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**Archiving and Intertextuality in Postcolonial Women's Fiction: *Minor Detail* by Adania Shibli and "The Woman in Pieces" by Assia Djebar**

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## **Dedication**

To my dearest parents, to my precious siblings, Foulla, Zoufa, Sarsoura, and Moudi, to my beloved bastouteti, Aya and Takoua, and to all my loved ones, you are the multitude of the woman I am.

Thank you with all my heart,

Ouala

## **Dedication**

I whole-heartedly dedicate this work to my late grandmother, who ignited this passion for literature with her magical afternoon tales, and taught me the power of imagination.

I also dedicate this work to my late mother, whom I feel her presence in every achievement and milestone. And whose unwavering support for my academic career continues to inspire me.

Hajer

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## **Abstract**

Settler colonialism poses a dual threat, endangering both the land and history, as the danger of historical erasure persists through the ongoing colonial legacies. This dissertation aims to study how Adania Shibli in *Minor Detail* and Assia Djebar in “The Woman in Pieces”, reflect the ongoing peril of historical erasure wrought by settler colonialism and its aftermath through a nuanced interplay between archiving and intertextuality. This research combines comparative intertextual analysis and thematic interpretations to investigate how the intersection of archiving and intertextuality, in both texts, challenges historical erasure and highlights the voice of marginalized women. The study examines the ways in which Shibli and Djebar use archiving to preserve minority voices and national narratives, particularly through collecting and maintaining historical records of cultural significance. It also looks at the implications of archiving on the preservation of cultural heritage, avoiding historical erasure, and correcting female (mis)representation. Similarly, it examines how intertextuality enhances the role and significance of archival records, granting it a more inclusive view on representation, and by extension female agency within the postcolonial context.

**Keywords:** Archiving, Intertextuality, Representation, Silence, Women’s fiction, Postcolonial narratives, Historical erasure, Collective voice, Cultural preservation.

## Résumé

Le colonialisme de peuplement constitue une double menace, mettant en danger à la fois la terre et l'histoire, car le danger de l'effacement historique persiste à travers les héritages coloniaux actuels. Cette thèse vise à étudier comment Adania Shibli dans *Détail Mineur* et Assia Djébar dans « The Woman in Pieces » reflètent le péril permanent de l'effacement historique provoqué par le colonialisme de peuplement et ses conséquences, à travers une interaction nuancée entre l'archivage et l'intertextualité. Cette recherche combine une analyse intertextuelle comparative et des interprétations thématiques pour répondre à la question de savoir comment l'intersection de l'archivage et de l'intertextualité, dans les deux textes, remet en question l'effacement historique et met en lumière la voix des femmes marginalisées. L'étude examine la manière dont Shibli et Djébar utilisent l'archivage pour préserver les voix des minorités et les récits nationaux, en particulier en collectant et en conservant des documents historiques d'importance culturelle. Elle examine également les implications de l'archivage sur la préservation du patrimoine culturel, en évitant l'effacement historique et en corrigeant la (mauvaise) représentation des femmes. De même, il examine comment l'intertextualité renforce le rôle et l'importance des documents d'archives, en leur conférant une vision plus inclusive de la représentation et, par extension, de l'action des femmes dans le contexte postcolonial.

**Mots-clés :** Archivage, intertextualité, représentation, silence, fiction féminine, récits postcoloniaux, effacement historique, voix collective, préservation culturelle.

## المخلص

يشكل الاستعمار الاستيطاني خطرًا مزدوجًا يهدد الأرض والتاريخ، حيث يستمر خطر المحو التاريخي من خلال الإرث الاستعماري المستمر. تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة الكيفية التي تعكس بها عدنيا شبلي في "تفصيل ثانوي" وأسيا جبار في "المرأة المقطعة" خطر المحو التاريخي المستمر الذي أحدثه الاستعمار الاستيطاني وما تلاه من خلال تفاعل دقيق بين الأرشفة والتناص. ويجمع هذا البحث بين التحليل التناصي المقارن التأويلات الثيمية للإجابة عن كيفية تقاطع الأرشفة والتناص في كلا النصين بشكل يتحدى المحو التاريخي ويبرز صوت النساء المهمشات. تفحص الدراسة الطرق التي تعتمدها كل من شبلي وجبار في استخدام الأرشفة لحفظ أصوات الأقليات والسرديات الوطنية، لا سيما من خلال جمع السجلات التاريخية ذات الأهمية الثقافية والحفاظ عليها. كما تبحث في آثار الأرشفة على الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي، وتجنب المحو التاريخي، وتصحيح التمثيل (الخاطئ) للأنتى. وبالمثل، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية تعزيز التناص لدور السجلات الأرشيفية وأهميتها، مما يمنحها رؤية أكثر شمولاً للتمثيل، وامتداداً لذلك الفعالية النسائية في سياق ما بعد الاستعمار.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأرشفة، التناص، التمثيل، الصمت، الرواية النسائية، سرديات ما بعد الاستعمار، المحو التاريخي، الصوت الجماعي، الحفظ الثقافي.

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## Introduction

In postcolonial fictional narratives, the notion of archiving is almost always present. It is often used to interweave crucial elements of identity issues of the colonized, the achievements and struggles of individuals, especially women, as well as the preservation of culture through memory and oral traditions. Archiving is used as a means of reclaiming lost voices in an attempt to decentralize the dominant historical narrative. It allows for the reconstruction of erased elements in history. Adania Shibli's novella *Minor Detail* and Assia Djébar's short story "The Woman in Pieces" stand as ideal representations of postcolonial fictional narratives motivated by the concept of archiving. Both authors had respectively witnessed struggles under Israeli and French rule. As well as the challenges posed by national patriarchy, particularly as women, their experience revolutionized literature into a form of archiving, they attempt to document the voice of the female subaltern. In their works, perspectives alternate, and agency is put into question. Both authors captivate the reader through their postmodern, experimental use of literary techniques, notably intertextuality, and *mise-en-abyme* as tools for archiving. This dissertation aims at exploring the notion of archiving in Shibli and Djébar's texts by looking at themes of intertextuality, silence, and representation. It analyzes historical misrepresentation and religious fanaticism as motives behind both authors' literary choices in Djébar and Shibli texts. Moreover, the similarity and differences they communicate in their texts will be explored.

In postcolonial literature, silence is the second most fatal rival for the Global South heterogeneous cultural identity, after misrepresentation. To weaken this silence and guarantee cultural preservation, postcolonial authors who are under the dominant colonizer, realized that the optimal option is archiving by various methods. Intertextuality is mostly favored by postmodern writers, such as Djébar and Shibli to archive and subvert; however, with it comes the question of representation and ethics, which Shibli and Djébar approach differently and creatively under the shadows of fiction in regard to their different colonial situations. For one

is under an ongoing colonization, and the other burdened by collective voices of the dead women. Silence is also associated with historical erasure. Thus, the concept of archiving becomes the last resort where the possibility for justice lies.

Previously conducted studies, most pertinently Amirah Silmi's "Voice and Silence in Assia Djébar and Adania Shibli" (2023) Delves into the themes of silence and Shibli and Djébar's quest for retrieving voice. Silmi acknowledges that Djébar does not only associate silence with imprisonment, but also with death and believes that the dead speak by telling oral stories. Additionally, helps by multiplicity of voices which spare her the authoritative representative position as well, relying on *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (1989) and *La Femme sans Sépulture* (2002) for examples. She missed reflecting on "The Women in Pieces" which carries in its folds more on how silence is related to death for Djébar and how intertextuality kept the buried alive. For Shibli, Silmi discussed how silence is embraced as a subserved technique to conquer the colonizer, providing that silence does speak itself of the colonizer's oppression when the colonial archive is inaccessible. Indeed, Shibli depends on silence as a subversive tool; however, intertextuality deepens the meaning of silence in the narrative for the reader, rendering silence more than a subversive tool. Silmi's article is important to the central argument of this dissertation, mainly because of its meticulous examination of the concept of silence and historical erasure. However, this dissertation will extend the discussion on silence from a broader perspective in relation to archiving and intertextuality, within the text that the critic overlooked which is "The Women in Pieces".

Assia Djébar's "The Woman in Pieces" originally published in French as "La Femme en Morceaux", in a short story collection entitled *Oran, Langue de Morte* (1997), is indeed under-studied. However, some articles examined it in regard to its rich and direct referencing to *The One Thousand and One Hundred Nights* within its postcolonial and autobiographical contexts, on which this dissertation will elaborate. Anna Cavness, in "Disseminating Shahrazad

in Postcolonial Algeria” (2009) comes across the text discussing and questioning the reason behind the intertextuality of Scheherazade's narratives in postcolonial Algerian narratives such as Rachid Boudjedra in *1001 Années de la Nostalgie*, Leila Sebbar's “*Scheherazade trilogy*”: *Shérazade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts*, *Les carnets de Shérazade*, and *Le fou de Shérazade*, as well as Djébar's novel *Ombre Sultane*. Cavness delves into a feminist discussion on Scheherazade on whether being a feminist leader or a guardian of speech, and how she is being the counterpart of Djébar's protagonist Atyka makes Djébar “examines a gendered history of violence in which language marks a vector of cultural dispossession” (9). In light of what Cavness foregrounds in her article, this research will elaborate on the idea of Scheherazade as a guardian of speech, and will extend the notion of Djébar's examination of gendered history. Our research will do so, however, from the perspective of representation and voice instead of feminism.

Robyn Creswell in his review “The Body and The Boarder” (On Adania Shibli) (2020) discusses Shibli's experimental writing style in *Minor Detail* (2020) alongside her other works, *Touch* (2010), *We Are All Equally Far from Love* (2012), and compares it to classic Palestinian writers, stating “Shibli doesn't foreground national emergencies but the experience of individuals who live far from the headlines...For Shibli, the emblematic experience of occupation is the *longue durée* of ennui and isolation rather than the dramatic moment of crisis”(3). Furthermore, he reveals Shibli's allusions to Israeli fiction, arguing that Shibli in most of her writings particularly in *Minor Detail* evades from the political perspective, “But fiction (like history writing) cannot escape its representative function so easily” (9). However, he fails to answer the reason behind Shibli's literary intertextuality other than her desire to highlight the cycle of colonial oppression of Jews and Palestinians under different conditions in different times: “The connections Shibli traces between the Holocaust, the Nakba, and the occupation are not equivalences, but they add up to a remarkably grim vision of history.”(9)

This research will elucidate on the notion of the individual experience in Shibli's *Minor Detail*, and answer the reason behind her textual references of Israeli fiction and the report in particular which Creswell overlooked in his examination of Shibli's references.

Chaandreyi Mukherjee's academic review of the novel "Nothing Moved Except the Mirage: Analyzing Fear and Freedom in Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail*" (2021), discusses the power and manipulation of language in Shibli's novella, and the ways in which either its presence or absences can still evoke passive horror and devastation. She states that "*Minor Detail* interrogates the ramifications of fear through political control, cultural and linguistic hegemony, geographical occupation and historical erasure." The concepts of postmodernism and historical erasure are also mentioned. Mukherjee points out that postmodernism is used by the oppressed to subvert history, due to its desire to normalize chaos such as the case in the second chapter of the novella and to problematize the notion of historical knowledge. She argues "postmodernist historiography leads to a creative structuring of the past through narrative employment of so-called historical facts. Postmodernism rejects essentialized, idealistic and traditional ideas about comprehending and articulating history. Thus, concluding that postmodernism by the subversion of official history will show that there are past perspectives and subjective pasts. Mukherjee's idea is commendable, yet it lacks in-depth analysis particularly on the notions of historical erasure and archiving. Mukherjee emphasizes the theme of fear and links it mostly to politics, resistance, language and finally a brief discussion on historical erasure limited to the first chapter to the novella.

*Minor Detail* was the subject of many critical studies which examined the novella particularly from the psychoanalytic perspective. In their article "Trauma, Memory and Broken Chronology in Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2023), Chahinez Ezzine and Houria Ait Ammour highlight the novella's characteristics, focusing particularly on 'Chronology', memory and trauma, demonstrating that *Minor Detail* despite its recent publication, perceiving it from the

modernist lens was possible. In addition, it examines the purpose of time in the work, first that it serves the subject of the text by inserting history through a past memory. Second, “a medium through which the past, present and future interrupted chronology by depicting the disturbed psychological condition the character suffers from” (302). Thus, concluding that Shibli’s narrative is evidence for trauma inheritance through generations. “Nakba, an Arabic term for catastrophe, refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Not only a past event in the history of Palestine but rather a collective trauma which continues into the present and has its arms well-stretched in the future.

This dissertation will advance scholarship on both texts, by providing in-depth comparative study and analysis on the notion of archiving and intertextuality, as an attempt to challenge colonial dominance. In addition to that, it will attempt to provide important insights into the themes of silence and representation in women’s fiction. This study will highlight the postmodern literary creativity used by pivotal authors in the field of postcolonialism, such as Shibli and Djébar, on account of the relevance of their work to answer the argument of this paper.

Due to the recent publication and relevance of contemporary Palestinian literature, *Minor Detail* by Shibli would offer a fresh perspective on Palestinian history and the Israeli occupation, especially in light of October 7th events of last year and the increasing international interest in Palestinian literature, as it connects the 1948 Nakba with present-day Palestine. The 2023 Frankfurt book fair controversy surrounding Shibli disinvitation in mid-October, and the postponement of her award for her novella *Minor Detail*, underscores the significance of her work and its impact. This serves as a catalyst for this dissertation, to examine the themes, narrative techniques, and the socio-political implications of this work.

“The Woman in Pieces” is understudied as a short story, works written about it were only few, especially those who acknowledged the key themes of female representation and

intertextuality, for example Tegan Raleigh “Women in Pieces Fairy Tales, Gender, and Translation in a Contemporary Conte by Assia Djebar” (2018), and Anna Cavness’s article “Disseminating Scheherazade in Postcolonial Algeria”. Linking Djebar’s short story to Shibli’s novella will be more helpful to uncover other aspects surrounding the short story, mainly the ways in which the concept of archiving is used. Additionally, it is intriguing to bring together Palestinian and Algerian texts, as both nations share a similar history of struggle at the hands of settler colonizers. Algeria's colonization resonates with the Israeli occupation of Palestine, even in key events in Palestinian history: The mass expulsions in 1948 Nakba, the war of 1967, first Intifada and the Unity Uprising, not to mention the amicable relationship between both nations. Comparing texts from nations with historical relations can promote understanding and empathy.

Hence, comparison was chosen as a methodology for this research, to provide a profound understanding and novelty of the themes of archiving, intertextuality, and representation in postcolonial women’s fiction. By demonstrating the power of literature through storytelling, one can aspire to convey complex ideas, challenge societal norms.

It is important to note that this research relies on the English translated versions of *Minor Detail* by Elisabeth Jaquette (2020) and “The Woman in Pieces” by Tegan Raleigh (2006), to ensure accessibility and consistency.

Each chapter in this dissertation serves a specific purpose in advancing the overall argument and contributes to the comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Thus, the chapter divisions are as follows: the first chapter, titled “Theoretical Framework,” introduces the solid theoretical basis for the subsequent analysis of the texts. It explores key concepts such as archiving, gender representation, intertextuality and its role postcolonial fiction reflecting on influential scholars and studies conducted in the field. Finally, it provides short biographies for both authors for further comprehensive understanding. The second chapter, titled “Comparative

Analysis of Archiving in *Minor Detail* and ‘The Woman in Pieces’,” will delve into an intricate analysis of the main theme of this dissertation, which is archiving, by exploring the reasons behind its relevance to both authors in their works, and the way it is executed in the narratives, as well as a thorough examination of the themes of silence and representation. The third Chapter, titled “Intertextuality: Resisting Cultural and Historical Erasure,” will include the study of intertextuality within the texts.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will address specific key concepts which form the base of this dissertation. It will dive into the concepts of archiving, intertextuality and representation and their various interpretations by seminal scholars in the field. Consequently, It identifies the research's approach. Additionally, it includes the author's biographies and summaries of the case studies.

### 1. Postcolonial Literature and Archiving:

Postcolonial literature refers to the body of literary works written by the formerly colonized countries. It emerged primarily as an established genre after the Second World War, mainly, including countries from Africa, Asia, and South America. However, one can argue that postcolonial literature's existence can be traced back to even earlier dates, for its direct association to various forms of colonialism and oppression, making it a long-lived struggle for subverting the hegemonic historical narrative.

Postcolonial writings, as a result, examine the cultural, social, and political trajectories of colonialism and by necessity imperialism on the colonized marginalized minorities. This body of writing establishes a platform that reclaims cultural identity, language and representation, a means to challenge mainstream colonial narrative. In postcolonial studies, the writer adequately asserts one's agency, allows for a cross-cultural dialogue that helps in highlighting the specificity of marginalized cultures and celebrates their identities in opposition to imperialistic narratives. The latter is intrinsically embedded in the procession of the Enlightenment notions of power and knowledge. The Eurocentric thought focused on reason and progress to emphasize the imbalance of historical power dynamics and justify colonial domination through the lens of superiority and cultural imperialism.

This body of writing is well known for its critical seminal works that vary from Edward Said's books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and Bill



Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989). These writers, along many others, paved the path for studies about the effects of colonialism on the psychology of the oppressed, its cultural and identity loss, the politics of displacement and disparity between 'Western' and 'Non- Western' societies, which made possible the reestablishment of hegemonic stereotypes about the formerly colonized to a more inclusive representation, that recognizes their agency, gender, cultural and national significance.

The study of voice and representation of the marginalized necessitates traversal archiving into what has been documented. Jacques Derrida, in his influential essay the "Archive's Fever" (1995), argues against the traditional notion of archiving as a static repository for information, through the epistemological study of the Greek antiquity of the archive, which was derived from the Greek words "arkheion" (town hall) and "Arkhe"(government). He explains that the archive means both commencement and commandment. Additionally, Derrida argues that "[a]ccording to nature or history, there where things commence-physical, historical, or ontological principle-but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command" (9). Derrida concludes that the archive is a product of a linguistic reality, a collective memory influenced by the law, politics and power. Michel Foucault, on the other hand, closely shares Derrida's idea. In his book *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault foregrounds that "[t]he archive is first the law of what can be said, the system which governs the appearance of statements as unique events" (129) notably steering away from Greek epistemology to discourse analysis. Understanding the implications behind these definitions is crucial and still relevant. However, the study of archive in postcolonial literature is that of scrutiny, of questioning the politics of representation and, in this research, it shapes how women's voice and agency were buried under layers of archival discourse. In doing so it adds a third dimension of oppression and injustice to patriarchy and colonialism.

In “Archiving the Postcolonial City” (2014) Ferdinand de Jong and David Murphy explain that “the archive has emerged as a critical tool to conceptualize the heuristic value of history, heritage and memory in debates on postcolonial futures,” (1) which can be paradoxical in the sense that what shapes the collective memory, tradition, and national identity, that gets inherited, is the very written accounts of history produced by the colonial narrative. This understanding of the archive can define the future of discourse debates in postcolonial contexts, and emphasizes the need to question the process of archival selections.

An eloquent introduction to the importance of archival investigation is found in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* (1995), in which the author introduces the postcolonial narratives excluded from the archival record, and how to deal creatively with such subaltern silencing. Thomas Richards, on the other hand, as one of the literary scholars of imperialism refers to “the imperial archive” in his book *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993) as “an imaginative construction” that accumulates knowledge of the European 19th- and 20th century empires, which mirrors Edward Said’s views on the interwoven threads of knowledge and culture that shaped *Orientalism*. Arguably, the erasure of national identity becomes a capitalist choice made by authoritative masculine regimes, that determines which interpretation of historical events is worth documenting. Gender by inherent result is marginalized.

The critical studies above serve as fundamental pillars in understanding the complexities of postcolonial discourse, shedding light on the miscellaneous impact of colonialism and oppression across various communities. They provide valuable insights on power dynamics, female representation, and resistance in postcolonial contexts. By offering a framework to the study, this research explores the postcolonial condition in Algeria and Palestine through the lens of gender, female representation in the archive, and agency while drawing upon a well

based theoretical groundwork by scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Derrida, Frantz Fanon and many others.

Prime examples of context specific literary works that document the atrocities of history is the Palestinian Adania Shibli's novella *Touch* (2010) through her fragmented short prose that captures the horrors of the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982. Shibli portrays the incident through the perspective of a young girl, trying to navigate displacement, restriction and ironically ordinary life experience within the Lebanese Civil War. Additionally, Mourid Barghouti's memoir *I Saw Ramallah* (1997) captures a nostalgic recount to his homeland after over three decades of exile. He often reflects identity, displacement and exile in his works to document the Palestinian struggle under Israeli occupation. Moving to the African context, one of Algeria's well-established postcolonial writers is Assia Djébar. She wrote *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (1980), which provides an insight on the lives of Algerian women amidst colonial and cultural transformation. In addition to her seminal work *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (1985), a historiographical novel that examines the dichotomies of colonizer/colonized, men/ women, nationalism/alienation, through the experiences / voices of Algerian women during and after the French colonial period, which, in essence, encompass the transgenerational patriarchy imposed by the French colonial rule. Djébar's fervent narratives exemplify her devotion to decolonize language of the archive and re-establish gender representation in post-colonial Algeria.

## **2. Intertextuality and Its Role in Postcolonial Fiction:**

Postcolonial fiction, in essence, attempts to create a dialogue between texts of different cultures and dismantle the authority of colonial discourse. Intertextuality as a result helps in bridging that dialogue. It serves as a method for preserving past voices and narratives. Just as archiving includes collecting and maintaining historical record of cultural significance, intertextuality entails the layering of texts and influences that serve as a repository of

interconnected texts and meaning. Postcolonial writers often utilize intertextual references in order to archive and revive marginalized voices and forgotten histories by embedding these references in a new narrative, one that not only preserves but challenges and reinterprets colonial discourse. This form of dynamic archiving allows for a continuous refining and an inclusive understanding of cultural and historical expressions. Being one of the prominent postmodern literary theories and practices emerging in the twentieth century, intertextuality highlights the intricate tapestry of texts, the possibility of influence of texts and authors on other texts, noting that no text exists in isolation from its author, reader, or other texts. A text however understood, not only as literary texts but also spoken language, political texts or newspaper articles.

In “Word, Dialogue and Novel” (1980), Julia Kristeva explains in her studies on Mikhail Bakhtin’s works that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (37). This specific notion of mosaic is the core understanding of literary texts within the framework of intertextuality. That one thinks and writes comparatively to precedent, and he/she depends on what has previously been said and on how he/she will be received by others. The established conception of ‘vertical and horizontal axes’ by Kristeva, of the connectedness of authors and texts, texts and other texts denotes a futuristic implementation, that a text lives on, through the process of production and reproduction of literature.

Comparative literature, as a matter of principle, seeks to discover the interplay between different literary traditions across cultural, linguistic and national borders in order to gain greater insight into global literary dynamics. The American School of Comparative Literature, responding to the French school, seeks to depoliticize the field by breaking down geographical and language barriers. It proposed theories such as parallelism, suggesting the existence of affinities between the literatures of different countries whose social evolution is similar

irrespective of their shared influence or direct relation. Moreover, Intertextuality was another key theory in the American school. The idea of intertextuality, inspired by the ideas of John Barth and T.S. Eliot, is an indication that texts are interconnected. However, in the study of intertextuality in postcolonial fiction, the American school's emphasis on individuality and depoliticization is no longer considered to be fully applicable. Intertextual references are used frequently by postcolonial writers to challenge imperialist rhetoric and protect the voices of marginalized peoples, which is how they create a dynamic archive containing a variety of cultures and historic expressions. The postcolonial intertextual analysis in this research aims to conduct partly an intertextual analysis in a comprehensive manner, aligned with Julia Kristeva's idea of intertextuality as a "mosaic of quotations" in which "any text is the absorption and transformation of another." It draws on the complex aspects of writing and meaning, and moves away from the American school emphasis on individuality and depoliticization in order to emphasize the importance of power, influence as well as representation within postcolonial context. It further allows for a thorough interpretation that considers the complex nature of writing and meaning.

Postcolonial intertextuality for that matter is “[a] critical tool for examining the ways in which colonial and indigenous texts interact, allowing for the deconstruction of colonial narratives and the reclamation of marginalized voices” (Ashcroft et al. 218). Intertextuality traces the influence of colonial discourse on the narrative of the oppressed highlighting the struggle for resistance and the reestablishment of those marginalized voices. In the context of postcolonial theory, an intertextual analysis inherently engages with the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It grapples with the issue of power, influence, gender, and representation. Arguably, intertextuality being a potent mechanism, encompasses both colonial and counter discourses. It simultaneously engages with/and colonial discourse, while also revalorizing indigenous cultural narrative that resists those colonial impositions. By doing so, it negotiates

the politics of identity formation and fosters a sense of cultural hybridity, further merging elements from both narratives to create a diverse cultural representation.

Subverting dominant narratives in postcolonial writings is enabled through the use of intertextuality which allows for an engagement with reinterpretation of canonical texts. Prime examples are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966). Both works critique Joseph Conrad's notorious novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Conrad's portrayal of Africa and Africans as primitive and uncivilized drove Achebe and Salih to re-write the story from the colonized perspective using intertextual references from the original text to subvert the stereotypical white supremacist narrative and assert the agency and humanity of his own characters. Another example is *Beloved* (1987) by African American novelist Toni Morrison, who uses intertextuality to reference African American folklore and Spiritual traditions. In doing so she reclaims a narrative that minimized the resilience of enslaved people at the time. By centering the narrative on Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman who is haunted by the ghost of her deceased daughter whom she was forced to kill so she will not have to face the same fate of her mother. Sethe was abused physically and emotionally which resulted in her struggles to reckon her past. Morrison invites the reader to acknowledge the enduring impact of slavery in shaping African American identity, especially for the enslaved female subject.

Reclaiming indigenous cultures are revalorized because of the use of intertextuality. It allows for the incorporation of oral, folklore and tradition in writing, adding a layer of authenticity, revision of the histories that were marginalized and misinterpreted by the colonizer. Intertextuality in this sense acts as a form of literary archiving, asserting and preserving the cultural properties of narrative that the colonizer sought to erase. For instance, in *In a Small Place* (1988), Antiguan American female novelist, Jamaica Kincaid utilizes intertextuality to reclaim Antiguan history and culture from colonial erasure. Through her

lyrical prose and intertextual references to Caribbean literature, she explores the vivid portrayal of the Antiguan life and the effects of colonial exploitation and tourism. In addition, prominent postcolonial novel *Petals of Blood* (1977) by Kenyan Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o laces spirituality, mythology and creatures as in the character of Wanja which is named after a legendary Gikuyu heroine, symbolizing her strength and resilience in the face of adversity. As well as a participation in traditional ceremonies such as the "Kiama" (assembly), all of which are markers of belonging to the Gikuyu tradition and social cohesion. These aspects of intertextuality depict the acts of resistance to colonialism and attempt to preserve the African "Gikuyu" cultural heritage.

Intertextuality as a result highlights the transforming potential of interweaving stories and texts to assert agency as a method of reclaiming voice and resistance. In addition, the concept of influence in literary texts, as discussed in his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), Harold Bloom explored the notion of misreading, claiming that texts are strictly rewriting attempts of earlier texts. However, this research celebrates the complex nature of the influence exerted by texts on other texts, and elaborates on the use of unconventional intertext references that contribute to the issue of representation, unveiling the layers of silence in archival studies.

### **3. Gender Representation in Postcolonial Fiction:**

Since its emergence in the 1970s women's studies has been concerned with exploring the nuances of power dynamics and representation of gender roles. The binary opposition of masculinity and femininity controlled by societal norms shapes what is understood now on identity formation for women. This calls for skepticism about the normative notions through which a woman is defined, viewed, treated, and recognized in the academic field and outside it. Primarily, it is crucial to recognize the distinction between 'gender' meaning biological 'sex'

that is female/ male, and its socio-political implication meaning a woman is classified differently from a man and even inferior to one.

In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) Gayatri Spivak argues that the subject of woman is stuck “[b]etween patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, [[whereby[ the figure of the woman disappears,” but she’s also “caught between tradition and modernization” (287). Delving into the intersection of power, gender and colonialism, Spivak focuses on the precarious position of women within colonial powers. For Spivak, women are subjected to oppression not only through patriarchal structures within their own societies but also through the imperialist systems imposed upon them by colonial powers. Patriarchy often dictates the traditional social norms relegating women to subordinate positions and denying them voice and agency, while imperialism further disempowers them by colonial domination and political exploitation. The erasure of women’s voices within patriarchal and colonial discourse speaks of the oppression they are often subjected to. In her book *Anxiety of Erasure* (2015), Hanadi al-Samman concludes that “in the literature of diaspora women writers, the wa’d trope is activated to also signify the suffocation of political freedom, the legitimate demands for democracy and social justice, and the curbing of feminine potential”(45). The concept of wa’d, which traditionally refers to the pre-Islamic practice of burying female infants alive, is metaphorically used by al-Samman to exemplify the systematic silencing and marginalization of women’s voice. In a way it imitates how often the voice of women is buried under layers of social and political constraints. The archive in this case echoes the historical oppression they faced. Moreover, the forces of modernization and Westernization often exacerbate these inequalities, imposing new forms of oppression and eroding traditional systems of support and resistance.

In *Gender Relations and Gender Violence at the Imperial Source* (1997), Connell Raewyn explains that “to understand violence against women in postcolonial Africa we must



understand the violence of colonialism; and to understand that, we must start with ‘gender relations and gender violence at the imperial source’ (48). She fosters a need for consciousness of colonial violence, advocating for the importance of challenging the socio-political construction of gender roles in African societies and by extension the women of the world. Representation consequently is related to documentation of those constructs. Texts and the archive’s power lies in their ability to decide on the parties included and also the minorities excluded. The archival selection within literary texts adheres to authoritative regimes which reflects broader societal biases and power imbalances, shaping dominant narratives while silencing marginalized experiences.

The concept of intersectionality adds another layer of complexity to the comprehension of gender dynamics in postcolonial settings. The overlapping factors of race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender to mold the way individuals experience oppression and marginalization. Prime examples of pioneers of gender and women studies are *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* by Judith Butler (1990), *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), and *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde (1984). They offer valuable insights on the representation of gender and its implication on power, identity, and societal change. Meanwhile postcolonial fiction included other works such as *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker (1982), *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* by Assia Djébar (1980), *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa (2006), and *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee (1999).

Notably, these studies are context specific, because of the cultural implications the different societies may hold. This is the reason why this research studies comparatively the representation of women in Algerian and Palestinian societies during and post colonialism.

#### 4. The Relationship Between Algerian and Palestinian Context and Fiction:

Algeria's stance on the Palestinian crisis has always been characterized by unwavering support, that is based on the inhumane experiences they both encountered by the colonizer. Palestine and Algeria relate to each other more than to any other Arab nation, and the reason is the settler colonizer as a common enemy. The Israeli and French colonizers made out of Palestine and Algeria settler colonies, and subjected them "to specific structural and ideological features – unlike colonies where activities were aimed primarily at securing and maintaining access to markets and merchandise" (Dunwoodie 3). Additionally, due to Algeria's deeply rooted nationalism that was shaped by the Muslim reformers with their newspapers such as *al-Shihab* (1925–1939) of Abdelhamid bin Badis, and *al-Umma* (1934–1938) of Ibrahim Abu al-Yaqzan, the Algerian identity stands on Islam and Arabism as two inseparable pillars. These ideologies cannot stand alone compared to the Mashriq perception of it. These two ideologies soon turned into the concepts of "The Arab World" and "The Islamic World", and the Algerians saw "The local plight against colonialism ...through a regional prism" (Ghazal 73). Since the 1939 revolt, Palestine was seen from this perspective, and reporting and commenting on the Palestinian case for Algerians became a collective anti-colonial act" (Ghazal 73). Thus, by conducting a study on literary texts from both countries would deepen the understanding of struggle under the settler colonizer in specific, enhances empathy and understanding between these countries more.

Literature reflected this unique experience of Algerian and Palestinians with the settler colonists. Postcolonial Mashriqists fiction also reflected on similar themes such as identity, resistance diaspora and displacement. However, historical erasure is much more relevant to Palestine and Algeria as well as Lebanon.

*Wild Thorns* (2023) by Sahar Khalife is a text that reflects on the fluctuating opinions on the Israeli occupation, which is depicted in the life of its protagonist's cousin Adil. It

highlights the themes of estrangement and identity, and most importantly historical erasure. During his trip back to his homeland Palestine from the Gulf countries, the protagonist Usama crosses the Allenby bridge where is interrogated multiple times. While questioning him, the Israeli soldiers would mockingly ask him the same questions repeatedly and keep on using the Hebrew names for Palestinian villages (Al Hassani and Mahdi 2). Usama explains that his mother was relocated to Nabuls, and the guard asks "Why did your mother move to Shekem?" (Qtd. In Al Hassani and Mahdi 2) and Usama replies that his mother likes Nabuls, and the guard asks again "Why does she admire Shekem?" (Qtd. In Al Hassani and Mahdi 3). This conversation from Khalife's text, demonstrates the colonizer's attempt at dissimulating his identity by constantly distorting his understanding of the names of the villages. Leila Sabbar in *The Seine Was Red: Paris, October 1961* (1999) revisits the tragic event of October 17th 1961, when French police brutally suppressed peaceful demonstrations by Algerians protesting against a curfew imposed on them during the Algerian war of independence. Sabbar weaves historical context with her fictional plot when her protagonist Amel, a young French-Algerian woman uncovers the hidden history of the 1961 massacre through her grandmother's stories and her own research. Amel's journey depicts themes of historical erasure, identity and trauma. In this narrative Sabbar touches on a dark period of history that is erased from the French national memory and brings it to light again.

Hence, Shibli and Djébar's works are the focus of this dissertation. This comparison will enrich and broaden the scholarship of the theme of historical erasure under the settler colonizer and its legacy in postcolonial Algeria when it comes to discussing women's issues.

The narratives of Adania Shibli and Assia Djébar provide a deep insight into the experiences of women in settler colonialism, illuminating the unique and often silenced stories of their own countries, Palestine and Algeria. The authors draw attention to the continued erasure of history and identity by taking account of psychological and societal impacts of

colonialism. Shibli's work deals with the daily realities and historical struggles of Palestinians under occupation. In her poetic narrative, she offers a voice for the over-looked Palestinian experience through an intersection between personal and collective memory. She challenges the dominant colonial narratives, and stresses the deterioration of Palestine's history and culture.

In Algeria, too, Djébar's writings have a deep connection to the history and culture of that country as she looks at women's role in fighting for independence from French colonial rule. The themes of identity, resistance and rewriting history from a woman's point of view are often explored in her works especially "The Woman in Pieces" that challenge the erasure of Algerian voices within colonial narratives. This perspective aims to improve understanding of the common experiences between Algeria and Palestine in settler colonialism through a comparative intertextual analysis of Shibli and Djébar's work. The widespread impact of historical erasure, as well as the ongoing struggle for identity and recognition, are illuminated by both authors. Their texts, while providing a critical lens for examining the legacy of colonialism on women in their countries, are also indicative of wider social dynamics.

The purpose of this comparative analysis is to enhance the scholarship on historical erasure and its implications for marginalized communities in Algeria as well as Palestine. The dissertation highlights the gender dimension of colonial oppression and the resilience of women to reclaim their histories and identities, by focusing on women's issues. It promotes mutual respect and understanding among these two countries, pointing out their common struggles against the backdrop of colonialism and postcolonial challenges; it also stresses the importance of preserving their cultural heritage.

## 5. Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail*, and Assia Djébar's "The Women in Pieces": Summary and Background

Born in Cherchel, Algeria, educated under the French system. Assia Djébar (1936-2015), is a translator, filmmaker, activist and a writer. Her narratives explore the daily lives, emotions and thoughts of the Algerian women during and after colonization, as well as under nationalist ideologies, while experimenting with the colonizer's language. In the article "The Other Language, the Language of the Other in the Work of Assia Djébar and Hélène Cixous"(2014), Cixous writes that Djébar re-entered "like a landlady, not as an occupant with hereditary rights. Thus, French was truly becoming for me a welcoming home, maybe even a permanent place [...] Finally I crossed the threshold freely" (qtd. In De Courtivron 19-21). Djébar accepted the French language as a home; by means bringing the Berber/ Arab traditional oral storytelling from the early Islamic history or the *One Thousand and One Nights* to the French language, thus creating a home as well as what Miriam Cooke in *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature* (2001) describes as "Writing-trace that becomes the basis of a new imagined community of women" (50), since historically in Arabic and Tamazight languages, oral storytelling symbolizes women's power. Marnia Lazreg, in *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (1994), writes that:

The oral tradition established by women through the manipulation of speech is exceptionally rich. Throughout the colonial era and before the advent of television, storytelling was the quasi monopoly of women [...] In fact there was a division of labor of sorts that characterized storytelling. Men, mostly fathers, often told stories not only to their children, but also to their wives, derived from *the One Thousand and One Night*, or from early Islamic history. (108)

Interestingly, it is *the Nights* that Djébar is mostly influenced by particularly Scheherazade, the heroine who symbolizes women's power and voice. Djébar's protagonists often embody

Scheherazade's authority to give voice to the silenced Algerian women and subvert the colonial orientalist ideologies. This is when according to Rajakumar, Djébar was accused by others such as Lazreg of having nationalist concerns and even for having a "nostalgic view of colonialism"(qtd. In Rajakumar 51).

However, as this dissertation argues, Djébar in her writings had always expressed a desire to trace the history of her native land, and archive it from the perspective of the colonized, hence rewrites in an attempt to decolonize the French language and the archive. Thus, for Djébar, Scheherazade became guardian of tradition and embodiment of authentic cultural identity. Scheherazade represents a unique figure for examining this problem in that her narrative power is derived from a moment of political crisis, and thus opens up a site for interrogating how gender is established as a synecdoche for cultural preservation.’(Cavness 3)

In a period of civil war during the 1990s in Algeria, Scheherazade became a symbol of power instead of a colonizer’s fantasy. The Moroccan writer, Fatema Mernissi’s in *Scheherazade Goes West* (2001) expounds this notion, by discussing the west’s romanticized and fantastical representation of the harem. She argued that the harem was always a place where women dominate through narratives, intelligence and power of word, unlike what the westerners imagined, a place where women are dominated and men achieve their wildest sexual fantasies. And Scheherazade was at the center of the argument, comparing the western and eastern representation of her. While in the east [Scheherazade] is viewed as an intelligent woman telling moral stories and guardian of tradition, in the west is an exotic romantic figure and incredibly intelligent woman with powerful narrations that stands out compared to others, since they are obedient unlike her. Djébar ceased Scheherazade's position and depicted the severity of the nation's civil war under religious patriarchy and the colonizer's legacy. “The Women in Pieces” tells the story of an Algerian woman named Atyka, who works as a French language teacher in the nineties. For one of her classes, she teaches her students “The Tale of

Three Apples” by Scheherazade of when once upon night, a woman cut into pieces is discovered wrapped in veils in wooden casket handed by a fisherman to the caliph of Baghdad. A search for her murderer leads to her husband who in a fit of rage and jealousy murdered her, after he met a black eunuch eating an apple bragging that a woman gave it to him. Apples at the time were out of season, but the husband traveled for days to buy some for his sick wife, and upon coming home he noticed that one of the three apples was missing. His next action was to plunge a knife into her throat. To everyone’s surprise, the Caliph spares the life of the murderous husband, and blames the slave instead and orders his vizier Djaffar to find him immediately or lose his life. Djaffar, while in his palace, was pondering about where he could find this slave. His daughter, ignorant about the real reason he was sad, hugged him for comfort. Djaffar felt something under dress, at first glance he thought it was a toy only to discover it was an apple given to her by the slave Rihan. The daughter explains that Rihan took it from a child in the street against his will. Looking for a way to spare the life of Rihan the beloved slave of his daughter, the vizier offers to tell stories for the Caliph, and if he likes them then would do him a favor and forgive Rihan. In the frame narrative, however, Atyka and her students realize that the woman cut in pieces story was lost under all of these incidents, and decide to rearrange the story again. However, by the end soldiers break into her class, shoot her and finally cut her head and place it on top of her desk, accusing her of teaching censored and explicit stories. Nevertheless, Death could not stop Atyka from finishing the story, as her severed head continued to speak for a while.

Djebar's unique weaving of the stories by fragmentation and intertextuality while discussing a political issue, using female body to reclaim voice for Algerian women, and subsequently archive, echoes Shibli’s style of writing, themes and the choice of the gender of the main characters in her novella *Minor Detail*. Despite the differences between both authors in terms of the choice of language and time frame, the similar colonial situation, loss of national

history, and their personal background as a modern, diaspora writers, makes their works comparable to study the method of archiving via intertextuality of colonial narrative or translations, to question and correct history written by the colonizer depending on literature. Hence, archiving through narratives retrieves agency as female subalterns. Speaking of themes of archiving and representation, Nagy-Zenki states that Djébar, like Michel Foucault, does not consider history as a one single valid version, as according to him [Foucault] there was no history with capital H, as there is only different versions of the same event, and the written one is the one produced by the powerful due to this Djébar recontextualizes the Algerian war of liberation and colonization, to erode western history. In order to fill in the gaps, she resorts to oral sources or noncanonical representation of Algerian history, a strategy to subvert Eurocentric historical representation and bring the other version. Another supporter of this idea is Silmi who asserts that “Writing past stories for Djébar is not an attempt to relieve trauma; it is a battle, one through which she seeks to subvert the dominant narrative of a monolithic official history” (65).

The second criticism Djébar encountered is the fact that similar to the other writers in her generation, such as Kateb Yacine and Rachid Boudjedra, she published all of her works in French. Hence, she was considered to be writing from a French perspective, as her work reflected the western feminist agenda with an essence of neocolonialism, and made her irrelevant to even the Arab culture (Dobie 129) and “that for some readers, writers, and critics the fact that Djébar wrote in French places her work not only outside the canon of Arabic literature but also beyond the sphere of Arab culture” (Dobie 129).

Lazreg explains this criticism further in Djébar’s novels a primary feminist perspective that is remarkable for its decontextualized, uncritical and abstract character, a perspective marked by the rejection of “native women’s lifestyles” and filled with “a litany of complaints about tradition and Islam” (200–01).



Another statement from Silvia Nagy-Zekni supports the idea that Djébar sometimes writes out of tradition. Asia Djébar in *La Soif* (1957), *L'impatient* (1958), *Ombre Sultane* (1987), And *I'amour, La Fantasia* (1985), opts for a careful deconstruction of tradition as an oppressive force. In her representation of history, her writing, however, is embedded in the (Islamic) tradition as an axis of religious and social identity. Her characters often transgress Sataboos, for example, those pertaining to marital and sexual relations”(2). Shibli also shares this experimental style of transgressing taboos, in her works when compared to the classic writers.

Adania Shibli was born in 1974, she is a modern Palestinian novelist, essayist, playwright and a professor. In 1996, Shibli made her debut by publishing various literary magazines in Europe and the Middle East. Further, she has expanded her work to include novels, plays, short stories and narrative essays, published in several languages. Shibli has several notable works such as: *We are All Equally Far from Love* (2012), and *Touch* (2010), yet mostly known for her novella *Minor Detail* due to the 2020 translation by Elisabeth Jaquette. A novella that tells a story of a Bedouin girl who was raped and murdered by a group of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) led by a platoon commanding officer. The first chapter focuses on this soldier, depicting his routine of cleaning his wound and performing his duty, in the desert of western Negev during the summer of 1949, to prevent infiltration by Bedouins with the newly established armistice lines with Egypt. The second chapter follows an unnamed female narrator from Ramallah, who appears to the reader as alienated, as she never mentions family nor friends or the type of work she does. She reads about the crime from the first chapter and decides to go on a quest to investigate. Her interest was sparked by discovering that the Bedouin girl's death occurred twenty-five years before her own birth.

The story is in fact inspired by a real event, which Shibli read about in an article by Aviv Lavie published by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in 2003. What makes this work of Shibli

more interesting is her meticulous detailed, emotionless and cruel language, and what is expected to be a “kind of counter history or whodunnit” (Creswell 3), that turns out somber, discouraging, and nothing but history repeating itself, more like a naturalistic work with predetermined tragic end and gloomy pessimistic atmosphere.

By comparing Shibli to other canonical Palestinian authors, such as Ghassan Kanafani, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Sahar Khalifeh and Mahmud Darwish, the distinct difference would be clear. For example, when Darwish’s poetry is read, the reader would feel the attachment to the land, in case of Shibli there is no profound, visible attachment to the land whatsoever, merely a description of a land that is guarded by guns (Creswell 8), a confusing style choice for Shibli as Palestinian writer since this kind of style according to Avishai Margali in his review in *The New York Review* “Israel: The Writer's Writers” (2009) for S. Yizhar’s fiction is unique to Zionists: “Many Zionists were, and still often are, caught in’ landscape schizophrenia’; they have a strong symbolic bond to the land, and very little concrete attachment to it”(qtd. In Creswell 8).

Speaking of the heroic characters of the canonical writers, Shibli’s characters are not created as heroes with a strong spirit for collective liberation, but ordinary people with experiences and collective subjectivity not even necessarily admirable. Also, almost all of them share some elements, such as anonymity, alienation and most importantly surrendered by detailed description through senses, which sometimes can turn into more of a deranged, neurotic thoughts, and explicit descriptions that scarcely found in old canonical works, for example; vomit, peeing, sweating. In her novel *We are all Equally Far from Love* (2012) her neurotic character thinks she is rotting in her bed, saying for example: “How many smells were now mingling on my corpse,” “Vomit, sweat, the smell of masturbation, underarm odors, my feet, the dust rag, my mouth, my hair, my throat, and my tears.” Creswell justified her choices. Shibli wrote her early books in the midst of the Second Intifada—an uprising that coincided with

growing popular disillusionment over the so-called peace process—and she takes a more skeptical attitude toward these dreams of emancipation’(3). An attitude that probably remained with her ever since.

While Djebbar explores the Algerian crisis through the lens of the fairytales, and the orientalist perspective, the canonical Palestinian authors investigate the Palestinian- Israeli conflict by discussing political themes. Shibli, on the other hand, addresses the Palestinian crisis through the five senses and details of tortured women, alienation and estrangement “which results in a foregrounding of tensions between empathy and the ethics of representation” (Al Ammar 554). This means that she evokes speculations and the authenticity about history through these strategies, particularly in *Minor Detail*. However, Ella Elbaz justifies it differently, asserting that Shibli chose writing depending on details, in order to fill in the gaps of the Palestinian history, thus constructing a fictionalized and imagined version of history to fill in the gaps since also reaching to the archive is impossible. The sensory experience became an alternative method to explore the past and write it from the colonized perspective making it accessible, while avoiding testimonies and the official archive. Hence, in accordance with this dissertation’s argument, it simultaneously replaces the authority of the colonizer’s archive (3).

Another possible reason behind why Shibli fictionalized history to archive is the rejection that Palestinians encountered while attempting to archive their history, as they usually tend to rely on memory and oral sources. The Israeli historian Benny Morris expressed his aversion to relying on memory and oral sources as they cannot be reliable, saying “enormous gaps of memory, the ravages of aging and time, and terrible distortions of subjectivity, the ravages of accepted wisdom, prejudice and political beliefs and interests” (qtd. In Elbaz 3), alongside other Israeli historians such as Yoav Gelber who also disapproved interview or orally-based archives.

Another similar statement was made by Silmi who writes that “For the colonized in the world of colonialism and neocolonialism, the marginal and minor remain the space of freedom, the place where things can be known and seen differently” (73). On account of the extreme secrecy of the Zionist archive and history, Shibli in order to find the voice of the marginalized such as the Bedouin girl, was left with no option but to re-envision and fill in the gaps. As to shift perspectives and observe the story of the girl from a modern female Palestinian point of view, or from “clairvoyance as Silmi described, a composition between memory, remembrance, sensory experiences or a ‘a bringing out of that which is forgotten” (74), a narrative somewhere between what is factual and what is fiction, “leaving us only to confront our will to knowledge, challenging us to see processes of effacement and hear those of silencing and making visible the will to non-knowledge that constantly underlies the pursuit of rationalized knowledge”(74).

In brief, as postcolonial modern female diaspora writers, both Djébar and Shibli, have contributed to literature by their creative and resistant way of writing, which subverted ideologies and fictionalized the colonizer's written history to raise speculations made possible to challenge the colonizer. Despite the challenges they faced, from writing about the colonized using the colonizer’s language and its intellectuals’ influence in the case of Djébar, to writing and attempting to construct the homeland history, that denied access to historical materials, from afar to keep what is left to vanish in history written down in the case of Shibli. Regardless of both authors' choice of language, their similar colonial situation, loss of national history, and their personal background as modern diaspora writers, makes their texts comparable. Djébar's weaving of the stories by fragmentation and intertextuality while discussing a political issue, using female body to reclaim agency for Algerian women and subsequently archiving in “The Woman in Pieces”, echoes Shibli’s narrative style in *Minor Detail*, which makes their texts worth a close study on their method of archiving via intertextuality.

This Chapter provided theoretical foundation for specific key concepts which form the base of this dissertation. It offered an exploration of the emergence of the concept of archiving by postcolonial authors, as a necessity for the study of voice and representation, as well as intertextuality and its role in postcolonial fiction, as a tool for writers to interact with the colonial and indigenous narratives, and as a mechanism for subversion. And finally, this chapter explored gender representation in postcolonial fiction, drawing on seminal works and their various interpretations, along with examples for further understanding. Additionally, it discussed the authors' personal and career background to deepen understanding and familiarization.

## **Chapter 2: A Comparative Analysis of Archiving in *Minor Detail* and “The Woman in Pieces”**

This chapter will introduce *Minor Detail* and “The Woman in Pieces” within the context of archiving, focusing on cultural preservation, archiving silence, and the representation of female figures. Both texts delve into the complexities of history, memory, and identity. This analysis will explore the construction of historical narrative aiming to examine the methods each author utilizes to amplify the voice of marginalized women within patriarchal and oppressive contexts.

### **1. Archive as a Tool for Cultural Preservation:**

Archives play a crucial role in preserving culture by recording, documenting, and providing access to historical records and cultural materials. Archiving is accomplished through creating historical records’ repositories. This process ensures that the cultural heritage of a community or a society is not lost over time. Materials of the archive can include official documents, personal correspondence, photographs, audio and video recordings, and other forms of cultural expression that serve as interpretive accounts of historical events, and also as primary sources for researchers, scholars, and members of the public of various cultural backgrounds, to help understand the knowledge presented in those materials.

The study of archives and culture in postcolonial literature has become a major issue of research, these studies explore how colonial narratives are reinterpreted, revised, and reinvented in the aftermath of colonialism. They assess archival material - both formal and informal - in constructing collective memory, identity formation, and forms of resistance to colonialism. American critic Roopika Risam insists on “the need for the creation of new methods, tools, projects, and platforms to undo the epistemic violence of colonialism and fully realize a decolonized, digital humanities” (78). Through their creative use of language, postcolonial

writers reclaim the collective identity of oppressed minorities, and highlight the erasure of those minorities in the archive: digital archive, oral narrative, and cultural artifacts. They are able to re-evaluate and undermine Eurocentric narrative constructs and celebrate indigenous cultures.

In examining the portrayal of archival practices in the works of Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2020) and Assia Djebar's "The Woman in Pieces" (1996), it is important to recognize the archive as a potent tool for the preservation of cultural heritage and memory. Both writers utilize distinct writing techniques, to explore how characters engage with archival materials presented in their writings, shedding light on the complexities of memory and culture preservation in the postcolonial context.

Shibli attempts to unravel the circumstances surrounding the mysterious rape and murder of an unnamed Bedouin girl by Israeli soldiers in Naqab (Negev) in 1949. In the second chapter of *Minor Detail*, a woman from Ramallah, driven by curiosity, indulges in a quest to the uncharted territory where the crime took place, hoping to discover the truth of the murder. Initially, Shibli faced difficulties obtaining documents about the incident. However, she had access to the testimonies of those convicted soldiers from the archives of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Israeli state archives, where she found a single article published in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (2003) by Aviv Lavie. It formed the backbone of her production process. The obsession of this woman with the murder of the Bedouin girl is kindled by the fact that the crime occurred twenty-five years prior to her birthday — a minor detail that blurred the lines between the crime happening in the past and the present life of the girl. Despite her apparent hesitation, this detail helped her to pursue "the complete truth, which, by leaving out the girl's story, the article does not reveal" (Shibli 61).

The article in question is the one written by Aviv Lavie, published in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (2003); it describes "The Nirim Affair," which the novel portrays as a platoon of Israeli soldiers being sent to Negev to cleanse the area in the aftermath of the 1948

war. While killing the remaining of the Bedouin inhabitants, the Israeli soldiers stumbled upon a young girl, they raped and killed her rendering her silent for good. The girl from Ramallah, as a result, takes it upon herself to travel and traverse the borders established by the Israelian system, in order to obtain all archival materials concerning the incident.

Shibli's detailed prose gives access to the nuances of life at the time, and makes possible the re-imagination of the crime scene. Her characters, though unnamed, still provoke the empathy of the reader, to look beyond the details of the narrative. Kuwaiti-American critic Layla AlAmmar writes in this regard that "[i]n presenting readers with unnamed characters, not only does Shibli foreground a tension between empathy and ethics, but the work becomes illustrative of a fragmented subjectivity" (556). She refuses to name her characters because, for her, it was another form of exerting power, one that defines, minimizes their subjectivity, relegating them to a state of abjection. Instead, she focused on exploring their representation in the archive by constructing "a repository of images that shifts attention to the unverifiable narrative of both perpetrator and victim, one that prioritizes description over plot." (Elbaz 2).

The first chapter of *Minor Detail* features the narrative of the Israeli soldier, told from the third person point of view, a technique that creates a detached atmosphere of narration, devoid of judgment, one that denies the reader access to the soldier's thoughts and feelings, and evokes curiosity as well as the need to explore the complexities of empathy and the human urge to rectify historical injustices. It leaves the reader to grapple with the issue of morality and responsibility of the characters. In contrast to the first chapter, Shibli utilizes the first-person point of view in the second part of her novel, an intriguing shift to personal narrative, where the protagonist recalls the nuances of her daily routine, her surroundings, the dog's barking, and her relationship with Palestinian colleagues, a narrative that moves to a more subjective lens, capturing the voice of the marginalized Palestinian female figure, yet it still reflects an erring



sensation of disconnection and reduces it to mundane description that captures the horrors of living under colonialism without any emotional attachment.

Shibli's protagonist struggles with identifying herself within a paradox of disconnectedness within the detailed prose narrating her daily routine, and the borders established by the Israeli system. She says, "as soon as I see a border, I either race towards it and leap over, or cross it stealthily, with a step. Neither of these behaviors are conscious, or rooted in a premeditated desire to resist borders; it's more like sheer stupidity" (Shibli 50). These borders would later extend to being rational borders of thought, of her own doubts, and the new remapping of her land that induced a feeling of alienation. They confine her movements, her rationality, her mother language and indigenous culture in the face of the new reality, and deny her access to the archival materials that could have helped her identify herself within the land, disclose the truth behind the Bedouin girl murder, and seek the closure she yearns for.

While the woman from Ramallah commences her journey to unravel the injustice of the past, she recognizes the limitations she may face but also emphasizes the need for scrutiny in reading about the crime. The minor detail that started it all may as well haunt her, until she can "arrive at the complete truth, which, by leaving out the girl's story, the article does not reveal." (Shibli 57). The protagonist's journey to the museum and Archives of the Israeli military and Zionist movements in Tel Aviv and in the northwest Negev, leads her to a C area (consisting of Israeli Settlements and is prohibited for Palestinians). Because she is from area A (under the Palestinian Authority), she is obligated to borrow her colleague's identity card, using different maps, one that shows the geography of Palestine before the Nakba of 1948 and an Israeli government-issued map. Shibli portrays this girl's journey as an act of archiving, while focusing on the details of her trip, the Graffiti on the walls, the language barrier, the streets' new names and the constant need to compare and try to identify the remnants of her culture left in the

landscape of Palestine before the Nakba to the reality of the neo-colonialism the protagonist lives in. The desert landscape here functions as an unconventional attempt at archiving. It resists, through the wind, the sand, and natural elements, it tells the story of every step, and wasted blood undocumented. In addition, the girl voices her disorientation as Shibli writes:

I scan the area with eyes wide open, searching for any trace of these villages and their houses, which were freely scattered like rocks on the hills and were connected by narrow, meandering roads that slowed at the curves. But it's in vain. None of them can be seen any more. The further I drive, the more disoriented I become. (68)

She preserves the minor details of the alignment of the crime with her date of birth, the change in the landscape and the Bedouin girl's story. By doing so, she highlights the importance of storytelling and the recollection of personal memory, that serves as a testament to the silenced voices and erased histories of marginalized Palestinian women and their belonging to their land against the Israeli rule and hegemonic historical narrative.

The protagonist in Shibli's work visits the Israel Defense Forces History Museum, where she encounters "a collection of photographs and propaganda films, a few of which, the labels indicate, were produced in the thirties and forties by pioneers of Zionist cinema" (73). As one film captures her attention, it shows a group of settlers gathered to build wooden huts and then celebrate their work by dancing while joining hands. Intriguingly, she rewinds the film multiple times "[a]gain and again, [she] [builds] settlements and dismantle them, until [she] [realizes] that [she] shouldn't waste any more time [there]" (Shibli 73). This particular scene portrays the girl's struggle to identify herself within the propaganda playing on the screen, projecting a sanitized version of history and the displacement Palestinians went through at the time, presenting the power narrative can exert, and how it can alienate individuals from their homeland, by excluding her from the archive, her people, and her culture, which will struggle to resist and be preserved.

Similarly, in a short story entitled “The Museum” (1999), Sudanese author Leila Aboulela narrates her protagonist Shadia’s experience in the Aberdeen Art Gallery, which is part of the Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums network in Scotland. She is struck by a wave of strong emotional conflict, while observing the artifacts presented in the museum, its walls become the defining force of how Scotland shaped the narrative and reduced the image of Sudan and Africa to a Jungle. The Nubian artifacts and the sound of bagpipes extenuate the contrast in the culture of both countries in a way that portrays Sudanese history as inferior, an extension of the Scottish colonial legacy. In Aboulela’s case, the act of archiving becomes inherently imperialist, and the materials become objects of display, disconnected from their original context and agency.

For Shibli, on the other hand, the issue regarding the archive isn’t only of misrepresentation but rather the production of an idealized version of history—a narrative that glosses over violence, erasure, and suffering— one that domesticates the traumatic atrocities experienced by the colonized. She believes that in documenting a multi-perspective version of the crime and the emotional distress it caused, her characters become a witness to the injustice of colonialism, and a voice to the voiceless. Particularly notable is the murder of the Bedouin girl, which was documented only from the soldiers’ testimonies in the report and the platoon commander’s diary. Through her prose, Shibli utilizes the dedication of her protagonist from Ramallah to showcase her attempt at archiving and scrutinizing the importance of truthfully representing the collective memory of the subaltern and their haunting memories—the faces of victims, the barren desert landscape, and the violence perpetrated.

Similarly, Assia Djebar employs archiving as a tool for restoring the voices of the silenced subalterns, and for the preservation of Algerian cultural heritage in the short story “The Women in Pieces,” in a manner that intertwines the marginalized particularities of Algerian history after French colonialism. The protagonist Atyka, a professor of French, chose to teach

the poetics of her third language, in the context of Algeria's Civil War, also known as the "Dark Decade" (1992-2002). By narrating the tale of the three apples to her students, Atyka draws their attention towards the characters: Scheherazade and the woman in pieces, prompting critical reflection about how each woman voiced their experiences within patriarchal and oppressive contexts. In this regard, Hélène Cixous comments in her essay "The Laugh of Medusa" (1975):

I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement. (875)

Djebar focuses on the inscription of Scheherazade as a symbolic female heroine, a figure known as the narrator, an allegory to how women throughout history functioned and resisted oppression and imperialism. Similarly, in her work *Far From Medina* (1991), Djebar illustrates through characters like Fatima and Scheherazade "how eloquence and storytelling can be deployed to achieve the practical liberation of women from oppression, and literature itself emerges as a site of questioning, an invitation to the reader or listener to think differently" (242). By rewriting Scheherazade, she dismantles the dominant notion of women as only survivors of oppression, and paints a more autonomous image of Algerian women in the context of colonialism that through their retelling of the history, they provide an alternative to the colonial discourse, a challenging narrative to the traditional roles assigned to them in cultural production. Djebar calls for the transgressive capacity of oral folklore and literary texts such as hers to inscribe women into historical record and embrace the social roles they adopted at the time to resist the French colonizer. Fanon in similar fashion advocated for the role of Algerian women at the time, concluding that "the Algerian woman under colonial rule takes on a unique

revolutionary agency in maintaining the social structure constituted by home and family against the cultural transformations of the colonial encounter” (64-66).

In the short story archiving is not merely a technique of historical preservation but also a means to represent and assert feminist heritage in the context of postcolonial Algeria. The story itself is an archive, a repository of fragmented voices, bodies and lives of Atyka, the woman from the tale and Scheherazade. The protagonist Atyka, through her storytelling, archives the experience and memories of both women, intertwining the personal with the collective. She collects tales and retells the story to her students, much like an archivist navigates documents. Djébar illustrates as she writes “tomorrow we’ll be in Bassora! But before, look at the map; we’ll come back to Baghdad...”(106). She blurs the line between the fragmented realities “... (walking down a street in another Arab city, it is Atyka who imagines all of this, imagines all of this today), yes, the time has come to go back to the young woman, to the stranger when she was alive, alive and happy.” (99), so the story becomes whole and the forgotten is remembered.

Djébar’s narrative and its engagement with archiving utilizes the aspect of language as an act of archiving. Originally written in French, being the language of the colonizer, it captures the duality of Algerian identity, an interplay of colonial discourse, the indigenous culture and the anxiety this produces in Atyka’s mind as she confesses: “language will let me come and go, not just in multiple languages— but in all ways” (100). Djébar meticulously describes the layers of linen and palm tree leaves used in the coffin of both Atyka and the woman cut into pieces as metaphor for the subsequent need to piece back the layers of narrative in the archive, that the process of archiving is nothing but a complexion of cultural elements that needs to be preserved to live on and inform the future, as Djébar moves from the Eastern setting of *The One Thousand and One Nights* to the Dark Decades of Algerian history.

In conclusion, the concept of archiving in “The Woman in Pieces” by Djébar is an efficient way to rehabilitate suppressed voices for the sake of preserving Algeria’s heritage and empowering women. Djébar connects the strands of history, resistance, and cultural transmission through Atyka’s narration of Scheherazade. In order to subvert the status quo, the story blurs the dichotomy between personal and collective histories, rendering the collective memory of the story as an archive. Djébar advocates for rethinking authorship, history, and heritage as well as embracing the indomitable Algerian women.

## 2. Archiving Silence:

*“Literature, for me, is the only place that accepts silence”*

*Adania Shibli (2023)*

To examine literature in terms of silence is certainly paradoxical, since literature is meant to make us see, hear, and feel through words, thus communicating and transmitting ideas, whereas silence is the absence of speech, oblivion, and secrecy. However, silence is a crucial theme for literature. First because in literature as in life there is so much to learn about what is left unsaid. Second, it exaggerates the atmosphere of suspense, drama, emotions and elevates the reader’s imagination by making him/ her a participant to fill the gaps within the work and hence capture the attention and interest.

Similarly to Shibli, Djébar is also a female diasporic writer. Her narratives are considered experimental compared to other Algerian writers, regardless of the use of the French language. Her texts also manifest a glimpse of silence in her own way. Silence is Shibli and Djébar’s point of intersection and difference simultaneously. The colonial situations from which each one of them writes is different, consequently their understanding of voice and silence differs. Shibli is still writing from, and about, an ongoing colonial situation. On the other hand, Djébar is writing to put these functions of silence in their work of fiction successfully and achieve the tension. Silence has multiple types which depend on the writer’s preferences. Jean-

Jacques Lecerle, in “Thomas Hardy’s Silences” (2013), identifies two types of silence. The silence of the world that is indifferent to the world of humans, and not endowed with speech nor any form of expression. And the negative or relative silence, that represents a lack of speech or speech that is “mutely conveyed”(1), because it is repressed.

The negative or relative silence is a recurring theme used by postcolonial writers. It foregrounds their motive, by capturing the colonized lack of agency and the oppression of the colonizer. Additionally, silence is included to accentuate female voicelessness and double burden by being silenced via both the colonizer and national males. To illustrate, in Tayeb Salih *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), Bint Mahmoud was a widow who despite her refusal was forced to be married to the old man Wad Rayyes by her father. She was not merely deprived of her sexual consent but from her voice as well, and was married because she was considered subordinate to her father. In colonized and patriarchal Sudan, Bint Mahmoud was oppressed twice and eventually realized that her freedom lies in death. This is a representation of relative silence which displays speech that is repressed. Speaking of Death, it is the state of non being that carries with it silence. Thus, the silence of the dead also speaks and indicates freedom of speech.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah’s novel *Admiring Silence* (1996), the unnamed protagonist loses his relationship with his family, after they resent him for keeping his marriage with an English woman a secret, and his overall remoteness and introversion that he induces in his letters to them back in Zanzibar. He turns out to be like his father Abbas from the novel’s sequel *The Last Gift* (2011), who left without a reason leaving him and his mother. Emma the wife thinks that Abbas was silent because “he had no dominion over his life” (53). In his book, *Manifesto for Silence* (2007), Stuart Sim divides silence into two categories: “silence as a condition” and “silence as a response” (14). In his dissertation, *A postcolonial Narratological Study of Silence in Gurnah's Admiring Silence and by the Sea* (2014) Ozlem Arslan argues that “in the light of

Sim's categorization, characters' losing "dominion over [their lives]" in *Admiring Silence* emerges as a condition, something imposed on them by the people or the experiences that have more control on their lives than themselves"(18). Silence in this work takes another shape as a condition, imposed by society, race and familial troubles due to the ruling regime of Zanzibar who is controlled and administered by the Oman Sultanate and the influence of imperial Britain and Germany, who control the economic power and when they speak, they silence the Zanzibar wealthy ruling figures let alone people (Arslan 19).

Gurnah depicted Abbas' silence for the reader to question, capture the history and power dynamics. Hence, he archives the Zanzibar society's oppression and silence under the influence of the powerful colonists to reclaim voice. When speech becomes impossible, silence communicates. Marysia Lewandowska argues "that there can be presence through omission; the absence of certain voices does not appear as a lack, she argues, but rather "as deafening silence."5(qtd. in Silmi 60). Another endorsing statement was made by Carol A. Kidron in her anthropological study, *The Silence of Holocaust survivors* (2009), stating the communicative power of silence, and referencing "the phenomenon of silence as a medium of expression, communication, and transmission of knowledge" (7). This is a reason why silence is a recurring theme in postcolonial literature, to indicate the faced oppression and retrieve agency, since silence also speaks and resists colonization. Which is why postcolonial writers resort to using silence anyway. The colonized are almost always forcefully silenced by the dominant colonizer's noise, they have no choice but to archive silence in return as exemplified in the case of Gurnah and many other postcolonial writers. However, they learned to manipulate and subvert silence for their favor, and it became a tool to voice the colonized struggles rather than repress it. The next step is to archive it in their narratives. Trinh Minh-ha stated in "Image and the Void" (2015) "Whether materially or immaterially manifested, the blank space remains alive with indefinite possibilities. It could be indicative of a profound determination not to



forget, a means to leave evidence of repression, a tacit gesture to honor an absent presence” (136).

As previously mentioned, silence can be manifested differently, it varies depending on the background from which the writer is writing. Silence in *Minor Detail* is evident throughout the text, and it starts with the narration. In the first chapter, despite the meticulous, traumatic details and descriptions as to the movement of the lieutenant around the camp and tent, his shaving routine, the wound cleaning and the soap suds falling from the girl’s face, silence lurks in the background, most evidently in the lack of dialogues or even monologues at least for the Bedouin girl, except for the lieutenant’s speech. Shibli does not give voice to the Bedouin girl, unlike what is usually expected from a postcolonial writer, that is to give voice to the marginalized. The girl only cries and babbles “incomprehensible fragments that intertwined with the dog’s ceaseless barking” (34). The details of narration do not give the voice to the Bedouin girl but rather obscures her voice under the existent layer of oppression exerted by the Israeli colonization. The Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg in his essay “Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method”(1980) hypothesized the concept of “evidentiary paradigm ”. He starts with the art historian Giovanni Morelli’s method of ascertaining forgeries, the focus should be on the margins of the painting instead of on the central part which the forger will copy with care, because the margins are where the unconscious personal touch displays itself (qtd. In Hammad 115). On the other hand, for Shibli, this could give an explanation for the voicelessness of the Bedouin girl and Shibli’s intentions as a postcolonial writer. Shibli intentionally buried the marginalized girl’s voice under the meticulous details of the rape as well as the lieutenant’s routines, to shift the reader’s attention by overwhelming him with the details to question the girl’s voice, age and name. From the beginning Shibli’s focus was on the silence of the girl who will speak to the reader, her buried voice under colonial dominance, and the details of narration to make the reader sympathize

with the marginalized. The silence under the details was Shibli's silent personal touch away from the report's story. Prominent British-Palestinian author Isabella Hammad points out that "Shibli has made a powerful point. To look for a smoking gun is to miss the larger picture" (Hammad 116).

In the second chapter, silence is manifested in the abruptness of the entire narration of the story itself. By the approaching end of the novella, tension escalates. The unnamed girl enters a military zone in Area B (is a land under Palestinian civil control in the West Bank, and heavy Israeli military control) between what she describes as "sandy hills" (100), which suddenly reveals lots of thorn acacia, terebinth trees behind them. The sudden scene of the trees in such an area captivates her attention, and she walks towards them where she finds a bullet case. Then her attention shifts towards a flock of camels standing nearby. By that time a group of soldiers spots her and calls her. She becomes anxious: "Instantly a wave of heat sweeps over me, and my body starts to sweat. I have to calm down, immediately. Being tense won't change the course of things" (100-101). The soldiers pointed their guns in her direction, and emotions heightened even more.

The others raise their guns at me. Immediately the sound of my pulse starts beating violently in my head, and numbness extends through my entire body, paralyzing it... moment. I have to calm down. I must be overreacting. Yes, just like usual. My chewing-gum. Where is it? I have to calm down. I reach my hand toward my pocket, for the pack of chewing gum. And suddenly, something like a sharp flame pierces my hand, then my chest, followed by the distant sound of gunshots.(101)

The story ends here, by silencing a character in a poignant moment of a rising action. Shibli interrupted the action, the narration and ended the story to magnify the drama and excitement, which follows it with nothing but silence. Silence by the end leaves the reader in a moment of reflection. Shibli once again evoked silence to make the reader wonder about the

shocking end the narrator met, and the reason behind it. The fact that the actual case was brought to court and twelve of the involved soldiers in the rape and murder of the girl were sentenced to prison, the reader might expect Shibli as well to craft the ending in a similar direction. While the reader anticipates the narrator to uncover a new detail about the Bedouin girl or the case in general somehow, or achieving justice in a way. Shibli plays on the readerly expectations and shockingly silences the narrator in an unanticipated and open ending. This indicates Shibli's way of shifting the reader's attention to the continued colonization and silence of the Palestinians. And the second time she breaks the silence through a manipulative use of itself [silence]. In this case, we notice that Shibli emphasizes the silenced marginalized individual, that she investigates the Palestinian crisis through the lens of the silenced, marginalized subjects instead of the political lens like the canonical writers. For Shibli, the emblematic experience of occupation is in silence and isolation not in the dramatic moment of action. In a 2021 interview with cultural journalist Claudia Steinberg, Shibli said “For me, this situation is never about Jewishness. Differences between people are used to commit injustice—that was an early lesson about racism. My parents didn’t interfere. They had experienced the Nakba when they were fifteen years old. My grandfather had been killed. There was silence about that. [...] Palestine is a mode of living, an experience” (Steinberg).

Unlike Shibli who estimated it as resistance, Djébar viewed silence in the traditional postcolonial sense, as a colonial violence and domination. Djébar, in *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade*, argues that “to refuse to veil one’s voice and to start ‘shouting,’ that was really indecent, real dissidence. For the silence of all the others suddenly lost its charm and revealed itself for what it was: a prison without reprieve” (204). This is due to the complicated situation of the civil war and postcolonial Algeria; especially on women, who despite the pivotal role they played in the war of independence disappeared into obscurity. Spivak made an analogy concerning the issue of postcolonial North African women: “the homeopathic double bind of

feminism in decolonization...seeks in the new state to cure the poison of patriarchy with the poison of the legacy of colonialism" (qtd. in Maafa 333). Hence, in Djébar's work there is no binary opposition between voice and silence, and in her texts voice and silence are in an inextricably intertwined quest to find Algerian women's voices (Silmi 58).

In her short story "The Women in Pieces", silence is manifested through the intricacies of voice and death. In the last scene, an armed group enters Atyka's classroom and the tension escalates. Some of them corner her, one of them guards the door, and another one shoots fire in the air to scare the children and sends them to escape or hide somewhere else. A bullet hits Atyka in the heart and renders her dead, they leave afterwards except for one who is described as a madman ...with a dagger (123) who approaches and beheaded her and before he left he positions her head on the desk and leaves dancing as a madman. Few seconds later, her voice starts to narrate "The Tale of the Three Apples" from *The Nights*, till it fades away quickly. Atyka's death and her voice after manifests silence; silence that symbolizes injustice and indicate a cycle of oppression and a decay of society happening in Algeria, as it the voice says: "Each of our days is a night, a thousand and one days, here, at home, at ..." (124). Raleigh states that "Djébar's writing does not attempt to form a seamless whole, but rather reveals the interstices – that is, the silences imposed by colonialism, followed by religious fanaticism, in her native Algeria. In Djébar's story" (40). In fact, the version of *The One Thousand and One Night* that Atyka was teaching, is the revised version of Antoine Galland.

Patterns and manifestations of silence exist in Shibli and Djébar's texts. Shibli's silence echoed the marginalized buried voices, and the ongoing occupation. Djébar's manifested silences pointed out the cycle of oppression made by the religious fanaticism on Algerian women specifically. Shibli and Djébar successfully documented silence and partially succeeded in communicating with the reader. However, they both failed to reclaim the full and original voice, due to the ongoing occupation. Shibli could not reclaim the voice completely when the

archive was impossible to reach. Djébar's use of the French language would strip the Algerian women from the authenticity of their voices (Silmi 62). Nevertheless, even if these exceptions were achieved, both Shibli and Djébar would not be able to reclaim voice. This is due to the theory of representation which was the first main reason for them to document silence.

### **3. Archiving and Female Representation:**

Documenting silence for postcolonial writers, is ethically representative of the marginalized subject, for they refuse to speak over silence and its intricacies. Spivak argues that the act of representation and giving a voice, is a double colonization. Instead of countering the colonial narratives, it reproduces them, rendering the colonized women doubly colonized. Thus, Shibli and Djébar documented silence of the women in their narratives rather than giving them a voice, nor speaking on their behalf. In order to represent the homogeneity of the other, the writer has to be an author and represent their own claim to the truth "only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self" (Silmi 61). Or look for other forms which empower the marginalized, a notion Spivak refers to as "portrayal" which is the opposite of "proxy" that indicates the traditional forms of representation.

In *Minor Detail*, Shibli refrains from giving a voice to the Bedouin girl and insists on silence, to avoid victimizing her. Instead, she fictionalized another character from the present day, which resembles her experience of acting as a detective to excavate the archive but fails highlighting the ongoing colonization, and the impossibility of reaching the archive. The quest of this narrator in itself acts as a representation that empowers the marginalized Bedouin girl by embarking on a journey looking for her voice. Her voice at the end was never retrieved, first due to the ongoing colonization and Shibli's emphasis on maintaining ethics of representation of avoiding speaking for and giving a voice.

Furthermore, the girl from the second chapter's narcissistic and indifferent comments when talking about the Bedouin girl, act as Shibli's emphasis on distancing herself from the Bedouin girl and interweaves her experience:

This type of investigation is completely beyond my ability. And the fact that the girl was killed twenty-five years to the day before I was born doesn't necessarily mean that her death belongs to me, or that it should extend into my life, or that it should be my duty to retell her story. As a matter of fact, I'm the last person who could do that, because of all my stuttering and stammering. In short, there's absolutely no point in my feeling responsible for her, feeling like she's a nobody and will forever remain a nobody whose voice nobody will hear.(60-61).

Shibli by not naming her characters and distancing herself describes what Min-ha refers to as Speaking nearby, a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it"(6).

Djebar as an Algerian Francophone woman, to connect with the subaltern Algerian women, has given importance to oral tradition and in order to free herself from the authorial position and represent their voices ethically in "The Woman in Pieces" particularly her strategy was the *mise-en-abyme* technique and interweaving bits of personal experience. In the "The Tale of The Three Apples", Scheherazade the storyteller, likens herself to the Sultan's vizier who himself becomes a storyteller to save the slave's life. And Atyka's students describe her as a political cunning;' *The famous storyteller has introduced a second storyteller. She's wearing a mask, that's all*' (121 originally in Italics). On the other hand, Djebar rewrote the tale using Atyka as a mediator, imagining and creating a portrait of the woman's life before the murder and her love for her husband. Atyka by the near end of the story, talking to herself she considers to turn the story upside down, and return the story of the woman cut into pieces herself (Cavness

8). Scheherazade charmed the Sultan with her stories and ended the massacres in the kingdom. Arguably, feminist critics are still cautious of naming her a feminist heroine, as she was under threats of death. In regard to her equivocal position as a feminist heroine, other critics “evacuated her figure from any feminist position by rendering her a guardian of place” (Cavness 2). Scheherazade holds off death “not to save her head, but to guard speech...she does not represent women, but all desiring beings” states Bencheikh (qtd. In Cavness 2).

By creating these narrative frames and layers of voices, Djébar has freed herself from the authority over representing Algerian women struggles. If Scheherazade is a political cunning and guardian of speech, Djébar’s inclusion of her tale in her narrative agency to tell the story of Atyka. This means that Djébar is retelling a story of gender violence indirectly. Djébar wore a mask similar to Scheherazade, to tell the bloody war that postcolonial Algeria is undergoing.

Atyka on the other hand, does not represent Algerian women directly, but also Djébar’s personal experience to be able to tell the story of postcolonial Algeria without speaking for them. “French will let me come and go, not just in multiple languages but in all ways”(100); this statement by Atyka echoes Djébar’s statement in her autobiography “like a landlady, not as an occupant with hereditary rights. Thus, French was truly becoming for me a welcoming home, maybe even a permanent place [...] Finally I crossed the threshold freely” (Djébar 19-21). Both Djébar and Atyka found their freedom in French, as they were educated under the French system. The exception or the proximity in this case, is that Djébar did not speak Arabic as Atyka did. At the end of the story, Atyka was accused by the soldiers of teaching “obscene stories” (122) and was murdered. This scene echoes to some extent Djébar’s life, although Djébar was not murdered but threatened and forced out of Algeria for writing in French. And whatever was written in French is considered to echo the legacy of colonization and western way of thinking, as Atyka’s used translation which was innocent in the first place. Thus, Djébar

and Shibli created these two characters not to represent the subaltern women but to speak nearby. By the use of *mise en abyme* technique and weaving her experience, Djébar created multiple voices to show homogeneity and the struggle of Algerian women under the national patriarchal rule. And Shibli distanced herself through her signature narrative style of details to manifest silence and blanks which in return provide a place where freedom and possibilities of voices of the marginalized speak for themselves indirectly, as well as her unsympathetic character and her still and bold language.

This chapter examined how Djébar and Shibli evoked their messages through characters with hybrid identities representing the subaltern away from the traditional forms of representation, using a multiplicity of voices and hybrid and borderline identities, archiving silence in their texts and, most importantly, introducing both works within the context of archiving.



### Chapter 3: Intertextuality: Resisting Cultural and Historical Erasure

This chapter will address the concept of intertextuality in Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* and Assia Djebar's "The Woman in Pieces" focusing on how these texts interact with and reference other texts. Intertextuality, in its fundamental sense, involves the relationship between texts and the ways in which they influence each other. However, acknowledging the varied interpretations of intertextuality over time, this research adopts Julia Kristiva's approach for its alignment with the overall purpose of the analysis.

#### 1. Intertextuality in Assia Djebar's "The Women in Pieces"

Djebar has always used intertextuality in the writing of her texts, which varies from historical, literary, and cultural references, to a complex interwoven narrative, also known as *mise-en-abyme*. Scheherazade can be considered Djebar's muse. She employs a revision of Scheherazade's character and her narrative in relation to Algerian women in several works. Notably, *Ombre Sultane* (1995), translated to *A Sister to Scheherazade* (1987), reflects the relationship between the sisters from *The One Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade and Dinarzad, in relation to Djebar's characters Isma and Hajila, a novel that examines the intersection of power and desire and its implication on the issue of representation of characters within the text and by extension to the broader context of patriarchy and post-colonialism. An enrichment of their cultural significance but also a means to resist misrepresentation and the silencing of women's voices, particularly Muslim Algerian women.

In "The Woman in Pieces", Djebar's attempt to re-imagine "the Tale of the Three Apples" derived from *the One Thousand and One Nights* convokes two types of narrative: traditional and modern. One with an italicized font featuring the narrator Atyka, a strong-willed Professor of French, set in 1990s Algeria, during the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism (modern). The other is written in standard type and retells the oriental story from *the Nights* (traditional). Djebar's method of traversing time and space both figuratively and literally allows for the

merging of her three potent female characters: Scheherazade, the woman cut into pieces, and Atyka. A fragmented narrative, in which the present is understood through the past.

The reality of the present, Atyka's reality, is elicited in parallel to the retelling of the story. The narrator Atyka explains to her students the nuances of Scheherazade's life which is made accessible through Djébar's choice of giving Scheherazade a voice. The latter's "infamous ploy to prolong her life by entrancing the sultan with her narrative powers creates a triangulated relationship between speech, death, and desire that has generated infinite possibilities for artistic production and critique" (Cavness 1). The Story of the Three Apples is structured through three narratives: first, the frame, Scheherazade and Shahrayar's story where she postpones her death by telling stories to the king until he falls asleep at dawn. Second, the framed text, Scheherazade's tales. And lastly another framed text within the second one where the Vizier Djafar takes the role of Scheherazade and becomes the narrator. This frame narrative structure mirrors "The Woman in Pieces". Thus, Djébar becomes the catalyst of voice.

Djébar's use of fragmented and frame narrative can insinuate the shared disoriented reality of women from Baghdad to modern Algiers. And the dismembered body of the woman in the story further illustrates the textual fraction. As Djébar describes,

The pieces are wrapped carefully in a veil...The veil is folded inside a carpet...The carpet, rolled halfway, is kept in a coffin, a large coffin made of palm leaves...The coffin made of palm leaves has been sewn carefully with yarn, good red yarn. Sewn tightly. The coffin itself is preserved in an olivewood trunk, a sealed trunk...The chest lies at the bottom of the Tigris. (97)

Her detailed description of the corpse reflects the layered nature of her text. "[T]hus marrying the body to narrative form. She accentuates the place of flesh in "The Story of the Three Apples," or rather, adds corporeality to the story. This incorporation is even more palpable in the description of the wife while she is still alive" (Stepanov 235). Djébar gives voice to the

woman in question unlike the original text; in fact she does so in the space of eleven pages instead of the original five. She speaks of her experience as a wife that can reclaim agency over her desire and body, a mother who's weary of the burden of potential pregnancy, and a woman who's capable of articulating her thoughts and anxieties.

The allegory of the body is a central textual reference in the text. It foregrounds how the experience of Atyka links and merges itself into one corporal entity "In her thoughts, she is in Baghdad, next to the Tigris, at the time of Haroun el Rachid and his vizier, Djaffar the Barmekide." (Djebar 100). In addition to storytelling as a means to resist the notion of speaking over, both Atyka and Djebar refuse to speak over women yet strive to bring those who have been silenced to the surface. Evidently, through Djebar's narration, the women cut into pieces came to life as an incentive to Atyka's narrated memory. This borderline connection established between the three female figures was accessible, the recollection of their life experience, manifested through the act of storytelling and specifically using the method of frame narrative. As Helene Cixous comments on the act of writing for women:

An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. (880)

The final scene in the short story features the beheading of Atyka by a group of extreme Islamists who took matters into their own hands to kill anyone who teaches or uses the colonizer's language. Djebar changes the form of this part of the text so the font of Atyka's murder scene and the narration of the tale from *The Nights* are both standardized which creates a sense of continuity and connectedness across space and time. Like the women cut into pieces in the tale, Atyka being dismembered allows her to witness a moment where her identity is refracted, figuratively divided between the three women. Djebar reinscribes the corpse of Atyka

in the same manner “enveloped in veils; she who is identified as the woman cut into pieces: “Atyka’s body and head, wrapped in white linen, rest within the chest inside the two coffins. The body of the woman was cut into pieces” (125).

However, one cannot but question if death ultimately means the absence of voice. In “The Woman in Pieces” Djébar resists death in an unconventional manner; she explores the idea that the physical bodies of her protagonist and the women cut into pieces are inseparable from the text, that storytelling merges their identities, their bodies in their intact or dismembered state. Body is text and text is body, therefore the voice of silenced female figures is retrievable if their body is still intact. However, noting the way Djébar gives voice to Atyka after the mutilation contradicts what has been said. She “flattens out” (Stepanov 222) the font which adds to the last scene a dimension where the confinement of logical time and space collapse so that Atyka is all the women at once and that form of collective responsibility is strong enough to resist death and silence exerted by the colonizer. It can be interpreted as the resistance of a collective entity; the imagery of the mutilated bodies reflects the fragmentation and multitude of voices a body can hold, that the corporal property of a woman holds memory, and desire, and can be the physical proof of its very existence and thereby its right to claim a narrative. That is the burden of subverting silence in both cases, Atyka’s as a representative of the violence exerted on Muslim Algerian Women who spoke French at time and the humanization of the women cut into pieces. Djébar precisely gives life to the severed women through creating a narrative for when she was alive believing in doing so her narrative voice is considered a potential site for social transformation.

## **2. Intertextuality in Adania Shibli’s *Minor Detail***

Intertextuality in Shibli’s *Minor Detail* was apparent from the outset, as she drew inspiration from a 2003 report by *Haaretz* which shared the same narrative about the Bedouin girl, thus engaging in the practice of obligatory intertextuality. However, the text is not only

referencing the report but it contains historical, cultural and literary references weaved together to construct a layered narrative. Consequently, four types can be derived from Shibli's text.

The first chapter of the text is organized by dates from the real events of the Nakba, the same timeline as the report indicates regardless of Shibli's imagined details of life in the camp. Yet, the plot of the second chapter is mostly imagined by Shibli as an attempt to speak nearby, creating a resemblance between herself and the narrator to look for the truth via her signature of telling of details as a historian. The reconstruction of the fictional second chapter after the first one which contains some real facts in it from the report, indicates Shibli's resistance of the colonial narrative by reconstruction through details despite the lack of the absolute truth nor partial of it. "It is possible to reconstruct something's appearance, or an incident one has never witnessed, simply by noticing various little details which everyone else finds to be insignificant" (Shibli 55). According to Carlo Ginzburg, historians can reconstruct the past from minor details or unimportant figures (qtd. In Hammad 115). In her book *Resistance Literature*(1987) Barbara Harlow discusses Abdel-fattah Kilito retelling of the Al-Jahiz fable from *the Book of The Animals*(2015) and while analyzing the riddle which Kilito started his fable with, Harlow reaches a conclusion that this particular retelling could raise many questions about resistance literature, stating that all of people that were denied the access to the world politics, or suffer the problem of contested terrains whether culturally, geographically or politically (21-22)

Such an agenda must attempt a reconstruction of history between those..., which have been variously designated as First and Third Worlds, metropolis and periphery, etc., in such a way as to redress, on the cultural as well as on the political and economic levels, the exploitative and repressive nature of those relations. (22)

Almost all of what Harlow had addressed coordinates with Shibli's situation and reconstruction of the report that offered an alternative perspective. Seen in this light, Shibli was involved in literary intertextuality which allowed her interaction with the colonial narrative and history as well, resulting in having power over it by subverting through her signature details and interesting characterization of the second chapter narrator regardless of the futile ending. Literary intertextuality and details made historical reconfiguration possible despite the ambiguous end and turned the lens on the victim instead of the victor. According to Creswell, Shibli's literary intertextuality surpassed the report, pointing that the very first lines of the text describing the landscape through the soldiers' binoculars as an allusion to the Israeli writer Smilansky Yizhar story *The Prisoner* (1949) which took place in the same timeline of Nakba. The story begins with the figure of an Israeli officer surveilling the landscape through binoculars, looking for Arabs. And he finds a shepherd, whom he describes "as dumbly silent as an uprooted plant", and who is brought back to the army base and brutally interrogated, though he clearly knows nothing of military value. The narrator of the story, an army private and Israeli everyman, is charged with transferring the shepherd to another base for further interrogation. The story ends, in a rather existentialist fashion, with the soldier debating with himself whether to let the prisoner free or not. Creswell describes Shibli's *Minor Detail* and Yizhar *The Prisoner* as both "a meditation on the meaning and moral consequences of 1948" (7) as Yizhar's writings usually have a sense of skepticism. He argued that Yizhar viewed landscape as an aesthetic relief from the war dilemma; however, for Shibli it is the opposite. "For her, the landscape is the opposite of pastoral. Rather than greenstuff and bedappled hills, it is a gray labyrinth of crowded checkpoints, dump sites, high walls, and gated settlements" (8). From this detail which Creswell touched on, we could say that Shibli alludes to Yizhar's story as her way of interacting with the past and showing that there is no difference between the past and the present, if not the present situation is worse: "History is not development but

repetition with slight variation of minor details’’ (Abu-Manneh). As Yizarh’s soldier ends the story debating which decision is right, to free the prisoner or to kill him, Shibli’s soldier kills the Bedouin girl without hesitation. Shibli juxtaposed Yizarh to offer the perspective of reality and what could have happened since the report that inspired her story is based on a true story.

Beyond literary intertextuality, the fact that such a report tells a historical account is what inspired Shibli’s text, involving her in historical allusions to the Nakba. For example, the soldier ends his speech by saying “Man, not the tank, shall prevail’’ (32), this phrase is a symbol of the Israelis victory in the battle of Nirim in 1948, that was hanged in the dining hall during the celebrations. This phrase can be juxtaposed against Kanafani’s phrase “Man is a cause’’ (qtd. In Abu-Manneh). However, one should consider Shibli’s writing aesthetic mockery is her device, not the humanist commitment. How dare the victorious colonizer speak about man, and to evoke remembrance to contrast the past and the present state? Additionally, the same phrase is referenced the second time, when the West Banker narrator learns about the history of Nirim settlement from the archivist. The archivist tells the whole history of the Nirim’s settlement eloquently and in detail, but the narrator finds nothing new in fact she laments the efforts she put in her quest, since she learned nothing new in particular “all the information I’ve gathered on this arduous trip I could have obtained while sitting in my house, at my table in front of the big window.” (84) And when she asked about any murders around the area, initially he was uncertain yet proceeded to inform her about the dead body of a Bedouin girl he encountered as a former volunteer soldier after the war. However, he does not refer to it as a colonial crime but as an honor killing. The archivist is not to blame for his ignorance of the murder of the Bedouin girl by the IDF, as Israelis kept a low profile of their crimes and justified it as self-defense or as a final act for peace particularly after the 1967 war. Mordechai Bar-On states

It is not a fine time for historians. They lack not only the necessary perspective but also the knowledge of the eventual lines history may find on its way to the future. The game

is played out in the media, in what leaders formulate, even in the cyber world, not in academic research. The deciphering of these turns of the mind cannot be done by regular methods of historiography. They call for audacious text interpretations like some of which were attempted in this essay. (16)

Shibli's historical reference is an audacious interpretation, that is to never look for truth and cohesion in history because "colonization is not just an event but an ongoing process." (Abu-Manneh) As history has already been tampered with, aiming for the full details is almost impossible. Nonetheless, at least in this historical reference of Shibli, which seems to never resist or protect itself from the harsh reality. One can reflect on the credibility of history and all of the lost minor details.

Shibli's historical references can also be traced in the narrator's journey. On her way searching for museums and archives in Yafa, the narrator notices "Ofar Prison" a few meters away from her and briefly tells its background

Ofar Prison I've heard a lot about this prison in recent years, but this is the first time I've seen it. It's relatively new, built in 2002, during the wave of invasions that took place in the spring of that year, when the army rounded up anyone over the age of sixteen and under fifty in public squares and brought them here. (67)

In this scene, there is a reference to the second Intifada, and the many detentions that took place at the time which even included children. According to Nakhala and Hakala, there were more than 1.000 detained Palestinian by the end of 2002 (5). By this reference, Shibli is revisiting history from her perspective by further telling the story of the colleague, and simultaneously reminding the reader of the detentions Palestinians suffered.

The West Banker during her quest, depended on a handful of different maps which she brought with her and the one that she obtained from the Nirim archivist.



I take the maps I brought with me out of my bag...which show the borders of the four Areas, the path of the Wall, the construction of settlements, and checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza. Another map shows Palestine as it was until the year 1948, and another one, given to me by the rental car company and produced by the Israeli ministry of tourism, shows streets and residential areas according to the Israeli government.” (66)

These maps show the separation of the Palestinian territories and the Israeli government areas within the same land. This cultural allusion to maps implicates power dynamics, restrictions and the fragmented Palestinian identity and geography. As in the first chapter there is no map referencing compared to the second. This emphasizes the strained and sophisticated relations between both identities over time. The maps lead the narrator to new roads and familiar ones that turned unfamiliar due the colonizer’s activity and power shifting as some Palestinian villages disappeared, eventually evoking a sense of alienation in her

I go back and open the map, which depicts Palestine until 1948, and let my eyes wander over it, moving between the names of the many Palestinian villages that were destroyed after the expulsion of their inhabitants that year. I recognize several of them; some of my colleagues and acquaintances originate from there...But the majority of the names are unfamiliar to me, to the extent that they invoke a feeling of estrangement. (69)

Maps, in this case, emphasize the displacement Palestinians feel towards their land. The narrator opened Palestine’s map from 1948 only to face the reality of the loss of historical and cultural roots. At the beginning of the chapter, the narrator stresses her extreme fear of borders and explains it as “sheer stupidity” (50) and a matter of clumsiness: “my inability to identify borders, even very rational borders, which makes me overreact sometimes, or underreact at other times, unlike most people”(50-51). What the narrator fails to understand is that the reason behind her paranoia and extreme fear of borders is rooted in pervasive control exerted over her life as Palestinian under colonization, where crossing borders means hostility and violence.

Thus, colonial maps usually stand as a representation of contested territories and borders. For the narrator these colonial maps stand as a method to navigate her personal trauma in a chaotic environment. By the use of the mapping concept, Shibli is challenging the reader's perspective as it encourages to consider the subjective experience of those living within these mapped territories. The constant need for maps evokes a sense of entrapment and suffocation, as well as a reinforcement of trauma and alienation for the individual such as the narrator since they indicate a series of checkpoints, barriers and closed roads. Maps are Shibli's cultural reference to focus on the marginalized subject's trauma and estrangement. Maps combined with Shibli's bold and minimalist language, involve the reader in a personal experience of a Palestinian trapped in psychological and geographical borders.

In brief, despite that Shibli is denied archival access, intertextuality offered her a space to interact with the colonial narrative, ethically represent the individual experience and reinterpret the archive.

To conclude, intertextuality is equally prominent in Shibli's *Minor Detail* and Djébar's "The Women in Pieces." However, in each of these narratives, intertextuality plays a different role. Djébar, an Algerian woman writer, found herself burdened by the collective voice of the oppressed Algerian women, and limited by her personal francophone background. Thus, in intertextual reference to oriental tales and real-life stories of women's experiences, she found the space to retrieve the collective voice of these women, assuming that the body is inseparable from text. Kristiva denotes that the interconnectedness of the texts means a futuristic implementation and the text lives on. This means that Djébar's intertextuality helped with voicing the struggle of the Algerian women oppression under patriarchy, fundamentalist ideas, and colonial legacy. In Shibli's case, intertextuality had another role. As a Palestinian under an ongoing colonization, access to the archive is almost impossible. Thus, alluding to the report and the colonial narrative, gives her space to explore and interact with the colonial archive, and

to ethically represent the Palestinian individual experience. Unlike Djébar who is writing from a postcolonial perspective addressing the collective and women issues, Shibli is emphasizing the individual experience due to the ongoing colonization and the normalization of oppression. Referencing the newspaper report and the story of the Bedouin girl encouraged Shibli to defamiliarize the colonial discrimination while maintaining ethical representation and eventually archive.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this dissertation has explored the nuanced intersection of intertextuality as well as archiving in *Minor detail* by Adania Shibli and “*The Woman in Pieces*” by Assia Djebar within the context of postcolonial women’s fiction. By analyzing the implications of the archive in relation to the preservation of cultural heritage, historical erasure, and female representation, this study has foregrounded how both Shibli and Djebar have employed intertextuality and archiving to preserve past voices and narratives. Just as archiving has included collecting and maintaining historical records of cultural significance, intertextuality has entailed the layering of texts and influences that serve as a repository of interconnected texts and meaning. The research has combined comparative intertextual analysis and thematic interpretation, It has recognized that intertextuality and archiving complement each other, has aided in the unveiling of marginalized truths about historical erasure and women’s representation in the postcolonial archive.

The research has operated within a well-established theoretical framework that has examined the complexities of the study variables. By exploring the fundamental scholarly principles in the field of postcolonial women’s studies, it has fostered a more profound understanding of the analytical perspectives applied in both texts.

The purpose of this comparative analysis has been to enhance the scholarship on history erasure and its implications for marginalized communities in Algeria as well as Palestine. The dissertation has highlighted the gender dimension of colonial oppression and the resilience of women to reclaim their histories and identities, by focusing on women's issues. It has promoted mutual respect and understanding between these two countries, pointing out their common struggles against the backdrop of colonialism and postcolonial challenges; it also has stressed the importance of preserving their cultural heritage.

However, a number of constraints have emerged in the course of the research, noting the lack of additional sources related to the case study of “The Woman in Pieces” by Assia Djébar. The research has been based on English-translated versions of both case studies: Elisabeth Jaquette's celebrated translation of *Minor Detail* (2020) and Tegan Raleigh's esteemed translation of *The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry* (2006), which are highly regarded in the field of comparative and world literature. Despite the limitations, the research has been carried out in a rigorous critical analysis of the available sources to ensure a thorough examination.

The study has explored the construction of historical narrative aiming to examine the methods each author utilizes to amplify the voice of marginalized women within patriarchal and oppressive contexts. Through the reinterpretation and revision of colonial narratives, Shibli and Djébar have assessed archival material in constructing collective memory, identity formation, and forms of female resistance to colonialism.

In addition, both writers have sought for the transgression capacity of collective, personal memory and literary texts to inscribe women into historical records. The stories told by Shibli and Djébar have constituted a fictional archive, a repository of fragmented voices, bodies and lives. Through storytelling and story interweaving, they have archived the experiences and memories of their female characters. Much like an archivist, both authors have blurred the line between fragmented realities of women in postcolonial context. They have utilized the literariness of language as an act of archiving, in a way that has captured the hybrid nature of the process of identity formation. An interplay of colonial discourse and the indigenous cultures of Algeria and Palestine in relation to their colonizers.

Moreover, intertextuality, as applied in both texts, has made possible the reinterpretation of silence and voice. The layers of textual references have denoted the binary opposition of silence as the absence of voice, which in essence has revitalized the agency of the subaltern. Intertextual storytelling for Shibli and Djébar has served as a means to resist the

notion of speaking over. Thus, they have become catalysts of voice in both contexts. They have established a borderline connection based on the recollection of individual life experiences and the collective narrative.

By comparing both texts, a sense of continuity and connectedness has merged across time and space. This research, in this respect, has celebrated the universality of experiences of Algerian women in the aftermath of French rule as well as the ongoing Israeli settler colonialism and its implication on Palestinian women. It has emphasized the importance of being skeptical about archival selections, particularly as this study has highlighted the erasure of women's voices in history and the ethics of representation.

The ongoing silencing of postcolonial women has persisted despite the efforts of both authors, along with others whose works are beyond the scope of this dissertation, particularly in Palestine with the continuous predicament of occupation and settler colonialism.

The question of whether the subaltern can truly speak and be acknowledged has been reflected in this issue, as has the broader question of scholars such as Gayatri Spivak. For example, the ongoing struggle for marginalized voices to be heard and acknowledged has been underlined by events such as the renunciation of the Frankfurt Book Fair controversy and ongoing student manifestations for Palestinian freedom worldwide.

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