had] to be rethought and reasserted."[15] The 'New' Negroes soon understood that the (re) construction of their racial identity required the death of the "Old" Negro and his rebirth into a new one.

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14. Lillian Simmons in, The Negro Novel in America, op cit., p.139.
15. Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance, op cit., p.2.

Accordingly, the 'New' Negroes struggled to find a way to paint a more representative and authentic portrait of themselves and of Black America than the one painted by the white men centuries before, and that still persisted in the minds. The "Harlem Renaissance" became a logical extension of the "New Negro" movement in the areas of art, music and literature.[16] A remarkable generation of poets, essayists, playwrights, novelists, musicians, and painters collectively created a unique historical opportunity to forge the cultural and intellectual identity of the Black Americans. They experimented in a variety of styles and attempted an objective and effective self-conscious search for identity.

Indeed, freed from the servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture by earlier generations, the African American literary production of the Harlem Renaissance witnessed a shift in its goals. Beginning by attacking the stereotyped image of black life, the black writers of the Harlem Renaissance struggled to define themselves in a white society, trying to describe the reality of black life as experienced by black authors rather than as imagined by white ones. They were encouraged to see themselves through their own eyes and not the contemptuous or hostile eyes of others. The Black authors, as Alain Locke states, "have now stopped speaking for the Negro- They speak as Negroes."[17] They started their movement by freeing themselves from "the minstrel tradition and the fowling-nets of dialect"[18] that marked white expectations for Black American literature. This florescence of creative activity was served by magazines and journals black as well as white. As a consequence, the twenties witnessed the emergence, in addition to the existing white literary magazines, of black magazines and literary quarterlies such as 'Fire', 'Harlem', 'Stylus', 'Quill', and 'Black Opals' which encouraged black literary production by publishing articles, short stories, poems and reviews produced by young black writers. Add to that the literary competitions organised by powerful journals such as 'Crisis', 'The Messenger' and 'Opportunity'. However, as we will see in the present chapter, a great number of the owners of these journals and magazines tried to direct and influence the orientation of this new literary movement.

As a matter of fact, by the middle of the 1920's, many black intellectuals had become conscious of this literary upsurge and tried to lead and guide the young writers. Houston Baker, Henry Louis Gates, and W.B. Du Bois, for instance, insisted on the celebration of folk culture with the primacy of Southern rural geography in the discourse of black identity. Baker insisted

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16. In The Novels of the Harlem Renaissance, the writer states that the term' Harlem Renaissance' reflected an awareness of the complexity of the socio-cultural forces at work in the New Negro movement and gave Harlem credit for its contribution.

17. The New Negro, op cit., p.48.

18. Ibid. According to him the Negro had to put away the protective coloring of the mimicking minstrel and find his true self.

mainly on the anti-elitist exploration of African American culture. He believed that more importance should be given to the black lower classes where, in his view, the most authentic blackness was to be found. Du Bois, for his part, promoted certain types of experience and cultural practice as more central than others to African American art. In "The Soul of Black Folks", Du Bois made it clear that specific geographies and historical moments were central to the understanding and production of a new black literature. He insisted that the understanding of the Southern rural folk was the key to gaining a 'proper' perspective on Black America.[19] The folk, as seen by Du Bois and the black writers of the Harlem Renaissance were primary black, rural, working class southern families who spoke with a regional dialect. Hazel Carby makes this point when she asserts that "our ideas of an Afro-American literary tradition are dominated by an ideology of the 'folk' from fictional representations of sharecroppers."[20]

Du Bois used the pages of 'Crisis' to ask writers and publishers to examine the search for self through ancestral means. According to him, black literature, although it had always existed, remained powerless and marginal, and the works of art imitative and thin as long as the blacks turned against themselves and aped white behaviour. Thus, far from becoming mere entertainers, the writers of the Black Renaissance were asked to regard literature as a means of seriously examining the problems of the black people, and to explore serious issues involving them. Du Bois argued that it was impossible for the Black Americans to know their true capabilities because of the oppressive nature of American slavery. Once they freed themselves from stereotypes and prejudices, the African Americans would discover within themselves their moral strength as a people. "For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity."[21]Then in 1920, writing again in 'Crisis', Du Bois stated convincingly that: "A Renaissance of American Negro literature is due; the material about us is rich beyond dream and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart."[22] Thus, the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance aimed at serving as spoke persons for their race and urged the young novelists and poets to do the same. Langston Hughes's manifesto "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," that was published in 1926 is a clear statement of the objective of this new wave of African-American writers:

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19. The Soul of Black Folk, op cit., p.108.

20. Hazel Carby, " The historical novel of slavery" in Slavery and the Literary Tradition, ed. Deborah E. Mc Dowell and Arnold Rampersad. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989, p.127.

21. The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many , op cit., p.24.

22. Ibid, p.35.

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.[23]

While the emerging writers were still suffering from the pains of their African heritage as well as from the alienation of living in a society that deemed them inferior and savages, they felt ready to face all aspects of their lives as African American people.

It remains, nonetheless, that not all African American writers, scholars, and political activists seemed to agree on the 'right' material to use. They became very selective and restrictive on which cultural aspects of black life would come to represent an identity that would uplift the social and political position of their race. While Houston Baker, Henry Louis Gates, and W.B. Du Bois, called , as we have already seen, for the use of the rural, working class Southern families who spoke with a regional dialect in their literary works, many of the advocates of the Black race uplift considered the rural Southern Blacks as "uncultured" and "counter-progressive". As a consequence, and in order to gain equal status with the dominant white culture, many black intellectuals of the early 1920's thought that they had to be selective in the kind of black material they had to present to their white audiences as typically theirs. As a first step towards progression, they had to disavow and dismiss some African American traditions and beliefs that they considered as a vestige of slavery and a sign of colored people's inferiority. Then, they had to choose the 'right' people and places to depict as representatives of the black community and black way of life. Some Black American intellectuals went so far as to discourage black writers from using black people's dialect in their works as they saw it as evidence of low intellectual ability. They claimed that the representations of certain aspects of black folklore would be used by whites as part of an elaborate scheme necessary for them to prove, on the one hand, white racial superiority and black inferiority; and to sustain, on the other hand, the racial hierarchy. Beauty Lee Bragg argues in this context:

> The figure of the New Negro was defined against that of the Old Negro, who was associated with slavery and the rural South and had been depicted in the popular cultural artifacts of the late nineteenth century as a stooped, head-ragged, mumble-mouthed buffoon who was unable to resist the brutal repression of the South. Most

23. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Nation 122 , June 23, 1926.

> importantly, then, the New Negro ideology figured the urban North as the engendering site of racial progress. It is the space where the southern blacks could break with a past that had politically and culturally emasculated them and become active in fashioning themselves in the mold of "Americanness." Central to signifying this new enfranchised status was a self-presentation that bore no relation to the Southern rural past.[24]

The young writers were, accordingly, more than often criticized "either for writing about the wrong kind of blacks, or for writing about blacks in the wrong way."[25] Despite the fact that they were faithful to their own people and used them as material in their literary works as was advocated by the Black elite, their works were often designated as 'low' culture.

Both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston resented race as being a significant aspect of identity in America, and protested against the representation of black experience in literature away from that which would give significance and meaning to black life. They took a radical step toward challenging racist and racialist conceptions of identity. One of their main objectives was to confront the negative images of blacks held by whites. However, the two writers challenged in their works the idealized concept of culture as established by the advocates of racial uplift. As we will see in the present chapter, Toomer and Hurston were not interested in keeping with the political agenda of the time. While the advocates of racial uplift were mainly interested in stressing the similarities between blacks and whites, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston asserted the differences between the two races. They were in fact, more interested in self-expression and interpretation than racial rhetoric and overt propaganda. Their literary interests were more focused on the American South in general and Southern African Americans in particular. According to Nathan Grant,

> Of the Harlem Renaissance writers of prose, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston were virtually alone in returning to the South for material, and as a result bring to African American fiction the elements of agrarian black culture that not only augment this referential foregrounding of language but also employ it as an emblem of modernity in ways that were generally muted or avoided by many of the practitioners of the novel of reaction.[26]

It is in the South that the two writers found the essence that could underlie and best describe the black experience in the United States. This position put the

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24. Beauty Lee Bragg , The Body in the Text: Female Engagements With Black Identity. Austin : The University of Texas at Austin, 2004, p.3.

25. In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity , op cit., p. VII.

26. Masculinist Impulses, op cit., p. 11.

two novelists at odds with many of their contemporary black scholars and political elite who wanted works that would reinforce the themes and ideals of the "New Negro" movement.

a-Toomer, "The Spectatorial Artist":

Although Jean Toomer wished to transcend the cultural parameters established by the Black elite by going South and seeking Southern identity as a source of racial pride, he had difficulties identifying himself with the 'Negro' or' the Negro cause' before his visit to the South as he was a consciously multi-racial person defined by society as a "Negro", but light enough to automatically pass as "white".[27]

> Among the items that came to me were items concerning the racial situation; but **they seemed unrelated to my life**. Nevertheless of course, my mind stored them up. I heard of the color line. I heard of segregation. I heard that colored people were barred from white hotels, theatres and restaurants. I heard of social inequality. I heard of passing. I heard that the white world was the world of opportunity, that the colored world was limited. I heard that if a person was known to have Negro blood, no matter how little, he was called Negro. I was more than curious about these items. Some seemed unfair. Some seemed untrue.[28]

When Toomer visited Georgia, he confronted the rural poor black people for the first time in his life, and noticed the bitterness and the violence of the Southern racial situation. The experience of the South, in spite of its brevity, made a lasting impression on him. It sparked his desire to write about a new kind of black people he did not believe existed in such a primitive state of being. Toomer, in fact, became moved by a desire to capture the essential 'Africaness' of southern black culture he observed around him during his stay in Sparta. In a letter to Claude McKay, the writer referred to the role of the South in awakening him to blackness, and how his connection to folk geography helped him in his discourse of black identity.

> Within the last two or three years, however, my growing need for artistic expression has pulled me deeper and deeper into the Negro group. . . . A visit to Georgia last fall was the starting point of almost everything of worth I have done. I heard folk-songs that came from the lips of Negro peasants. . . . And a deep part of my nature, a part I had repressed, sprang suddenly to life and responded to them. Now I cannot conceive of myself as aloof and separated.

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27. This aspect of Toomer's life will be developed in the next chapter.

28. Darwin Turner, ed. The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1980, p.18. Emphasis mine.

> My point of view has not changed; it has deepened, it has widened.[29]

The great impact that Georgia experience had on Jean Toomer and his work has been well described by Eugene Holmes in his article, "Jean Toomer, Apostle of Beauty". In it, the critic states:

> He [Toomer] found down there a hereditary link with forgotten and unknown ancestors. Slavery, once a shame and a stigma, became for him a spiritual process of growth and transfiguration and the tortuous underground groping of one generation, the maturing and high blossoming of the next. He found in the life of those Georgians and their forebears a sense of mystical recognition.[30]

However, despite the impression that his visit to Georgia left on him, Toomer had difficulties taking sides with either blacks or whites, males or females in his work. Although he was faithful in his description of the southern black people, their lives and their suffering, he remained most of the time mute concerning what he witnessed. The Southern black people, in the novel, are perceived by the narrator of the stories as "a canvas upon which to paint his dreams,"[31] consequently, there is silence on both sides. Neither he nor the characters are given voice by the writer to express their woes and pains. Although this narrator is a witness, in the same way as his creator, of the tragedies and chaos that surround the characters in the novel, there is no personal involvement, emotional implication, or indictment in the greatest part of the work in spite of all the suffering and misery witnessed.[32]

Indeed, the narrator in Cane fails to take any kind of position towards the people he describes or towards what happens to them. He seems as a detached observer or a mere outsider and does not feel concerned by the plight of the people he meets and learns to know. This spectatorial narrator fails to immerse in his observations or to take any active action to relieve the pain of the people he observes. Gortam B. Manson was the first to call this persona the "Spectatorial Artist,"[33] a term which suggests the progression of the narrator from a spectator in the first stories to an artist in 'Kabnis'. His progress from

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29. Ibid., p.18.

30. Eugene Holmes "Jean Toomer, Apostle of Beauty" cited by Nellie McKay in Jean Toomer, Artist, op cit., p.30.

31 . Portraits of the New Negro Woman, op cit., p.128.

32. In In a Minor Chord Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity, Darwin T. Turner states that ". It is also true, however, that consciously or subconsciously Toomer knew that he, like Lewis, was visiting in the South. Thus, he could write sympathetically as one who feels kinship yet maintains artistic detachment. He desired merely to observe, to sense, and to reflect the milieu, not to change it", pp.28-29.

33. In "the Significance of Jean Toomer" Opportunity 3, September1925, p.263.

spectator to artist is measured by the degree of his involvement in the life of his characters and his understanding of their fragmented souls.

For the spectatorial artist, involvement in the life of his characters means identification with them and recognition that their plight is also his plight. But, in Cane both spectator and artist remain completely detached from their material and from the plight of the people around them, especially in the first part of the novel. Susan L. Blake in her essay, "The Spectatorial Artist and the Structure of Cane" states that, "The central conflict in Cane is the struggle of the spectatorial artist to involve himself in his material. The characters in the individual stories are engaged in the same conflict. Their 'material' is life; involvement for them means acceptance of its chaos."[34] In the first part of Cane, the spectatorial artist remains separated both physically and emotionally from the characters in the stories. Whatever their plights, he does not take sides and does not make any kind of comment that can show his feelings or position. Their plight does not affect him. This is most evident when describing Becky's death. He does not feel any sympathy towards the alienated woman nor any remorse when she is left to die alone, without even checking if she is really dead or just injured from the collapse of her cabin.

In 'Esther" and 'Blood-Burning Moon', Cane's narrator comes a little closer to the characters he describes. Thus, instead of just narrating the events that lead to the madness of the two female characters, he goes a step further and gets inside their thoughts to describe their own vision of the fragmented world in which they live. But here again, there is neither a feeling of sympathy towards the demented women nor an indictment of the men that have caused their tragedy. Cherene Sherrard-Johnson concludes that, "Despite the fact that Toomer was revolutionary in his dramatization of patriarchal oppression, the silent unknowability of his subjects' psyche, which his spectatorial narrator cannot comprehend, does not allow the women to be anything more than victims of male oppression, white or black."[35] Moreover, the narrator as a spectatorial artist does not foster action in the females he meets. He limits himself to the description of their physicality with a total ignorance of their personal needs or aspirations.

In fact, when writing about the rural blacks, Toomer saw himself as an historian capturing the past before it died. He did not think that anything could be saved. He was convinced that the black South was in the way of extinction at the hands of both the violent white South and the sordid social conditions forced on blacks in the urban North. That is why he could only record it and then watch it, as he said, die on the modern desert. Cane was a 'swan-song' for its writer, so there was no need, according to the writer, to fight for something that was going to die anyway, "And why no one has seen and felt that, why people have expected [him] to write a second and a third and a fourth book like

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34. Jean Toomer: A Critical Evaluation, op cit., p.196.
35. Portraits of the New Negro Woman, op cit., pp.18-19.

'Cane,' is one of the queer misunderstandings of [his] life."[36] His work was not meant for propaganda. On the other hand, despite the detachment of Jean Toomer from his people in his work, the novel was meant by the writer to strengthen African American feeling of ethnic pride.

For the advocates of racial uplift during the Harlem Renaissance, as we have already seen, the figure of the 'New Negro' they wanted to shape was defined against that of the existing 'Old Negro' who was associated with backwardness, passivity, and the rural South. For these people, the 'New Negro' had to be a Northerner who broke with his racial past and who fashioned himself in the mold of White America by proving his intellectual competence and his capacity to assimilate. In Cane, these northern 'New Negoes' are depicted as isolated individuals with fragmented minds. They suffer from an inner dilemma, whether to reject their African heritage and work towards their acceptance into the mainstream society or to cherish their Africanism and live a content life by keeping the values with which they were born. Their characteristics and their behavior, most of the time, ostracize them from both their original community and the community they try to integrate. These characters, in reality, hold a marginal and isolated position that offers them no alternative in the American social structure. They are either racially ambiguous or they challenge socially acceptable interracial relationships.

Muriel in 'Box Seat' is such an example. Her desire to achieve white America's quality of life has positioned her in between two options: either to privilege and be proud of the spiritual and traditional values of African society or accept and adopt the materialistic world of white America. John in 'Theater' is another example of the black people torn between their African heritage of which they should be proud and the assimilation to the mainstream American society that promises them a life in luxury. John's dilemma consists in choosing between Dorris, the woman he loves, and all she represents as pride in her origins and African values, and the mainstream quality of life reached by his educated brother. Toomer uses light and shadow to suggest the internal conflict of John. "[John] He is seated at the center of the theater, just before rehearsal. Light streaks down upon him from a window high above.one half of his face is orange in it.one half of his face is in shadow." (Cane, 54) Daylight shining through the theater window tints his face orange when he surrenders to his sensuality and all it implies as African spirituality and collectivism. On the other hand, his face is shadowed whenever he uses his mind and the white men's values to distance himself from his African origins and repress his sensuality. Since African origin is undesirable for the white society, the African Americans who try to be accepted into the mainstream society work on incorporating the white's values into their lifestyles. Meanwhile, these African Americans have to decline at least part of their African identity. Upon realizing

36. Toomer Collection, Fisk University Library, Box 14, Folder 1, 59.

that the more he implements the mainstream values, the more he disconnects with his African heritage. John in 'Theater' has found himself in between the two societies, belonging to neither of them.

Jean Toomer's work was considered by critics as a mouthpiece of the young writer, expressing his own pride in his roots and origins. In the foreword to the novel, Waldo Frank wrote:

> A poet has arisen among our American youth who has known how to turn the essences of materials of his Southland into the essences and materials of literature. . . . The fashioning of beauty is ever foremost in his inspiration. . . . He has made songs and lovely stories of his land . . . [Cane] is a harbinger of a literary force of whose incalculable future I believe no reader of this book will be in doubt.[37]

Alfred Kreymborg, on the other hand, described Toomer as "one of the finest artists among the dark race, if not the finest."[38] However, as we will see in the next chapter, this idealistic image of the 'race man' will disappear soon after the publication of Cane , as the writer will dissociate himself from the 'Negro' race and leave place to a more ambiguous image of the African American man.

b- Zora Neale Hurston, "The Wandering Minstrel":

Zora Neale Hurston was criticized by the black intellectuals and critics of her time for not writing openly about racial confrontations in her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God and for giving more importance to the feminine experience. In her work on American women writers, Elizabeth Ammons states that race was the main issue for the writers of Hurston's time. According to the critic, "While [Afro-American writers] suffered because they were women…they suffered more and primarily because they were black. If one or the other of the two issues had to take priority, it had to be race."[39] Within the cultural movement of the time, being black and celebrating that fact tended to take precedence over one's gender. Accordingly, the female writers of the period had to think about themselves as African-Americans first, and women second.

Hurston's apolitical approach to literature has been condemned by people of her race because the content of her work seems separated from the historical context of her time. Indeed, art is not associated with political concerns in her novel, and there is an evident disengagement from her part from the calls of the Negro movement. In the foreword to her biography, Dust Tracks on a Road, Maya Angelou states that Hurston "does not mention even

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37. Darwin Turner , ed. Cane. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1988, p. 121.

38. Portrait of an Artist, 1923- 1936, op cit., p. 1.

39. Elizabeth Ammons, Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 23.

one unpleasant racial incident." The lack of any reference to the outside world in Hurston's novel has also been criticized by Hazel Carby in 'Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk' as the critic considers that Hurston has displaced the discourse of racial order and maintained the exclusion of black subjects from history.[40] In Carby's sense, Hurston has excluded the black subject from history by portraying the rural black folk as a subaltern group. The critic asserts that Hurston has privileged the nostalgic and 'displaced' the problem of race as of central importance in the life of the black community.

Zora Neale Hurston, for her part, and unlike W.E.B Du Bois and Richard Wright for whom "the Negro problem" was "more important than…literary form,"[41] resented race as being a significant aspect of identity in America. She never denied the racist attitudes against the Blacks; however, she rejected the 'problem' as being the central issue of her writing. As Michele Wallace argues, "At a time when the Ku Klux Klan was still lynching blacks en masse, and the tone of racial wisdom, à la W. E. B. Dubois and Richard Wright, was dignified and dramatic, Hurston rejected the racial uplift agenda of the Talented Tenth on the premise that ordinary bloods had something to say, too."[42] Accordingly, Hurston's works were not exactly what the leaders of the Negro Renaissance wanted or expected. In her autobiography, she confessed that she "was and [is] thoroughly sick…of the race problem."[43] She was conscious of racial oppression in white America but the racial oppression debate was peripheral in her literary writing. She, accordingly, suppressed interracial conflicts in favor of presenting "one example of a black American who never considers enlisting in the regiment, because she defines herself in her text in terms other than warrior or defiant black activist."[44] In "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" Hurston expresses the complexity of the race problem and her inability to understand its intricacies. She writes, "Sometimes I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company! It's beyond me." [45] By suggesting that racial discrimination lies beyond her comprehension, Hurston suggests that she will not allow racism or racist individuals to confine or control her. Race was not the only paradigm to be considered in both her life and her literary works.

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40. "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and Folk," in New Essays on "Their Eyes Were Watching God" , op cit.

41. Du Bois declared in this context, "I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda" while Richard Wright attacked all black writers who had not " taken advantage of their unique minority position" in order to develop " the highest possible pitch of social consciousness." Cited by James C. Cobb in Away Down South , op cit., p.157.

42. Michele Wallace, Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory. London: Verso, 1990, p.172.

43. Dust Tracks on a Road, op cit., p.171.

44. Alice A. Deck, "Autoethnography: Zora Neale Hurston, Noni Jabavu, and Cross- Disciplinary Discourse." Black American Literature Forum 24 , 1990, pp. 237-256, p.237.

45. Cheryl Wall, ed. Zora Neale Hurston. Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings. New York: Library of America, 1995, p.829.

In addition, Hurston felt that the confrontation between black and white would compromise her art. She stated that she was interested in writing fiction and "not a treatise on sociology." She preferred to use literature to reaffirm the Black life and culture rather than to plead the cause of racial justice. Already, in 1936, before the writing of her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, she confessed to the critic Nick Aaron Ford her lack of interest in the race problem by stating that "I am not interested in the race problem, but I am interested in the problems of individuals, white ones and black ones."[46] Hurston refused to prioritize racial matters over the rural, black South way of life in her works. She continued in the same context : "Many Negroes criticize my book because I did not make it a lecture on the race problem…I have ceased to think in terms of race."[47] Hurston's position has been supported by critic Nellie McKay who states:

> If one of her desires for her book was to present a more balanced view of the effects of racism on black life, it was not because Hurston was unaware of the seriousness of racial politics. She simply refused to accept the oppression of blacks as a definition of her life.[48]

Hurston's rejection of the race problem as the first reference for her work comes to represent her ideological position. Rather than openly confronting racism and racist acts against her people, she chooses to instill the values of her culture into her readers. In this sense, Hurston's approach in her works seems detached from racial questions. She seems more worried about the condition of her people as human beings than as Negroes within a racist white society.

Thus, in Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston celebrates black community life in such a manner that "the harsh edges of life in a Jim Crow South seldom come into view."[49] Hurston's novel challenges the accepted understanding of whiteness as well as its role in society. By deliberately not mentioning white racist incidents in her novel, she refutes the preconceived ideas of the dependence of the black people on the whites to be able to have a decent and happy life. Her novel denounces racial oppression exactly by showing Eatonville's people very independence from it, thus undermining the authoritative social constraints designed to quell their freedom. In her view, the absence of whites not only kept Eatonville free of racism but also freed blacks to express themselves without reservation. By showing that everything belongs to the black community in Eatonville, and that the black people govern themselves by themselves, Hurston indirectly highlights the skills of her

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46. Nick Aaron Ford, The Contemporary Negro Novel. Boston: Meador, 1936, pp.96-97.
47. Ibid. , p.97.
48. Nellie McKay quoted by Barbara Rodriguez in Autobiographical Inscriptions: Form, Personhood, and the American Woman Writer of Color. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.48.
49. Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography , op cit., p.218.

people. The white men cannot impose discrimination on the black people in her novel because the blacks do everything by themselves and have left no place for the whites in their fictional community from where they can exercise their racism and segregation. As Butler Evans realizes, Hurston prefers to restrict her narratives to the private and domestic spheres by exploring "the inner world of Black life."[50]

In defense of her position toward the depiction of the Southern Blacks in her novel, the writer states that, "I tried to be natural and not pander to the folks who expect a clown and a villain in every Negro. Neither did I want to pander to those 'race' people who see nothing but perfection in all of us."[51] By representing the misrepresented or the missing from representation, and by giving voice to the voiceless southern folks, Hurston challenges the one sidedness of mainstream American writers and stands against unjust stereotypes of all sorts from within the outside as well as from within her own race. In spite of her suppression of direct racial hatred from her novel, Hurston uses a strong social protest in her work . Through her novel, she narrates a story that reflects the reality of African American lives while referring predominantly to the controversial aspects of African American communities, such as double oppression and double consciousness. Although she does not point directly towards the mainstream society, the mainstream values or the stereotypes imposed on the African Americans, Hurston's novel implies that the mainstream oppression is the main cause of poverty, distress and lack of confidence among the African Americans. A passage from her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road, illuminates Hurston's commitment to writing as an act of survival and self-assertion:

> What I had to swallow in the kitchen has not made me less glad to have lived, nor made me want to low-rate the human race, nor any whole sections of it. I take no refuge from myself in bitterness. To me, bitterness is the under-arm odor of wishful weakness. It is the graceless acknowledgment of defeat. I have no urge to make any concessions like that to the world as yet. I might be like that someday, but I doubt it. I am in the struggle with the sword in my hands, and I don't intend to run until you run me. So why give off the smell of something dead under the house while I am still in there tussling with my sword in my hand?[52]

In their article, "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: African American Strategies for Day-to-Day Existence / Resistance in the Early Twentieth-Century Rural South," Coclanis and Simon state that being unable to go for open protest,

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50. Elliott Butler-Evans, Race, Gender, and Desire: Narrative Strategies in the Fiction of Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, p.42.
51. Carla Kaplan, Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters. New York: Doubleday, 2002, p.299.
52. Dust Tracks on a Road, op cit., p.288.

African Americans often turned to other forms of clever resistance. One aspect of this resistance, according to them, was the control African Americans exercised over their own lives and bodies in situations that could not be directly controlled by racial rules and regulations. These included visible demonstrations of cultural uniqueness, strength, and power: "On Saturday nights, however, black women and men took control over their time and their bodies. At rural bars, juke joints, and house parties they shook, sang, danced, gambled, drank, and boogied."[53] Hurston did not wait for Saturday night to free her people from the control and scrutiny of the white man. Instead, she preferred to allow her people live in the best way they saw fit for them by completely removing the white people from their lives. Comparing the works of Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston, June Jordan states that, "The functions of protest and affirmation are not, ultimately, distinct … affirmation of Black values and lifestyle within the American context is, indeed, an act of protest." In this sense, "Hurston's affirmative work is profoundly defiant, just as Wright's protest unmistakably asserts our need for an alternative, benign environment. We have been misled to discount the one in order to revere the other."[54] Alice Walker too has praised Hurston for refusing to focus on the suffering of the black people under Jim Crow. According to her, Hurston's work was characterized by its "racial health–a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings."[55]

To sum up, we can say that Zora Neale Hurston was criticized for speaking and writing her mind, something considered offensive by her contemporaries who were concerned about the proper racial image she should project. Hurston was also accused of writing what a white audience wanted to read. She seemed to have transgressed the parameters established by her contemporaries by not carrying the burdens of race and gender differences in her literary works. Accordingly, her work was considered inauthentic and sentimental, as it did not represent the racial experience of black people.

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston remained spectatorial artists in their works as there is neither in Cane nor in Their Eyes Were Watching God direct confrontation between whites and blacks, no indictment of racist acts and no call for retribution and change. It is true that there are references, in the two literary texts, to acts of violence, repression and lynching, especially in the work of Jean Toomer, but in no case did any of the two writers feel directly concerned by these acts of violence and no one of them felt the need to reverse the

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53. Peter Coclanis and Bryant Simon, "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: African American Strategies for Day-to-Day Existence / Resistance in the Early Twentieth-Century Rural South." African American Life in the Rural South 1900-1950, op cit., p.203.

54. June Jordan, " On Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston: Notes toward a Balancing of Love and Hatred" Quoted in Will Brantley, Feminine Sense in Southern Memoir: Smith, Glasgow, Welty, Hellman, Porter and Hurston. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993, p.218.

55. Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography, op cit., pp. VII-XIII.

dichotomy and to describe the whites in a stereotypical way as rapists, brutes and racists. Moreover, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston approached the themes of their era in vastly different ways, but their goal was the same: to promote the literary work of black people. Through her extensive use of folkloric and African American cultural elements in her literary work, Zora Neale Hurston refutes the assertion that any culture is superior to another. Of the two writers considered in this section, Toomer had the most complex vision of race. As we will see in the next chapter, he maintained an ambivalent and nuanced position about his mixed racial identity. He did not comfortably fit in either the black or the white world.

VII.2- Racial Affirmation / Racial Pride

> Le complexe du mutisme vaut celui d la castration…Ce n'est pas un malheur irréparable de perdre ***sa*** langue, mais le malheur suprême consiste à perdre ***la*** langue, le morceau de chair qui se loge dans la bouche.[56]

In the same way that the white Americans looked at the black people as devoid of culture and civilization, the French colonizers regarded Algerians as bereft of culture, mores and traditions, and that the only educational system to be adopted in the colony had to be implemented in French since the French language was equated with civilization and intellectualism. French became the language of instruction in schools while French history, literature, and politics became the main focus of the lessons in the classrooms. The French educational system as a whole was principally a response to the threat of political opposition. Alf Heggoy and Paul Zingg note that "all school reforms and special education programs were designed primarily as counter insurgency efforts."[57] They were meant to help the colonizers rule by consent rather than force and violence through the inculcation of French cultural values and beliefs in the minds of the colonized. However, the total integration or assimilation advocated by the colonizers through their educational system never gained mass support from indigenous people. Instead of fostering assimilation and loyalty to the 'Mother' country, the teachings at the school were pivotal to shaping political consciousness and collective action. They fuelled patriotism and nationalistic sentiment. The values and principles learnt in the French schools started being significantly questioned by a new generation of Algerian writers who described themselves as experiencing the 'malaise', the exclusion and the injustice that most of the indigenous population continuously

56. Abdefettah Kilito, " Les mots canins" in Du Bilinguisme. Paris : Denoël, 1985, p.216.

57. Heggoy, Alf Andrew and Paul J. Zingg. "French Education in Revolutionary North Africa." International Journal of Middle East Studies. 7.4 , 1976, pp. 571-578, p. 578.

encountered because of the difference in status and rights between Algerians and Europeans.

Writers who belonged to this new wave started raising and questioning the issue of Algerian identity, difference, rights and status. The plea was to all Algerians to rediscover their history as a weapon to be used against oppression. The Algerian writers, in fact, conceived of their writing as a pattern for encouraging forms of resistance and agitation. While they were generally well-versed in the colonizer's culture, the Algerian writers who emerged during the colonial period were driven mainly by a continuous search for an identity, and a desire to claim a land, a history and a culture while at the same time rejecting the values imposed by the French occupation. They saw their newly acquired position as a way towards greater awareness of the nature of colonialism and as something that could equip them to fight oppression. The search for identity became, accordingly, a key issue in the literature that emerged at that period.

> The aim of the Algerian literature [had] always been to reveal the real condition of the Algerian people and society by acting as a witness and by giving accounts and details of the malaise and misery of the Algerian people. Algerian writers such as Mouloud Feraoun, Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Franz Fanon and Assia Djebar are seen as the founders of Algerian literature, and as militants fighting in their own way against the French occupation.[58]

Finding a voice and then employing it were radical steps to creating a national literature and identity. The Algerian writers claimed independence and different values from those of the colonizer. They set out to reveal to France and the world the real conditions in which Algerians were living. At the same time, they rejected the French values and beliefs. These writers began to emerge in 1945, after the end of the Second World War and the frustration of the people at seeing more justice prevailing in the country after the success of the Allies. Indeed, it had been expected that the victory of the Allies and the liberation of France, to which a large number of Algerians had contributed, would bring justice and more rights to the Algerians. On VE day, 1945, instead of having more rights, more than forty five thousand Algerians were killed.

This event, which is associated with the emergence of a more militant and radical nationalism in Algeria marked Algerian literature. Most of these writers were poor or came from impoverished families. "Nous sommes pour la plupart de pauvres gens sortis des douars et de familles modestes pour devenir des bacheliers, on ne sait comment."[59]They transcended the constraints of French educational policy that were intended to make of them assimilated

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58. Bulletin of Francophone Algeria : London : University of Westminster, n° 14, winter, 1999.
59. Ferhat Abbas, La Nuit coloniale . Julliard, 1962 , p.132.

people who had little sense of their own history , cultural legacies, and language. The writers of that period became 'literary' militants fighting for a new political alternative. Their writings were essentially drawn from their own experience, and they presented themselves as witnesses of the misery of the Algerian people. They used the language of the colonizer as a tool to express their anger and frustration at their status as colonized people. Much of their writing became broadly described as politically committed. Ahmed Lanasri explains that the literature born from this mixed marriage between the colonized subjects and the colonizer's language is a "produit hybride . . . dès sa naissance, marquée par l'équivocité du sense. Conçue d'un croisement placé sous le signe de la violence physique et morale, cette production porte en elle les stigmates de la résignation et de la révolte."[60] In her seminal work, Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam, Pamela A. Pears stresses the importance of the colonizer's language in the nationalist movements by stating :

> [I]n the case of colonized peoples, the mastery of the colonizer's language, in this case European, enabled revolutionary groups to gain access to popular European models of nationalism. Consequently, the bilingualism of the intelligentsia played a significant role in nation formation. The intelligentsia facilitated communication between colonial powers and the indigenous population, and many members of the revolutionary forces […] felt quite comfortable using the French language.[61]

In fact, as Phillip Naylor rightfully argues, the mastery of the French language by the FLN leaders was their : "greatest weapon against the colonialists and allowed [them] to maintain a competitive advantage during negotiations in the postcolonial period."[62]

French for the Algerian writers, on the other hand, became politically weighted by the history of colonialism. They appropriated it to turn it against the colonizer. The objective was to let the outside world know about the 'malaise' and what was happening in African countries under foreign occupation. The desire of the Algerian writers to share their ideas with as wide an audience as possible compelled them to use the colonizer's language in spite of the many problematic concerns that it entailed. These writers, according to Mortimer, "use[d] the colonizer's language as a revolutionary tool to express an ideology and aesthetics of difference."[63] For Mostefa Lacheraf, this literature provided an excellent image of Algerian reality. " Cette

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60. Ahmed Lanasri, La Littérature algérienne de l'entre-deux guerres. Paris: Publisud, 1995, p.177.
61. Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam, op cit., p.11.
62. Phillip C. Naylor, France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation . Gainesville : University Press of Florida, 2000, p.259.
63. Research in African Literature ,op cit, p.3.

littérature va refléter pour la première fois dans les lettres françaises une réalité algérienne qu'aucun écrivain, même Camus, n'avait le courage de traduire."[64]

All the writers expressed in one way or another injustice, racism, misery and frustration in which the Algerian people suffered. They also expressed the Algerian people's desire to claim a land, a culture, and an identity, all of which had become unclear because of colonization. Thus, their works were a refusal to identify with the colonizer. Their fiction became an important battleground for the virtual fighting of the war. Mouloud Mammeri, one of the writers of this new generation, expressed well the feeling of his countrymen when he declared that "Les valeurs pour lesquelles il me semblait que l'on peut vivre avaient été élaborées par d'autres hommes pour une société différente de la mienne, dans un contexte où aucun des miens ne figurait sinon accidentellement."[65] Both Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar suffered from the feeling of alienation and estrangement within their own country. They also felt that literature and culture were the best weapons to redefine one's own national identity. They understood their role as literary people to include an obligation to speak out on current political events. Thus, their works suggest a complete involvement in the political life of their country and their countrymen.

a- Kateb Yacine , "The Revolutionary Poet":

> Dans le rôle de l'écrivain, s'il y a un aspect purement politique, c'est celui qui consiste à prendre position. C'est surtout cela qui est important. S'il peut prendre position dans son œuvre, c'est déjà beaucoup, mais l'écrivain n'est pas seulement un écrivain. Il est un homme, un citoyen, et il doit prendre position d'autant plus qu'il est écrivain, parce qu'il est un citoyen qui a un pouvoir d'expression qui peut être multiplié, qui peut porter et faire avancer une idée ou une cause.[66]

For Kateb Yacine, the colonized people's attempt to enter the dominant discourse and claim it as their own has been, for a long time, doomed to failure. The French audience's first interest in Algerian literature stems from the general political situation and the relevance of the Algerian writers' works to the immediate context of war time events. Thus, the writer attributes the emergence of Algerian literature during the colonial period to a violent intervention of history.

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64. Mostefa Lacheraf, "l'Avenir de la culture algérienne", (1963) cited in La Littérature maghrébine d'expression française. op cit., p.223.

65. Mohammed Saad "In Search of Identity: Algerian literature during and after the occupation" in Bulletin of Francophone Africa,op cit., p. 8.

66. Hafid Gafaiti, Kateb Yacine : un Homme, une œuvre, un pays. Alger : Voix Multiples. Laphomic, 1986, p. 43.

> Sincèrement, je crois que, s'il n'y avait pas eu la guerre d'Algérie, *Nedjma* n'aurait pas été publié si tôt. On a commencé à parler des embuscades, *France-Soir*, tout le monde en parlait et, finalement, l'Algérie devenait commerciale, même sur le plan littéraire.[67]

During the bloody events of 1945, Kateb was only sixteen and was still attending school. However, and as said in the previous chapters, his participation in the insurrection that followed the victory of the Allies and the liberation of France led to his arrest, interrogation, torture and imprisonment in a military camp for three months. Kateb witnessed the death, injury, and later on torture of thousands of his countrymen. He also lost several members of his own family. His mother, on the other hand got insane and had to be confined to a psychiatric hospital. Commenting on this decisive period of his life, Kateb declares:

> C'est en 1945 à Sétif que mon vague humanitarisme fut affronté pour la première fois aux plus atroces des spectacles…alors le choc que je ressentis devant l'impitoyable boucherie que provoqua la mort de milliers de Musulmans, je ne l'ai jamais oublié**.**[68]

As a result of the choc he received, Kateb became an ardent nationalist militant and an engaged activist in numerous short-lived organizations that preceded the emergence of the FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale). The National Revolution grew to be a major inspiration of his writing. He thus decided to put his literary skills at the service of the cause of his country. He became accordingly, "amoureux en même temps de la révolution."[69] His work became a vehicle for emphasizing Algerian resistance and revolt against the invaders. He attempted to subvert colonial narratives about Algeria created by the French colonizers as a means of justification for the colonization and oppression of the Algerian people.

> Je voulais en effet atteindre une sorte d'accouchement de l'Algérie par un livre. C'est très important, parce que, à ce moment-là, le sang coulait. En posant la question algérienne dans un livre, on pouvait atteindre les gens au cœur. C'est beaucoup plus fécond, plus fort, c'est le sens même du combat des algériens. Ils ne sont pas morts pour tuer, ils sont morts pour vivre.[70]

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67. Nadia Tazi, " De 'si jolis moutons' dans la gueule du loup" L'Autre journal n^{0} 7, Paris, Juillet-août 1985, in Le Poète comme un boxeur. Entretiens 1958-1989. Ed, Gilles Carpentier. Paris : Editions Du Seuil, 1994, p.24.

68. Témoignage Chrétien, April 4th, 1956.

69. Monique Hennebelle, "Nedjma de Kateb Yacine" Afrique Littéraire et Artistique 6 , 1969, pp.3- 6, p.3.

70. Nadia Tazi in Le Poète comme un boxeur. Entretiens 1958-1989, op cit, p.27.

Kateb thus challenged French colonial narratives of Algeria by establishing a sense of race pride through a restoration of Algeria's past and culture.

From the beginning of his literary career, Kateb Yacine felt the need to depict the world of alienation and injustice in which his countrymen lived. His work is the result of political convictions as much as it is the product of the imposition of a colonial educational system. His use of French to express anti-colonial ideas was an important characteristic of his work as he used the language of the colonizer to turn it against him by writing the most violent and powerful pamphlets against colonialist France. " Nous sommes coupés de nos traditions parce que colonisés. On nous a volé notre manière d'être au monde."[71] Kateb, in reality was aware of the importance of the means offered to him by the colonists and he intended to use it to the uttermost. When he was asked why he was using French to express his hatred and rejection of French presence in Algeria, Kateb replied, " ça veut dire que pour les gens qui ont été à l'école française afin d'arracher cette culture de haute lutte–ce n'est pas un cadeau qu'on leur a donne–au prix d'humiliations sans nombre, après des interdictions , des tabous à l'intérieur d'un ghetto racial, social, colonial, cette langue est finalement devenue une arme."[72] In the face of opposition, his resolution seems to have been to rob the colonizer of some of his power by removing his presumed control over the sign. He would use the same weapon used by the colonizer to denigrate and belittle the Algerian people, that is the French written language, and get his voice heard in order to inform Europeans and doubtful Algerians alike of the true value of Algerian pre-colonial history and culture. Kateb appropriated the French language to express the fact that neither him nor his people were French. "j'écris en français pour dire aux Français que je ne suis pas français."[73]

For Kateb and his contemporaries, depicting violence in fictional works became a therapeutic tool that allowed them to transcend their desire to commit actual violence by violating the language of the colonizer. Kateb's language in Nedjma is a good illustration of this subversion of the language. Indeed, the themes of rape, murder, madness, and verbal and physical violence dealt with by the writer in his novel, all require the use of appropriate violent language. He asserts that, " une langue appartient à celui qui la viole, pas à celui qui la caresse."[74] To be able to do so, Kateb broke with the standard use of the French language. He transcended the traditional structure of the colonial language and adapted it to the colonized people's context.

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71. " Renaissance de la tragédie" in L'Action, Tunis, 11 aout 1958 cited in Le Poète comme un boxeur, op cit., p.39.

72. Lia Lacombe , " Arracher le fusil des mains du parachutiste" in Les lettres françaises. Paris, 7-13 Février 1963 cited in Le Poète comme un boxeur, op cit., p.53.

73. Mediene Benamar , "Toujours la ruée vers l'or " cited in Le Poète comme un boxeur, op cit, p.132.

74 . Cited by Bernard Aresu, in Counterhegemonic Discourse from the Maghreb: The Poetics of Kateb's Fiction. Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993, p.28.

Indeed, for the Algerian writer, employing the language of the oppressor did not necessarily imply employing its literary traditions and forms. Kateb separates his work from European literary conventions bound by the rules of aesthetics and structure. He does not only reconstruct historical narratives through fiction but also reconstructs Algerian mythic beliefs. Thus, the myth of the ancestor 'Keblout' becomes the most potent tool for Kateb in order to restore the dignity of his people and assert a cultural identity independent from French influence and narratives. For Kateb, the central focus becomes the rewriting of the history of French destruction of the Algerian people through the killing of their ancestor Keblout and the usurpation of their land. Myth becomes, thus, a cultural affirmation of the existence of an Algerian pre-colonial identity. Without the restoration of this myth, Kateb feels that his people would remain confined to an inferior existence and to the complete loss of their identity. " il faut réagir contre la dépersonnalisation du people, contre cette désincarnation des problèmes à laquelle se livre la presse réactionnaire, qui arrive à rendre le people algérien absent, à faire de lui une série de caricatures qui le rendent absent dans la conscience des gens."[75]

In his desire to remove his nationalistic work from identifying with French culture, Kateb took the language into his hands and remodeled it in a way that could best express his inner thoughts and experiences. In her article, 'Kateb Yacine', Mireille Djaïder explains the process used by the Algerian writers when adopting the language of the other.

> Cédant à la convoitise d'un symbolique étranger, l'amant de la langue-autre ne se veut pas 'emprunté' mais affirme sa différence avec force, dans la violence et la transgression par quoi se manifeste une position ambiguë de révolte et de désir. Le renversement poétique qui se donne comme v(i)ol de l'outil linguistique devenu instrument de domination de l'Autre branche le texte sur un scénario quasi prométhéen. Le sujet parlant qui s'approprie la langue des maîtres pour l'offrir aux siens comme instrument de revanche et de connaissance lui donne essentiellement une fonction de communication. Mais l'étrangère langue de rupture, dévoie l'expression de la révolte. [76]

Rather than following a straight forward narrative technique, Kateb ventures in and out of linear history, going back and forth between events, focusing on the way specific ones have influenced the lives of his people. For the Algerian writer, "la mémoire n'a pas de succession chronologique [77] thus, past and present are so intertwined that they are confusing sometimes.

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75. "Le monde entier pour objet" in France-Observateur, 1958 cited in Le Poète comme un boxeur, op cit, p.49.

76. Mireille Djaïder, "Kateb Yacine." LIMAG: Littératures du Maghreb. Ed, Charles Bonn. 1996.

77. Déjeux Jean, La Littérature Algérienne Contemporaine. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France,

In addition, Kateb rebels against the modes of narration prevailing at the time he writes his novel. So, instead of having an omniscient or first person narrator as in the realist novel tradition, Kateb's narrative is told through the four main characters in the novel , along with an anonymous character. No one of the four characters is privileged in the novel, and no single voice takes prominence over the others. Often, the narrative voices are so intertwined that we have difficulties distinguishing between the different speakers. This is done on purpose by Kateb for whom the individual loses his individuality in the context of collective struggle. This has been confirmed by Kamal Salhi who states that "This merging of voices universalises their meaning as they come to represent all Algerians."[78] As the writer considers his work as an "autobiographie au pluriel", the collective voice takes precedence over the individual.

In addition, Kateb deliberately ignores French syntax as he writes in his novel sentences that are two to three pages long. He also purposefully replaces the periods by colons when moving from one idea to another. This is mostly evident in passages of stream of consciousness where dream and reality are so mixed up that no clear cut distinction can be made between what the characters really do and say and what they just imagine. Another instance of the appropriation of the French language by Kateb Yacine is his extensive use of words linked with rape, imprisonment, and torture. Such vocabulary shows the degree of involvement of the writer in his people's cause.

To sum up, Kateb, in Nedjma, has done away with linear plots, character development, and traditional western narratives. He has resisted prescriptive French grammar and western narrative techniques by implementing procedures that challenge the syntax and lexicon of the French language. He has rejected 'well-worn formulas' and attempted to create his own way of writing relying on crossing genre boundaries with interior monologue, poetic composition, journal, and novel . He has also used multiple points of view in order to be able to depict the same events from different angles and to exploit contradictions between them to strengthen the ambiguity and polyvalence of his work. In Sellin's words, Kateb's way of writing is:

> …an amalgam of [his] Arabo-Oriental cultural patrimony; assimilation of the scientific philosophical discoveries of Einstein, the surrealists, the existentialists, and others; and an awareness of the stylistic innovations of the experimental 'nouveau roman' of the 1950's and, perhaps, the novels of William Faulkner…what he seems to provide in his overall work is a definition of life force marked by what we might call a regional mentality.[79]

1975, p.75.

78. Kamal Salhi, The Politics and Aesthetics of Kateb Yacine. Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999, p.44.

79. Eric Sellin, "The Algerian Novel of French Expression" in The International Fiction Review,

In the same way as Toomer's Cane, Nedjma is considered as a novel. However, and similarly to the African American literary work, Kateb's Nedjma is an amalgam of prose, poetry, and theater where we can find dialogues, memories, dreams, and multiple narrative voices.

b- Assia Djebar, " The Rebel Student":

Although women were late comers to the literary world, their works were as politically engaged as those of their male counterparts. Thus, the 'call for a name, land, and differentiation' was also used by women writers even though their number was smaller. It was also made by Assia Djebar in her book Les Enfants du nouveau monde (1962). Indeed, Djebar's feminist politics is inextricably linked with the nationalist struggle for independence in Algeria for her writing, as we saw in the previous part , espouses the plight of Algerian women battling with the double burden of patriarchy and colonialism. A close reading of her works by her critics identifies her as a "politically engaged writer [who] seeks to criticize the repressive structure of the society she examines and to promote the liberation of Algerian women."[80] Her literary work, in fact, challenges the dominant narrative. It is steeped in a preoccupation with history as her people have been excluded from the pages of colonial history and denied access to the records of their own past. Her concern with history is meant to deconstruct French representations of her people, and to represent native history from the perspective of the oppressed rather than the oppressors. Les enfants du nouveau monde plays a key role in reclaiming Algerian history and identity. It is the "devoir dire,"[81] in which the colonized people possess agency and re-imagine their experiences and nation through their own perspective. As scribe and translator of her people's oral history, Assia Djebar writes: "Dire à mon tour. Transmettre ce qui a été dit, puis écrit."[82]

In the same way as Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar was politically involved in the struggle of her country. Her political consciousness took place when she was a student in the 'Ecole Supérieure de Sèvres' in Paris. Like her male counterpart, Assia Djebar felt concerned with the political changes that were taking place in her country. Although in France, she wanted to express her solidarity with her people and the nationalist cause. She, accordingly, took part in a strike organized by Algerian students in France. It is true that Assia Djebar was not as committed to the cause of her country as her countrymen in Algeria, and did not endure imprisonment and torture like them, due to the fact

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Vol. I No.1 (January 1974), pp.38-47, pp.43-44.

80. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria, op cit., p. 80.

81. Assia Djebar, Ces voix qui m'assiègent: -en marge de ma francophonie, Montréal : Les Presses de L'Université de Montréal, 1999, p. 65.

82. Assia Djebar, L'Amour, la fantasia. Paris : Albin Michel, p.234.

that she was in France, far from the battlefield, she nevertheless saw her studies brought to a halt. She moved then to work as a journalist for the newspaper of the national liberation party' FLN', El Moudjahid, publishing interviews with Algerian refugees in Morocco and Tunisia. During that time, Assia Djebar worked in tight collaboration with Frantz Fanon as the latter was the editor of the newspaper. The Algerian writer was certainly influenced by his writings and by his own interpretations of the colonizer-colonized relationship during the Algerian War of Independence. Fanon would leave an imprint on the writer whose works would attest on the violence of the war and its devastating effects on the Algerian people.

Moreover, Assia Djebar has appropriated, in the same way as her male counterpart, the colonizer's language to inscribe the suffering and injustice inflicted upon Algerians by the colonial conquest. She has employed French as a political tool, a weapon of both political and cultural resistance. "Cette langue était autrefois sarcophage des miens; je la porte aujourd'hui comme un messager transporterait le pli ferme ordonnant sa condamnation au silence, ou au cachot."[83] However, while Kateb Yacine's Nedjma rewrites history, Assia Djebar's Les enfants du nouveau monde confronts and portrays its reality. The Algerian female writer reconstructs history by putting the Algerian people in the forefront of the colonial struggle. In addition to her denunciation of French colonialism, Assia Djebar uses her literary work to conceive women's liberation from various forms of oppression and subjugation from both patriarchal and colonial powers.

As a conclusion we can say that the position of the two pairs of writers is not very dissimilar concerning the effects of racism and oppression on their lives and the ways to fight them. It remains however that without denying the devastating effects of racism and discrimination, Toomer and Hurston were primarily interested in the presentation of their own people apart from the influence of politics on their lives. They emphasized the responsibility of both races to try to overcome their historic problems and form a new race of American. Ironically, the rise of black studies and black consciousness in the 1960s, brought about the reprinting of both Cane and Their Eyes Were Watching God and led to the revival of their reputation as leading figures in the Harlem Renaissance. The two novels have never been out of print since then and possibly will never be.

However, while the two African-American writers try to capture a dying culture and way of life before it is 'too late', Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar are more optimistic about the future of the Algerian people and the preservation of their identity and culture. Although the country was still colonized at the time of writing the two novels, Kateb Yacine's Nedjma offers a positive ending and conveys an opening to the future. Indeed, "Lakhdar s'est

83. Ibid, p.241.

échappé de sa cellule" (Nedjma,1/255) "Lakhdar has escaped from his cell" (Nedjma,15/ 343) opens and closes the novel. For the writer, such a statement means that although history repeats itself, it is forward moving. The same is true for Assia Djebar whose novel's very title offers alternatives for the children of the new world.

Chapter Eight
The Double Burden

This chapter deals with double consciousness and cultural dualism as experienced by Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston from America and Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar from Algeria. In the case of Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston, the two African American writers were born into a culture in which they could never perceive themselves as one authentic self. Rather, they identified themselves both the way in which the dominant white culture defined them and the way they identified themselves. Accordingly, the two writers express, in one way or another, some degree of double consciousness, as described by various theorists, mainly W.E.B Du Bois, through the form and content of their literary works, as well as through their personal pronouncements.

Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar, for their part, seem as this chapter will reveal, very affected by the assimilationist methods adopted by the French colonizers in Algeria. Their works and declarations portray a severe and painful feeling of dualism. This stems from the fact that the Algerian writers have been obliged to adopt the language of the oppressor and adapt it to voice their resistance to cultural and military imperialism. In fact, the literary models serving as reference for these writers have all been from the colonizer's cultural tradition as their native culture has been, as we have previously seen, relegated to an inferior position. For these writers, the choice to write in the oppressor's language instead of writing in the maternal one has been very difficult and often forced. They have had to divide themselves between their indigenous cultural heritage they have acquired at home, and the imposed culture they have acquired at school. As a consequence, the language of the French oppressor nourishes them intellectually but not culturally or emotionally. It fails to translate their deepest feelings and emotions. Moreover, because of its association with the French oppressor, the language used by these writers can never be considered as authentically theirs. Thus they feel, in Memmi's words, 'à cheval sur deux cultures [...] rarement bien assis, en effet, et […] ne trouve(nt) pas toujours le *ton* juste'[1] as they write from a unique position, between both worlds, and belonging to neither of them. This conflicting situation, or the two split identities and selves seem, as we are going to see in the present chapter, not very different from the "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings"[2] that characterize the two African American writers' double consciousness.

Accordingly, all four writers we study emphasize their alienation from the dominant discourse they have been trained to speak. Through their

1. Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé, op cit., p.140.
2. Du Bois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk, op cit., p. 215.

narratives, these writers repudiate the White/French colonizer's political, ideological, and literary authority even if they write through their colonizers' influence. Their narratives become, as we are going to see, a confrontation with their dual identities, one that epitomizes the ambiguous dilemma of the postcolonial subject. While some of the texts they have written may appear to fall into traditional western literary genres such as the novel, they cannot all be categorized neatly under this label alone. In fact, as we will argue, some of these texts seem to escape the conventions of the genre with which they may be most closely associated.[3] At times, the texts consist of dialogues, flashbacks, streams of consciousness, and poetic verse. They are a combination of various literary techniques and genres.

In the present chapter, we will analyze the consequences of double consciousness and cultural dualism on the lives and works of the writers under study and see the methods these writers adopted to try and transcend the feeling of alienation and dualism in which they have lived. We will also analyze the means they have adopted to assert their 'true' self as independent from the one imposed upon them by the white/colonizer. Of particular theoretical importance in the present chapter are the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon for the three of them have written intensively of the state of mind of the colonized intellectual whose language and culture have been 'robbed' from him.

It is worth noting however, that although both the black Americans and the Algerians were objected and silenced for a very long time, and their languages forbidden, their experience with their oppressors was very dissimilar. While the Algerian people were colonized from the outside, African Americans were colonized within their own country. While the Algerian people were dispossessed of their language and culture, the black people became possessions, and while the Algerian people retained their native language as the privileged few became bilingual, the enslaved black Americans were uprooted from their primary oral culture and transported to an alien territory where they were denied access to both oral and written culture.

Indeed, as soon as the African slave reached the New World, he was denuded of his native culture and extirpated of his native language. He was even denied his native religion. To rebuild his shattered life, he was obliged to adopt the culture of the people he was forced to live with. But even this new culture was not freely open to him. His white masters allowed him access to western culture on a very limited basis. For example, he was not allowed to learn to read or to write, and the few ones who managed to do so, did it secretly and at the risk of losing their lives sometimes. This peculiar situation

3. Kateb Yacine, for example, has always resisted the assimilation of his work with the 'nouveau roman' that appeared in France at the time of the publication of Nedjma. The Algerian writer did not appreciate his association with the colonizer's new literary movement. He confesses that, " on a voulu me 'foutre' dans le nouveau roman, on a essayé de spéculer sur mon nom".

did little to encourage literary pursuits. In any case, by its very nature, slavery limited the creative expression of black people to folk forms. With the advent of writing, the African American people felt the need to recapture their history and culture through literary texts. It nevertheless remains, as we are going to see in this chapter, grounds for comparing and contrasting how African Americans and Algerians have countered the dominant discourse.

For the Algerian writers under study, the linguistic experience with the colonizer's language has left imprints on both their lives and their writings. Given the legacy of colonial violence, the Algerian novelists too have approached the colonizer's language with ambivalence. Throughout their literary careers, they have acknowledged ambiguity towards the French language. Their political awareness has made them conscious that their use of an alien language would distance them from their people, thus making them undergo an internal 'exile'. In this chapter, we will answer questions like: What is the relationship between the maternal tongue and the White's/ French language? How do the writers under study situate themselves in relation to this duality in language, in culture? What does it mean for the selected writers to write in the language of the former master/ colonizer? Is this a cultural betrayal, or is it rather a gesture of recuperation and transformation?

VIII.1-Double Consciousness:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife--this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. [4]

Mingling memories and traditions from both Western and African cultural spheres, African American culture is simultaneously part of and separate from white American culture. Viewed as being bilingual, it has been marginalized in American society. For the people belonging to this 'marginalized' culture, "relegation to otherness leads to an awareness of double-consciousness."[5] This 'double consciousness' was defined by W.E.B Du Bois in "The souls of Black Folk" in 1903.[6] It refers mainly to the

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4. W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, op cit., p.215.

5. Philip Page, Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995, p.10.

6. DuBois declared that 'this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through

existence of two antagonistic selves in the black man's body, self as self and self as seen by others, and to the impossibility of any black person to reconcile the two experiences as he spends his life negotiating and enduring the conflicts between the two selves, the one he thinks he possesses and the one the others ascribe to him, "an American, a Negro, two warring souls in one dark body." The antagonism resulting from this 'twoness' results in the eternal imprisonment of the black man in the negative projections of the white other, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others". Du Bois's notion of 'double consciousness' is, accordingly, a result of the black Americans' quest for wholeness and unity of self in a supremacist country that refuses to see them in any other way than as inferior beings devoid of culture and civilization while their desire is to be accepted and integrated in their country simply as Americans.

Fanon comes closest to DuBoisian double consciousness by saying, "Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has to place himself…[H]is customs and the sources on which they are based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him."[7] According to William Andrews, this concept of 'double consciousness' operated on three different fronts:

> One had to do with problems of self-definition resulting from living within a society pervaded by stereotypes and negative images that all African Americans had to confront. A second involved the exclusion of African Americans from mainstream American institutions, creating a way of life that was both 'American and not-American.' The third focused on internal conflicts in the individual between what was distinctly 'African,' which Du Bois identified as an innate and powerful spirituality, and what was 'American'[8]

In more general terms, 'double-consciousness' describes the split awareness of African American writers in America. For the new generation of black

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the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity'. However, although Du Bois is considered by many as being the first to have used the concept of 'double consciousness, Bernard W. Bell explains that "The O[xford] E[nglish] D[ictionary] identifies the rise of double consciousness as a diagnostic term in psychological discourse in 1882 as "a condition which has been described as a double personality, showing in some measure two separate and independent trains of thought and two independent mental capabilities in the same individual." But the term actually appeared as early as 1817 in a psychological case study of Mary Reynolds [by William S. Plumerm] entitled "A Double Consciousness, or a Duality of the Person in the Same Individual." In "Generational Shifts in Du Bois's Discourse on Double Consciousness as the Sign of African American Difference." W.E.B. Du Bois on Race and Culture: Philosophy, Politics, and Poetics. Eds, Bernard Bell, Emily Grosholz, and James B. Stewart. New York and London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 89-90.

7. Black Skin, White Masks, op cit., p.110.

8. William L. Andrews, Foster Frances Smith and Harris Trudier, eds. The Oxford Companion to African-American Literature. Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1997.p. 225.

novelists that emerged just after the First World War, their adjustment to the dominant white culture was marked by a conflicting pattern of identification and rejection. They were at the same time alike and different from their white counterparts.

On the one hand, these writers had to be conversant with western culture, especially with the traditions of English literature. Their pride and self–esteem suffered, on the other hand, from the unpleasant image of themselves they received from the white people and the black middle class. The latter were often "the products of hybrid cultural experiences"[9] and "frequently draw from both African and European heritage."[10] Forced into a biracial culture in which they were the oppressed others, they often documented in their literary works their quest to discover their lost identity. The novel became, for these emerging Afro- American writers, "an important vehicle to represent the social context, to expose inequality, racism and social injustice."[11] The dilemma of the African American writers, their identity crisis, stemmed from the fact of having the unthinkable task of voicing their blackness in a culturally white language. This situation created a conflict in their psyche as these writers became, more often than not, torn between their past and present. As a consequence, their identity crisis became painfully obvious in their literary works.

In his analysis of Toni Morrison's novels, Philip Page suggests that there are four basic issues that are dealt with by African American writers in their literary works, and that are directly linked with their feeling of 'double-consciousness' and 'split identities'. These issues, as we are going to see in the present chapter, are relevant to the works of the writers of the 1920's and to Toomer and Hurston's fiction too. They are, "the quest for place, the recovery of the past, the problem of identity, and experimentation with narrative form."[12] Nevertheless, things were not as easy for the black writers of the 1920's as they seemed to be. As E.U. Essien-Udom states so well, "Afro-Americans are trying to achieve equality in American society while at the same time striving to maintain three overlapping identities–American in the broader sense, black American in the sense of a unique America experience, and African in the sense of the land of their forebears." [13]

Unfortunately, the biracialism and biculturalism of the black American writers denied them the very authority they sought to attain as authors. As Davis writes in his introduction to The Negro Caravan:

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9. Peach Linden. Macmillan Modem Novelists: Toni Morrison. London: Macmillan Press, 1995, p.12.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid, p.2.

12. Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison s' Novels, op cit, p.17.

13. E.U. Essien-Udom, "Black Identity in the International Context." In Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience, op cit., p.233.

> The editors . . . do not believe that the expression " *Negro Literature*" is an accurate one, and in spite of its convenient brevity, they have avoided using it. "*Negro Literature*" has no application if it means *structural peculiarity*, or a Negro school of writing. The Negro writes in the forms evolved in English and American literature. . . . The editors consider Negro writers to be American writers, and literature by American Negroes to be a segment of American literature.[14]

Both Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston reveal through their treatment of the African American characters in the novels selected for study their own awareness of this double consciousness. Their use of English, on the other hand, is informative in this regard. The characters speak their own Black dialect. Their language is full of black diction and idiom. This is an attempt to both protest at using the white man's tool and to create an identity that has survived and is still surviving a change that is considered irreversible. However, of the two African-American writers under study, Jean Toomer is the one who has suffered most from this double burden. Indeed, he has been the one the most frequently portrayed as an incarnation of 'double consciousness', the racially alienated man. His alienation from his own people seems the most pronounced as his African heritage becomes more a burden than a source of pride for him. His works and declarations reflect, as we will see, the most deep-seated form of otherness.

a- The Racially Alienated Man:

As seen previously, Jean Toomer was very much praised for his literary work Cane. He was believed by many critics and intellectuals of the time to be the best writer to have "captured" the rural Southern Black experience in a haunting and revealing way. He was also considered as a founding father of the Harlem Renaissance, and the "most talented Negro writer America bred."[15] But their disappointment was at its greatest when Toomer refused to claim an African-American ethnicity. The writer wrote in a pamphlet in 1932: "As for being a Negro, this of course I am not–neither biologically nor socially."[16] He also stated that during the Harlem Renaissance, "[He] did not like the boosting and trumpeting and the over-play and over-valuation of the Negro, of the products of Negro writers, which were springing up. [He] refused to have any part in this displaying."[17] Toomer rejected the appraisal made of him by critics because he felt that he was appreciated more

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14. Houston A. Baker Jr., cited in Discourse and the Other: The Production of the Afro-American Text. Ed, W. Lawrence Hogue . Durham: Duke University Press, 1986, p7

15. In a Minor Chord , op cit., p.4.

16. Ibid, p.33.

17. Frederik L. Rusch , ed. A Jean Toomer Reader: Selected Unpublished Writings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.102.

for his race than for his art.[18] Toomer's denials were received as betrayal. He was no longer the 'true race man' praised by critics and literary men alike but rather an embarrassment to the African-American people as he became "the man who deserted his people".

In his introduction to Jean Toomer Selected Essays and Literary Criticism, Robert Jones refers to the school of thought that viewed Toomer as a racial traitor and states that "This school believes that writers of African heritage should focus exclusively on racial themes and subjects." This school accused "Toomer's racial idealism" as being "a clever ruse to deny his heritage; and that his 'raceless' writings … should be banished into obscurity."[19] He became, accordingly, marginalized because of his racial ambiguity.

Toomer, in reality, epitomizes DuBois's double-consciousness as the young writer had always felt, as his elder explains concerning ambiguity in character, "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge this double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishe[d] neither of the older selves to be lost." DuBois's statement applies to the way Toomer struggled to find a balance between his self as 'other' and his self as 'American'. Thus, his life and work appear to bear the most prominent perspective of otherness. Indeed, Toomer's explicit renouncement of both himself and his work to be representative of African American culture and life were due mainly to the writer's personal crisis at being both black and American and refusing to be confined to only one race. The writer's life was a constant battle to discover his true identity long before he wrote Cane.

Toomer also thought that his quest for wholeness was directly linked with his efforts to find his father. Nathan Toomer, Jean Toomer's father, a light-skinned mulatto had abandoned his wife when the writer was just six weeks old. As a result, Toomer went to live with his maternal grandparents. After his move to his grandparents' house, Toomer's grandfather, P. B. S. Pinchback, the influential former governor of Louisiana, wanted to change the boy's name to his own, and his mother agreed to drop Nathan. Jean Toomer became known as Eugene or "Pinchy" Toomer. After Toomer was old enough to claim his own name, he decided that he preferred the use of Eugene, or its French version, Jean. Years later, Jean Toomer would reclaim his father's name, calling himself Nathan Jean Toomer.[20]

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18. What can explain Toomer' motive in wanting to deny his race can be found in an extract taken from his diary , in which the African American writer confides, " My desire to be dominant, to have the freedom and power of at least the social world, will not allow of my being colored, for the colored world is dominated and segregated. I must live, first, as an individual." Cited in In a Minor Chord, p.34.

19. Robert Jones, ed. Introduction. Jean Toomer Selected Essays And Literary Criticism. Knoxville: University Of Tennessee Press, 1996, p. xiii

20. He added Nathan to his name for two reasons: in hopes of reuniting with his father who, unknown to Toomer, died in 1907, and of correcting readers' assumptions that he was female.

Toomer's search for identity became more complicated when considering his struggle with race. Indeed, the writer's identity was never a stable one since his position in society constantly shifted. As a child and adolescent, Jean Toomer found himself 'passing' into many ethnic environments. First, as a child, Toomer lived for almost fourteen years in his grandparents' house. Because of the active political life of his grandfather, the young Toomer found himself socialized in white aristocratic circles. Then Toomer moved to live in his Uncle Bismark's house. This time, he found himself surrounded by an upper-class black community.

As a result of his family background, Toomer's life, as John Francis Kinsler points out, "can be viewed a constant battle against the liminal or fractured positions thrust upon him by society towards an integrated whole- his strategy was one of constant revision, adopting multiple positionalities in order to achieve a final goal of unity and spiritual fusion for himself and America." [21] The writer's unsettled childhood and the constant changing of his name demonstrate his fragmented self as well as his difficulty in forming an identity. As a mulatto, Toomer suffered from a lack of belonging. He neither wanted to be 'just black' nor 'just white', but a third category that would include both races and exclude none of them.

Although Toomer had no defined social position due to his personal and family backgrounds, he refused to be racially categorized. He believed that isolating himself into one racial group would deny some aspects of his identity. Likewise, he considered that defining men according to their race distorted and limited their social identity. He confessed, "I have lived equally amid the two race groups. Now white, now colored."[22] This implies that Toomer could become 'white' or 'black' depending on the situation, and that he could assume the identity necessary to blend in with either group. Although this ability to control which aspects of his multiple identities he would emphasize and allow to surface allowed him to mingle easily with either group he wanted to be part of, it nevertheless forced him to deny, consciously or nor, some part of himself no matter what position he took as the two identities were mutually exclusive.

Moreover, Toomer defined race as an unjust categorization of Americans that created a prejudiced and fragmented society. Accordingly, he refused to be placed within any racial category. He did not want to be labelled either black or white because identification with either race would have been only a partial identification and would have surely prevented him from establishing an objective and raceless relationship with the other. Indeed, the African American writer considered that claiming one racial identity and ignoring the other would lead him to deny an important part of himself. So he

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21. John-Francis Kinsler, Jean Toomer: Essentialist and Spiritualizer. Royal Holloway: University of London, 2006, p.4.

22. Mark Whalan, ed. The Letters of Jean Toomer, 1919-1924. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006, p. 70.

did not identify himself with a particular race. Although Toomer admitted to having Negro ancestry, he preferred to distance himself from being Negro. This is evident in his letter to Sherwood Anderson where the writer deliberately used the third person to separate himself from the Negro group:

> The Negro's curious position in this western civilization invariably forces *him* into one or the other of two extremes: either *he* denies Negro entirely (as much as he can) and seeks approximation to an Anglo-Saxon (white) ideal, or… *he* overemphasizes what is Negro. Both these attitudes have their source in a feeling of (a desire not to feel) inferiority. But I feel in time, in its social place, my art will aid in giving the Negro to *himself*. (emphasis added)[23]

Toomer wanted his art to stand on its own merits and not by the race of its author.

Toomer saw the separation of art into ethnic groups as a cultural death to America. Whenever and wherever possible, he expressed his position towards the Afro-American literary tradition. Thus, when he was asked by James Weldon Johnson the permission to include parts of Cane in his second edition of The Book of Negro Poetry, the writer answered in a way that shocked most of his contemporaries as the following excerpt demonstrates:

> I recognize.. .that the Negro art movement has had some valuable results. It is, however, for those who have and who will benefit by it. It is not for me. My poems are not Negro poems, nor are they Anglo-Saxon or white or English poems. My prose, likewise. They are, first mine. And, second, in so far as general race or stock is concerned, they spring from the result of racial blendings here in America which have produced a new race or stock. We may call this stock the American stock or race. My energies are devoted and directed towards the building of a life which will include all creative people of corresponding type.[24]

After the publication of Cane, Toomer became frustrated with the misinterpretations and classification of his life and writing by race. He did not believe in racial categories and eventually tried to clarify his racial views. He found, from his family background and personal experience within the two races, that his race did not fall into one particular category. He rather suggested a merging of positive meanings of blackness and American. This goes hand with hand with Du Bois's suggestion of a positive merging of the two selves.

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23. The Letters of Jean Toomer, 1919-1924 , op cit., p.106.
24. Toomer Collection, Fisk University Library, Toomer to Johnson, 11 July 1930.

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America…He would not bleach his Negro soul…He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellow, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.
> This, then, is the end of his striving; to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture…[25]

His position did not change two years later when Nancy Cunard asked him to include parts of Cane in her anthology The Negro. In his answering letter he stated: "Though I am interested in and deeply value the Negro, I am not a Negro. And though I have written about the Negro, and value the material and the art that is Negro, all my writings during the past seven years have been on other subjects. In America I am working for a vision of this country as composed of people who are Americans first, and only of certain descents as secondary matters."[26] Some years later, Toomer would reject the existing racial categories in the United States of America. Rather than label himself an Afro-American, or a white American, Toomer would call himself an American.

> There is a new race in America. I am a member of this new race. It is neither white nor black nor in between. It is the American race, differing as much from white and black as white and black differ from each other. It is possible that there are Negro and Indian bloods in my descent, along with English, Spanish, Welsh, Scotch, French, Dutch, and German. This is common in America; and it is from all these strains that the American race is born. But the old divisions into white, black, brown, red are outworn in this country. They have had their day. Now is the new ideal of man. I proclaim this order. My marriage to Margery Latimer is the marriage of two Americans.[27]

Toomer resisted being identified with any race besides the new one he was creating–the American race. In fact, by choosing to identify himself as "an American", Toomer refuses to place himself within the American bi-racial discourse of 'black' or 'white'. Unable to be both in the dualistic racist system he preferred to become neither as he believed that racial stratifications and social establishments were unnatural and caused racial discrimination. According to him, America had to move away from race as a construct and

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25. The Souls of Black Folk, op cit., p.215.
26. Toomer Collection, op cit., Toomer to Cunard, 8 February 1932.
27. Toomer Collection, op cit., Box 15, Folder 18.

embrace one hybrid 'American Race' in order to get rid of the need for racial construction, comparison and privilege.

Although Toomer did maintain his racial position throughout his life, he did not expect anyone to accept or even to understand it. There was, according to him, very little he could do to influence people's thinking. "If people wanted to say the black blood was Negro blood and…then call me Negro." Toomer considered himself, as stated in a letter he sent to Sherwood Anderson, as an interracial negotiator and unifier of representational identity. "And 'I' together with all the other 'I's' am the reconciler."[28] He persisted in his belief that "here in America we are in the process of forming a new race, [and] that I was one of the first conscious members of this race."[29] These declarations by the African American writer opened him to criticism that labeled him "a tragically misguided figure who was unable to come to terms with his racial identity." [30] Even today, critics accuse him of being a "hypocrite and a traitor."[31] Toomer's views of race, in fact, isolated him from many of his contemporaries who could not understand the writer's position towards race.

This double consciousness, from which the writer suffered, is also seen in some of his characters in the novel. Indeed, for Jean Toomer the artist, no one better than the mulatto/mulatta could stand as a symbol of the fusion of different races in America. The mulatto/mulatta as characters, who have been kept from social acceptance and who have long existed beyond racial boundaries, became germane to Toomer's experimentation with literary form. Thus, in Cane, Toomer uses the mulatto as the main character in most of his short stories; he also unites aesthetic traditions of Southern, African American, and European-American art forms "[his] drive to make the pieces of Cane balance or cohere enacts on the formal level his struggle to reconcile both the contradictory spirits of North and South and the black and white within himself.**"** [32] He believed that the mulatto's search for a social identity could end only with the elimination of all kinds of social categories

Perhaps the most prominent character who suffers from double consciousness in Cane is Kabnis. Through Kabnis, Toomer probes for a voice that would reconcile his own racial dichotomies and those of the United States in the 1920s. Kabnis's experience, in the novel, details the efforts of Afro-Americans to find viable identities in a racialized America. As seen earlier, Kabnis's search for identity consists in the dilemma whether to reserve the African heritage and be proud of his ancestors or whether to assimilate to and integrate the mainstream values. Although the end of the story is quite optimistic with Kabnis wearing the robe and reconciling himself with his

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28. The New Negro, op cit., p. 126.
29. Ibid.
30. Woodson Jon, To Make A New Race. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999, p.29.
31. A Jean Toomer Reader, op cit., p.99.
32. The New Negro, op cit., p. 126.

African heritage, it remains that his conflict over racial identity is unresolved. By leaving the quest for identity unresolved, Jean Toomer describes the intricacies of being an African American in American society. All these express the ambivalence and the tensions of being both a Negro and an American. In the same way as his character Kabnis, Toomer, as said earlier, could neither reconcile the cultures of North and South nor face his racial past. Perceived by others as African American, Toomer admitted only interest in the 'Negro race', not membership. In fact, Toomer's position was not just a rejection of his African heritage, but a rejection of any kind of categorisation. He felt that he did not belong to any specific racial category. He believed he was a new person, a representative of a new American race. In his privately published book of aphorisms, he wrote, "I am of no particular race. I am of the human race, a man at large in the human world, preparing a new race."[33] In his literary work, Toomer fuses the art forms of the African American with the European in order to create a new American art that would encompass both European and African predecessors as a denial of racial and artistic categories. "Toomer forces us," as Gates argues, "to abandon any definition of Afro-American literature that would posit the racial identity of an author as its principal criterion ... the critical difference for Toomer was not so much his race ... as what he sought to represent and how he represented it."[34] As a result, the way Cane is presented is linked closely to the characters' instability and inner conflicts.

b- The Culture Uplifter

In the same way as many African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston faced the difficult task of maintaining pride in blackness and in her African origins within a culture that elevated white over black. Like Jean Toomer, Hurston deliberately challenged the literary traditions of the time by embracing the rural agrarian in Their Eyes Were Watching God, and depicting a "backward Negro people" using their peculiar speech and traditions to express their lives. Hurston's work in general was meant as an answer to the social scientists of the time that persisted in their descriptions of African American life as devoid of traditions or culture. Since myth and folklore were the essential means of reclaiming the black cultural heritage in opposition to the white construction of blackness, she became aware of the necessity of denouncing the fallacy of the myth of Africa's primitiveness. The African American writer underwent "a positive analysis of black culture"[35] in her work in order to recover the African American identity

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33. Jean Toomer cited in Essentials, op cit., p. XXIV.

34. Henry Louis Gates, Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp.206-209.

35. "Autoethnography: Zora Neale Hurston, Noni Jabavu, and Cross- Disciplinary Discourse," op cit., p. 237.

of her people. Her inscription of folkloric and cultural elements in her text were meant to highlight not only Janie's search for identity, but a whole people's search for identity that would valorize the black people as African Americans with a rich cultural tradition.

By transforming African American folklore, that is mostly oral, into a fictionalized written text, Zora Neale Hurston rejected the already existing image of African Americans as primitive and unsophisticated. She portrayed the South and the folk as the source of black art, black heritage, and spiritual growth and development. She also reconstructed the color black from a symbol of inferiority and oppression to one of strength and resistance. She accordingly asserted her right to write as both a non-European and a Southerner. Her main aim was to document and refashion African-American ethnic identity thereby preserving and perpetuating the cultural values of the black people at a time when race remained an "unspeakable topic" in the culture of the USA. As a result, she translated and transcribed African American beliefs and myths that she collected during her anthropological research in the South, and wove them into fiction in order to deconstruct white perceptions of black people.

Hurston's position made of her a traitor in the eyes of the racial uplift advocators as her work was not deemed central to the principles of the new movement. She became, according to them, the symbol of the kind of cultural stagnation Renaissance elders resented. Already, during the publication of Mules and Men in 1935, Hurston was accused of being a nostalgic writer whose only aim was to preserve the "extinct."[36] Biographer Carla Kaplan states in this context,

> This was a risky move esthetically and it was a risky move politically because it ran afoul of the main aesthetic and political tenet of the Harlem Renaissance. Most of her contemporaries, which is to say also most of her dear friends in the Harlem Renaissance, were absolutely dedicated to the notion that the literary arts were the single most important way that blacks could achieve civil rights and they would do so by showing white America that blacks were really no different. Which meant that the theater and the fiction that was considered most important in the Harlem Renaissance were those cultural representations that showed blacks looking like mainstream ideas of white culture, which is to say Northern, urban, middle class, professional blacks. Hurston wanted to do something altogether different. She wanted to show white and indeed black culture, a group of black Americans they had probably never heard of. So she wanted to go down into

36. Leigh Anne Duck, " 'Go there to know there': Zora Neale Hurston and the Chrono type of the Folk," American Literary History 13.2 , 2001, pp. 265-94 , p.265.

> the Deep South, into the sub-working class and document the lives of what she called the 'Negro farthest down.' [37]

Hurston was faulted by her contemporaries for not writing protest novels for social change. Many of the black activists who objected to her work argued that the white readers would take the poor, uneducated, carefree black characters depicted in her novel as representatives of all the black race while they would overlook the intellectual and social accomplishments of the emerging black middle class who were struggling to overcome racial, social, and economic hardships , and who were completely absent from her literary work. They also accused her of 'panding' to wealthy white patrons who urged her to depict black people as entertaining creatures whose sole objective was to amuse white readers at the expense of their own race. As late as 1971, critics still saw in Hurston 'a wandering minstrel' rather than a serious writer. In In a Minor Chord, Darwin Turner agreed with earlier critics. He wrote: "But, superficial and shallow in her artistic and social judgments, she became neither an impeccable raconteur nor a scholar. Always, she remained a wandering minstrel."[38]

In the same way as Jean Toomer, Hurston felt that black traditions in the South were on their way of extinction, and that they needed to be saved, through the written form, before it was too late. Early in Mules and Men, Hurston stated that African American folk tales "are a lot more valuable than you might think. We want to set them down before it's too late."[39] like Toomer before her, Hurston felt an urgency to save the culture of her people before it was lost in the midst of modernism and industrialization. Her writings were a way of preserving her culture even while she believed that it was slipping away.

Thus, instead of being a simple 'spectator' of her people's cultural collapse, Hurston took position and emphasized African Americans' active engagement with rather than passive absorption of cultural elements as they participated in a hybrid culture. In "Characteristics of Negro Expression" Hurston declared that, while the African-American, "lives and moves in the midst of a white civilization, everything that he touches is reinterpreted for his own use. He has modified the language, mode of food preparation, practice of medicine, and most certainly the religion of his new country. . ." [40] In the same way as her country people, Hurston would reinterpret the English language and the Eurocentric literary tradition for her own use. Although her work, as we will see later, does not include a direct indictment of racism, the African

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37. Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters, op cit., p.220.
38. In a Minor Chord, op cit., p.120.
39. Zora Neale Hurston, Mules and Men, (1935). Harper Collins Publishers, 1990, p8.
40. Bonnie Kime Scott, ed. The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 181.

American writer refused to be a simple spectator of her people's belittling and denigration. She looked beyond the devastating effects of slavery and Jim Crow and emphasized the determination of black southerners in creating their own sense of identity apart from that bestowed upon them by white patriarchy.

Hurston uses, in her novel, the tools that she considers the most adequate to uplift her people and enhance their cultural traditions and ways of life as completely distinct from the white ones. She employs the knowledge of her background in Eatonville in addition to her findings from her anthropological research in the South. "[Hurston's] intimate knowledge of this milieu enables her to render the various folk in their genuine cultural context and to transcribe spoken language with a sensitivity rarely achieved since."[41] In her desire to promote her people's cultural life, "Hurston create[s] a bridge between the 'primitive' authority of folk life and the literary power of written texts."[42]

The most prominent aspect of African American culture that Hurston uses in her novel is certainly storytelling which is firmly embedded in the African American oral tradition. Janie's sharing the story of her journey with her friend Phoebe, by word of mouth, and letting her tell the story to the other members of the community is based on the tradition of storytelling. Though Janie does not share her story directly with the community members, due to her special position, she is confident that Phoebe's telling the story is "just de same as me 'cause mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf." **(**Their Eyes, 6).Thus, according to Hazel Carby, acquiring the tradition of storytelling and using it allows Janie to "mount her own porch"[43] and start a tradition of her own.

Hurston uses also, in her literary works, the mode of free indirect discourse which blends Standard English with black vernacular. In this form of narrative, what has been already said by the characters becomes a part of the narrator's voice. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, the narrator appropriates both the language and mood of the community. He provides an insight to the community without any distorted vision. For instance, when the narrator describes the impact of Joe's decision to free Matt Bonner's mule, in the novel, it is said that it provoked 'new lies' around the town. Eventually, after the mule dies and is found in an unnatural position, Sam's story about the mule's fight with Death seamlessly blends with the narrative and makes it difficult for the reader to identify where the voice of the character ends and where the voice of the narrator starts. In his introduction to The Signifying Monkey, Henry Louis Gates states:

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41. Klaus Benesch, "Oral Narrative and Literary Text: Afro-American Folklore in Their Eyes Were Watching God." Callaloo 36 (1988): 627-35, p.630.

42. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spillers, ed. Con/uring: Black Women, Fiction, and the Literary Tradition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, p.11.

43. Hazel V. Carby, "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and Folk," in New Essays on "Their Eyes Were Watching God, op cit., p.73.

> Free indirect discourse is represented in this canonical text [Their Eyes Were Watching God] as if it were a dynamic character, with shifts in its level of diction drawn upon to reflect a certain development of self-consciousness in a hybrid character, a character who is neither the novel's protagonist nor the text's disembodied narrator, but a blend of both, an emergent and merging moment of consciousness.[44]

Free indirect discourse is an imitation of forms of oral narration to be found in African American vernacular literature. Its rhetorical strategy is designed "to emulate the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical patterns of actual speech and produce the illusion of oral narration."[45]

Along with free indirect discourse, Hurston uses two other modes of narration which are direct discourse and indirect discourse. Direct discourse is written in black vernacular, while indirect discourse is in Standard English. By shifting between the first and third person, the African American vernacular English, the language of the folk , and Standard English in her writing, Hurston rejects the white model and preserves her blackness. Hurston attempts "to replace traditional authorship and its rigid, hierarchical language with alternative forms of narration and power."[46] She supplies her characters with words that enable them to articulate their thoughts. Hurston has, in fact, assumed the difficult task of taking a tradition which is oral and writes it down with authenticity. The linguistic forms and speeches used by the black characters in the novel could only help them be themselves within the boundaries of the rural South. They reflect their social and cultural realities**.** This merging, according to Hurston, serves not only a communal function, but a spiritual one as well. It is a force that can empower the African American people to construct their own independent identity.

Additionally, Hurston uses two other devices that are typically black and Southern. These are signifying and conjuring. Signifying, often written as signifyin', is a slang term for many kinds of verbal play that has originated among African Americans. It is also known as 'playing the dozens', 'giving a reading', and specifying'. In Words About Words, David Grambs defines the word as a simple "verbal game of exchanged insults."[47] According to Gates, playing the dozens is a verbal insult ritual in which the participants make "derogatory, often obscene, remarks about another's mother, parents, or family

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44. Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. XXVI.

45. Ibid., p.81.

46. "'The Hierarchy Itself': Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and the Sacrifice of Narrative Authority," op cit., p.182.

47. David Grambs, Words About Words: A Dictionary of 2000 words-Old, New, and Surprising-for Styles, Devices, Defects, and Oddities of the Craft of Prose Writing. New York: McGraw, 1984, p.333.

members."[48] But sometimes, the insults can be more serious, it becomes then, "a mean game because what you try to do is totally destroy somebody else with words."[49] This is what happens to Joe Starks in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, when his wife Janie insults him on the porch, as a result of his constant humiliation to her. By mocking his impotency and exposing him in front of the whole community, Janie literally kills him.

However, signifying can also be "a way of teaching or driving home a cognitive message…"[50] In Black Literature and Literary Theory, Gates states that "Black people have always been masters of the figurative: saying one thing to mean something quite other has been basic to black survival in oppressive Western cultures."[51] And in Dust Tracks on a Road, Hurston writes, "The bookless may have difficulty in reading a paragraph in a newspaper, but when they get down to 'playing the dozens' they have no equal in America, and, I'd risk a sizable bet, in the whole world."[52] In a world of racism and segregation, black people often found in the language of signifying the power to evade reality and to transcend their social powerlessness.

In addition to signifying, Hurston has adopted, as we have seen earlier, 'conjuring'. The reliance on conjure practices by African Americans helped the black slaves in retaining their cultural heritage, particularly as the dominant White culture sought to replace African people's ways of knowing with their own. According to Valerie Lee, " conjuring has been an empowering concept…[it] pays homage to an African past, while providing a present day idiom for magic, power, and ancient wisdom within a pan-African cultural context."[53] Hurston was among the first American writers to have taken the oral genre of conjuring from spoken to written word. In the novel, she depicts the use of conjuring as a tool of resistance against the oppression that her female character Janie endures. In Sharla Fett's words, conjuring is "…an arena in which men and women attempted to defend their sense of worth and protect what they regarded as their own, regardless of their physical strength."[54] Despite Janie's seemingly physical weakness as a female threatened by her husband's unstable state of mind, conjuring helps her fight back for her life.

In his literary biography of Hurston, Hemenway explains why 'conjuring' is so important to the African African-American people. "Conjure has historically provided an access to power for a powerless people, and many

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48. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism, op cit., p.69.
49. Ibid, p.72.
50. Ibid.
51. Black Literature and Literary Theory, op cit., p.6.
52. Dust Tracks on a Road, op cit., p.217.
53. Valerie Lee, Granny Midwives and Black Women Writers: Double –Dutched Readings. NewYork: Routledge, 1996, p.13.
54. Sharla M. Fett, Working Cures: Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002 ,p.91.

of its traditions are ancient. It is an alternative mode for perceiving reality, contrasting sharply with what is perceived as the white man's excessive rationality."[55] While conjuring is a source of empowerment for Janie in the novel, it remained for the white Americans of the era as the exclusive 'non sense' of African Americans. Often, their rituals and spiritual traditions were equated with devil worship, heathen superstitions, and black magic.

By using 'signifying' and 'conjuring' in her novel, Hurston went against public opinion of her time. Like the conjure women of her ancestral past, Hurston calls, through her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God, for the preservation and healing of an entire community of black people that lost pride in their origins and faith in their future. Through the introduction of non-western literary devices, Hurston calls on the inner spirituality of her people to continue to fight in a world bent on subjugating and objectifying them. In addition, the African American writer's use of African-based spirituality in the form of signifying and conjuring in her novel stems from her conviction in the capacity of fiction to provide ways of maintaining and communicating important cultural values which otherwise might be lost. To reach her goal, Hurston travelled to the most remote places in the country in order to collect and interpret the songs, stories and folklore of the rural blacks. Above all, she could observe the life of the black people in Eatonville, the town of her childhood, and report the tale-telling of the men on the porch of her parents' house, "the most interesting place that [she] could think of."[56] Through her novel she attempts to reconstruct the black voices she had heard in the Old South by using the black dialect and the black spiritual practices. Accordingly, she has become, as Henry Gates concludes in his "Afterword" to Dust Tracks on a Road, "a metaphor for the black woman writer's search for tradition."[57]

Although critics today describe Hurston's use of black material and black dialect as 'authentic', her novel possesses a rich history of controversy surrounding its reception. The writer was shunned by her contemporaries who assumed that the 'primitive' ingredients of poor southern black culture needed to be transcended. Worse, Hurston was accused of inaccurate portrayal of African Americans. The unfavorable reviews of the work seemed unavoidable for her work appeared to be reaffirming the very old stereotypes of African Americans the new movement was trying to fight and erase. Her rebellious, non-compliance has caused her unrelenting criticism from the most powerful and respected Black elite.

In the same way as Jean Toomer, Hurston faced the dilemma of whether or not to take side with African or American beliefs**.** However, Hurston's racial alienation was considered of another kind. Indeed, unlike Toomer, Hurston did not reject both categories but rather developed a unique

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55. Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography, op cit., p.119.
56. Dust Tracks, op cit., p.46.
57. Ibid, p. 288.

point of view that encompassed the merits of both and avoided one-sidedness. She drew upon her internal cultural resources and claimed representation on her own terms. Since English has always been associated with the power of the white dominant group, Hurston has mingled it in her novel with black dialect as a way to build up a positive image of the black people. She managed to use white cultural traditions to relate uniquely black experiences. As Chaney writes in a different context, Hurston had "the unthinkable task of voicing blackness in a culturally white language."[58] The African American lived on the margin of the white society, close enough for actual physical contact with the majority culture and its heritage, but very far from it in concrete experiences and cultural background.

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that by embracing the rural, southern aesthetic in their novels, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston wanted to challenge the parameters of political identity as advocated by their contemporaries. The two Afro-American writers were interested mainly in depicting the cultural heritage of their people as a way of perpetuating and preserving it. Moreover, they endeavoured, in their works, to negate the standard grammatical and ideological constructs associated with the White's domination in discursive practices. Accordingly, their works became glowing examples of the rich cultural legacy of the rural south. In their desire to assimilate the White man's language to their own culture, the black novelists inscribed elements of orality into the written language of the novel. In the same manner as oral tales, the novels which incorporate its traits tend to lack formality in contrast to what is normally expected in European literatures. One might also be reminded of the exchange of language between the speakers by structuring the telling of a story in the form of a conversation, full of interruptions, questions from listeners, and other sound. These authors transgress patriarchal logic and rationality. Toomer and Hurston's endeavour to write also aims to inscribe them into the historical discourse from which they had so long been denied access due to their alterity and to preserve their cultural values for generations to come.

VIII.2 - Cultural Dualism

> "I speak as an Algerian and as a Frenchman..." The intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, when he comes up against the need to take on two nationalities, chooses, if he wants to remain true to himself, the negation of one of these determinations. But most often, since they cannot or will not make a choice, such intellectuals gather together all the

58. Michael A. Chaney. Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative . Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2008, p.24

> historical determining factors which have conditioned them and take up a fundamentally 'universal standpoint.'[59]

DuBois's theory of 'double consciousness' is by no means unique to the African American writers as it can also be applied to the Algerian writers under study, albeit not in the strictest sense that Du Bois means it. As Fanon explains, Algerian intellectuals stumble over the need to assume two nationalities, two determinations, the intellectual who is Arab and French. Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar come immediately to mind as directly influencing their way(s) of writing was their sense of hybrid identity resulting from the two opposing worlds in which they lived. On the one hand, they were imprinted by their upbringing in an Arab society and on the other hand, they were marked by the French culture that they had inherited as a product of the colonial system. The colonial educational system was problematic for these people as they were introduced to French notions of culture and civilization at school while they were expected to maintain traditional positions at home and within their communities. Very often, it was quite impossible for them to reconcile these two sets of values. The clash resulting from their French education on the one hand, and their native social milieu on the other hand incited cultural rupture and ambivalence. As a result, they found themselves on the margins of both Algerian and French culture.

Actually, the French colonizers deprived the Algerian people of their language and traditions in an attempt to exterminate their culture and impose western cultural paradigms on a persecuted and colonized people. They used the French educational system as a tool to create consent for political and cultural domination. At the same time, they degraded the Algerians' culture, rituals and religious beliefs categorising them as inferior, primitive and pre-historic. Arabic language was devalued while French was privileged and promoted as the official language of the colony. On a more individual level, the French educational system directly led to rupture between the individual and his community.

Algerian experience with the French language started in the early years of colonization as the French colonizers aimed at using the French educational system as a means of controlling the Algerians by distancing them from their own cultural values and beliefs. The French claimed that one of their main goals in colonizing Algeria was bringing enlightenment and progress to the country through their civilizing mission. Nevertheless, statistics and facts presented by historians and politicians prove that their action had nothing to do with civilization. One of the main objectives of the colonizers as soon as they

59. The Wretched of the Earth, op cit., p.218.

settled in the country was the dismantling of the existing educational system by seizing the estates and funds for education. Accordingly, "The literacy rate never reached its pre-colonization level during the entire 132 years of colonization."[60]

On the other hand, the education of the indigenous population, when it took place, was more the imposition of the cultural norms of the dominant colonial power upon the indigenous society than a tool of emancipation. For Memmi, induction into the education system of the colonized denied the colonized a history which predated the colonizer's arrival. It was a potent colonial weapon that deliberately obscured the past of the native population, while it privileged European cultural values. As a result, school children were soon alienated from their own history and, thus, lost all sense of who they were. It is through this process that the minds of youth were colonized. As Memmi explained:

> Et celui qui a la chance insigne d'être accueilli dans une école n'en sera pas nationalement sauvé : la mémoire qu'on lui constitue n'est sûrement pas celle de son peuple. L'histoire qu'on lui apprend n'est pas la sienne. Il sait qui fut Colbert ou Cromwell mais non qui fut Khaznadar ; qui fut Jeanne d'Arc mais non la Kahina. Tout semble s'être passé ailleurs que chez lui; son pays et lui-même sont en l'air, ou n'existent que par référence aux Gaulois, aux Francs, à la Marne ; par référence à ce qu'il n'est pas.[61]

Thus, the colonized children inevitably started their lessons, as we have already seen, with "Our ancestors, the Gauls". Memmi describes this process as the effective "emasculation" or "calcification" of colonized societies or, stronger still, as the "social and historical catalepsy of the colonized."

Language was an especially efficient means in the denigration and belittling of the natives' history and culture for Arabic, and all that it entailed in terms of culture and civilization, was deemed inadequate by the French for the educational needs of the indigenous population. The French colonizers, through their educational system, imposed an alien system of values and beliefs upon the colonised people, violating their identity and denigrating their native culture and history. Accordingly, the Algerian writers' efforts to adjust to the dominant culture were marked by conflicting patterns of identification and rejection. Although French represented personal liberation for the writers trained in the colonial school, it carried the burden of colonial history. Thus, it is not without bitterness that these writers turned to writing in the colonizer's

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60. Habiba Deming, "Language and Politics: A New Revisionism" in Algeria and France: 1800-2000 . Ed, Patricia M.E. Lorcin. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006, p.182.

61. Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé, op cit, p. 123.

language as an alternative to try and reconcile these two opposing worlds created by colonialism.

As the quest for racial and cultural identity is very much linked to the use of language, Frantz Fanon, cautioned African novelists in general on using the language of the colonizer to speak for their own people. In his seminal work, The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon writes, " At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hallmark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. The native intellectual who comes back to his people by way of cultural achievements behaves in fact like a foreigner."[62]. Moreover, Fanon wrote that it was impossible for the Algerian people to be French and Arab at the same time because the colonial situation established them as opposites. Thus, there is no middle ground for the Algerian writers between two identities that are negations to one another.[63]

Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar were conscious of the dangers that the use of the colonizer's language to speak for their own people would entail; they felt that they were thrust into 'la gueule du loup,'[64] and that they had to appropriate 'la langue adverse'[65] and 'la langue Maratre'[66] to voice the conflicting ideas surrounding colonialism. Despite its dangers, these writers regarded the use of French as an effective means of liberation. It was very important to them to speak the same language as the enemy. Consequently, these writers had to come to some sort of compromise. Do they adopt the new language? Refuse it? Use it as a weapon to fight the oppressor? The duality created by this 'imposed' language is evident throughout their works. Indeed, as the following analysis will surely reveal, the two writers' works, although written in French remain in spite of their European linguistic vehicle or medium, deeply rooted within an Arabo-Berber and Muslim tradition. Their writing techniques and genre blending reflect their alterity. As we will see in the present section, the two Algerian writers' expression of double-consciousness evolves from childhood and home to adulthood and society.

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62. The Wretched of the Earth, op cit., p.212.

63. This idea has been contested by Pamela Pears who seems much influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari as she states that: "the writer who is a product of colonization and writes in the colonizer's language is separate from the colonizing power (there is no assimilation). Instead, the contamination of one field (colonized) by another (colonizer) creates 'a block of coexistence'" in Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam : Women, Words, and War , op cit, p.2

64. Le Polygone étoilé, op cit., p. 181.

65. Assia Djebar in Research in African Literature , op cit.

66. L'Amour, op cit., p.298.

a- Kateb Yacine in " La gueule du loup" :

As seen in the previous chapter, cultural subjugation required cultural retaliation from the Algerian novelists. Kateb Yacine felt that he had to write in French even though it was the language of the enemy in order to inscribe the suffering and injustice inflicted upon the Algerians by the colonial conquest. Kateb's views were shared by a group of Antillean writers in their "Eulogy to Creolity," in which they explained that they "conquered" the colonizer's language, and tailored it to suit their expressive needs.

> But our histories, for one time generous, gave us a gift of a second language. It was not there at the beginning. It belonged to our oppressors. We have conquered it, this French language…. we appropriated [it]. We expanded the meanings of some words…. We enriched its vocabulary and its syntax. …In short, we inhabited it. … Our literature should witness this conquest… it is not creolized or reinvented French or francized or reinvented Creole, but the language we found and decided upon… An antidote to ancestral domination that oppressed us.[67]

However, writing in French made Kateb in a way an exile as well as a traitor to his people, his culture, and his country. Due to his incompetence in the Arabic language because of the educational system, he lacked the most basic mode of connecting to his parental heritage and found himself marginalized from his home and family. Although he yearned to reconnect with the oral tradition that was part of his childhood and of his mother's world, he lived in a perpetual frustration of being incapable of doing so, and of being obliged to write in the language of the people who colonized his country, destroyed his family , and denigrated his cultural and historical heritage. It follows, then, that Kateb developed a sense of alienation from his own people, especially a linguistic one because he wrote and spoke French and the majority of his countrymen did not. Kateb states in this context:

> Dès l'âge le plus tendre, à l'école, des Algériens de ma génération ont connu le déchirement entre ce qu'ils étaient et ce qu'ils apprenaient. Avides d'absorber cette culture française qui s'offrait à nous comme LA CULTURE, la fenêtre ouverte sur le monde moderne, nous n'en ressentions pas davantage tout ce qui la séparait de notre place au sein de nos familles dans la communauté des vaincus, des humiliés, des pauvres. Je découvrais que ce que j'avais appris pendant la journée m'isolait lentement de mon milieu. Je devenais l'intrus, presque l'ennemi. Dans ma bouche, les miens

67. Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, et Raphaël Confiant. Eloge de la Créolité. Paris : Gallimard, 1989, pp.46-48.

> retrouvaient le langage du vainqueur… Ainsi je vivais sans répit le heurt de deux mondes.[68]

Kateb's use of French language deprived him of the Arabic language that had 'surrounded' him from his early age. He nourished a strong desire to assert his people's historical personality and to come to terms with the duality created by the imposition of the French language in their education. A dominant theme in his work is consequently his feeling of frustration and anger within an imposed culture.

Indeed, Kateb Yacine faced from an early age, linguistic and cultural dilemmas. He felt a constant need to adjust to the differences between his own traditional culture and the one brought by the colonizer through the educational system. Formal French education imposed on the Algerian school children instilled cultural knowledge and value systems that were contradictory to those of the home and community. They created a cultural dualism in the colonial subject, removing him linguistically, and culturally from his native culture. In L'Autre Journal, Kateb confesses to Nadia Tazi how he was fascinated by the new culture offered to him at school, and how this culture was instilled in him in such a subtle way that he could not be aware of its negative consequences on his future life.

> C'était une contradiction grave, si vous voulez, mais c'était ça. Je dévorais les livres, tout ce que j'apprenais, je crois que j'étais plutôt précoce ; je lisais Baudelaire…et puis je m'identifiais avec ce que j'apprenais, avec la Révolution française, qui était vraiment ma passion. Mais bon, tout ça c'était la France. Je ne m'en rendais pas bien compte au début, parce que, pour un enfant, ces choses-là ne sont qu'à moitié conscientes.[69]

In his literary works, Kateb's characters' development is marked by a feeling of dividedness. They demonstrate, through their evolution from childhood to adulthood, a growing consciousness of inner contradictions and antagonisms caused by their dual Arabic and French heritage. This dividedness becomes a determining factor in the formation of their identities.

Kateb uses his character Mustapha as a spokesperson of the writer's emotional confusion and feeling of alienation from his family's world, especially that of his mother. For Mustapha, as for his creator, the privilege of attending the French school marks the loss of the magical relationship with the mother. In Nedjma, Mustapha epitomizes this cultural dualism from which the writer himself suffers. While maître Gharib, Mustapha's father, belongs to traditional Algeria, he insists on sending his son to the French school with the

68. Témoignage Chrétien, op cit.
69. Le Poète comme un boxeur, op cit., p.14.

prime objective of mastering the French language, in the same way as Kateb's father sent the young Yacine , years earlier, to 'la gueule du loup' in order to master the language of the 'Other'. Throughout the novel, we can see the innocent desire of the young Mustapha to fulfill his father's wish and master the colonizer's language. His evolution in the mastery of the language is proudly narrated by the young boy. Thus, we learn first that he masters his grammar, "…on peut me poser n'importe quelle question sur le participe." (Nedjma, 208), "…oh yes, I can use the subjunctive." (Nedjma, 280), then that he masters writing, "Père m'a félicité pour la composition française," (Nedjma, 2011) "father congratulated me on my French composition" (Nedjma, 282), and finally that he has succeeded, "j'ai réussi!" (Nedjma, 212) "and I succeeded!" (Nedjma, 284).

It remains however that Mustapha does not associate his successes at the French school with any happy memory at home. All are linked in a way or another with the violence that surrounds the young boy in his community. Thus, we learn about his expertise in grammar while he is watching his father 'bleeding'. We also learn about his mastery of written expression while he is beaten by his father. And finally we learn that he is good at natural sciences when he uses the word 'tibia' to inform us that his father has hit his mother, cracking a bone in her leg. This may have been done on purpose by the writer in order to stress the ambivalence existing between the world of the colonized, full of blood and violence, and that of the French school that is imagined by the young school boy as belonging to the world of "les mille et une nuits".

Mustapha's divided loyalties between his native culture symbolized by his mother, and the French civilization and culture, symbolized by the French teacher, lead to an emotional crisis. The young boy feels that he has betrayed his origins and his mother, but at the same time he cannot separate from the new culture offered to him, and that he has learnt to love. These divided loyalties are best seen in the novel when Mustapha attends school the day of 'Mouloud', a Moslem religious feast. Of all the native school boys, Mustapha is the only one who goes to school because it is the day of a science test. Although he returns a blank paper as a protest against the French disrespect of the natives' religious celebrations, Mustapha feels that he has betrayed his people. " Je suis un faux frère!...J'aime les sciences naturelles." (Nedjma, 221), "…I am a false brother !...I like natural science." (Nedjma, 295)

This feeling of alienation is further developed in Le Polygone étoilé where Mustapha describes the idyllic relationship that existed between him and his mother before being sent to school." …les premières harmonies des muses coulaient pour moi naturellement, de source maternelle,…ma mère…était surtout douée pour le théâtre. Que dis-je ? A elle seule, elle était un théâtre. J'étais son auditeur unique et enchanté, quand mon père s'absentait pour quelque plaidoirie…" (Le Polygone, 179) This idyllic relationship ended when

his father sent him into 'la gueule du loup' in order to master the French language "Ainsi se referma le piège des Temps Modernes sur mes frêles racines." (Le Polygone, 181) Mustapha's father had certainly no idea of the rift that such a move from the native culture to the one of the colonizer would cause to his young son. Maître Gharib, in the same way as Kateb's father, saw the French language as a potential tool that his son would eventually need in his future life. As such, he had to master it. "La langue française domine. Il te faudra la dominer…" (Le Polygone, 180)

In fact, both Kateb's father and Maître Gharib, in the same way as a lot of Algerian people of the period of time preceding the Second World War realized that France was not to leave the country soon, and that if their children were to improve their standard of living, they would have to live in the new world France had created, using the linguistic and cultural tools France had brought and imposed on the native population. At the conclusion of Le Polygone étoilé, Mustapha describes the emotional conflict that this separation from the world of the mother has engendered.

> Ma mère soupirait; et lorsque je me plongeais dans mes nouvelles études, que je faisais, seul, mes devoirs, je la voyais errer, ainsi qu'une âme en peine. Adieu notre théâtre intime et enfantin, adieu le quotidien complot ourdi contre mon père, pour répliquer, en vers, à ses pointes satiriques…Et le drame se nouait. (Le Polygone, 181)

For Mustapha, the traditional culture's values are losing their relevance as a result of their contact with the technologically advanced civilization of the oppressors. Nevertheless, this conflict between the two civilizations has become a permanent source of tension for the young man. The interior exile that Mustapha feels, because of his education in French, has led to a lasting inner tension caused by the traumatic separation with the nearest person to his heart, his own mother. The latter was the first to put him in contact with the repository of traditional values. She was also the first to initiate him to poetry and drama. The traumatic feeling experienced by Mustapha in both Nedjma and Le Polygone étoilé at his separation with his mother, is shared by the writer himself whose separation with his mother was both literal and figurative.

Kateb's use of French, to speak back to the colonizers who had degraded his people, and to question their hegemonic supremacy, is perceived, as we saw previously, as an act of revolt. Kateb refused that his work be classified rigidly as fiction, thus, in Nedjma he distorted the French language both at the level of narrative form and narrative voice. He weaved history and fiction together while destabilising the boundaries of fiction writing. Moreover, he blends oral traditions with modern novelistic techniques. Indeed, Kateb used a multi-voiced narration that makes it difficult to discern who is actually

speaking. His radical use of language also stands as an attempt to distance his narrative form, as much as possible, from the colonizer's language. He also gave preference to the tribal and oral culture of his people, including ancient, half-forgotten rites and legends in his literary work.

However, to write in French meant for Kateb not just translating vocabulary and syntax from his native language into French, but also consciousness and feelings. In "The Algerian Novel of French Expression" Sellin states that all of Kateb's works are "exteriorizations of the Arabic mind with its polarity and repetition contained within the cartouche of the infinite, expressed to the fullest degree possible in French."[70] Kateb has, accordingly, modified the French language through the use of oral techniques and transpositions from Algerian dialectical Arabic.

On the other hand, Kateb knew that the French language did not belong to his people and would not be able to carry the full reality of the people's experience. The use of standard Arabic would not have alleviated the problem either as it would not have been able to reach the intended audience to which it was initially written. As Heggoy indicates, "had they [Algerian writers] been able to write in Arabic, they would still be caught in an impossible dilemma: their readers would be Egyptians and Syrians, for example, but only a few were Algerians."[71] Thus, after finishing Le Polygone étoilé in 1966, Kateb turned away from the novel and ceased to write in French. He turned to street theater in vernacular Algerian dialect as the best means that could reach the biggest number of his countrymen, mainly the illiterate ones who could not have access to his work written in French. For Kateb Yacine, Algerian writers should: "prendre au sérieux la langue populaire, langue dans laquelle s'exprime le génie du peuple, et qui n'a rien à voir avec cet arabe (littéraire) administratif naphtalinisé , si cher aux esprits desséchés."[72] His return to dialectical Arabic and to street theater were meant to reach the illiterate majority of Algerian people, stir their imagination, and encourage them to participate, at least virtually, in the building of the new nation.

b- Assia Djebar, the "exilée":

The question of language remains an important issue when discussing the literary works of Assia Djebar too. In the same way as with Kateb Yacine, the choice of language has raised for the Algerian female writer questions with regard to identity and authenticity. Through her literary career, Assia Djebar too articulates the experience of alienation, being cut off from her native

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70. Eric Sellin, "The Algerian Novel of French Expression," op cit., pp. 41-42.

71. Alf Andrew Heggoy "Colonial Education in Algeria: Assimilation and Reaction." In Education and the Colonial Experience. Ed , Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly. New York: Advent Books Division , 1991, p.107.

72. Littérature maghrébine de langue française, op cit., p.226.

culture as a result of having adopted the values and customs of the colonizer. Although the decision of attending the French school and learning the 'langue adverse' was not hers, the Algerian writer, in the same way as her male counterpart, has had to face the consequences of this decision all her life. In L'Amour, la fantasia, Assia Djebar describes how her father, who insisted on her education in French, took her to school for the first time. This journey from home to school would take the Algerian female writer on a longer one that would be both bilingual and bicultural. This would result not only in her development as an artist but also in her alienation from her own people.

Yet Djebar's experience, in contrast to that of Kateb Yacine, was not only racial but also gendered. Assia Djebar went to school at a time when the majority of Algerian women were denied education and access to the outside world. The French school gave Assia Djebar liberation as a woman in a patriarchal society; it allowed her to escape the stifling condition of life which crushed other women in her country and liberated her from the stranglehold of mores and traditions. However, this same system that liberated her from female enclosure, excluded her from most aspects of traditional woman's world. Djebar demonstrates this rupture in L' Amour, la fantasia as she describes the rift produced by colonial education:

> Ces apprentissages simultanés [ces deux écoles], mais de mode si différent, m'installent, tandis que j'approche de l'âge nubile...dans une dichotomie de l'espace. Je ne perçois pas que se joue l'option définitive: le dehors et le risque, au lieu de la prison de mes semblables. Cette chance me propulse à la frontière d'une sournoise hystérie.[73]

Moreover, the Algerian writer has come to understand that French could not express what was deeply felt by her. In Nulle part dans la maison de mon père, she exposes the shortcomings of the French language in describing her inner feelings and thoughts:

> [L]e français ne pouvant en rien rendre les allitérations, les allusions, les double ou triple sens d'un mot pivot, le jeu intérieur des rimes arabes...Oui, vraiment, le français devient langue morte quand il n'est capable que de traduire le 'sens', non la pulpe du fruit, ni la vibration de la rime![74]

The problem for Assia Djebar lies in the fact that even French alliterations and metaphors have proved inefficient and incapable of accurately describing, reflecting or portraying either her native culture or her inner feelings. The colonial language has fostered psychological and emotional alienation.

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73. L'Amour, la fantasia, op cit., pp. 260-261.
74. Nulle part dans la maison de mon père, op cit., p.278.

In Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria, Jane Hiddleston states that: "Although she is educated in the French system, and is only able to write in detail using the French language, she finds that this language glosses over the multiple, intricate Arab and Berber resonances of her cultural history. Anti-colonial narrative becomes deformed and indeed compromised when created in the language of the coloniser."[75] Through her works and pronouncements, Djebar refers again and again to this alienation that she finds in the French language and to her incapacity to describe what is deep inside her through the language of the oppressor. Describing her dualism in using the French language to write L'Amour, la fantasia, she states, "Je me suis rendue compte, à partir d'un certain moment, que le français était ma langue pour penser, pour avoir des amis, pour communiquer avec des amis, mais dès que l'affectivité et le désir étaient là, cette langue me devenait désert. Ce désert est investi des scènes de violence et de la guerre des ancêtres, de la chute des cavaliers qui sont tombés dans le combat."[76]

Although Assia Djebar seems torn between her two cultural identities, her native identity, and the French identity acquired at school, she insists on using the French 'butin de guerre' in order to give voice to her country people and reconstruct the history and culture destroyed by the colonizer. Thus, she has been in continual struggle to bring together the two unreconciled parts of her upbringing: her ancestors' oral tradition and the colonizer's written sign. While her French education has given her access to the written sign, Arabic has given her access to oral accounts of her ancestors which have been passed down from generation to generation.

> La langue française, corps et voix, s'installe en moi comme un orgueilleux percidé, tandis que la langue maternelle, toute en oralité, en hardes dépenaillées, résiste et attaque, entre deux essoufflements. Le rythme du "rebato" en moi s'éperonnant, je suis à la fois l'assiégé étranger et l'autochtone partant à la mort par bravade, illusoire effervescence du dire et de l'écrit.[77]

Thus, similarly to Kateb Yacine, the inner struggle caused by the appropriation of two 'adverse' languages has led her to create her own language. She has appropriated, and then altered the techniques used in western narratives.

In her study on postcolonial women writers, Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam: Women, Words, and War, Pamela A. Pears states that "In order to express herself in French, the Francophone author, if she follows binary oppositions, is forced to divide herself between one cultural heritage (in

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75. Assia Djebar: Out of Algeria op cit., p.2.

76. Lise Gauvin, L'Ecrivain francophone à la Croisée des Langues. Paris : Editions Karthala, 1997, p. 25.

77. L'Amour, la fantasia, op cit, p.241.

this case, Algerian) and that which is intrinsic to the language in which she writes (here, French)."[78] This mingling of the two irreconcilable parts has given Assia Djebar the richness that characterizes her work. Djebar feels that she has to write in French even though it is the language of the enemy because, as she explains, French allows her to mingle the "multiple voices" of her culture and upbringing, the Berber of her ancestors, the dialectal Arabic of the home, the literary Arabic of the koranic school and French. In Ces voix qui m'assiègent, the writer states:

> Les multiples voix qui m'assiègent – celles de mes personnages dans mes textes de fiction, je les entends, pour la plupart en arabe, un arabe dialectal, ou même un berbère que je comprends mal, mais dont la respiration rauque et le souffle m'habitent d'une façon immémoriale […] Oui, ramener les voix non francophones – les gutturales, les ensauvagées, les insoumises – jusqu'à un texte français qui devient enfin mien.[79]

Accordingly, Assia Djebar has modified the French language in order to insert some aspects of oral Arabic in it and recover, by the way, parts of her lost mother language. " c'était… la sonorité de la langue maternelle que je tenais à retrouver constamment dans la chair de la langue française."[80]

It is to be noted, nonetheless, that such manipulation of the French language is not yet felt in Les Enfants du nouveau monde. Assia Djebar was at the beginning of her literary career, and although she mastered the French language, she seemed more interested in giving voice to her country people and to describe their hardships under colonization than in manipulating the French language to express her alienation. But even at that time, her double-consciousness was felt by critics who considered her as "… l'expression la plus apparente des contradictions d'une classe bourgeoise francisée par sa culture, et néanmoins conservatrice dans certains aspects de ses mœurs, principalement en ce qui concerne le respect de la famille et la mise en tutelle des femmes. C'est là un autre aspect de l'acculturation."[81] Despite its short comings in describing her inner feelings and thoughts, and despite its superficiality in narrating her autobiography, Assia Djebar has finally decided to keep the French language as the language in which she would write her literary work. "En 1979, quand je me réinstalle a Paris pour écrire […] je prends conscience de mon choix définitif d'une écriture francophone qui est, pour moi alors, la seule nécessité."[82] Thus, contrary to many other writers who

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78. Remnants of Empire, op cit, p.100.
79. Ces voix qui m'assiègent, op cit., p. 29.
80. L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues. Entretiens, op cit., p.30.
81. Charles Bonn, Le Roman algérien de langue française: vers un espace de communication littéraire décolonisé? Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985, p. 18.
82. Ces voix qui m'assiegent, op cit., p.39.

preferred to return to the mother tongue after the independence of their countries such as Kateb Yacine , Djebar has transformed the French language from " langue des conquérants" to " langue du père" to reclaim her voice as a female writer and to express the struggle of her countrywomen to recover their rightful place within a patriarchal society.

> Le français qui fut un siècle durant langue des conquérants, des colons, des nouveaux possédants, cette langue s'était muée pour moi en langue du père.
> Le père m'avait tendu la main pour me conduire à l'école : il ne serait jamais le futur geôlier ; il devenait l'intercesseur. Le changement profond commençait là : parce qu'il était instituteur de langue française, il avait assumé un premier métissage dont je serais bénéficiaire.[83]

Thus, instead of remaining the language of the 'Other', the language of oppression and subjugation, French has become, for Assia Djebar, a liberating tool, that of the father who had taken her hand on her first day to school and shown her the path to emancipation through learning and invading 'males' space.

As a conclusion, we can say that the formal schooling the two Algerian writers received in French and that initiated them into a culture and set of beliefs contradictory to those of the home engendered in them a double consciousness similar to the one experienced by the African-American writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Each of the two settings, the French school and the home provided spaces of resistance that countered not only the colonial power and Western influence but also patriarchy and communal restrictions. The two Algerian writers have accomplished, accordingly, their quest for identity and self-expression by negotiating multiple identities and situating themselves at cultural and linguistic crossroads. Feeling alienated from both their people and the French language, the two Algerian writers stopped writing altogether for a period of almost ten years after the independence of their country. They were unable to turn to Arabic as a language of literary expression, as neither of them mastered it; at the same time, they could not continue writing in the language of their ex-colonizer. To overcome their alienation, they turned to two different cultural expressions, Kateb Yacine to theatrical production in dialectical Arabic, while Assia Djebar moved to cinematic production.

On the other hand, by expressing their double consciousness and investigating the degree of their assimilation in the 'Other's' culture and set of values, the two groups of writers, African American and Algerian alike, acknowledge their existence while at the same time try to deconstruct the

83. Ibid., p.46.

stereotypes that were meant to denigrate their culture and belittle their peoples, using the cultural tools imposed on them as weapons against their oppressors.

CONCLUSION

In our research work, we have confronted four contemporary postcolonial writers with the issues of representation, identity and culture. These writers, as we have seen, are Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston from the United States of America, and Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar from Algeria. Over the course of this work , our aim has been to demonstrate that there are significant similarities between the two African American writers and their Algerian counterparts in their depiction of the 'Self' and the 'Other' in their literary works. Our aim has also been to show that despite the differences that separate the two groups of writers in terms of history, race, religion, and language, the very fact of being the victims of superior political and economic forces has relegated them to an inferior position of sub-humans, unworthy of respect or consideration. Indeed, our combined analysis of African American and Algerian literary works has illuminated a joint search for self and identity. Comparing the two sets of writings has demonstrated how each sought to redefine self and identity in his own terms, a difficult enterprise given that the discourse of the two pairs of works is burdened with the racist and supremacist presuppositions of Western culture. Through the four parts of this study, we have shown the parallels that could be drawn across geo-political , cultural, and linguistic borders. The bond that the four writers have achieved is seen through themes such as an understanding of the self in reference to the other, the search for identity and voice, and the unifying use of the oppressor's language.

In the first part of our work, we have seen how the colonizing powers define the people they subjugate in negative and inferior terms in order to impose their superiority on them**.** To justify their acts of segregation, belittling, and exploitation, these 'superior' powers depict all the people who come under their control as the 'Other'. This 'Other' is stripped of any positive attributes that characterize the colonizers. Accordingly, the people depicted as 'Other' have neither a civilization nor a culture. Moreover, their religion and language are deemed of no importance. As such they deserve to be colonized and subjugated. Their history is erased, their culture degraded, and their identity blurred. In the case of African American people, the latter were assigned all the negative characteristics opposite and inferior to those reserved to whites. While the black males were depicted as brutes and rapists, the black females were depicted, in most of white racist texts, as so degraded that even the white men of integrity were corrupted through their contact with them. In the same way as their African-American counterparts, the Algerian people were aligned with savagery and backwardness, their identity and culture denied them by their French colonizers. The latter used binaries in their representations of the Algerian people as an effective means to justify their presence in the country, and their oppression of its people. They emphasized the idea that Algerian people were an essentially passive and homogeneous mass devoid of

subjectivity or individuality that needed the help of the French to show them the path of civilization.

In the second part, we have seen how colonization and oppression of the African American and Algerian people had affected the communities of the subjugated people negatively, and how the belittling of their males had divided the two communities within themselves. We have dealt mainly with the oppression of women by their male counterparts. In both the African American and the Algerian communities, women were seen as the 'Others' to men, subjugated and oppressed by them. In the case of the two African American authors, men transferred their frustration at the loss of their manhood and authority to their own women. Thus, despite the fact that both Cane and Their Eyes Were Watching God are set after the emancipation of black slaves in The United States, the notions of oppression, abuse, and survival are evoked, as we have already seen, throughout the two novels. Instead of the oppression of the black slaves by their white owners, it is chiefly the oppression of black women by their black husbands and masters. While none of the female characters in the two novels is in a literary sense a slave, they are either physically or emotionally, if not sexually abused by men. By portraying the male characters in the two literary works in a negative light, Toomer and Hurston show, on the other hand, that African American women have to be strong enough to deal with two kinds of oppression, the oppression based on race as well as the oppression based on gender. As bell hooks writes, "A man who is himself victimized, wounded, hurt by racism and class exploitation is actively dominating a woman in his life."[1] Accordingly, the male characters in the two novels suffer 'only' from mainstream racial oppression while the female characters suffer from double-oppression, from outside and inside their African American community.

More than their male counterparts, African American women suffered, as we have already seen, from long-standing stereotypes and controlling images that depicted them as either the asexual mammies or the oversexed matriarchs. At the same time, they were forced to conform to 'the cult of true womanhood', that was established by the white dominating race in order to regain some of their dignity as human beings. This led to a perpetual internal fight within African American women's mind. While they rejected the attempts of the dominant group to lure them into accepting the definitions of black women as inferior and immoral beings, they had to wear the mask of behavioral conformity imposed on them. As a consequence, these women were forced to live a dual life, one for themselves and one for the dominant group. To be able to reconcile the contradictions separating their own internally defined images of self as Americans of African descent, with their double

1. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black, op cit., pp. 20-21.

objectification as the 'Other' of both the whites and the black males, these black women " became familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection."[2]

For the two Algerian writers too, women were positioned as the "Other" in society, and were doubly oppressed by patriarchy structure and by colonialism. Any attempt to raise the issue of their subordination within the home or to change the oppressive situation in which they lived, was condemned by the patriarchal system as a blasphemous attempt to trespass the communal laws. These women, through the two narratives, attempt to declare their subjecthood in a paternalistic society that insists upon their object status. Regardless of their motivations, they have transgressed the patriarchal law in entering the military realm–a male space defined by the struggle for power and dominated by masculine discourse. They have refused to keep silent and have rejected the limited space allocated to them. We have also dealt, in the second part, with the struggle undertaken by both Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar who wrote against a patriarchal system of values that classified women as secondary and dependent upon males for representation. In the two novels, the female characters are able to name and give a real shape to the sources of their oppression. They are also able to create their own image, the true reflection of their identity. Voice, for these women has become an appropriate means of shaping an identity that has been silent for a very long time.

In the third part of the thesis, we have seen how travel serves as a powerful tool for both the African American and the Algerian writers for the discovery/ recovery of one's identity and voice. This travel has taken many forms, but whatever the form the characters in the four novels have chosen to adopt, either literal or metaphorical, it has allowed them to better understand who they really are, and helped them make their voices heard. While the theme of the journey characterizes the novels of Jean Toomer and Kateb Yacine whose protagonists travel to the land of the ancestors in search of their lost identity, the same theme appears in the works of the two female writers too, except that Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar explore this theme in ways that are characteristically feminine. In both Their Eyes Were Watching God and Les enfants du nouveau monde, the novelists encourage their female characters to break free from the values imposed by their communities in order to assert their personal and cultural independence. Contrary to the male characters' journeys in the previous novels, the female characters' journeys in the works of Zora Neale Hurston and Assia Djebar take personal and psychological forms as the two writers prefer, as we have seen, to make their protagonists travel inwards in search of self-definition and voice.

2. Sister Outsider, op cit., p.114.

In fact, voice had been privileged, in African American female tradition, as the primary medium through which one could construct his identity.[3] Their Eyes Were Watching God is very much part of this tradition in that Janie Crawford, the female protagonist in the novel, is in search of her voice and self in a society that denies her both. Speech becomes a key tool for the liberation of the female character as it challenges and resists domination. By creating the character of Janie, Hurston not only shows that African American society includes strong female members, but also the importance of these strong, independent women in order to preserve their heritage. Although these female members of society might not have completely eliminated male dominance, they are certainly helping other women to cope with their position within their community. The same courageous and rebellious women are depicted in Assia Djebar's novel through the description of her female characters. The latter have chosen to transgress taboos created by patriarchal traditions and follow paths they have drawn for themselves as full human beings instead of men's objects of pleasure.

In the fourth part, we have shown how the four writers we have studied in the present work have challenged the invisibility in which the oppressing powers have put them by promoting their native culture as a means of sustaining strength while under oppression. Our aim in this part has been to locate these forms of resistance by analyzing the attitudes of the four writers towards race and colonialism. For Jean Toomer, his experience of tragedy within his own family and his vision of his country's tragedy in the land of dualisms and racial segregation, created in him a deep desire for an America different from the one he was living in, and an American different from the one he was living with, an American free from the constraints of race and ethnicity. Toomer's statements and position, however, devastated the image of the young writer as a central figure in the New Negro Movement at a time when no racial ambiguity or multiracial identication was allowed. Critics who praised Toomer at the publication of Cane could not understand and accept his racial position and his attitude towards the New Negro, so they preferred to ignore his later works. His claims of racial ambiguity and multiracial identication, and their expression in his work, were poorly received. Toomer was considered a race traitor because he challenged his culture's demand for absolute distinctions between white and black. Zora Neale Hurston's alternative, on the other hand, was to celebrate traditional folk culture and to glorify the ways and beliefs of her own people. By using 'signifying' and 'conjuring' in her novel, Zora Neale

3. Michael Awkward in the introduction to his study of African American women's novels states that one of the characteristics identified in African American women's writing is "the struggle to make articulate a heretofore repressed and silenced African American female's story and voice" in Inspiriting Influences: Tradition, Revision, and Afro-American Women's Novels, op cit. , p.1.

Hurston tried to restore the black people's faith in themselves and provide a context by which they could articulate their own beliefs and values as distinct from the white American Eurocentric ones. Hurston's position, in reality, went hand in hand with Fanon's belief that in order to get rid of the 'savage' stereotype that seems to stick to them, African American people need to show that they had a culture prior to their arrival to the American continent.[4]

In the same way as with the African American people, erasure and forced invisibility were among the most effective oppressive mechanisms adopted by the French colonizers to eradicate the existing Algerian culture. The Algerian people were forced to swallow a rhetoric that stressed the pride of being under the care of the 'Mother' country while their own history and language were denigrated as inferior. Accordingly, the two Algerian writers reached toward a cultural identity apart from that bestowed by the colonial 'Other' by promoting their pre-colonial history and culture, and incorporating indigenous materials in their works. In fact, and as we have been able to show, the two Algerian writers were highly interested in keeping with the political agenda of the time in which their works were written. They openly condemned French colonization in their works.

We have also dealt in part four, with double consciousness and cultural dualism as experienced by the four selected writers. For the African American writers, the antagonism they experienced and that resulted from the existence of two antagonistic selves in the black man's body, self as self and self as seen by others, led to the eternal imprisonment of the black person in the negative projections of the white 'Other'. This led the African American people to a lifelong feeling of double consciousness as well as a long quest for wholeness and unity of self in a supremacist country that refused to see them in any other way than as inferior beings devoid of culture and civilization. Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar, for their part, were very affected by the assimilationist methods adopted by the French colonizers in Algeria. Their works and declarations portray a severe and painful feeling of dualism especially since they had no other alternative than to adopt the language of the oppressor and adapt it to voice their resistance to cultural and military imperialism.

At the end of our research work, we have reached the conclusion that the four works chosen for the present study stand in opposition to the clichéd exoticism and ambivalent attitudes toward the subjugated people present in much of the prose written by both the White and the French colonizers. At the same time, we have proved that despite all that separate the two sets of literary

4. In The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon states that: ". The Negro, never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by the whites, when he decides to prove that he has a culture and to behave like a cultured person, comes to realize that history points out a well-defined path to him: he must demonstrate that a Negro culture exists", op cit., p.212.

works, in terms of the era and county in which they were written, the language used, and the convictions and beliefs of their authors , much seems to link them as postcolonial writers in search of voice and identity in a world that denies them both.

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ABSTRACT IN ARABIC

ملخص

يعتبر هذا العمل دراسة مقارنة تعتمل مناقشة الذات و الآخر في روايات مجموعتين من الأدباء تنتميان إلى بلدين مختلفين و تكتبان في لغتين مختلفتين.

فيما يخص المجموعة الأولى، فهي تتكون من جين تومر (Jean Toomer) و زورا نيل هيرستون (Zora Neale Hurston) ،و هما أمريكيان من أصل إفريقي، عاشا و كتبا أهمأ عمالهما في النصف الأول من القرن الماضي. و لقد تم اختيار "قصب" (Cane, 1922) لجين تومر و "أعينهم كانت تراقب الله " (Their Eyes Were Watching God, 1937) لزورا نيل هيرستون كون الروايتين كتبتا في الفترة المسماة "نهضة هارليم"

(The Harlem Renaissance)

و هي الفترة التي أراد فيها الأمريكيون السود في الولايات المتحدة التعبير عن استيائهم من العنصرية، القهر، و الاستبداد لأنهم كانوا يعانون من هذه السلوكات في بلادهم. كما أنهم أرادوا في تلك الفترة استعادة الذات التي اغتصبت منهم و دفنت على أيدي العنصريين الأمريكيين البيض.

أما المجموعة الثانية ، فهي تتكون من أديبين جزائريين عاشا الفترة الاستعمارية و أرادا عبر عمليهما الرد على المستعمرين الفرنسيين الذين حاولوا محو الهوية الجزائرية و استعباد الشعب الجزائري كافة. لقد تم اختيار كاتب ياسين (Kateb Yacine) في روايته "نجمة" (Nedjma, 1956) ، كما تم اختيار آسيا جبار(Assia Djebar) و روايتها "أولاد العالم الجديد"

(Les Enfants du nouveau monde, 1962) ، كون العملين كتبا في الفترة الأشد قهرا على الجزائريين.

بالرغم من الاختلاف الموجود بين الروائيين الأربعة فيما يخص موقعهم الجغرافي، تاريخهم، واللغة التي يكتبون بها، إلا ان كونهم ضحايا الآخر

(الأمريكي الأبيض من جهة، والمستعمر الفرنسي من جهة أخرى) خلق بينهم أوجه تشابه من الصعب تجاهلها.

فالأفرو-أمريكي عان الكثير من استعباد و اضطهاد الأمريكيين البيض له، إذ قام هؤلاء على تعميم فكرة أن الرجل الأمريكي الأسود كائن بدائي، غير أخلاقي و عنيف، عاجز عن ممارسة التفكير المنطقي.

و قد قام الأمريكيون البيض على تأبيد هذه الـ تنميطات في الرجل الزنجي لتبرير التمييز العنصري الذي يمارسونه في البلاد، و الذي يسعوا من خلاله، على حد قولهم، إلى حكم وضبط هؤلاء البشر الذين لا يستطيعون التحكم في غرائزهم و أفعالهم اللاإنسانية. غير إن الأمريكيين السود لم يتقبلوا هذه الصورة المشوهة و الخاطئة التي رسمت لهم، وأرادوا، عبر أعمالهم الأدبية، إظهار صورة أخرى لهم أكثر صحة و تشريفا.

أما الجزائري المستعمر، فقد صورت له، في أعمال المستشرقين الأوربيين، صورة الشعب الفظ، غير المتحضر، المنعدم الهوية و الثقافة. فقد أراد المستعمر الفرنسي تغذية أذهان الجزائريين بالنظرة القائمة على التفوق العنصري و التفافي و الحضاري للغرب.

و من هنا كان اكتشاف الآخر بمثابة شرط أساسي لاكتشاف الذات. و قد سعى الأدباء الأربعة الذين تم اختيارهم لهذه الدراسة إلى تصحيح ما شوهه الآخر(المستبد/المستعمر) من صور عن ثقافة و تاريخ مجتمعاتهم.

تندرج هذه الدراسة في إطار ما يعرف باسم خطاب ما بعد الكولونيالية، و هو خطاب نقدي يهدف إلى تفكيك الخطاب الاستعماري و إلى إعادة النظر في تاريخ المستعمرات في فترة ما قبل الاستعمار. و يسعى أدباء ما بعد الاستعمار إلى إعادة كتابة الحضارة الاستعمارية من وجهة نظر ضحايا الاستعمار و الاستبداد.

و تجدر بنا الاشارة هنا الى اننا نعتبر الأمريكيين السود ضحايا الاستعمار مثلهم مثل الجزائريين. فبالرغم من كونهم ولدوا و ترعرعوا في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية و أنهم لا يملكون بلدا آخر سوى البلد الذي وجدوا أنفسهم فيه (خاصة

بعدما تم نقل أجدادهم من بلادهم الأصلي بإفريقيا غصبا)، إلا أن كونهم عانوا الكثير من الاضطهاد و الاستبداد على أيدي الأمريكيين البيض الذين حرموهم من ثقافتهم الأصلية و منعوهم من استعمال لغتهم الأم في التواصل فيما بينهم جعلهم يعانوا من استعمار من نوع خاص، و هو استعمار داخلي، له نفس سيمات و خصائص الاستعمار الخارجي إلا انه أكثر قساوة وظلما.

و من ابرز المنظرين في ميدان النقد ما بعد الكولونيالية الذي تم الإستعانة بهم في هذا العمل هومي بابا ، Homi Bhabha ادوارد سعيد Edward Said و فرانس فانون Frantz Fanon و هم المنظرون الذين ناقشوا في أعمالهم النقدية التجربة الاستعمارية و ما فيها من توتر مع التأكيد على الفوارق بين مراكز الهيمنة و الأطراف الدائرة حولها.

كما إن هذه الدراسة تعنى بالنظرية النسوية كوننا اخترنا أديبتين في عملنا هذا، نسعى من خلال عمليهما النظر الى طرق فرض الصمت و اللاوجود على النساء كونهن الحلقة الأضعف في سلسلة المستضعفين، و ذلك من خلال ما تطرقت له كل من زورا نيل هيرستون و آسيا جبار في عمليهما من الظلم و الاستبداد اللذين عانت منه كل من النساء الأمريكيات من أصل افريقي و الجزائريات سواء على ايدي المستعمر (الأمريكي الابيض/الفرنسي) او الرجل (الاسود/ الجزائري).

وقد استعنا في استعمالنا للنظرية النسوية باعمال غاياتري سبيفاك (Gayatri Spivak)جنبا إلى جنب بعض المنظرات العربيات مثل مغنية لزرق ،فاطمة مرنيسي ، و نوال السعداوي ،اللاتي حاولن عبر أعمالهن تعديل الموازين بين الرجل والمرأة عن طريق استعادة أصوات النساء اللاتي تم تهميشهن أو إسكاتهن، و مواجهة المصادر التاريخية السائدة التي قامت بإقصاء تجارب وخبرات النساء .

و نعتبر النظريتين، خطاب ما بعد الاستعمار و النظرية النسوية ، تكميلا لبعضهما البعض إذ إن كلاهما يعني بوجوب فضح طرق المهيمن في فرض الصمت و القمع على المهيمن عليه، سواء كان مستعبد ا، مستعمر ا، أو امرأة.

كما ان كلتا النظريتين تسع يان إلى استعادة المهمش و التابع بمعزل عن القوى المعيقة له (مستعمر، مستعبد، زوج).

بالرغم من وجود مناقشات كثيرة ودراسات نقدية وأكاديمية حول أعمال الأدباء الاربعة الا أنها المرة الأولى التي يتم فيها مقارنتهم في عمل واحد.

تنقسم هذه الدراسة الى أربعة فصول أساسية.

في الفصل الاول تطرقنا الى صورة الذات و صورة الآخر في أعمال جين تومر و زورا نيل هيرستون و حاولنا إظهار العنصرية، العنف ، و سوء المعاملة التي كان يعاني منها الأمريكيون السود في بلادهم في العشرنيات من القرن الماضي . كما اننا قمنا بدراسة معاناة الشعب الجزائري على أيدي المستعمرالآخر كما ورد في أعمال الأديبين الجزائريين.

أما في الفصل الثاني فقد تطرقنا الى تمثيل الذات و الآخر في المجتمع الواحد وتحدثنا عن العلاقة بين طرفين متقابلين ومتناقضين، أحدهما الذات المرأة التي تخضع لهيمنة واضطهاد العقلية الذكورية والآخر الرجل الذي يرى المرأةعلى أنها كائن مستضعف لا يستطيع حماية نفسه، ولا تمثيلها إلا بالانطواء تحت رحمته، وهذا ما ساهم في صناعة عبودية المرأة الجسدية، الاقتصادية والأسرية.

و قد قمنا في الفصل الثالث بمحاولة تسليط الضوء على قضية الهوية و اكتشاف الذات بعيدا عن الأنماط الجاهزة والمتوارثة. فالشعوب المستعمرة سلب منها حق تمثيل نفسها، و جرىتمثيلها عبر الخطاب الكولونيالي، وهذاما أثار جدلا حول الهويات الثقافية، ومفهوم التبعية الخارجية الاستعمارية .اما المرأة فقد تم تمثيلها بالدمية الـ خرساء التي لا تملك سبيلا للنجاة والعيش بسلام، إلا بالانطواء تحت رحمة الرجل القاسية الظالمة. لدى سعت كل من زورا نيل هيرستون و آسيا جبار إلى تأكيد هوية المرأة المتميزة و المستقلة عن الأخر، الراغبة في التحرر من سلطة الخضوع للرجل.

في الفصل الاخير ،اهتمت هذه الدراسة بمشكلة المثاقفة (acculturation) التي طرأت على كل من الأفرو-امريكيين و الجزائريين إثر احتكاكهم بالآخر. فبينما

تحمل المثاقفة معنى التعالي عند المستعمرين الأوروبيين (الامريكيون البيض و الفرنسيون)، فهي تحمل معنى الدونية عند الأمريكيين السود و الجزائريين نظرا لمحاولة الغرب التأثير بكل تداعياته المعنوية و النظرية على الآخر، بما فيها إهانة الرموز الحضارية و الثقافية، و استعمال اللغة كأداة للسيطرة و الإخضاع.
هذا ما أدى الى ازدواجية في شخصية الأدباء الذين احتكوا بالآخر، كما انه أدى إلى صراع داخلي واضطراب نفسي لدى هؤلاء الكتاب الذين بقوا حائرين بين اختيار عناصر الهوية الأولى و بين العناصر الجديدة التي فرضت عليهم من طرف الآخر.
أما في الخاتمة، فإننا حاولنا إظهار أوجه التشابه بين الافرو-امركيين و الجزائريين في معاملتهم للذات و الآخر في أعمالهم الأدبية. فبالرغم من كل ما يفرق بين المجموعتين إلا أن كونهما خضعتا لنفس طرق الاضطهاد و العنف جعلتهما تسعيان إلى إثبات الذات و الاعتزاز بها بنفس الطريقة.