

T.C.
İSTANBUL ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
KARŞILAŞTIRMALI EDEBİYAT ANABİLİM DALI

DOKTORA TEZİ
WOMEN'S SUBVERSION AND SOLIDARITY IN
JANE AUSTEN'S *EMMA* AND ASSIA DJEBAR'S *A SISTER TO*
SCHEHERAZADE
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Asmaa ŞEHADÉ

2520160116

TEZ DANIŞMANI

Prof. Dr. İbrahim ŞABAN

İSTANBUL – 2024

ABSTRACT
WOMEN'S SUBVERSION AND SOLIDARITY IN
JANE AUSTEN'S *EMMA* AND ASSIA DJEBAR'S *A SISTER TO*
SCHEHERAZADE
Asmaa ŞEHADÉ

This study aimed to compare the portrayal of women's identity, freedom, and self-discovery in the novels *Emma* by Jane Austen and *A Sister to Scheherazade* by Assia Djébar. The focus was on how both authors, despite their distinct historical and cultural contexts, addressed shared themes of feminism, patriarchy, and societal constraints. The research explored the societal, economic, and cultural challenges faced by women in 19th-century England and colonial Algeria, with a particular emphasis on marriage as the perceived means of salvation.

The study examined the themes, characters, and narrative techniques in both novels, highlighting how the female protagonists in each work navigated societal pressures and strived for independence. Key questions included: What societal constraints shaped the lives of these women? Why did marriage emerge as the only route to freedom? How did both authors portray the strategies these women used to achieve self-realization and empowerment? By comparing these two works, this study filled an academic gap by offering a cross-cultural analysis of Austen and Djébar's portrayal of women. It provided new insights into the shared feminist concerns that transcended different cultural and historical settings, shedding light on the authors' contributions to literature and feminist discourse. Within this framework the study employed qualitative analysis to examine both novels through the lens of feminist and post-colonial criticism, offering a comprehensive look at how Austen and Djébar used narrative techniques and cultural critiques to explore the struggles of women in their respective societies.

Keywords: Feminism, manipulation, patriarchy, self-discovery, comparison, identity.

ÖZ

**WOMEN’S SUBVERSION AND SOLIDARITY IN
JANE AUSTEN’S *EMMA* AND ASSIA DJEBAR’S *A SISTER TO
SCHEHERAZADE***

Asmaa ŞEHADÉ

Bu çalışma, Jane Austen’in *Emma* ve Assia Djebâr’ın *A Sister to Scheherazade* romanlarında kadınların kimliği, özgürlüğü ve kendini keşfi anlatımını karşılaştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışma, her iki yazarın, farklı tarihsel ve kültürel bağlamlara rağmen, feminizm, patriyarka ve toplumsal baskılar gibi ortak temaları nasıl ele aldığını incelemiştir. Araştırma, 19. yüzyıl İngiltere’si ve sömürge Cezayir’inde kadınların karşılaştığı toplumsal, ekonomik ve kültürel zorlukları, özellikle de evliliğin kurtuluş aracı olarak görülmesini vurgulamıştır.

Çalışma, her iki romanda da kadın kahramanların toplumsal baskılara karşı nasıl mücadele ettiğini ve bağımsızlıklarını nasıl elde etmeye çalıştıklarını; temalar, karakterler ve anlatı teknikleri açısından incelemiştir. Anahtar sorular arasında şunlar yer almaktadır: Bu kadınların hayatlarını şekillendiren toplumsal kısıtlamalar nelerdir? Neden evlilik özgürlüğün tek yolu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır? Her iki yazar da kadınların kendini gerçekleştirme ve güçlenme yolundaki stratejilerini nasıl tasvir etmiştir? Bu iki eseri karşılaştırarak yapılan bu çalışma, Austen ve Djebâr’ın kadın tasvirlerine yönelik kültürler arası bir analiz sunarak akademik bir boşluğu doldurmuştur. Farklı kültürel ve tarihsel bağlamlarda kadınların karşılaştığı benzer feminist sorunlara dair yeni bakış açıları sunmuş, her iki yazarın edebiyata ve feminist söyleme katkılarını aydınlatmaya çalışmıştır. Austen ve Djebâr’ın anlatı tekniklerini ve kültürel eleştirilerini kullanarak, kadınların toplumlarındaki mücadelelerini nasıl keşfettiklerini feminist ve sömürge sonrası eleştiri bağlamında inceleyen nitel bir analiz yöntemi kullanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, manipölasyon, ataerkillik, kendini keşfetme, karşılaştırma, kimlik.

To My Family.....



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this thesis without the help and encouragement of many people. I would like to thank all people who helped and inspired me throughout this research. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my academic advisor and mentor Prof. Dr. İbrahim ŞABAN for his criticism, comments and academic guidance throughout my study. He has been a stimulating supervisor with his warm-hearted friendship and inspirational comments.

I owe a great many thanks to Dr. Hüseyin YURTDAS and Dr. Sinan Okan ÇAVUŞ for all their invaluable support, encouragement and guidance from the beginning to the end of the writing process of my thesis. I am especially grateful to Dr. Hüseyin ÖLMEZ for revising and editing this study.

My draft chapters with invaluable suggestions for further study. I am grateful to the members of the examining committee for their criticism and suggestions. My family deserves special thanks for their never-ending support, motivation, tolerance and encouragement. They were always with me whenever I felt lost, hopeless or frustrated during the writing process of my thesis. They are the greatest supporters in my life especially in times of crisis. Very special thanks to my husband who was very supportive and helpful especially during bad days of migraines and weakness.

This dissertation would have never been finalized without the tolerance and understanding of the people I love and valuable contributions of my colleagues. I am thankful to everyone who shared this arduous journey with me without sparing their moral support.

Asmaa ŞEHADE

Istanbul, 2024

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
OZ.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
CONTENTS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1

CHAPTER ONE

FEMINISM

1.1. The History of Feminism.....	4
1.1.1. The First Feminist Wave.....	4
1.1.2. The Second Feminist Wave.....	5
1.1.3. The Third Feminist Wave.....	6
1.2. Modern Feminist Social Theory.....	6
1.3. Jane Austen as a Feminist.....	9
1.4. Assia Djebar as a Feminist.....	17

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN'S CONDITIONS IN TWO COUNTRIES

2.1 Women's Conditions in the 19th Century.....	22
2.2 Women's conditions in England during the 19th century.....	22

2.3 Women's conditions in Algeria during the 19 th century.....	27
--	----

CHAPTER THREE

JANE AUSTEN AND ASSIA DJEBAR

3.1 Jane Austen.....	36
3.1.1. Jane Austen's Literary Life.....	36
3.1.2. Jane Austen's works.....	38
3.1.3. <i>Emma</i>	39
3.2 Assia Djebbar.....	41
3.2.1. Assia Djebbar's Literary Life.....	41
3.2.2. Assia Djebbar's works.....	46
3.2.3. <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	46

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON BETWEEN *EMMA* AND *A SISTER TO SCHEHERAZADE*

4.1. Comparative Literature.....	48
4.2. Topics of Comparison.....	52
4.2.1. Social Class	52
4.2.1.1. Social Class in <i>Emma</i>	52
4.2.1.2. Social Class in <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	53
4.2.2. Marriage.....	57
4.2.2.1. Marriage in <i>Emma</i>	58
4.2.2.2. Marriage in <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	63
4.2.3. Manipulation	72
4.2.3.1. Women's Manipulation in <i>Emma</i>	74
4.2.3.2. Women's Manipulation in <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	89
4.2.4. Self-Discovery.....	93
4.2.4.1. Self-Discovery in <i>Emma</i>	94

4.2.4.2. Self-Discovery in <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	109
4.2.5. Narration.....	114
4.2.5.1. Narration in <i>Emma</i>	114
4.2.5.2. Narration in <i>A Sister to Scheherazade</i>	120
4.3. Results of comparison.....	127
4.3.1. Similarities.....	127
4.3.2. Differences.....	133
CONCLUSION.....	136
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	141



INTRODUCTION

“Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression.” Henry Remak, *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective* (1961). In this regard, a comparison of women’s literary creation in *Emma* by Jane Austen and *A Sister to Scheherazade* by Assia Djebar will be undertaken.

We are going to compare two different writers from different societies and different historical backgrounds, living in different periods, and we will try to find similarities between their novels in terms of theme, subjects and characters. In the times when both writers lived, women were facing social, patriarchal and economical constraints. They suffered from male dominance and poor conditions that meant that marriage was the only route to their salvation. In this thesis, we will examine how different female characters in the novels are involved in a quest for identity, freedom and independent space, with a focus on what strategies they use and how they apply them to survive. This study will also examine the historical, political, social and economic periods during which both writers lived and wrote these novels about young women entering society and the marriage market with the goal of finding a suitable mate. This study tries to show that even though both female writers lived in different periods and examined different cultures, both created the same female characters and addressed the same social issues using the same literary tools. We chose Jane Austen and Assia Djebar since both writers criticize dominant traditions and social norms in the name of all women in their societies. They try to give voices and identities to female characters while also portraying female-female rivalry during the construction of the female characters’ identities in their works. Both novels share many similar themes, such as feminism, identity, culture, language and the female body.

These two writers enter the world of literature by creating different strategies. In their works, Austen and Djebar use history, culture, myths, language, and criticism to give power, places and voices to females in their fight against the patriarchal and social class. The study deals with

these authors' aims by paying attention to their differences, as well as their similarities. They stand among different traditions, periods and cultures.

The aim of the study

The aim of this study is briefly summed up by highlighting the definitions of women not only in traditional Algerian and colonial society, but also in English society by the manifestation of the novelist's procedures for showing the woman within the boundaries drawn by patriarchal and social traditions. Throughout our thesis, we will try to highlight the following questions:

What were the conditions of English and Algerian women during the 19th century? How did both writers deliver the image of English and Algerian women through their female characters? How society and social class affects the female character? Why did the women in both novels and cultures find marriage to be the only way to their salvation? How, and by what means, can women achieve salvation other than by marriage? How both writers delivered their novels and the problems of their heroines through narration? What were the differences and similarities of both novels?

Throughout this study, we will introduce famous critics who have dealt with Jane Austen, like Edna Steeves in her book *Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose* (1978), Margaret Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, (1975), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Deborah Kaplan, *Jane Austen among Women* (1992) and Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (1983). However, there are very few studies that have been made about Assia Djébar's works: we will focus on Jane Hiddleston's *Assia Djébar out of Algeria* (2006), Priscilla Ringrose's *Assia Djébar in Dialogue with Feminism* (2006) and Anjali Prabhu's *Theorizing the Role of the Intermediary in Postcolonial (Con)text* (2003), and many others.

The Purpose and the Significance of the Study

Austen's novels exemplify the social norms of early 19th century England, which may contrast with those encountered by similarly aged women in modern Western societies but resemble those experienced by women in modern Eastern societies; hence, the importance of this

study, comparing the English writer Jane Austen and the Arab writer Assia Djébar, since there has been no such comparative study in the literary field. Also, we seek to raise females' awareness so that they may gain solidarity with other females to achieve strength and freedom, and to more generally raise awareness around the world of women's submission to marriage due to their poor social conditions.

We will try to show how two women of different origins and backgrounds reach self-awareness through mistakes and suffering. The way to maturation is hard and long, but the outcome is worth all the hardship the protagonists go through. Our thesis might be of some interest to all literature researchers and all those interested in comparative literature and feminist studies, and we hope to broadcast, together with other studies, the voices and the aims of these writers. The present thesis is also significant in that it provides information about the social environment of the nineteenth century in terms of education, customs and traditions, class differences, family relations and friendship, marriage, cooperation, the place of women, and justice in nineteenth-century England, on the one hand, and post-colonial Algeria on the other.

Our thesis is in four chapters: the first chapter will discuss modern feminist theory and the relation of Austen and Djébar with feminism. The second chapter will discuss the historical background of women's conditions and situation in England during the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as in Algeria during the colonial and post-colonial periods, in terms of customs, culture, social class, marriage, dependence and freedom. The third chapter will be a biography of both Jane Austen and Assia Djébar, their lives, their works and a summary of their novels *Emma* and *A sister to Scheherazade*, which we will discuss in this thesis. The fourth chapter will focus on marriage and social discrimination in both novels as well as women's manipulative powers and self-discovery. In this chapter, we will compare both novels, in terms of points of similarities and differences in terms of marriage, manipulation and narration.

CHAPTER ONE

FEMINISM

1.1. The History of Feminism:

Women from the 18th century, especially after the Enlightenment; engaged in the struggle against inequalities existing in many fields such as social, political, legal and administrative in addition to their role in society. Since the middle of the 19th century, women's struggles with men for equal status, equal rights and freedoms have revealed the concept of feminism. Feminism is an approach that basically takes a stand against gender discrimination, defends the necessity of eliminating the oppression and control that women are subjected to in all public and private spheres, and fights to reach the legitimate rights of women by avoiding patriarchal hierarchy. The historical movement of feminism covers the period from the 19th century to the 21st century and is divided into three waves, the first, second and third. In these three waves, women struggled to obtain their universal and individual legitimate rights. While a single and fixed definition of feminism or feminist theory cannot be made, some different perspectives have been put forward about the historical stages of feminism. Some divide the developmental stages of feminism into one or two feminist waves, while others divide it into three or four feminist waves. However, the historical development respected by many researchers consists of three chronological waves.

1.1.1. The First Feminist Wave:

The first feminist wave, which became evident at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, was built on the demands drawn by Mary Wollstonecraft in her work "Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's, "The Declaration of Sentiments" (1848)

In general, these demands included women's suffrage, equal opportunities in education, and women's property rights. These demands were in the nature of fundamental rights according to the conditions of the period. Feminist groups, who thought that women and women's rights

were not sufficiently mentioned in the American Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of Human Rights and the works of theorists who developed the Natural Rights doctrine, pushed them to make a series of demands in the social and political fields. During this period, multiple declarations and works containing demands such as the right to life and freedom of women, the right to vote, the right to take part in the administration, and the right to equal opportunities in education were put forward¹. The right to vote remained a problem. This was particularly problematic, while the wives of their husbands, who held important positions in Europe, and women in a certain hierarchical class had the right to vote, while in general, no women had the right to vote. In America, blacks and women did not have the right to vote. The granting of the right to vote to black men caused white and black women to struggle for the right to vote.

1.1.2. The Second Feminist Wave:

The developments that took place in the West in the 1960s affected women directly, especially in this period when technological developments emerged that enabled women to give birth safely. Women had difficulties in accessing and using these technological or alternative methods/medications. Women's groups had engaged in a struggle to provide these alternative opportunities to all women and to abolish the oppressive and conservative laws in many countries. Although women had guaranteed their equality with men by law, they had differences from men in terms of vital practices. In this situation, women argued that the application of the existing norms of the society is not according to biological gender, but that it is the norms of a completely patriarchal system. This idea became a slogan, especially with Simone de Beauvoir's words "You can't become a woman, a woman is born", and in her work "The Second Sex", "Women's emancipation will start from their bellies". In this period, women's groups also criticized the continuing unequal roles within the family or the domestic sphere of patriarchal structures and the definition of the "private sphere". However, they also stated that the patriarchal structure of the family institution is a situation that increases and diversifies sexist exploitation. "Women have demanded that their bodies be out of male control. In the West, the demand for the widespread use of birth control has been brought to the agenda in order to distinguish between sexuality and fertility. Since a completely safe contraceptive system has not yet been created, the right to

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, **Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)**, Eugene, University of Oregon, 2000, pp. 150-200.

abortion has been recognized and the woman has a say over her own body.” The struggles in this area continued effectively in Northern Europe and the USA, and as a result of the struggles of the feminists in England, birth control became law in 1967².

1.1.3. The Third Feminist Wave:

It was born in the early 1990s as a reaction against the practices of wave feminism and wrong perceptions. This reaction was generally the reduction of feminism to upper, middle-class white women only, and the women’s movement was aimed to spread widely. It emphasizes that women’s problems are not only the problems of white women but that women should be dealt with individually on a universal level. Third-wave feminists were more interested in micro-policies such as violence against women, sexuality, and women’s empowerment. In addition, they focused on much more diverse topics in terms of content than the other two waves.

Third-wave feminist movement generally focuses on gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationalism, politics, economics, etc. They discussed the issues and tried to theorize these phenomena from a feminist perspective.

The wave wanted to deal with women’s issues at the individual level rather than all generalizing women’s issues. In other words, they tended to engage in politics over the issues of individual women. They saw women both as a gender role and as an identity. While second-wave feminist perception basically demands absolute equality, third-wave feminist perception, on the other hand, believed that differences were a valuable and important situation³. However, they attached importance to the dissemination of all kinds of activities, especially education, that would provide a social transformation and increase awareness. (Leslie & Drake, 1997)

1.2. Modern Feminist Social Theory:

Feminist theory is an important branch of theory in sociology that changes its expectations and orientation of the subject in another direction, from the male perspective to the female

² N. B. Rosenthal, “Consciousness Raising: From Revolution to Re- Evaluation,” **Psychology of Women Quarterly**, Volume 8, Issue 4, June 1984, pp. 309-326.

³ Leslie Heywood, and Jennifer Drake, **Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism**, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 20-270.

perspective and experience. In this way, feminist theory highlights issues of society, movements, and topics that have been overlooked or misunderstood by the patriarchal view of social theory for years.

Many people mistakenly believe that feminist theory primarily studies women and that its primary goal is to support the superiority of women over men. In fact, feminist theory is about looking at the social world in a way that articulates the forces that create and reinforce injustice, inequality, and oppression. In this way, it supports the path of justice and equality.

By ignoring the views and experiences of women in social theory, feminist theory analyzes their interactions as well as their actions in society with the goal of ensuring that nearly half of the world's population is not excluded from it. A view of the authorities, problems and social relations. By shifting the focus of social theory away from the views and experiences of men, feminist theorists develop more comprehensive and creative social theories than those who still advance male dominance.

Feminist social theory has been concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men and with analyses of male power over women. Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic and political arrangements specific to particular societies. This mode of theorising derives its concepts and methods from the social sciences and focuses on the material conditions of women's lives and the ideological processes which legitimate and help to perpetuate women's subordination. Like all forms of feminist theory, social theory takes diverse forms and has, over the last three decades, given rise to considerable debate.⁴

Sandra Harding argues whether or not there is a feminist approach. In fact, the approach is "a theory and analysis of how research should work or should continue"⁵. Such methodological critiques are set against feminist studies struggling to find a place for alternative values in the academy. By the late 1980s, many feminist theorists opposed the concept of them being distinctly feminist methods or methodologies. Instead, they point out, that many feminists do "simply" doing "good" research. For example, in 1990, feminist criminologist Lorraine Gelthorpe addressed the

⁴ Stevi Jackson, "Feminist Social Theory," **Contemporary Feminist Theories**, Ed. by. Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp. 12-33.

⁵ Sandra Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory," **Signs**, Volume 11, Issue 4, 1986, pp. 645-64.

problem of differentiating between feminist research and good research simply. While others agree with the notion that feminist research should be “good” research that provides alternatives to mainstream research, a large body of scholarship enlists some of the basic core principles that are essential to much feminist research.

One of the famous contemporary feminists, Julia Kristeva was influential in Anglo-American feminist theory and criticism. Kristeva who tries to balance the female body with motherhood has been suspected of male-dominated essentialism. For her, femininity is a position especially that which is marginalised by the patriarchal society. Once a woman is located on the margin; she could be seen as the representative of a higher and purer nature⁶. Kristeva’s relative definition, changing as it does with the various forms of masculinity, has the advantage of being historically adjusted, and of identifying the patriarchal system of its marginality, a marginality which can also involve men. Since in patriarchy women are inclined to the maternal function and since it is essential to degrade the maternal function in order to become a subject, misplaced degradation is one cause of women’s oppression. Similar to other French feminists of her generation, Kristeva fought to remove prohibitions on the maternal body enforced by Oedipal and castration complexes.

The French literary critic, writer, poet (and playwright) Hélène Cixous, who does not prefer the label “feminist”, proposes the concept of the “l’écriture” feminine. Cixous is known primarily in the Anglo-American world for promoting the Derridean idea inspired by l’écriture feminine ‘feminine writing’, a way of dealing with personal differences in social theory and rituals arranged to defeat the frontiers of Western Logocentrism.

Cixous discusses the existence of two levels on which lecture feminine is transformative: a literal individual level and another is metaphoric, structural level. On the literal level, an individual woman must write herself; how her body feels like. In particular, women must discover their own sexuality and find methods to write about their joy.

⁶ Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel,” **Desire in Language A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art**, Ed. by. Leon S. Roudiez, Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia UP, 1980, pp. 64-91.

On the structural level, the structure of language itself will change when a woman writes her own body. As a woman becomes an active subject, her status as a subject in language will also change. The woman who writes will be building a new signifying system. For Cixous, the women who speak and who don't reproduce the representational stability of the Symbolic order won't "make sense" in any currently existing form. L'écriture feminine is not objective; it removes divisions between text and speech. Thus, l'écriture feminine is naturally a deconstructive language⁷.

1.3. Jane Austen as a Feminist:

Jane Austen (1775-1817), and many women writers, were criticized for their subject matter, and their works weren't recognized or published. They had to take male pen names and choose themes deemed unfeminine in order to get their works published, and it is a sad loss that some great writers failed to understand those women – especially Jane Austen – whose fiction was criticized by men such as Emerson:

“...vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world. Never was life so pinched and narrow. The one problem in the mind of the writer in both the stories I have read, *Persuasion*, and *Pride and Prejudice*, is marriageableness. All that interests in any character introduced is still this one. Has he or (she) the money to marry with, and conditions, conforming? ‘Tis “the nympholepsy of a fond despair,” say, rather, of an English boarding-house. Suicide is more respectable!”⁸

D. H. Lawrence made a similar criticism when he called Austen “this old maid” who “typifies personality instead of character, the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness, and she is, to my feeling, thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the Word.”⁹ Women writers such as Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen weren't criticized only by male writers but also by female writers such as Edna Steeves, who wrote in 1973 in her *Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose*:

⁷ Leslie Heywood, and Jennifer Drake, **Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism**, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 20-270.

⁸ E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, **Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson**, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1913, pp.336-337.

⁹ D. H. Lawrence, **A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, in Sex, Literature and Censorship**, Ed. by. Harry T. Moore, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1953, p. 119.

Marriage is still the one career. Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen can see or imagine no other. In their novels, they create personalities in a traditional social situation but never examine the situation itself closely. Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen were not bold women; they are not critical of institutions, nor even of men in their character as men. (227)

Interestingly, the cornerstone of subsequent feminist inquiry, Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* published in 1975, concludes that while Jane Austen's c works do, indeed, express opinions about current controversies, these opinions were not liberal, but reactionary, and Austen was not a feminist.

"Jane Austen's novels belong decisively to one class of partisan novels, the conservative. Intellectually, she is orthodox. . . . Her important innovations are technical and stylistic modifications within a clearly defined and accepted genre".¹⁰

In 1988, Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel* establishes that Austen's limited subject matter reflects neither a limited political understanding nor an acquiescence to a male-dominated culture, but rather:

"Smuggle in the social criticism, as well as the mildest of reform projects, through various means of indirection-irony, antithetical pairing, double plotting, the testing or subverting of overt, typically doctrinaire statement with contrasting dramatic incident."¹¹

Claudia Johnson considers the fundamental subject of *Emma* as "the feminine authority in itself", noting that in Emma Woodhouse's 170-year history, she was being seen for the first time as a possible role model for young women. Seeing feminine strength, activity, and Emma's good judgment as positive virtues, the heroine is seen as an imperfect creation in need of humiliation and recovery, eventually becoming a hypochondriac¹². Interesting is the aspect, highlighted by Claudia Johnson, where Emma Woodhouse is seen for the first time, almost two hundred years after her birth, as a role model for young women. It is true that Emma can be seen as a foretaste of

¹⁰ Marilyn Butler, **Jane Austen and the War of Ideas**, Great Britain, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 3.

¹¹ Claudia L. Johnson, **Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel**, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 22-24.

¹² Claudia L. Johnson, "Emma: Woman, Lovely Woman, Reigns Alone", **Jane Austen Women, Politics and the Novel**, 1988, pp. 123-147.

the modern woman who with intelligence and means does what she can only do in her vital context. However, it is harsh to say that she is an imperfect creation in need of humiliation and recovery. That assumption has religious overtones, and although we know that Jane Austen had great respect for religion, she does not invest her character Emma with those needs; rather, she is presented with the ability to acknowledge her mistakes, to regret having made them, and to try to grow as a human being.

Virginia Woolf highlighted Jane Austen's capacity for, despite living in a man's world, having been able to create her own space from which to write from the point of view of women, and related her work to Shakespeare. "This is perhaps the greatest miracle of all. There was around the year 1808, a woman who wrote without hatred, without bitterness, without fear, without protests, without sermons. This is how Shakespeare wrote, I thought looking at Antonio and Cleopatra; when people compare Shakespeare and Jane Austen, perhaps they mean that their minds had burned out all the obstacles; and for this reason, we do not know Jane Austen nor do we know Shakespeare, and for this reason Jane Austen is present in every word she writes and Shakespeare too. If Jane Austen suffered in any way because of circumstances, it was from the narrowness of life that they imposed on her. A woman could not then go alone on the streets. She never travelled; she never crossed London by bus or ate lunch alone in a shop. But perhaps by character Jane Austen was not used to wanting what she did not have. Her talent and her way of life were perfectly matched.

Virginia Woolf highlighted the fact that until Jane Austen, important female characters in literature had been viewed exclusively by the other sex and from the point of view of their relationship with male characters. Woolf emphasised the integrity that women writers of that time must have needed in the face of so much criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to be able to tell of what they saw.

For Woolf, only Jane Austen and Emily Brontë succeeded in writing as women, and not as proxy men. They were exceptions within their vital and historical context, which, according to Woolf, gave them even greater merit. These women completely ignored the perpetual admonition of the "eternal pedagogue" who dictated to them, "write this or think this other".

Jane Austen found a perfectly natural, well-formed voice that suited her, and she never strayed from it. Thus, with less literary genius than Charlotte Brontë, she managed to say a great deal more. But all the older literary genres were already fully inhabited and coagulated when Austen began to write. Only the novel was still young enough to be malleable in her hands; perhaps one reason why she wrote novels.¹³

Many are the critics and scholars who have debated *Emma*, one of Austen's most popular novels in England. The opinions that this work and its heroine have aroused have been abundant and diverse. Some have been able to see the context of the main character, within what circumstances allowed, and have expressed their opinions accordingly. Other critics, however, have wanted to see and judge the novel according to the standards of the twentieth century. In Jane Austen's *Emma*, A Casebook, edited by Fiona Stafford, the philosopher and literary critic George Henry Lewes and Charlotte Brontë are shown to disagree when the latter writes about Austen: "Why do you like Miss Austen so very much?" After reading *Pride and Prejudice* on Lewes's recommendation, Brontë declared that she would not like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses, and dismissed Austen's art as merely 'shrewd and observant'. "Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet; what sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study, but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of Life and the sentient target of Death - this Miss Austen ignores." This passionate sentence concludes with the distinctly unsisterly observation that Jane Austen was "a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete and rather insensible (not senseless) woman". The lack of passion lamented by Scott, acknowledged by Lewes and punished by Brontë, figures persistently in nineteenth-century responses to Austen.¹⁴

Brontë passionately criticizes Austen's lack of passion; in turn, Virginia Woolf criticizes the excess of passion in Charlotte Brontë's work and the lack of integrity in her comments regarding Austen. Brontë abandoned history, to which she owed all her devotion, to attend to a personal complaint. Indignation diverted her imagination. We do not criticize the excess of passion

¹³ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Boston, Mariner Books, 1989, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ Fiona J Stafford, "Introduction," *Jane Austen's Emma - A Casebook*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 3-35.

in Charlotte Brontë because it is precisely that passion that makes her brilliant and is one of her undoubted glories; but at the same time, Jane Austen was able to communicate something of the human soul in a profound way, and rather than lacking in passion, her passion was communicated in a more serene and balanced way. Perhaps it is that different way of communicating what is felt that affords more scope to what is intended to be transmitted. The force of a volcano can burn and render one insensible; that of a bonfire, however, allows one to feel its heat without overriding one's senses or ability to think. This approach would not be limited only to the novel *Emma*, but to all of Austen's literary works.

Emma is considered to be the most mature and generous work of the author, due to the fun and adorableness of her characters, not least Emma herself, but also Harriet Smith, Miss Bates, and Mr. Woodhouse. We cannot deny that its characters are attractive and amusing, which they undoubtedly are. Both *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* far surpass *Emma* in maturity and generosity, both in the richness and complexity of the themes they pose and in the dramatic evolution of their main characters. However, Chapman grants *Emma* "a supremacy that rests not on characterization, but on the perfect symmetry of the characters' design, highlighting the flow of human arity and sympathy running like blood under a skin of delicate porcelain and making the reader's veins pulse in unison. Undoubtedly, the sincere charitable impulse is shown in wanting to do good, despite frequently achieving the opposite, acts, in concert with the attractive sympathy Emma exudes, as a mitigator which allows the reader to accept Emma Woodhouse and to make an effort to gradually understand the reasons and circumstances that are the driving forces behind her behavior."¹⁵

Booth, however, chooses to focus on something other than character evaluation. He is interested in the control that the author exercises in relation to the reaction that is produced in the reader towards her heroine. Emma is a character with clear and significant defects, who makes unforgivable mistakes. Yet despite this, Austen manages to make the reader sympathize with her. And it is precisely this point to which Booth considers the author to have found a brilliant solution - she shows us most of the story through the eyes of Emma herself.¹⁶

¹⁵ R. W. Chapman, *Jane Austen: Facts and Problems*, Oxford, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1948, p. 202.

¹⁶ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, "Control of Distance in Jane Austen's Emma", Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 243-264.

Undoubtedly, this important insight by Booth – that it is seeing the story through Emma’s own eyes that brings us to understand her as a human being – is important. This knowledge of the character communicated through a free and indirect style, is what has helped actresses to be able to portray the character with credibility. However, this appreciation, in that it often justifies reprehensible behaviour, has its risks. Does understanding the motives of the most egregious dictators in history somehow allow us to accept them? Absolutely not.

Marilyn Butler read Austen’s texts with an emphasis on the philosophical questions of the 18th century, which diverted sharply into the political sphere due to the repercussions they had on readers during the French Revolution. The opposition between reason and passion, selfishness and disinterest, individual ambition and social responsibility, were all themes that were extensively covered in fiction between the 1790s and 1800s; and these, Butler divided between the radical and conservative political camps.

All of Austen’s heroines, for Butler, can be seen as role models capable of failing and role models willing to achieve a conservative goal¹⁷. From this perspective, Butler sees *Emma* as a story in which we are shown a heroine saved from her dangerous imagination through moderate reform, characterized by open-mindedness, reason and good sense, until finally, securely entrenched in a defined and permanent role in the community.

In *Emma* (1815), Jane Austen is concerned with the growth of an individual’s moral personality, measured by the most exacting standards imposed by 18th-century values. The most popular of Jane Austen’s novels begins with an ironic statement about marriage: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (*Pride and Prejudice*, opening sentence). This so-called universal truth is an illusion – one maintained by a society driven by the forces of the marriage market. Austen used such irony to address and undermine the major ethical questions in her society through her novels. Irony, in her hand, is the instrument of a moral vision. Arnold Kettle addressed the moral aspects of Austen’s *Emma*, saying: “The prevailing interest in *Emma* is not one of mere ‘aesthetic’ delight but a moral interest.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Butler, **Jane Austen and the War of Ideas**, p. 164.

¹⁸ Jane Austen, **Emma**, p. 114. Kindle Edition.

Jane Austen has been considered by many critics as a writer who represents a conservative point of view, aligned with the values of the rural aristocracy and the patriarchal society of her time. In that sense, the idealized representation and the final triumph of Mr. Knightley's character in *Emma* seem to confirm such readings. However, there are also various works by feminist critics who underline that Austen consciously or unconsciously represented a subversive discourse that gave account to women's frustration at the rigid, gender-based social order that imposed upon them a condition of dependence and submission. In 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published *The Madwoman in the Attic*, devoting two chapters to an imaginative and groundbreaking feminist rereading of Jane Austen. Gilbert and Gubar consider that Emma, despite being the centre of the novel, has to learn what she has in common with Jane Fairfax, and that is her vulnerability as a woman. In this way, they conclude, the story of Emma Woodhouse is not a tale of moral reform depicting the salvation of a capricious heroine, but rather a narrative of subjugation through which a vivacious intelligence is forced into a secondary role of service and silence.¹⁹ They conclude, in direct opposition to the views of Margaret Butler, that "For all her ladylike discretion ... Austen is rigorous in her revolt against the conventions she inherited" Jane Austen, they find, is subversive, covering her "discomfort", her "dissatisfaction" and her "rebellious dissent" with conservative, conventional plot strategies, and thereby attaining "a woman's language that is magnificently duplicitous"²⁰. The strength of the Gilbert and Gubar analysis is a rigorous insistence on the intentionality of an Austen subtext of dissent. Gilbert and Gubar, in *Madwoman in the Attic*, suggest that Jane Austen regarded political and military history as a parade of men posturing in fancy clothes. Consequently, they argue, Jane Austen ignored history because history ignored women. Their position is supported in *Northanger Abbey* by Catherine Morland, who, a novel reader herself, makes a shrewd criticism of history:

"I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences on every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all, it is very tiresome."²¹

¹⁹ Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, **The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination**, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1979, p. 120.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²¹ Jane Austen, **Northanger Abbey**, Virginia, SMK Books, 2012, p. 427.

Underneath Catherine's naïve prattle, Jane Austen presents a modern criticism of history that is written for, by, and about men – truly “his story” rather than “herstory.”

This approach to analyzing Austen was continued by Dale Spender²² and Jane Spence²³, who worked to establish a clear feminine tradition within the English novel. Towards the end of the 1980s, Austen was seen as a very important figure within a community of women who had struggled to make a new genre of novel, a way in which their sex could stand out.

We can agree upon the value of the figure of Austen in the creation of this new genre of novel, but, more than just providing a means by which her sex could stand out on the page, it is also notable as a field where women could express their creative and intellectual capacity.

Since many critics associate Austen with feminism, especially in correlation with Mary Wollstonecraft, it is important to understand the development of feminism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. According to critic Margaret Kirkham in her book, *Jane Austen: Feminism and Fiction*, there is no proper history of 18th-century feminist thought: “the history of feminist ideas and relation to literature and politics before the late 19th century, when women's suffrage became an active political issue, has yet to be written”²⁴.

Mary Wollstonecraft was a radical feminist who argued for equality of the sexes and for the main doctrines of the later women's movement in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Her inspiration to write *Vindication* came in response to Philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, and his assertion that men and women differ intrinsically with respect to virtue: a moral disjuncture resulting, according to Rousseau, from man's natural possession and woman's natural deficiency of reason. Wollstonecraft argued that “no sex to virtue” and that it was a lack of educational opportunities that mainly contributed to a woman's supposed lack of reason²⁵. Another great study of Jane Austen was made by the critic Audrey Bilger in her book, *Laughing Feminism* (1998), which referred to Austen and Wollstonecraft as “Feminist Moralists,” suggesting that

²² Dale Spender, **Mothers of the Novel: One hundred Good Women Novelists before Jane Austen**, London and New York, Pandora, 1986, apud., Stafford, F. (ed.), Op. cit., p. 22.

²³ Jane Spence, **The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen**, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986, apud., Stafford, F. (ed.), Op. cit., p. 22.

²⁴ Margaret Kirkham, **Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction**, Sussex, Harvester, 1983, p. 3.

²⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, **Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)**, Eugene, University of Oregon, 2000, pp. 40-50.

feminism is a sort of social criticism that is associated with laughter, subversive humor and mocking of society and societal values²⁶. Regardless of how much Austen may have been influenced or shared feminist ideas with Wollstonecraft, there is plenty of critical evidence to suggest that Austen was making a social statement of her own through her work. For example, in *Emma* (1815), Austen depicts the society of the eighteenth century as rigid and hierarchical, and thus maintained by the deference of those who occupied the lower levels of the social pyramid and by the paternalism of the higher classes. During Austen's life, this rigidity began to crack, as the middle class became more prosperous. Austen's novels, such as *Emma* and *Persuasion*, deal with the pressure that women from less privileged backgrounds suffered from.

1.4. Assia Djébar as a feminist:

Assia Djébar seems to agree with Cixous. Our writer has noticed like all other working women that Algeria has become more than ever a country for men, managed by men and for the benefit of men. To do this, she did not hesitate to take appropriate instruments, such as the novel and the French language, which she writes and renews on each occasion when women are touched, to express their freedom.

According to Hélène Cixous who states in her book, *the Laugh of the Medusa*²⁷ that women are bodies, and they are more than men, incited to social success, to sublimation. More body, therefore, more writing. During the damping of their history, women have lived dreaming, in silent bodies, in silences, in hoarseness revolts.

Perhaps that is why both Hélène Cixous and Assia Djébar bet on a type of writing that can speak with the embodied voice, with the female body and, thus, speak with the feminine difference. In this way, that female body that has always been banished to silence can now become voice, language and text.

In addition, the objective of Assia Djébar is to narrate the story of the most oppressed in her country, that is, of her women, those dispossessed, even, of writing. These women, as has

²⁶ Audrey Bilger, **Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen**, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1998, p. 37-53.

²⁷ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," **Signs**, Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, Volume 1, Issue 4, 1976, pp. 875-893.

already been said, are part of what Spivak (1998) calls “the cast of the oppressed”²⁸; those that need to be explained, excused, or redeemed. They need to be explained because they are outside the so-called “logocentric” discourse, that is, the discourse of dominant Western reason; but it is not about “the inferior”, but about “the other”.

Those women without voice and, therefore, without history, are reduced to vanquished bodies or ghosts destined for absence. Hence, this Algerian author intends to establish a story told through the whole of her novels, a story that appears fragmented and that, however, when gathering all these fragments, like the elements of a syntactic sentence, will end up having a meaning full. In fact, in her work, she will repeatedly explain the reasons that unite the vertices of that curious triangle formed by writing, the alphabet and the body.

Thus, this image in which writing and the female body intertwine guides the pages of Assia Djebar, who on more than one occasion speaks of that first moment in which she advances, hand in hand with her father, towards school:

“Fillette arabe allant pour la première fois à l’école, un matin d’automne, main dans la main du père. Celui-ci, un fez sur la tête, la silhouette haute et droite dans son costume européen, porte un cartable, il est instituteur à l’école française. Fillette arabe dans un village de Sahel algérien. Fillette arabe allant pour la première fois à l’école, un matin d’automne, main dans la main du père. [...] Villes ou village aux ruelles blanches, aux maisons aveugles. Dès le premier jour où une fillette «sort» pour apprendre l’alphabet, les voisins prennent le regard matois de ceux qui s’apitoient, dix ou quinze ans à l’avance : sur le père audacieux, sur le frère inconséquent.

Voilez le corps de la fille nubile. Rendez-la invisible. Transformez-la en être plus aveugle que l’aveugle, tuez en elle tout souvenirs du dehors. Si elle sait écrire ? Le geôlier d’un corps sans mots- et les mots écrits sont mobiles- peut finir, lui, par dormir tranquille : Il lui suffira de supprimer les fenêtres, de cadenasser l’unique portail, d’élever jusqu’au ciel un mur orbe.

A dix-sept ans, j’entre dans l’histoire d’amour à cause d’une lettre. Un inconnu m’a écrit ; [...]. Le père secoué d’une rage sans éclat, a déchiré devant moi la missive [...], les années suivantes, je me suis engloutie dans l’histoire d’amour, ou plutôt dans l’interdiction d’amour ; [...], la correspondance secrète se fait en français : ainsi cette langue que m’a donnée le père me devient entremetteuse et mon initiation, dès lors, se place sous un signe double, contradictoire [...] j’ai fait éclaté l’espace en moi.”²⁹

²⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” **Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture**, Ed. by. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Urbana, U of Illinois P, 1988, pp. 271-313.

²⁹ Assia Djebar, **L’amour, l’fantasia**, Paris, Lattes, 1985, pp. 11-13.

“An Arab girl going to school for the first time, on an autumn morning, hand in hand with her father. He, wearing a fez on his head, tall and straight in his European suit, carrying a satchel, is a teacher at the French school. An Arab girl in a village in the Algerian Sahel. An Arab girl going to school for the first time, on an autumn morning, hand in hand with her father. [...] Towns or villages with white alleys, with blind houses. From the very first day a girl 'goes out' to learn the alphabet, the neighbors take on the sly look of those who pity, ten or fifteen years in advance: pitying the audacious father, the reckless brother. Veil the body of the nubile girl. Make her invisible. Transform her into a being more blind than the blind, kill in her any memory of the outside world. Can she write? The jailer of a wordless body—and written words are mobile—can eventually sleep peacefully: it will suffice to block the windows, to padlock the only gate, to raise a wall as high as the sky, a wall without an opening. At seventeen, I entered into a love story because of a letter. A stranger had written to me; [...]. The father, shaken by a silent rage, tore up the letter in front of me [...]. In the following years, I immersed myself in the love story, or rather in the prohibition of love; [...], the secret correspondence was in French: thus, this language my father had given me became a matchmaker, and my initiation, from then on, was marked by a double, contradictory sign [...] I made space explode within me.”³⁰

As can be seen in this long quote, the attitude of the society in which the author grows up is reflected, given the possibility that a woman may, by herself, have the ability to write and, therefore, send a letter of love of the man not chosen by his family. In this short paragraph, there is also a persistent idea in Djébar's work, which she has already realized in these pages. I refer to the idea that it is necessary to recover the memory of women, the one that has never been written, the memory of the experiences of illiterate women to whom only one oral language belongs and, for that very reason, are condemned to silence. That is the reason why it is so important to give them a voice through writing, to give them “the words –the very ones that the unveiled body discovers”³¹ Ultimately, what this narrator wants is to speak from the body and female experiences with a double intention, on the one hand, to crack the androcentrism in which her society is immersed, on the other, to confront the culture of silence in the that has grown, coinciding in this with the position of Cixous, when she stated that a feminine text cannot be nothing more than subversive.³²

³⁰ Assia Djébar, *L'amour, l'infantasia*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, Lattes, 1985, p.11-13.

³¹ Assia Djébar, *L'amour, l'infantasia*, Paris, Lattes, 1985, p 13.

³² Hélène Cixous, et al., “The Laugh of the Medusa,” *Signs*, Volume 1, Issue 4, 1976, pp. 875–93.

The fact is that when Djébar elaborates her work, she insists on constructing an identity, theirs and that of their Algerian compatriots, an identity that is between two religions, two cultures, two languages and two countries; an identity that flies between tradition and modernity, as well as between war and peace. The elaboration of her work begins, therefore, by recovering the stories of women, preserved thanks to the tradition of oral transmission that resonates in her mother tongue like a distant echo and that she now wishes to launch to the four winds.

In short, Assia Djébar elaborates on a synthetic evolution of Algerian women and Arab women in general. In her opinion, “the end of childhood ends too soon in sunny countries” (Djébar, 2009, p. 27) so it is from the age of 12 or 13 when they must settle accounts with their culture and traditions and put an end to your voice. And it is right there, where Assia Djébar’s voice seeks to rise through her transgressive writing and resistance. In this sense, it is worth remembering the words of Sophie Bessis who stated that the place of women in society and Arab society itself has evolved faster during the last fifty years than over several preceding centuries³³, although this has required the incessant struggle of revolutions, more or less silent, carried out by them from the most diverse spheres. To this it will be necessary to oppose the other revolutions, those in which women have been used as a weapon of confrontation and, with respect to this, the colonial period is immensely rich in examples; It should not be forgotten that it was the moment when colonizers and colonized used women - their situation and their bodies - to cement their respective positions.

Assia Djébar herself testified: “I write, like so many other Algerian women writers with a sense of urgency, against regression and misogyny.” With her arrival in the world of letters, we see the entry into force of women in this movement. Indeed, in a country where men occupy all places, an Algerian female author stages women as if to remind them that they exist and that they have a role to play they repeat it in feminism with the desire to cross the silence to realize themselves in the world of the living who have every right to express themselves. From the outset, she insisted on the need to make the voices of women heard, by devoting her works to the exploration of the genesis, roots and causes of their exclusions and by putting forward their words against the repression of traditions, of social archaism and male domination. Writing in the

³³ Sophie Bessis (1947) is a Tunisian-born French historian, journalist, researcher, and feminist author. She has written numerous works in French, Spanish, and English on development in the Maghreb and the Arab world, as well as the situation of women denouncing the identity imprisonment to which they are subjected.

Maghreb generally and in Algeria in particular is a masculine action. The man in this kind of society dominates all areas. He has all the privileges. It is his word that is taken into consideration while neglecting everything that comes from the woman. Women's literature has become the refuge of women writers. Attacking Algerian writers, they try to escape, sometimes to squeeze out all the load that is inside of them; when we talk about burden, suffering, dreams, ambitions, abuse, love, freedom ... They find that writing heals their wounds, their spiritual ailments. We see that the reasons for this charge are numerous, they come from family, society, traditions, entourage, colonization, torture and also love.

As a woman and a very sensitive, affectionate, tender and warm being, every feeling of every event, every period of her life and every moment is essential for her. These writers choose subjects that speak of the plight of women in a patriarchal society, whether it is the father, the brother, or the husband. We can then say that French-speaking feminine literature is the struggle of women writers to fight against this oppressive society.

Algerian female writing resides in the relationship developed between female writers and Algerian female memory. But this relationship cannot be dissociated from the omniscience of the notion of voice in feminine texts. Algerian female memory is by definition oral and is transmitted exclusively from woman to woman, "word of mouth" to use the term, in dialect. These feminine voices play an important role in Djebarian writing and help us understand how an oral phenomenon can be transposed to writing.

Assia Djébar is undoubtedly the most famous woman-writer of all time in the Maghreb. The quality of her literary works has earned her worldwide recognition. She is one of the first three women writers of the Maghreb and Algeria: the first is Marie-Louise Amrouche born in Tunisia and from Kabylia, the second is Djamilia Debeche born in Rhras and our writer Assia Djébar the historian and the novelist, who opens the way for her sisters to speak out for liberation in their fight for the emancipation of women and their freedom

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN TWO COUNTRIES

2.1. Women's Conditions in the 19th Century

In the 18th and 19th centuries, women were trying to survive under very restricted conditions compared to men. Women were under pressure from both family and society. The pressure that started in the family seemed to aim to get women used to the pressures and restrictions of their husbands in future marriages. When the women were younger, their movements were determined and controlled. There were attitudes which were considered suitable and attitudes considered unsuitable for a woman. The social principles that restricted the behavior of women and suppressed them beneath male domination supposedly made them ideal and perfect according to the understanding of that century. Those who did not comply with these social principles were defined as rude and uncouth. Some of these social principles were those that emphasized the necessity and importance of the man, while the second place of the woman – travelling unaccompanied or wanting to have more education than a man – was severely frowned upon. The most damning social principle for a woman was that she did not follow her husband's word. It was not only social rules that kept women away from social life. In those centuries, the state tried to keep women in the background, as if supporting these social principles. For example, numerous obstacles were placed before women who wanted to receive education on a par with that of men. There were women who somehow managed to overcome these obstacles and receive an education and work in their desired jobs. However, these women were paid less than men to discourage them from work.

2.2. Women's Conditions in England During The 19th Century

The issue of the status of women is a debate that has its origins in the Middle Ages in England, gained dynamism during the Renaissance and continued until the Age of Enlightenment. Women were equated with sexuality and sin, with the first guilt imposed on Eve. This attitude started in the Middle Ages and continued with the depiction of women as devils by priests. In this period, when the idea that “a woman's place is in the home” was dominant, women were

considered worthless, even at home. Second-class treatment was always afforded to women everywhere. This continued in the 18th and 19th centuries. The pressure exerted on women in these centuries was quite high. At the end of the 16th century, married women were dependent on their husbands in every way and the increasingly prominent bourgeoisie glorified housewives in the 18th and 19th centuries – a viewpoint that came to dominate the middle class. In the 18th and 19th centuries, what was expected of women was to sit at home and do heavy household chores. Apart from that, if they had time, they would spend their time sewing, gossiping, attending tea parties and, of course, raising children. All this was deemed part of a duty to keep women away from the male-dominated outside world. Women taking care of housework put them under a very heavy burden. The women had to get up early in the morning, wake the household, then milk cows, make cheese, work on the farm and help their husbands. Apart from that, it was their duty to take care of their children, to sew clothes for the household, and to sell the cheese they made. Women could not earn any income from this – they had to give any money from the cheese they made and sold to their husbands.

The 18th and 19th centuries were the periods of male domination. The victory of the bourgeois class and the culture that developed in the 19th century brought a new understanding of morality and religion. Bourgeois ideals, with regard to Christian masculinity, did not only develop a conception of culture and morality; at the same time, they developed and brought manly independence and freedom to the fore. In the British middle class, which was culturally ascendant during the 19th century, domestic relations and sexual attitudes also moved to a different dimension. Women were viewed sexually, and these sexual associations made them secondary to society. A solid family meant a solid society, and a solid family could only be formed through male domination. There was a prevalent belief that this could only be achieved through restructured religious understandings.

Psychological differences between men and women were insistently emphasized. This led to the widening gap between the ‘feminine’ structure of the house and the ‘masculine’ structure of society. The importance of marital sex life was emphasized quite often, along with the importance of women avoiding extramarital sexual intercourse.

These differences between men and women caused women to remain in the background and increased the attachment of women to men. Women needed money to survive, and this was only possible in three ways: inheritance, contentment with the rights granted to single women by the state, and marriage.

There was almost nothing satisfying about legacies for women, since the inheritances left after the death of a father, who was the head of the house, was usually just enough for the surviving spouse to continue her life. Most of the inheritance was left to the father's closest male relative if there were no boys in the immediate family. If there were boys in the family, they would get most of the share, and their sisters had to continue to live with their brothers until they got married. The mother had the right to take only the house and the items in it from this inheritance: "Widowed women could only have what is called the real property. The real property was the house and the items in it"¹

It was hard to live outside of marriage. In the early 1800s, there was a sharp increase in the number of single women – there were over a million unmarried women aged 25 in England. This now became a major problem for the state: "What are we going to do with our old singles?"²

This situation put unmarried women in a difficult position in the eyes of society – they were simply not welcome, and this issue was frequently raised in homes and at social gatherings. Single women had rights before the law, but their ability to exercise these rights was limited:

"Women without husbands deserved special status in many ways in the 18th century. First of all, their legal position put these women in a different position than other women. Unlike married women, they liked their legal identity. According to the Law on Single Women, they had rights that married women do not. They could own property they could own their wealth, and the general law did not limit their right to trade freely [...] But in the eighteenth century, how far could single women exercise such rights? Their legal identity was important to the existence of women, but did this mean for the working class? Secondly, especially in the 18th century, [...] there were almost too many unmarried women, as well as widows in the majority. Unmarried and widowed women were an important group in society. Most of these women were domestic servants."³

¹ Susan Staves, **Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660- 1833**, London, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 29.

² Bridget Hill, **Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century Oxford**, United Kingdom, B. Blackwell, 1989, p. 222.

³ **Ibid**, pp. 221-222.

At this time, marriage was the best way for women to lead their lives comfortably and not to humiliate their families and themselves in society. However, marriage also had its own conditions and procedures. In these centuries, marrying a man deemed unsuitable by one's family, or by society, or, of course, having an extramarital affair, was roundly condemned. Something like this puts both the family and the woman involved in a degrading situation.

Women who chose to marry had to comply with the conditions and procedures required by marriage. For example, if women had their own property, then after marriage, legally, they had no rights over it. "Her husband's rights over his wife's property were given to him as a result of marriage through his wife."⁴ Under 18th and 19th-century laws, married women did not have the right to own property or land:

"For the most part, they did not have the right to own land; this would result in the division of property. When they owned land for whatever reason, they looked more like property than before."⁵

Married women were dependent on their husbands, both economically and legally. Married women took the man's name, and the man decided where and how they would live. All decisions belonged to men. "If man and woman are one body for God, they were also one person in law, and it was the husband who represented this one person."⁶ Therefore, fathers in the family paid close attention to prospective spouses when marrying their daughters. They took care that the person who would become a husband was a good person, suitable for their daughters. In addition, married women could not acquire property, trade, or even prepare a will without the permission of their husbands. Married women could not have legal property; women's property was considered the property of their husbands. Married women could not prepare a will, could not earn money for themselves, and could not make a business deal. They were also not allowed to divorce, although

⁴ Susan Staves, **Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660- 1833**, London, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 52.

⁵ Anja Meulenbelt, **A Creative Tension: Key Issues of Socialist-Feminism**, Boston, South End Press, 1984, p.18.

⁶ Mary Lyndon Shanley, **Feminism, Marriage, and The Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895**, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 8.

their husbands could divorce them. Women had no rights and were somewhat akin to slaves at home.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, marriages were generally based on mutual interest and material wealth. The following poem illustrates this:

“Sukey, you shall be my wife,
And I will tell you why
I’ve got a little pig
And you, have got a sty
I’ve got a dun cow
And you can make good cheese Sukey, will you marry me?
Say yes if you please.”⁷

The importance of the economic situation in marriages and the fact that marriages were based on material considerations are well summed up by Matthew Boulton’s quote “Don’t marry for money but marry whoever has money.”⁸

Marriages among the upper classes were based first on nobility – the bloodline – and then on material factors. People in this class wanted to protect their nobility and wealth. Another important element in marriages, sought after in a woman, was virginity. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the virginity of women was very important in terms of maintaining a healthy lineage and determining who any child to be born belonged to. However, it was also common to have a relationship before getting married. In particular, couples who were not allowed to marry resorted to this tactic, in order to force their families to allow the marriage. However, the behavior was widely condemned in the eyes of society and put the family in a humiliating position.

As a result, in 18th and 19th century England, women were rarely either in love with, or even attracted to, their husbands. Whereas George Eliot wrote: “Marriage must have a relationship of affection and attraction.”⁹

⁷ Bridget. **Women, Work, and Sexual Politics**, p. 175.

⁸ **Ibid.**

⁹ Joan Perkin, **Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England**, London/Great Britain, Routledge, 1989, p. 311.

For 18th and 19th-century women, marriage was a matter of social and financial security. Nevertheless, they hoped for love, trust, affection and peace from their marriage. They desired a happy marriage, with children. They expected to be respected in the home and the community, and they wanted to be heard and valued. However, because of the male-dominated society of the 18th and 19th centuries and the laws made by this society, women could not be given all that they wanted.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when class differences were more evident, the law mostly affected middle-class women. Women pushed into a secondary role by confinement at home and the view that the home was the limit of a woman's business, were tied by social rules and laws, and in this way, the gap between the two genders was made stark by society. Despite all the laws upholding the dominance of men, the women of that period perhaps served themselves best by getting married, given the conditions of the time.

2.3. Women's conditions in Algeria during the 19th Century

In Algeria, as in Morocco, women were either given no inheritance at all, or only a small proportion was given. The protagonist of *The Disappearance of the French Language*, Berkane, reveals the injustice between her siblings and herself. In inheritance sharing, a quarter each is given to three males from the home, and the last quarter is divided between two girls.¹⁰

As is clear, tradition strongly favoured men. Tradition exalted only the man, while the woman was a captive, in darkness, with all power resting in the hands of the man. The man had the right to marry more than one woman at the same time, while, even if he was seen as objectionable by society, divorce was prevented. The woman, silent about everything she faced, could not rebel against polygamy, and her bedroom became a prison for her. The woman, who was raised by her mother and relatives since childhood with the idea of becoming a wife to a man, had no choice but to accept the situation. The limitations of the lifestyle imposed on her were certain. This situation for women was taken to a different dimension with the arrival of colonists. With the

¹⁰ Assia Djebar, *La Disparition de la langue française*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2003, p. 13.

French capturing their lands, they became prisoners in their own countries. For women, colonists represented a new threat, on top of patriarchal social oppression and male domination.

In the context of postcolonial literature, the notion of the Francophone sits in the midst of linguistic questions since the French language retains a certain privilege in Algeria even though colonization has been brought to an end, and despite the Arabization policy of the independent Algerian state. Hence, one of the primary issues for postcolonial literature is the linguistic choice of an author from a formerly colonized country. Frantz Fanon parodies the allegorical positing of a feminine figure to represent cultural identity in the context of colonial Algeria by taking on the voice of a colonial administrator, and caricaturing how the colonial project targets women as a medium for social change:

“If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight”¹¹

Under the auspices of French colonization, “unveiling” as a metaphor for a strategic penetration of cultural space was often couched in the name of liberating repressed Indigenous women. Indeed, in 1958, the French government orchestrated a group of women to “spontaneously” unveil in the streets of Algiers. The incident was reproduced as an English language documentary for distribution in the United States entitled *The Falling Veil*, and was meant to glorify France’s success in bringing “independence” to Algerian women. Malek Alloula’s photographic essay *The Colonial Harem* suggests another subtext to the focus on unveiling within the Algerian colonial archive¹². Here, the fetishized representations of an Indigenous ‘feminine other’ in colonial postcards depicting nude or semi-nude ‘odalisques’ and ‘mauresques’ (women of Maghrebian descent) represent a fantasy of access to what in reality remains a space largely inaccessible to the colonizer. Indeed, against such fantasies of access, Fanon characterizes the feminine domestic space as a final outpost of resistance against colonial rule. In his analysis, the Algerian woman under colonial rule takes on a unique revolutionary agency in maintaining the

¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 2002, pp. 37-38.

¹² Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, pp. 105-120.

social structure constituted by home and family against the cultural transformations of the colonial encounter.¹³

Today, more than 80% of the populations of developed countries have a colonial past, either as ex-colonizer or as ex-colonized. Countries which gained political independence cannot today shake off the catastrophic legacy of colonization. This colonial heritage is manifested in these countries by the continuity of complex state and economic links that have been woven for centuries – what is called “neo-imperialism or neo-colonialism. In the literary field, postcolonialism, by its simplest and purest definition, is a field of literature formed by the creations of authors from formerly colonized countries. They are sometimes mixed-race writers, sometimes not, whose texts are inevitably marked by colonization. In this area, the authors treat mostly the same themes. These literary works, “categorized under the global label of postcolonial, are in many ways alike.”¹⁴

Postcolonial studies are a set of historical processes and resistances that developed in the face of European colonialist ideology. It is a new intellectual approach concerning the colonies which declared their independence in the second half of the 20th century (1962 for Algeria, in this context) evolving from a political and economic point of view. It is also possible to define this area as one of “cultural resistance” developed by colonized subjects against colonialist policies. Culture, indigenous and Western, being a living phenomenon, has been in an incessant state of transformation, both during and after European colonization. As a literary theory, postcolonial criticism is a literary field which analyzes the cultural productions of changing postcolonial peoples. Postcolonial studies also signify an ideological attitude that tries to bridge the abyss between terms which, despite their presence in opposition, complement each other: center-periphery, dominant-dominated, white black etc. In this context, the postcolonial perspective is not simply a theory of knowledge, it is at the same time a field of theoretical application where knowledge is transformed into a mode of activist intervention. It is a fundamentalist philosophy that questions and claims to annihilate the weight of the European cultural heritage of colonialism. As we have mentioned several times, postcolonialism is not a historical period succeeding

¹³ Fanon, **The Wretched of the Earth**, pp. 64-66.

¹⁴ Jean-Marc Moura, **L'Europe Littéraire et l'Ailleurs**, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1998, p. 173.

colonialism, but a critical posture against colonial domination. The common denominator with regard to this literature is manifested in the trilogy of language, culture and ideology between European countries and the Third World. Let us repeat here Moura's definition:

“Ce mouvement critique distingue généralement post-colonial, désignant simplement la période qui court depuis la fin de la colonisation pour chaque pays ou culture et postcoloniale qui ne renvoie pas simplement à la littérature ‘venant après’ l’empire, mais à un ensemble littéraire dont il est possible de reconnaître des qualités thématique-formelles spécifique, lorsqu’on l’envisage par rapport à la colonisation et à ses conséquences.”¹⁵

“This critical movement generally distinguishes *post-colonial*, simply designating the period that begins with the end of colonization for each country or culture, from *postcolonial*, which does not merely refer to literature 'coming after' the empire, but rather to a body of literature that can be recognized by specific thematic and formal qualities, particularly when viewed in relation to colonization and its consequences.”¹⁶

That is to say, we must think of imperialism and colonialism in their relation to texts. So, the postcolonial perspective demands a focus on literature marked by the experience of colonization and examines it critically by seeking to promote different symbolic frameworks of imperialist unification.

What these works of literature have in common is that they were born in a context marked by colonization and an emphasis on colonial power. The source of postcolonial perception lies in the era of decolonization and in Third World thought. The origins of this current are thus found in the formulation of the interrogations of the histories of colonized countries. From these historical and cultural questions, the authors identify a critical perspective through which “they will highlight the singularity of these emerging literatures compared to the Western canon.”¹⁷ Postcolonial thinking resulting from a political reaction to literary criticism inevitably anticipates a transnational approach.

According to Moura, one of the major difficulties lies in the fact that postcolonial criticism encounters the political, linguistic and literary institution known as ‘la Francophonie. The term

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁶ Jean-Marc Moura, *L'Europe Littéraire et l'Ailleurs*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1998, p. 173.

¹⁷ Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures Francophones et Théorie Postcoloniale*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2013, p.12.

was used for the first time in 1880 by Onésime Reclus, a French geographer, to designate the geographic areas where the French language is spoken. By la francophonie (with a lowercase initial) we mean:

All peoples or groups of speakers who use the French language partially or entirely in their daily lives or in their communications. The term Francophonie (with an initial capital) rather designates all the governments, countries or official bodies that have in common the use of French.¹⁸ What interests us in this term in the first place is that it refers to

“à une diversité géographique et culturelle organisée par rapport à un fait linguistique.”

“a geographical and cultural diversity organized in relation to a linguistic fact.”¹⁹

Defining the term Francophonie is difficult since it is a multidisciplinary conception, involving sociolinguistics, sociology, human geography, history, political science, etc. It is therefore impossible to adopt a single point of view,

“sauf à dire de la francophonie: le fait de parler français.”

“Except to say of the Francophonie: the fact of speaking French.”²⁰

Postcolonial literature or French-speaking literature (we write it in the plural since there are several countries outside of France where we speak and write or communicate in French) is in fact a kind of political category – non-homogeneous literary forms developed by bi-cultural writers born outside France, possessing their own culture as well as that of the metropolis.

The formation of a French-speaking postcolonial theory happened in the 1980s when new authors appeared who dealt with perspectives that had hitherto been neglected. They are truly Indigenous writers, the first occupants of a land previously colonized, and female writers. It would also be relevant to specify that the natives are no longer only fictitious characters in the Western novel but also authors of their own fiction. In French-speaking and/or Maghreb postcolonial literature, from the 1960s, there was a dynamic explosion that French-speaking literary production has never known since.

¹⁸ Arnold Breene, “Francophone Africa,” *African Affairs*, vol. 66, no: 262, 1967, pp. 12-19.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/720703>.

¹⁹ Moura, *Littératures Francophones et Théorie Postcoloniale*, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Among the main themes of postcolonial literature are the feeling of multiple belonging, crossbreeding, issues of identity, hybridity, etc. Postcolonial criticism is concerned, among other things, with marginality, what is marginalized, ambiguity and rejection of the binary. In particular, writers erect a plural ego by problematizing it from a dialogue between the ethnic personality and the dominant culture. Memory, being without fire or place, emigration, living in between, the diaspora, and alienation are also among the fundamental occupations of postcolonial literature. These themes bring the authors together. They come together around the themes of the plural, hybrid and cosmopolitan personality. At the heart of postcolonial literary debates is how to express oneself in one way or another. Experiences of gender, language, race, and class during colonization became a major source of resistance in postcolonial literature. In this context, French-speaking postcolonial writers retaliated in writing by forming a counter-discourse to Western canonical texts. They write in the name of shattering stereotypical representations, prejudices and the great myth of the East. The importance of language and ideology is emphasized in relation to aesthetic resistance. During the act of literary creation, the indigenous author makes a choice of language. For the writer who has acquired an education in the dominant language and culture, this language is mainly French. The motivation behind this choice is the fact that the use of French grants authors the ability to reach a larger audience than in their mother tongue. Otherwise, the author, in a sense the spokesperson for marginalized culture, never manages to make his voice heard by the Other, the European. Hence, aesthetic resistance does not mean the total rejection of the dominant culture; on the contrary, in order to both express oneself correctly and develop an opposing discourse, it must be known intimately. On the other hand, the full adoption of the language of the colonizer by the local writer proves that he interacts with that language. This interaction sometimes calls for linguistic changes in the Western language, such as the use of local words, syntactic and semantic disobedience, including the insertion of features of ethnic prose. The postcolonial writer, faced with the Eurocentric reading of history, re-reads and rewrites colonial history from a new point of view. In this context, instead of rejecting history reflected from a European perspective, he transforms it with an original point of view. Thus, postcolonial literature is a response to the literary and historical creations of the colonial period.

The process of colonization is not only the physical occupation of land or the tyrannical imposition of power but also the colonization of the mind. Thus, by the process of the simultaneous imposition of language, religion and culture, cultural imperialism is realized in third-world

countries. At the end of this period of cultural oppression, a third space of existence manifests itself where the two cultures overlap. This in-between existence is an inevitable transformation process. For the new colonial subject with multiple belongings, the notion of space is quite important. This diasporic subject, displaced and forced to migrate, suffers discrimination by race, sex, class or culture. Several stereotypical clichés (east-west, lower-upper, black-white) lead to the emergence of mixed-race identities which highlight the differences.

The long history of the colonization of Algeria, the period known as French Algeria, begins with the capture of Algiers in 1830 and ends in 1962 with the country's independence. June 14, 1830, is the date when the French troops commanded by General de Bourmont, Marshal of France during the Restoration, landed at Sidi Ferruch, a peninsula located 30 kilometers west of the capital, Algiers. At the time, France was not enjoying a peaceful atmosphere, as this was a time of great revolutions. From 1830 until 1871, under five regimes including the Restoration, Republics, and Empires, the French bourgeoisie showed itself very supportive of the ongoing conquest of lands populated by millions of inhabitants. French troops first set foot in Algeria on June 14, 1830, and this landing is considered the first act of French colonization. From 1830, forty years of fierce combat, cruel murders and voracious looting ensued between a people devoid of any modern equipment and the fully organized and equipped French army.

This conquest of Algeria was an unprecedented atrocity, since not only physical genocide but also a genocide of souls was perpetrated by the French army in order to further colonialist expansion as effectively as possible. The Algerian people, banned from almost everything, were subjected to the violence of colonial domination. Victims of a cruel conquest, the natives who did not have the means to resist were faced with a situation of economic and social powerlessness. Despite there being a very large majority of indigenous inhabitants, most were suddenly excluded from top management positions in public institutions.

The ideology of the time was justified by the dispossession of the Algerians of their native lands and, even more importantly, by the devaluation of their cultural and moral traditions and of their language (dialects). It should be emphasized that French colonization was complemented primarily by cultural genocide; they had to kill the soul of the Algerian people in order to control

not only the land but also the ‘zeitgeist’. The historical French colonial tradition created an Algeria where European racist ideology abounded.

Frantz Fanon, a staunch anti-colonialist and a founding father of Third World thought and decolonization, makes the same spatial separation between the regions of the colonizers and those of the natives. It is possible for us to find the same binomial aspect of cities in his writing. In *The Damned of the Earth*, almost the manifesto of decolonization, he describes the gulf between the two sides as follows:

“Le monde colonisé est un monde coupé en deux (...) La ville du colon est une ville repue, paresseuse, son ventre est plein de bonnes choses à l'état permanent. La ville du colon est une ville de blancs, d'étrangers (...) La ville du colonisé, ou du moins la ville indigène, le village nègre, la médina, la réserve est un lieu mal famé, peuplé d'hommes mal famés. On y naît n'importe où, n'importe comment. On y meurt n'importe où, de n'importe quoi. C'est un monde sans intervalles, les hommes y sont les uns sur les autres, les cases les unes sur les autres. La ville du colonisé est une ville affamée, affamée de pain, de viande, de chaussures, de charbon, de lumière. La ville du colonisé est une ville accroupie, une ville à genoux, une ville vautrée. C'est une ville de nègres, une ville de bicots.”²¹

“The colonized world is a world divided in two (...) The colonizer's city is a well-fed, lazy city, its belly permanently full of good things. The colonizer's city is a city of whites, of foreigners (...) The colonized's city, or at least the native city, the ‘negro village,’ the medina, the reserve, is a notorious place, populated by notorious men. People are born there anywhere, anyhow. They die anywhere, from anything. It is a world without space, where men are piled on top of each other, and huts are stacked on top of each other. The colonized's city is a hungry city, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. The colonized's city is a crouching city, a kneeling city, a prostrate city. It is a city of negroes.”²²

Algerian women’s participation in the decolonization process and the donning of the veil for strategic reasons did indeed contribute, among other factors, to the success of the independence struggle. At the same time, as Lazreg argues persuasively, Algerian women’s voluntary decision to veil themselves had significant repercussions that were, naturally, not felt until a later point in postcolonial history. Inadvertently it drew attention to the sexed female body that was initially manipulated by French imperialists, and later by postcolonial government authorities, so-called

²¹ Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2002, p. 42.

²² Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2002, p. 42.

religious factions and armed terror groups for a variety of reasons contributing to their individual agendas.²³



²³ Marnia Lazreg, **The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question**, New York and London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 199-201.

CHAPTER THREE

JANE AUSTEN AND ASSIA DJEBAR

3.1. JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen was born in Steventon Town, Hampshire, England, on December 16, 1775. She was educated in a boarding school between 1785 and 1786. Apart from that, she was never separated from her family and continued her education at home. She was the seventh daughter of a middle-class family of eight children. Her father, George Austen, was a priest. The family had a reasonable income of about £600 a year but they were not rich, so the father was not able to give any money to his daughters after marriage. She had never been engaged or married and died in 1817 out of illness.

Not too much is known about the life of Jane Austen, who lived in the late 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th. We would have more information now if her older sister, Cassandra, hadn't burned many of her sister Jane's letters after her death. According to Cassandra, Austen wrote "must be burned" on the many letters sent between Jane and herself over the years. Our critique of her personality will be based on a few surviving letters and her works.

3.1.1. Jane Austen's literary life:

In the period when Jane Austen lived, the late 18th and early 19th century, classicism ended and romance took its place. But, in contrast to her time, Jane Austen did not produce romantically styled works. She was more familiar with classicism and liked and read works written in the classical style. The effects of classicism can also be seen in her novels

Jane Austen never gave free rein to her imagination in the writing of her novels; she never departed from the facts. She only wrote about the environment she knew very well and the people in that social circle.

Her conscious and careful decision to limit her subject to the circles in which she moved gives to the characters she creates authenticity and detail, and the characters in her novels always

have similar characteristics. For example, the families that are the subject of her novels generally have young girls of marriage age, servants, and close neighbors.

Jane Austen makes no mention in her novels of the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, or the Napoleonic Wars which took place between 1775 and 1817. Her two brothers rose in the Admiralty and took part in the battles of the period, but Jane took nothing from their experience. Although she read the news that filled the newspapers during her lifetime, she never mentioned these events in her novels. For example, Darcy, one of the characters in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, grabs a newspaper when he gets into trouble, but Austen does not mention what was written in that newspaper in her novel.

Austen never criticized England in her works. According to her, England, everything that existed in England, and even the bourgeoisie that was so influential in the administration, was good, so that in her novels there are no rebels against the rules adopted by the bourgeoisie.

Jane Austen regarded the sensuality, romantic longings and sensitivity of women as flaws. For this reason, she either did not include these flaws in her novels or she corrected them. Since she restricted herself too much in terms of the subject matter of her novels and wanted to write about the people she knew best, this desire naturally caused the world of women to emerge in her novels. The aim of each novel is to specify the characters of the women, but Austen also cleanses these women of sensuality and romantic longings. Of course, there are also male characters in her novels. However, she often leaves them in the background or makes them appear among female characters. They never act alone. What they do, and what they talk about, is conveyed to the reader through women.

There are balanced and non-sexual relationships between male and female characters in Jane Austen's novels. Since Jane Austen avoids mentioning sexuality at all in her novels, she does not include situations of the "love scene" type. There are people who fall in love, but what goes on between these people and how they treat each other when they are alone is not mentioned. Hence, what we are left with in her novels is essentially an aspect of social relationships. In her novels, love is mutual. Love and respect are free from passion and obsession, and the story always ends in happiness and marriage.

In addition, Austen's novels reflect a "love for money", which she thinks is important to address. While a rich, single woman is considered a lady; a poor, single woman bears the servant stamp. This is why, in her novels, people's financial income is also mentioned alongside their personalities.

Virginia Woolf's husband, Leonard Woolf, in his article "The Economic Determinism of Jane Austen" published in 1942, sees the characters created by this author as typical representatives of the capitalist bourgeoisie. The female characters in Austen's novels can be grouped into two categories; generally, those who are rational and those who act upon their feelings. In *Pride and Prejudice*, we meet the logical Elizabeth and her unreasonable sister Lydia, driven by her emotions; similarly, we encounter Elinor and Marianne in the novel *Sense and Sensibility*. The women in her novels marry a good and rich man if they are smart, and those who act out of their senses and act irrationally marry impecunious men.¹

3.1.2. Jane Austen's Works

Impressed by her family's fondness for reading, Jane Austen began reading and writing at a very young age. As a little girl, she wrote short satirical sketches. She wrote her first novel, *Love and Friendship* and, later, *A History of England by a Partial, Prejudiced and Ignorant Historian* at the age of fourteen. She wrote novels such as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* in her twenties, after which these novels were reviewed and published. *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were published between 1811 and 1813. *Mansfield Park* was published in 1814, followed by *Emma* in 1816. Meanwhile, she completed her book *Persuasion* and this was published, together with *Northanger Abbey*, in 1818; that is, one year after her death. Perhaps due to the perception of the female identity of the period she lived, she did not publish any of her work under her own name. She used the expression "By a Lady ..." at the end of her works.

¹ Leonard Woolf, **The Economic Determinism of Jane Austen**, London, New Statesman and Nation, 1942.

3.1.3. *Emma*

From the beginning, Emma Woodhouse is described as a beautiful, intelligent and rich young woman, with a comfortable home and a cheerful character, who had lost her mother and whose father, Mr. Woodhouse, is a hypochondriac, dedicated to the care of his own health and the safety of his loved ones. Austen's novel opens with the wedding of Emma's housekeeper, Miss Taylor, a friend and confidant of the protagonist, who is credited with introducing her to her future husband, Mr. Weston. Convinced of being the architect of the union between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, Emma decides to organize another wedding as soon as the opportunity arises but meets the opposite opinion of her friend Mr. Knightley, the older brother of her sister's husband.

Emma does not like the idea of the engagement between her friend, the 17-year-old Harriet Smith and the village vicar, Mr. Elton. Deaf to her friend's wishes, in order to get Harriet to choose Mr. Elton, Emma persuades her to reject the marriage proposal of Mr. Martin, a young and respected farmer, but things get complicated when she discovers that Mr. Elton is no more than a social climber, interested in marrying her and not Harriet.

Emma refuses the proposal, Mr. Elton leaves and while the protagonist tries to console her friend, things change again with the arrival in Highbury of Frank Churchill (the stepson of the Westons, who would look favorably on a marriage between him and Emma) and of Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates' beautiful and talented niece.

Mr. Elton, who is now married, also returns to Highbury and brings with him his new wife, a frivolous and haughty woman, who fails to attract Emma's sympathies; it isn't too long before the two women realize they are very different.

Mrs. Elton is not the only woman who fails to attract Emma's sympathies; the same is true of Jane Fairfax, probably due to her reserved nature, which the protagonist mistakes for coldness. In looking for some small flaw in Jane's annoying perfection, Emma decides that what led the girl to live with Miss Bates is her undeclared love for Mr. Dixon.

But who is Mr. Dixon? At this point, it is necessary to take a step back in Jane's life.

We thus discover that Jane lived with her aunt, Miss Bates, and her grandmother until the age of nine, and was then welcomed into the house of Colonel Campbell, an old friend of Jane's father, who provided an excellent education for her, which would never have been possible if she had continued to live with her aunt, whose finances are not in good health.

The years spent at the Campbell home have allowed Jane to become a close friend of the Colonel's daughter, but it is precisely when the latter marries Mr. Dixon that, according to Emma's assumptions, everything changes and, secretly in love with her friend's husband, Jane decides to return to live with her aunt instead of visiting the newlywed couple.

Emma's suspicions towards Jane grow, fuelled by the gift of a mysterious benefactor, who gives her a piano, and also Jane's interest in Mr. Weston's son from his first marriage, the handsome and wealthy Frank Churchill. Emma thinks she harbours some feelings of love towards Frank, but she soon realizes that she is tied to him only by sincere sympathy and tries in every way to contrive an engagement between Harriet and Frank. Meanwhile, Mrs. Weston confides that Mr. Knightley is in love with Jane.

This news coincides with a row between Emma and Mr. Knightley after the former publicly humiliates her good-hearted, though somewhat irritatingly boring friend Miss Bates. Knightley is appalled by Emma's behavior and, stinging, tells her so. This brings home how Emma's reckless behavior, even on those occasions when it has in the past – in her eyes, at least – been well-meant, has often hurt other people. It proves to be a pivotal moment for Emma.

Just when we are convinced that Austen has fired all her cartridges, unexpectedly, the game changes; it turns out that Jane and Frank have been secretly engaged for a year, and while Emma – wrong again – is distressed by the idea that this could hurt Harriet, her friend confides to her that she has fallen in love with Mr. Knightley and is convinced that her love is reciprocated. At this point, spurred to unexpected jealousy, Emma realizes that the truth has always been in front of her: she is in love with Mr. Knightley!

Towards the end of the novel, Mr. Knightley asks for Emma's hand, and Harriet agrees to marry Mr. Martin after reconciling with him, thanks to Emma's contrite intervention. The novel ends with Emma's wedding, organized after Harriet's and before Jane and Frank's union.

3.2. ASSIA DJEBAR

Assia Djebbar, whose real name is Fatima Zohra Imalhayène, was born on 30th June 1936 in Cherchell, an ancient town in Algeria. This ancient city, whose name comes down to us from Antiquity, and which Djebbar uses very frequently in her works, marks her career not only as a writer and historian but also as a filmmaker and journalist. Coming from a traditional Algerian bourgeois family, she spent her childhood in Mitidja, in Mouzaïaville, where she attended both French and Koranic schools. From the age of 10, she went to a neighboring city, Blida, known as the 'city of roses', to learn in the classical department (Greek, Latin and English) of a French college, where she obtained her baccalaureate in 1953. In 1955, she was admitted to the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Sèvres in France, which was a unique event at that time, since she was the first North African, Arab-Muslim to be received there. Before this, she had got into writing, and, so as not to embarrass her family, especially her father, she took the pseudonym Assia Djebbar, which means Consolation and Intransigence. Djebbar, "the uncompromising" is one of the 99 names of Allah, according to the Quran.

3.2.1. Assia Djebbar's Literary Life:

During Algeria's liberation war, Assia was involved in many cultural initiatives. She took part in the Algerian student strike of 1956 and worked as a journalist alongside Frantz Fanon at the Moudjahid of the F.L.N. In 1962. She recounted this fight for independence and freedom in her third novel, "The Children of the New World", dealing with the political commitment of her characters but also with the fight of women for their feminine identity. This theme of the woman, which has never been absent from her novels, is a recurring one.

She was elected to the French Academy on June 16, 2005, in the chair of Mr. Georges Vedel. She was also the first woman of Algerian origin to be elected to the French Academy. Assia Djebbar passed away in 2015 in Paris.

Thanks to her bicultural background, Assia Djebbar sat poised between two different cultures, almost adversaries, throughout her literary life. In her universe of aesthetic creation, she experienced a constant swaying between the French culture in which lay her intellectuality, her education and her literary motivation, and the Arab-Muslim culture thanks to which she aspired to

rediscover the deep song of her ancestors. Thus, her writing is anchored at the edge of two cultures and several languages - including French, Arabic dialect and Berber - which allows her to superimpose different cultural spaces. By creating a third textual cross-border space, the poetics of Assia Djébar become those of a trans² writer. A Berber woman through her maternal line, of Arabic-speaking parents, she used her pen to craft a francophone voice, though that of an Arabic writing in the French language. The work of Assia Djébar is thus constructed in the space between heartbreak and hospitality, between the unwritten mother tongue and the writing of love in the mother tongue or the opposing language, between the grammar imposed by the colonist and the idiom that the writer reinvents, book by book, to play her inner score. It is possible for us to understand from this literary binary state that French-speaking writing requires hybridization in Djébarian work, an interstitial space of reinterpretation. She considered herself a Francophone woman in her intellectual and critical activity, despite her ambiguous relationship with the notion of Francophonie, a notion she uses in order to overcome national boundaries and cultural hierarchies. Thus, her work forms a sort of cross-border literature.

In the context of postcolonial literature, the notion of the Francophonie sits in the midst of linguistic questions since the French language retains a certain privilege in Algeria even though colonization has come to an end and despite the new Arabization policy. At this stage, one of the primary issues dealt with in postcolonial literature was the linguistic choice of an author from a formerly colonized country.

The first aspect of her Djébarian originality is perhaps manifested in her way of rethinking from a new angle the issue of Francophonie – namely the French language – as a crucial constituent part of her identity, because, as she said; “Identity is not just paper, it’s blood, but also language”.³ Very aware of the linguistic suffering endured by authors in her position, Assia Djébar approached the question of Francophonie – writing in the French language – with an Arab-Berber sensitivity. Thus, she is dealing with a duality, a contradiction, in a single, unified text. Due to the need to draw her ideas in the language of the other – since she never managed to master the highest levels

² Mireille Calle-Gruber, **Assia Djébar**, Paris, ADPF, 2006, p. 16.

This term belongs to Mireille Calle-Gruber, to go further, see the work cited above.

³ Assia Djébar, **Ces voix qui m’assiègent**, Paris, Albin Michel, 1999, p. 42.

of the Arabic language – she declared herself a writer in French, but with a non-French speaking voice:

“Je suis femme d’écriture, j’ajouterais presque sur un ton de gravité et d’amour, je n’ai qu’une écriture: celle de la langue française, avec laquelle je trace chaque page de chaque livre, qu’il soit de fiction ou de réflexion.”⁴

“I am a woman of writing, and I would almost add, with a tone of gravity and love, that I have only one form of writing: that of the French language, with which I write every page of every book, whether it be fiction or reflection.”⁵

Through the duality and alternation of her upbringing, a bilingualism that she would later call “a bilingualism that limps with both legs”⁶, as well as a multicultural space, was hollowed out in Assia Djébar’s mind from her early childhood. She thus established relations with several languages, with dialectal Arabic at the time the language spoken daily in Algeria – a language of which Assia Djébar never managed to learn the written version – and with French as the language of education, since it was forbidden to speak in Arabic within the confines of the French college, and finally with Berber a forgotten language whose song remained with the ancestors. The second aspect of originality in her Djébarian work lies in its total refusal to limit itself to a major linguistic affiliation to one single language. Like Amin Maalouf, who announced that “l’identité n’est pas donnée une fois pour toutes”.

“identity is not given once and for all”⁷, Assia Djébar, too, refused to establish and accept a hierarchy between linguistic affiliations. Djébar, heir to a dual culture and bilingualism, owed her mastery of the French language to her father, Tahar Imalhayène, a schoolteacher who taught Arab children the French language, which was a rare occurrence in the community of Colonized Algeria. Thus, it was through the intercession of her father that she learned French at school, even though it was the language of the colonizer. As Djébar admits, French was a “decided plus” that allowed her to address sensitive issues, which could have been too transgressive, if written in the sacred Arabic language. Like other Francophone female writers of the Maghreb, Djébar acknowledges the advantages of writing in the language of the former coloniser:

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁵ Assia Djébar, *Ces voix qui m’assiègent*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, Albin Michel, 1999, p. 42.

⁶ Lise Gauvin, “Territoires des Langues, Entretien avec Assia Djébar,” *Littérature*, Issue 101, 1996, pp. 73-87.

⁷ Amin Maalouf, *Les Identités Meurtrières*, Paris, Le Livre de Poche, 1998, p. 31.

“When I use the French language I have the freedom to talk about it all, I have the freedom to depict anyone and anything... I am immediately inside the truth, my own truth.”⁸

Assia Djébar, whose work reveals a continuum of transformation throughout her literary career, focused on several wounds in addition to the linguistic conflict she felt in her heart.

We must never forget that memory and family ties become crucial when building a child's identity. The father of Djébar very willingly made himself the accomplice of his little daughter, Fatima, since the story of the emancipation of the novelist begins "hand in hand with the father". Her father would, unusually for the period and locale, never be her future jailer; on the contrary, he became her benign intercessor, keeping his daughter from confinement in the ancestral harem.

Our writer frequently noted, watching and listening to working women, that Algeria has more than ever become a country for men, managed by men and for the benefit of men, not hesitate to take up her pen, in the French language, to make this point with persistence and verve, expressing the desire of her female compatriots for their freedom. As she testified: “I write, like so many other Algerian women writers with a sense of urgency, against regression and misogyny.”

With Djébar's entry into the world of letters, we witness the arrival of a powerful force for women. Indeed, in a country where men occupied all roles of significance, this Algerian female author set women firmly on the stage, as if to serve as a reminder that women exist and that they have a role to play. It is an unapologetically feminist stance, lit by a desire to see women break their silence and realize themselves in the world of the living, as human beings with voices, agency and with every right to express themselves. From the outset, she insisted on the need to make the voices of women heard, devoting her works to an exploration of the genesis, roots and causes of their exclusion and by putting forward their words and views against the repression of tradition, of social archaism and of male domination. Writing in the Maghreb, and indeed in Algeria as a whole, is a masculine act. Man in this kind of society dominates all areas. He has all the privileges. It is his word that is taken into consideration, while everything that comes from the woman is neglected. Literature therefore became the refuge of women writers. Attacking Algerian writers,

⁸ Clarisse Zimra, “‘When the Past Answers Our Present’: Assia Djébar Talks About Loin de Médine,” *Callaloo*, Volume 16, Issue 1, 1993, pp. 116–31. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2931821>. Accessed 25 Jun. 2022.

they tried to escape, sometimes to squeeze out the load they carried inside of them; the burdens, suffering, dreams, ambitions, abuse, love, freedom. They found that writing healed their wounds, and their spiritual ailments. We see that the reasons for this charge are numerous; they come from family, society, traditions, entourage, colonization, torture and also love.⁹

As a woman and a very sensitive, affectionate, tender and warm human being, every feeling of every event, every period of her life and every moment was essential for Djébar. Such writers choose subjects that speak of the plight of women in a patriarchal society, whether it is the father, the brother, or the husband. We can then say that French-speaking feminine literature is the struggle of women writers against this oppressive society.

Algerian female writing resides in the relationship developed between female writers and Algerian female memory. But this relationship cannot be dissociated from the omniscience of the notion of voice in feminine texts. Algerian female memory is by definition oral and is transmitted exclusively from woman to woman, “word of mouth” to use the term, in dialect. These feminine voices play an important role in Djébarian writing and help us understand how an oral phenomenon can be transposed to writing.

“Les écrits féminines se déploient dans un processus historique d’une quête de soi, d’une reconnaissance, d’une revalorisation, d’une présence face à des mentalités anachroniques qui minimisent les capacités des femmes.”¹⁰

“Women's writings unfold within a historical process of self-discovery, recognition, revalorization, and asserting presence in the face of outdated mentalities that minimize women's abilities.”¹¹

Assia Djébar is undoubtedly the most famous woman writer of all time in the Maghreb. The quality of her literary works has earned her worldwide recognition. She was one of the first three women writers of the Maghreb and Algeria (the first being Marie-Louise Amrouche, born in Tunisia and from Kabylia, the second, being Djamilia Debeche, born in Rhiras). The third was

⁹ Rim Hassen, “Translating Women in Assia Djébar’s *Far From Madina*,” **Palimpsestes** [Online], 22 | 2009, Online since 01 Octobre 2011, connection on 25 juin 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/palimpsestes/188>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/palimpsestes.188>.

¹⁰ Fouzia Bendjelid, **Le roman algérien de langue française**, Alger, édition Chihab, 2012, p. 79.

¹¹ Fouzia Bendjelid, **Le roman algérien de langue française**, trans. Paul Assaker, Alger, édition Chihab, 2012, p. 79.

Assia Djébar, historian and novelist, who opened the way for her sisters to speak out for liberation in their fight for the emancipation of women and their freedom.

3.2.2. Assia Djébar's Works

At a very early age, 21, she wrote her first novel, *La Soif*, in 1957, during her studies in France, followed by a second in 1958, *Les Impatients*. In 1962, she returned to Algeria to teach modern and contemporary Algerian history, though subsequently she reluctantly left because of the Arabization policy of the young independent state. After ten years of literary silence, she published a dozen novels such as *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* (1962), *Les Alouettes Naïves* (1967), *Les Femmes d'Alger dans votre Appartement* (1980), *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985), *Ombre Sultane* (1987), *Loin de Médine* (1991), *Vaste est la Prison* (1995), *Oran, Langue Morte* (1997), *La Femme sans Sépulture* (2002), *La Disparition de la Langue Française* (2003), *Nulle Part dans la Maison de mon Père* (2007), and also made three films and produced numerous essays. Her work won her several literary prizes, including the International Neustadt Prize in 1996, and the Peace Prize in 2002. She also received the title of doctor *honoris causa* from the University of Osnabrück. In 1977, she directed *La Nouba des Femmes du Mont Chenoua*, which won the International Critics' Prize during the Venice Biennial in 1979. Her second film was called *La Zerda ou les Chants de l'Oubli*, which was shot in 1982. An Algerian literary prize named The Assia Djébar du Roman Prize was created in 2005 in honor of the novelist, to encourage the production of Algerian novels.

3.2.3. A SISTER TO SCHEHERAZADE

Two women, indeed many women, are squeezed between a suffocating tradition and the unstoppable desire for freedom. Two of these women are the wives of the same man, but one day, the first bride decides to leave her husband and daughter and free herself to begin to discover and understand herself, and others. Her name is Isma, and she takes on the role of narrator, the eternal role of one who has to invent stories to survive. A modern Sheharazade, she observes the second wife of Man, Hajila, and becomes her voice, her cry of despair. The house is a prison for those who are irremediably in captivity; marriage is an unbearable torture for those who are handed over to a male to obtain protection. It was Isma who chose the second bride, whose Arabic name is

Derra, meaning wounded. But the young Hajila, who comes from the misery of living in a shack, begins to feel in herself the irrepressible desire to live a life of her own, to breathe freely outside, in the city, in streets that open up new images of an unknown and fascinating humanity. So, she begins to escape every day, as long as the light protects her, from her role as a prisoner: she comes out of the beautiful house in which she was expected to have remained happily secluded. On the streets of the city, she also gets rid of the veil that hides her face and walks “naked”, until she is forced to return to the luxurious apartment and to the role of privileged slave. When she confesses this rebellion to her mother, the reaction is violent: her marriage, which Hajila is now putting in danger, represents an advantage for her whole family, giving them the hope of freeing themselves from misery and social contempt. Yet not even the harsh blame of her mother can hold back the young woman who, day by day, accumulates a hatred for her imposed husband and complicit love for the child that the man had had from an earlier foreign woman. A dramatic episode will definitively free her from her sense of guilt, inferiority, and humble respect for her husband. The man had never had sex with her in six months of marriage, but one night he rapes her and, since then, this violent “ritual” has been repeated over many nights. However, the contempt that such violence provokes in her gives her strength, while at the same time taking it away from man. He starts drinking, he collapses in the face of his awareness of his real helplessness, and this discomfort manifests itself in blind and brutal violence. Yet this man had been capable of love, had been able to arouse love and passion in the first woman he married, Isma. And she, in the memory of moments of tenderness and sensuality, retraces her life as a bride, as a child and as a girl, up to the sensational gesture of (momentary) abandonment of husband and daughter. But, having sought out and found a new partner for her husband, which had not seemed to her an abuse of another woman, an awareness instead is slowly growing in her that she will never be a rival for her, but she cannot be his accomplice either. And the little girl, whom Isma takes back with her, will make her feel it over time.

This last novel by Assia Djébar still has women as protagonists, Arab women who attempt individual liberation and reject the denial of life that tradition imposes on them. All this is achieved without putting in contrast an exaltation of the West as a paradise or perfect condition of life. What Djébar indicates is the need for self-awareness among the women of Algeria, for a path that perhaps only culture and solidarity between women can open.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF *EMMA* AND *A SISTER TO SCHEHERAZADE*

4.1. Comparative Literature:

“The world has been in permanent crisis at least since 1914” is the phrase with which René Wellek begins his popular article, advocating a review of the objectives and methods of comparative literature.¹ Perhaps we could even add another century to this “state of permanent crisis” if we take into account that since 1831 Hegel had (perhaps unknowingly) brought to the table the death of art (*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*)², and later Nietzsche, following in his footsteps, claimed in 1882 that God had also died (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*)³. And yet, here we are in 2020, wondering if there is such a thing as comparative literature.

Van Tieghem, a pioneering figure in comparative literature, emphasized the importance of studying literature across national boundaries. His focus on *interliterary relations* highlights the interconnectedness of literary traditions and the importance of analyzing texts beyond the limitations of national literatures⁴. Van Tieghem believed that literature could not be fully understood if it were isolated within the context of a single nation or culture. Instead, he argued that the study of literary history must involve examining the interactions, influences, and exchanges between different cultures. This broader scope, according to Van Tieghem, allows for a more nuanced understanding of literary movements and their developments across time and space.

The comparison exists without a doubt—it is the action of carefully examining (a thing or a person) to establish the similarities or differences with another. Comparing is one of the most frequent and common activities that human beings carry out; as a method, it has existed since the

¹ René Wellek, *The Crisis of Comparative Literature*, “Concepts of Criticism,” New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963, pp. 282-295.

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 103.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, Vintage, 1974, p. 181.

⁴ Paul Van Tieghem, *La littérature comparée*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1931. Pp.20-80

seventeenth century in scientific research; as a human activity, since always. As Plato takes up later, the act of comparing and discerning all this chaos is what shapes the universe, what gives meaning to life and death.

Nationalistic interpretations of literature and instead adopt a more comparative approach that recognizes the transnational flow of ideas. This approach enriches our understanding of how literature reflects not just individual or national crises, but global ones, allowing comparative literature to function as a method for interpreting the broader cultural and historical dynamics of our world.

Comparison is an essential part of the language; Without it, it would be impossible to imagine things that we do not know and that can only take shape from what is every day to us. The comparison allows us to explore new worlds. Hence the study of literature in general depends to a great extent on it, and also hence we cannot restrict its study to letters. Comparison is part of the way we understand the whole world. Therefore, George Steiner (1967) is not wrong in stating that comparative literature is any act of reception in a meaningful way in languages, art and music.⁵

Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek argues that comparative literature must expand its boundaries beyond traditional Eurocentric models and incorporate what he calls "comparative cultural studies. This approach broadens the scope of comparative literature to include not only the comparison of literary texts but also an examination of cultural practices, ideologies, and media. His interdisciplinary methodology challenges the static, nation-based comparisons that often dominate the field, advocating instead for a more global, cross-cultural analysis that reflects our increasingly interconnected world.

Nowadays, comparative literature is closer to comparative cultural studies "since the study of culture and cultural products —which include, without being restricted to literature, communication, media, art, etc. — is carried out in a construct contextual and relational, and with

⁵ George Steiner, **Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman**, London, Macmillan Pub Co, 1967, pp. 9-70.

a plurality of methods and approaches, interdisciplinary, and, if required, including teamwork”⁶. Therefore, this new discipline requires a methodology that appeals to multiculturalism and interdisciplinarity in order to lay the foundations for comparative literature of the future. In this sense, Tötösy de Zepetnek’s framework of comparative cultural studies emphasizes the necessity of acknowledging the multiplicity of cultures and voices that exist within literature and cultural production. His approach allows us to transcend narrow comparisons and engage with broader cultural systems, making comparative literature not just a method, but a tool for understanding the complexities of global interaction and crisis. Concerning female writers who made special contribution to comparative literature we should talk about the Turkish writer Inci Enginün.

Inci Enginün is a prominent Turkish scholar in comparative literature, renowned for her significant contributions to the field and her emphasis on the interplay between literature, culture, and identity. Her ideology is characterized by several key themes, including the importance of intertextuality and cultural exchange. Enginün explores how literary texts influence and interact with one another across cultural boundaries, advocating for a comparative approach that recognizes the fluidity of texts and their meanings in diverse contexts. She highlights the significance of transnational perspectives, encouraging scholars to move beyond nationalistic frameworks and examine how literature reflects broader cultural and historical dynamics, thus allowing for a more nuanced understanding of literary movements. Additionally, Enginün incorporates feminist theories into her analyses, addressing issues related to gender and representation in literature, particularly how women writers from different cultures navigate patriarchal structures and contribute to feminist discourse. She is also interested in the complexities of cultural identity, especially in the context of globalization and postcolonialism, examining how literature serves as a site of negotiation for identity and cultural hybridity, reflecting the interactions between local and global influences. Furthermore, Enginün advocates for a multidisciplinary approach to comparative literature, drawing on various theoretical frameworks to enrich literary analysis and foster a deeper understanding of cultural and literary phenomena.

⁶ Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek, “The New Humanities: The Intercultural, the Comparative, and the Interdisciplinary,” **Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies**, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 2003, pp. 13-29.

Through her scholarship, she has significantly contributed to the development of comparative literature in Turkey, promoting a more inclusive and globally aware perspective in the field.⁷

Any comparison between the works of Jane Austen and Assia Djebar might seem incongruous – the two writers are separated by time, geography, religion and culture. *A Sister to Scheherazade* was published one hundred and seventy years after *Emma*. It takes place in post-colonial Algeria, a society divided between traditional Muslim beliefs and the Arabic language on the one hand, and the lingering French colonial language and culture on the other; and the tensions and divisions underlying this juxtaposition are evident throughout. Haliya, coming from a traditional and poor Muslim family speaks little or no French, while her husband's children, to whom she acts as an effective governess or nursemaid speak little else. *Emma*, by contrast, takes place in an England that is comfortable in its own colonial power and success, having recently triumphed over France in the Napoleonic Wars. Although there is no mention of war or politics in the novel, we get the sense of a self-assured nation whose way of life and place in the world seems unquestionable and is, indeed, unquestioned.

Perhaps most significantly, questions about the role and rights of women in society were only just beginning to be asked in Austen's time. Feminism as we know it had not yet been born, and women were only beginning to find their political voice. Mary Wollstonecraft's book 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' was published in 1792 and, although relatively well-received in some quarters, had yet to percolate through society at large. There is certainly no indication in Jane Austen's writings that it had exerted any overt influence on her. Wollstonecraft had argued in favour of an expansion of the education of women beyond what was then accepted as suitable and appropriate – namely those skills and 'accomplishments' that would serve and enhance their unquestioned role in society, which was limited to the domestic sphere. It was a woman's job to make the home as comfortable and pleasing environment as possible for their husbands, and as secure and nurturing as possible for their children.

⁷ İnci Enginün, "Comparative Literature in Turkey: Past and Present," *Journal of Comparative Literature*, vol. 12, no: 3, 2010, pp. 45-67.

4.2. Topics of Comparison:

In our novels *Emma* and *A Sister to Scheherazade* we are going to compare them in terms of marriage and how women were forced to find a rich husband to help their families, also we will look at social class at that time which consisted of poor and rich only. Another comparison is how women were manipulated by other women during their journey to marriage and how they reached truth through self-discovery after committing mistakes. At the end, we will discuss the narrative voice of both novels to discuss both writers' styles of narration. At the end, we will illustrate similarities and differences that we discover during the comparison.

4.2.1. Social Class:

At the time of Jane Austen and the time that Djébar was writing about in Algeria, women were suffering from the patriarchal system. Society was divided into rich and poor only there were no middle class and women were not allowed to work in proper jobs to earn money and live a respected life.

4.2.1.1. Social Class in *Emma*:

In her novel *Emma* (1815), Austen depicts society in the eighteenth century, as rigid and hierarchical, and maintained by the deference of those who occupied the lower stage of the pyramid and by the paternalism of the higher classes. During Austen's life, this rigidity was beginning to crack, as the middle class became more prosperous. Austen's novels, such as *Emma* and *Persuasion*, deal with the pressure that women of the lower class suffer from. The society of Highbury is less rigid – the Cole family and Mr. Weston rub shoulders with the impoverished Mrs. and Miss. Bates. Also, Frank Churchill was raised by his maternal relatives, who were richer than his own father, and Jane Fairfax, despite her poverty, also joined the aristocratic class, through the good offices of the Campbell family. In general, it would seem that there is no great discrimination in class distinctions. The only exception is Emma, who at first glance seems to have a conservative outlook, as she vigorously defends the existing social order, but, as we shall later see, Emma's conservatism will be used by Austen to propose a new order of things.

Austen posits a society of solidarity as a palliative for the problem of female dependency, a society in which those members in a privileged position assume a moral responsibility towards the less fortunate. The adoption by the Campbell family of Jane Fairfax falls within this idea. But there are also numerous examples of gestures of solidarity in the Highbury community: for example, when the Woodhouse family sends Mrs. and Miss. Bates pork, or when Mr. Knightley sends them apples from his garden and makes his own carriage available to them so they can attend the Coles' dinner (although there might be other reasons for doing this). Examples of these gestures are many, but the relationship which must exist between social position and responsibility is summed up in the words of Mr. Knightley in the Box Hill scene when Emma is carried away by her vanity and offends Miss. Bates, Mr. Knightley gets annoyed with Emma for her insolence:

"I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner ... but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor, she has sunk from the comforts she was born to, and if she lives to old age must probably sink more ... You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour – to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her – and before her niece too – and before others, many of whom (certainly some) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her."⁸

Austen focuses on the female experience. However, instead of viewing society from the perspective of militant feminism or narrating a sentimental story that puts women in the place of victims (indirectly reinforcing the male domination model), Austen presents a society in the process of transformation, whose women find opportunities to occupy a place other than the one traditionally reserved for them. In that sense, we can affirm that, with *Emma*, Austen subtly defies the moral and social attitudes of her time, introducing in her work the discourses present in her society and proposing women who can occupy new spaces. Austen does not condemn the patriarchal model but suggests that it is time to make adjustments.

4.2.1.2. Social Class in *A sister to Scheherazade*:

The fact that the fundamental mentality of the colonizer is to reject the non-self, the colonized, who finds himself in constant confusion and continually wonders 'Who am I, in reality?' The Eurocentric conception of the colonizer is based on political and psychological

⁸ Jane Austen, *Emma*, p. 245. Kindle Edition.

domination as well as on the master-slave dialectic. Considering that woman is, moreover, a secondary being to the Eastern world, the main question that must be asked in this context is: where is she, the woman, in this dialectic, whose slave end is formed by the colonized? The colonizing perspective creates a fissured world, cut in half, according to Fanon's terminology. The inhabitants of these two worlds are the masters and the slaves, the colonizers and the colonized. In this system, which over time has come not only to exploit the earth but also human souls, where is the woman whose body has already been separated from her soul and her feelings for a long time? Did the process of marginalization of women, beings marginalized from their very existence, begin with colonization? Of course not. Didn't the master-slave dialectic, which corresponds to European and Eastern societies, already exist between man and woman in the Eastern world? From a woman's point of view, in colonial societies, the desire for recognition passed only to Western society; that is, from man to man. The marginalization of women has doubled.

The basic assumption and the dominant psychology of the colonial period are formed by Eurocentric male domination. The sovereign eastern man is replaced by the sovereign western man. This Western sovereignty puts at the center a human hierarchy where Arabic or black is inevitably placed at the lowest level. In this humiliating system of cultural hierarchies, where Arab culture is totally ignored, the colonized slave woman places herself lower than the colonized man. Colonization, which can be summed up as the economic and cultural subjugation of an underdeveloped country, generates a second-degree change for women. The woman who is the other in her own society becomes for a second time the other in European society.

Women have never been able to establish a society by themselves, autonomous, under any circumstances. They have always been dependent on the patriarchal community, where their secondary status is accepted without any logical basis. The world in which the woman lives is a world of men, created and ruled by men. The Arab woman, in particular, accepts this patrilineal system and locks herself in her body, in her home. This world teaches passivity to the woman, because of the many faults attributed to her as well as the pre-acceptances about her existence; the woman retains her diasporic situation in this masculine world. Its existence is limited only to waiting, in which imprecise immanence hangs in the male need for affirmation, confirmation and even praise.

The conditions of women and men differ greatly since men can embrace many more concrete opportunities, such as diversity of work, to assert their freedom, while women are deprived of a space to even confirm its existence. Several theorists who have thought about the condition of women, like Spivak, Kristeva or De Beauvoir, find the freedom of women only in total revolt. Women must begin by shedding the imposed chains that surround them, which have paralyzed them for a long time. The social, economic, moral or other differences between women and men at the level of perception can only be bridged with the effective participation of women in the world of work, traditionally monopolized by men. Once the woman secures her own space in this patriarchal world, the dependency system collapses. In Arab societies, in particular, a habitual perceived privilege is implanted in the heads of boys from childhood, which is defined by the little boy's sexual organs. Man's existence is in a total entity, his mind and body are in great harmony. Its place in society, and its social successes, strengthen its entity. On the other hand, the woman, not having an existence in herself, is in pieces; her soul, her body, her feelings and her spirit are determined for her, and yet attributed to her as a limitation, without reciprocity.

Her mind and feelings are reduced to nothing, her body is under male domination, and her boundaries are determined by men. Nothing depends on the woman in this so-called feminine world. The existence of a woman deprived of basic existential elements such as expressing herself, and thinking, is not immanent, but external. She is transformed into a robotic mechanism by the male perspective. The Algerian woman in this context is just the one who cares for children, takes care of meals or housework and satisfies man's desires. This type of existence is imposed upon her. Man is man, that is to say, human, but woman is secondary, a prisoner of the male world, one whose salvation is only possible through her revolt. For many years, the woman who has remained second, second throughout her life and is seen as the wife or daughter of a man, is given to certain men by other men. All possible definitions for women are dependent upon men. All possible meaning is given to her by a man. Thus, does she, the woman, gain a metaphorical necessity? In the Eastern world, a woman is almost an object, she has no choice, especially the choice to choose her husband. So, the passivity of the woman is proved by the fact that she is (passively) married to a man while the man himself (actively) takes a wife.

Algerian women adapt without difficulty to the world of masculine values. Fanon expresses this family structure of Algeria by saying:

“La jeune fille, dans l’ensemble, n’a pas l’occasion de développer sa personnalité ni de prendre des initiatives. Elle prend place dans le vaste réseau de traditions domestiques de la société algérienne. La vie de la femme au foyer, faite de gestes séculaires, ne permet aucun renouvellement. L’analphabétisme, la misère, le statut de peuple opprimé entretiennent et renforcent jusqu’à les dénaturer les spécificités de l’univers colonisé.”⁹

“Overall, the young girl does not have the opportunity to develop her personality or take initiative. She takes her place within the vast network of domestic traditions in Algerian society. The life of a housewife, shaped by age-old gestures, allows for no renewal. Illiteracy, poverty, and the status of an oppressed people maintain and reinforce, to the point of distorting, the specificities of the colonized world.”¹⁰

A Sister to Scheherazade is a declaration, with a cry, of a manifestation of women who are forced to be silent in the shadow of traditions and customs, in the shadow of her society, her family, her husband and in the shadow of her clothes. These women do not have the right to trace their lives, to choose what they want or to express themselves.

Djebar expresses her contempt for the suffering of Algerian women by creating Isma, with whom she shares very similar characteristics. Reading the novel, one notices that Isma, the narrator of the story, has similar features to those of Djebar. Indeed, like her, Isma seeks to distinguish herself and to free herself in her society, a society where women have little chance of asserting themselves. Our writer has always chosen the path of modernity and change. She is opposed to the customs of her native country, and this is the same path that Isma chose in this novel, she has some striking insights in which she externalizes herself furiously:

“Isma, the impossible rival, haphazardly wearing a story to free the concubine, haunts for the ashes of a past that has gone up in smoke. Is this woman who is speaking, whose dreams have been burnt up by memory, really me, or some ghost within me, who steals in, sandals in hand, and mouth gagged? To weaken her sister to what disillusionment.....”¹¹

The reader can understand the attitude of the Algerian woman embodied by the two opposing women. Often the misfortune of women begins in childhood; both are now tormented

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *L’An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2011, p. 91.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *L’An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2011, p. 91.

¹¹ Djebar, Assia. *A Sister to Scheherazade*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987, p. 139.

and tortured. Our writer evokes unhappy memories of our two main characters. Isma speaking of a painful childhood after her mother died from tuberculosis:

“My mother succumbed to tuberculosis. After her death, our trips to the zaouïa took on the nature of a pilgrimage. My father grave-faced, accompanied by our band of city-women: we travelled in two barouches which we hired in the town, and when we reached the end of the ‘Roman road’, we proceeded on foot, with the exception of my grandmother she was visiting her rival, with whom she was reconciled when their husband died - who arranged for a horse to meet her. She rode in front of us, bolt upright, prouder than ever when one of the tenant-farmers turned up to walk beside her, holding the leading-rein. And so, we all climbed up to the zaouïa which we reached before the extreme heat of midday.”¹²

Isma was raised by her aunt and talks about the difficulty of being a girl in this kind of society:

“I was only six I discovered that in this rural society, at least among those who think themselves the elite, the taboo falls on every female child of this age. It is true that in our city; whose population had been increased in the sixteenth century by Andalusian refugees, girls were confined to the harem when they reached puberty, but that was not till they were eleven, twelve, or sometimes thirteen. Immeasurable progress! ... or possibly loving.”¹³

This little girl has grown up and has become a teenager who cannot accept her situation as a girl stuck in the harem with other women but rather, she strives for freedom:

“When I was a teenager, I was always reminding myself that my father had delivered me from the harem. In later years, I stayed away. roaming the world, as long as possible. Every day, in every street of every town in which I might happen to be. Ever walking and ever in love. The sun would look down on me. As I roved, with an insatiable appetite for the wind, new prospects and fresh skies, I forgot the times of meals, an important appointment, some humdrum sedentary task. The intense light made me inveterately absent-minded.”¹⁴

4.2.2. Marriage

Financial constraints and the inability to provide enough money for women are the main reasons why women needed to get married. For women who could not earn any income and could not benefit from inheritance rights, marriage was the safest alternative.

¹² Djebbar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 106.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.134.

4.2.2.1. Marriage in *Emma*:

The issues of women and marriage in Jane Austen's time are reflected in her novels in all their aspects. In 18th and 19th century England, laws, traditions customs, and material constraints forced women to view marriage as salvation and the only possible course.

Intelligent women in Jane Austen's novels fall in love with rich, well-made, and rational men. Examples include Elizabeth and Jane Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, and the love of Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* for Edward and Emma, who finally sees the truth and responds to Mr. Knightley's love.

In her novels, families are in a hurry to marry their daughters. The rush to marriage in the novels reveals the female situation in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* aptly illustrates this: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife". (*Pride and Prejudice* 7)

Actually, what Jane Austen implies in this sentence is that "a girl needs a rich husband".

Highbury society is a hotbed of gossip because gossip is usually related to the subject that mostly interests everyone – marriage. For many members of that society, marriage was a sort of market in which the best match was to be sought in order to preserve or improve social status. That is what Mr. Elton tries to do through his proposal to Emma. Emma is deeply offended by his boldness, not only because her plans for Harriet are thwarted, but because the social disparity between Mr. Elton and herself makes it unthinkable (for her, at least) to consider such a marriage alliance. In *Emma*, female dependency is associated with poverty, as illustrated by the cases of Harriet Smith, Miss. Bates and Jane Fairfax. In the case of Harriet Smith, illegitimate daughters were extremely vulnerable women, as they did not even have any legal existence.

Austen seeks equality as much as she wants money and love in marriages. Equality, here, mostly means an equal level of intelligence, matching points of view, and comparable intellectual identities between husband and wife. In this respect, Darcy and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*

are equal. Both characters are actually quite proud, intelligent and cultured. Austen believes that only a marriage of this kind will bring happiness. The subject of the novel is set up as if to emphasize the necessity of equality.

Yet, in the same novel, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are not equal. Mrs. Bennet is a woman with a shallow mind and a low level of understanding. This situation causes Mr. Bennet to ridicule his wife at every opportunity. Therefore, theirs is not a happy marriage. Jane Austen, who expresses the view of society on women and marriage in 18th and 19th century England in her novels, actually reflects society's perspective on old and single women when she introduces Mrs Bates, who once was the wife of a clergyman, and as such enjoyed a more comfortable situation in former times. She is now a widow with very little income living with her single daughter, Miss Bates, in a small apartment with a single maid who does all the housework. In spite of the lack of money and of being unable to entertain guests, they still have "connections", and they maintain relations with the best families of Highbury, thanks to their respectable past:

"Mrs. Bates, the widow of a former vicar of Highbury, was a very old lady, almost past everything but tea and quadrille. She lived with her single daughter in a very small way and was considered with all the regard and respect which a harmless old lady, under such untoward circumstances, can excite. Her daughter enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness. Her youth had passed without distinction, and her middle of life was devoted to the care of a failing mother, and the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible. And yet she was a happy woman, and a woman whom no one named without good-will."¹⁵

Jane Austen does not separate women from marriage because of the laws and social pressure of the period in which she lived; she knows that every woman sees only marriage. The pressure and behavioral restrictions that manifest themselves on women at a young age push women to the institution of marriage, which is also a kind of pressure, but which makes them comfortable in society. However, of course, to be married is also important for women. To marry a poor man means poverty for the rest of one's life; therefore, the importance of material existence

¹⁵ Jane Austen, **Emma**, p. 15. Kindle Edition.

in marriage is constantly emphasized in Austen's novels. In her definition of the characters, their material assets are always given importance.

Striving to somehow alleviate the pressure on women in the 18th and 19th centuries in her novels, Jane Austen makes some of her characters take control at least of their marriage decisions in her works. These include Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Emma, having no one to consult, has to make her important decisions alone.

The fact that Austen never married can be interpreted as a rebellion against the 18th and 19th century's social rules, not just in her novels but in her life, and this is the reason for her characterization as a feminist. Austen did not accept a destiny of marriage, which women of her time regarded as a necessary remedy for their condition. In all the novels Austen wrote, the main female characters are smart and beautiful. The feature that distinguishes *Emma* from other novels is that the main female character in the novel, Emma Woodhouse, is rich as well as being beautiful and smart. This feature stands out in the opening sentence of the novel.

"Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection."¹⁶

The issue of female dependency appears again, but now works from another perspective, in the statements that Emma makes to Harriet Smith when she states that she is never going to get married:

"I have none of the usual inducements to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune, I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want: I believe few married women are half as mistresses of their husband's house, as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1. Kindle Edition.

man's eyes as I am in my father's.”¹⁷

In the novel, Emma constantly states that she will not marry, trying to marry off all the single people she sees until finally she is left alone with her feelings and realizes that she loves Mr. Knightley.

Emma perceives, with great clarity, the limitations that marriage imposes on women and takes care to avoid any emotional commitment that might lead her to the altar, although she does not hesitate to plot romances for others. Emma is in a position where she is independently wealthy. She does not need a man to take care of her financially. She is almost on an equal level with men as far as money is concerned. Here she speaks her mind with the same authority as a man would do. Money, then, appears as a central element in the question of female dependence. Emma has money, and this is important because it will allow her to remain single with dignity, since “being single and rich, is always respectable”. The situation is radically different for Miss Bates, who suffers from the double misery of being unwed and poor.

Emma's words surprise us because we do not expect a character who defends the established social order to discuss such topics of contemporary feminist discourse. Mrs. Elton's character offers an interesting counterpoint to Emma. From Mrs. Elton's mouth, we hear a disconcerting “feminist” speech because whenever she states something that supports women's rights, she immediately compliments the submission of a married woman. Thus, on the one hand, she praises the circumspect and silent Jane Fairfax by saying: “I am a great advocate for timidity” and at other times she says to Emma: “a vast deal may be done by those who dare to act. You and I need not to be afraid. If we set the example, many will follow it as far as they can” (*Emma* 184)

When Mr. Weston criticized Mrs. Churchill's whims, Mrs. Elton comes out in her defense and warns Mr. Weston that “I always take the part of my own sex ... I always stand up for Women ...” (Austen 200) and then she proceeds to defend a triviality like convenience of using their own sheets whenever one is forced to travel and stay in a hostel on the way. However, not all of Mrs. Elton's speech is incoherent. When Mr. Weston states that he showed Frank's letter to his wife, Mrs. Elton is horrified:

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55. Kindle Edition.

“...oh! Mr. Weston – I must protest against that. A most dangerous precedent indeed! I beg you will not let your neighbours follow your example. Upon my word, if this is what I am to expect, we married women must begin to exert ourselves! Oh! Mr. Weston, I could not have believed it of you!”¹⁸

Mrs. Elton’s words show that she understands that women have an uphill struggle to exercise some power in a patriarchal society, and the idea of joining forces with other women to form some kind of community, is a form of struggle. Mrs. Elton exasperates us every time she refers to her husband by calling him “Mr. E.”, or when she again and again boasts while walking in the Barouche-Landau when they visit Highbury.

The contrast between Emma and Mrs. Elton highlights how the conservative model (represented by Emma) can actually work well. Mrs. Elton often misuses her power. An example of this is when she begins to look for a job for Jane Fairfax, although Jane asks her repeatedly not to do so. With this behavior, she walks over to the girl and ignores her wishes. Instead, Emma is a happy example of how a woman with power can govern properly. Austen wrote at a time in the history of England in which all social criticism, particularly addressed to the family institution in general or to the position of the woman in particular, was associated with a radical cause. She always kept away from the polarized positions that originated with the polemics of the 1790s.

Although Emma’s character defends the traditional order, we can also see that she questions contemporary ideas about marriage. When Mr. Knightley and Emma argue about Harriet, when she rejects Mr. Martin’s marriage proposal, Emma is very rational and balanced in her defense of her views. When posing the problem of Harriet’s illegitimacy, she replies in the face of Mr. Knightley’s indignation, that “he always imagines a woman to be ready for anybody who asks her. She is not to pay for the offense of others” (Austen 39) and then notes that a seventeen-year-old girl does not have to accept the first marriage offer she receives, but Mr. Knightley concludes with very keen observations about the choices that men make when he asserts that:

“Harriet’s claims are not so contemptible as you represent them. She is not a clever girl, but she has better sense than you are aware of ... waving that point, however, and supposing her only pretty and good-natured, let me tell you that in the degree she possesses them, they are not trivial recommendations to the world in general, for she is in fact, a beautiful girl ... and till it appears that men are much more

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199. Kindle Edition.

philosophic on the subject of beauty than they are generally supposed; till they do fall in love with well-informed minds instead of handsome faces, a girl, with such loveliness as Harriet, has a certainty of being admired and sought after... Her good-nature, too, is not so very slight a claim ... I am very much mistaken if your sex in general would not think such beauty, and such temper, the highest claims a woman could possess.”¹⁹

Emma consistently overturns all the contemporary stereotypes relating to women and marriage that come from Mr. Knightley, although we know that Emma has made a mistake by manipulating Harriet’s life.

While the novel begins with a powerful, self-confident female character, who proclaims her indifference to marriage, and who is very much the mistress of Hartfield, due to her father’s feebleness, the novel does not end up enthroning female control. The novel ends with the wedding scene of Emma and Mr. Knightley and their “perfect happiness.” Does Austen really expect us to accept the triumph of the patriarchal model? Can we imagine Emma as submissive as her sister Isabella? Is it reasonable to expect Mr. Knightley to give up his habits of teaching Emma? Since the relationship between them arises from conflict, it is not expected that this will happen immediately.

Even so, the female characters in *Emma* have an unusual power. This can be seen through Mr. Knightley’s extraordinary decision to live in Hartfield as long as Mr. Woodhouse lives, although Donwell Abbey is a more important residence, and very few men of such class distinction would renounce living in their own mansion. This points to a gesture that allows us to think of a possible new order of things. With his decision, Mr. Knightley, the character who guarantees the conservative order, and puts Emma “in its place,” unexpectedly yields a considerable portion of his power. By moving to Hartfield, he will live in the house of Emma, therefore, implicitly, he is accepting, to some extent, the governance of his wife.

In contrast to other marriages, Emma and Mr. Knightley’s pairing contains the possibility of becoming a balance of opposing but equal forces in which differences can be negotiated. This leads us to the feminist discourse, which proposes that men and women have the same moral nature, and therefore, should have the same rights and obligations.

4.2.2.2.Marriage in *A Sister to Scheherazade*:

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 40. Kindle Edition.

In Arab society, the woman is always secondary to the man, the wife to her husband, the sister to her brother or the daughter to her father. The same idea of superiority is evident in the Algerian family between daughter and son. An Algerian family welcomes the arrival of a boy into the world with more joy than a girl. While boys enjoy many privileges in the family, girls do not have the right to take initiative or develop their personality. The young girl, first in the family into which she was born, then in the family of the man to whom she is married, leads a life filled with Arab traditions.

The first knowledge a young girl learns from her mother is the incomparably greater value of the boy in the family than of the girl. In an underdeveloped society such as Algeria, the woman is always the minor of the man, she must always have a guardian, brother, uncle, husband, son, etc. Unlike what is known and customary in Europe, the life of an Algerian woman does not develop in three stages: childhood, adolescence and female maturity. We only recognize two phases: childhood and marriage. The young girl, even the little girl, is married at a rather early age because her adolescence is ignored in Algerian society. In such a family, once the little girl's childhood is replaced by puberty, an implicit agreement between the father, the brothers as well as the daughters comes to light which ensures that they never come face to face with the girl.

“Cette nécessité, dans laquelle se trouve le père de ne pas côtoyer la nouvelle femme qui se trouve au foyer, amène l’entourage à envisager le mariage de la jeune fille.”²⁰

“This necessity, in which the father finds himself unable to associate with the new woman in the household, leads those around him to consider the marriage of the young girl.”²¹

This imposition of early marriage is nothing but the worry of having a pubescent daughter, a child-wife with no social status in the house. Let us not forget that the social status of women depends only on their marriage. An Algerian woman is either married or not; this is what defines her social status.

²⁰ Simon de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Paris, Gallimard, 1949, p. 92.

²¹ Simon de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, trans. Paul Assaker, Paris, Gallimard, 1949, p. 13.

Like all the Algerian people under colonial rule, this poor veiled girl is imprisoned under her veil, motionless. She is forced to be ashamed of her body. She has no capacity to know herself, to understand herself. She is ashamed of her femininity. Even a glance at her father or brother is forbidden to her. From her marriageable age, she is reduced to nothing. All the men in her house, father and brother, no longer see her, rather they don't want to see her, since it is against tradition. "If you are not born a woman: you become one."²² This iconic quote from Simone de Beauvoir perhaps sums up the condition of women with brevity and universality. She also quotes, in her monumental work, *The Second Sex*, Aristotle: "The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities. We must view the character of women as suffering from a natural defect. The fact that woman is considered secondary to man, even as an imperfect man, a being who exists only fortuitously, is a catastrophic perception in the history of human thought". Simone de Beauvoir also gives a most powerful example:

"Le rapport des deux sexes n'est pas celui de deux électricités, de deux pôles: l'homme représente à la fois le positif et le neutre au point qu'on dit en français 'les hommes' pour désigner les êtres humains, le sens singulier du mot 'vir' s'étant assimilé au sens général du mot 'homo'. La femme apparaît comme le négatif si bien que toute détermination lui est imputée comme limitation, sans réciprocité."²³

"The relationship between the two sexes is not like that of two electric charges, two poles: man represents both the positive and the neutral, to the point that in French, 'les hommes' is used to designate human beings, with the singular meaning of 'vir' having been assimilated into the general meaning of 'homo.' The woman appears as the negative, such that any determination is attributed to her as a limitation, without reciprocity."²⁴

From this excerpt, it is possible for us to divine that for centuries, no matter in which country or time period, there has been a point of view which favors ignorance of the subjectivity of women.

The natural tendency of men is towards action. He is an external being: man is a warrior, a winner. But traditional marriage does not allow the transcendence of the woman; on the contrary, it buries her in an immanence. The woman is imprisoned in the family community. Masculinity does not grant women any other possible form of existence besides being the daughter, the wife,

²² de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, p. 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁴ de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, p. 20.

or the mother of a man. The only social confirmation of the woman therefore relates to the management of the home. In short, the woman has no space except in her family home to exist in society. However, neither the maintenance of the house nor the care of the children and the husband, allows the women to be independent. This type of work does little to contribute directly to society since it does not include any production. The process of women's transcendence can only take place when they are directly involved in production and action so that they gain meaning and respect in society. However, the domestic action of the wife does not tend to stray from dependence on the husband and the children. The greatest misfortune of women comes from the lack of a sense of existence in oneself, it is never defined by her body, nor by her feelings. Most of the time she is just a wife. In this way, a woman whose bonds are torn from society is expelled from social life, from everyday life. She therefore leads a life outside reality. The last link in the chain of inevitable bodily destiny of women is to become a mother. Being a mother is a woman's main and natural task for the maintenance of the human species.

A Sister to Scheherazade highlights two women who are completely opposed in terms of social status, from two different backgrounds but united by the same fate. The novel exposes the experience of the two main characters: Isma, the first wife, the modern woman who left her home and chose divorce in order to free herself, and Hajila, the second wife, the traditional slum woman who has found herself married to a man chosen by her family, the decent husband who will lift her out of her poverty, without any right to say yes or no.

If we try to describe the novel in general terms, we could say that it is about polygamy. This is understood as the right given by law to men in some Muslim countries to have several wives. In the novel, Djébar also addresses other issues to do with the situation of Arab women, such as marriage, the right to express themselves within the couple's relationship and the obligation to wear the veil. From this novel, you can see what happens when the second wife becomes part of the life of the first. The word used in Arabic to designate the second wife is *Derra*. *Derra* has traditionally had the meaning of 'co-wife' or 'second wife', but as Djébar herself notes, it has an active meaning: the one that hurts, and the passive one: the one who is hurt. *A Sister to Scheherazade* shows the relationship between Isma and Hajila and how the first wife - Isma - becomes the liberator of the second - Hajila. Isma is the first-person voice, 'I', who narrates the novel. Isma is divorced from one who, in the novel, is named only as 'him' or 'the man'; she is in

charge of finding a wife for her ex-husband. This new wife will take care of the daughter they both had when they were married. Isma realizes the suffering of the new wife and wants to help her. She intends to free Hajila so that she can get out of the confinement to which her husband has subjected her and advises him to seek help if he wants to abort the child he is waiting for, after the violation of which she was the object. Isma, in her purpose of freeing Hajila, assumes the same objective that Scheherazade set herself in *The Thousand and One Nights*, that of trying to free the young women of her city from the death sentence that the caliph had imposed on wives, after spending the first night with them.

A Sister to Scheherazade has its roots in *The Thousand and One Nights*. In this novel, there is a game of doubles that consists of a binary splitting of the two female characters: Scheherazade-Isma, the one who has the strength and narrates the novel and Hajila-Dinazarda the one who is waiting under the bed to wake her sister one hour before dawn. Hajila likes to wander the streets aimlessly and without wearing the traditional veil worn by Algerian women. The husband does not know what she is doing until she confesses. The important thing for Hajila is to wander the streets of the city, take off her veil and feel free, but when she takes off the veil, it is as if she were naked and, in this way, she can be the object of the gaze and perhaps the desire of other men. The husband, jealous upon learning of Hajila's wandering, not only beats her but also leaves her locked in the apartment where they live. Isma, the liberating Scheherazade, intervenes and gives her the key to run out of the confinement

Isma married at the age of 20, her husband and she lived in Paris, and she had a daughter. She was really happy. She loved her husband and she experienced marital happiness but unfortunately, this happiness did not last, and the couple were divorced:

"I remember, oh yes I remember so many years, a whole lifetime in a twinkling of an eye! I walk on. I remember the passing of many days, one day succeeding another, some falling, some taking wing, without music, music sparkles in our eyes; our hands reach out to each other and the couple embrace. A lifetime in the twinkling of an eye. Dazzled, I spread this life out before me, it, already I destroying it, darkening its dawns, filtering its lazy afternoons, extinguishing its sunshine, faint or dazzling- what matter! I choose only to awaken the nights: From the crest of the twenty years of age to the valley of my thirty, through the narrow gorge of the forty, who can tell on what sky the corridor will open out? I no longer have a face or possess a veil "Isma," I scatter my name, all names in a dust of snuffed-out stars."²⁵

²⁵ Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 12.

She was immensely sad because she did not achieve anything during this time. She thought she was still married. She did not work. She did not make any money and she did not have time for herself:

“I explained that I had to work, teach, and especially have time for myself! Yes, I had given up – but not “abandoned” – my daughter; her father was returning home and wanted to remarry, he’d put forward his proposition: “A woman who’ll look after the house and the children, that’s all I want”²⁶

This marriage proposal is a lot like a business agreement in which the bride is just a reciprocal thing. In return, Hajila’s husband offers the family financial aid and promises to help them find their own home. Soon after marriage, Hajila discovers that her husband is a drunkard. He treats her like a servant while being completely indifferent to her. The practice of their love is described as rape. Djébar compares Hajila’s first sexual contact with her husband to a battle on a mattress in a tangled set of crumpled sheets. She abundantly uses words like “resistance,” “surrender,” and “sword thrust,” to describe their sexual act.

“You clench your teeth. Rape! Is this rape? People assert that he is your husband, your mother always refers to ‘your master, your lord’ ... He has forced you down on to the bed, you try to fight him off, finding unsuspected sources of strength.”²⁷

As a married woman, Hajila becomes a prisoner, a “doll kept in luxury” in a spacious apartment. Her monotonous existence makes her envy men, who can all go out in the sunlight. In the novel, it is the segregation of spaces that Djébar examines: public space, where men can move without restrictions and domestic space, a space that women cannot leave without permission.

“You who can all go forth into the sunshine! Every morning, you splash water over your face, neck and arms. These are not the ablutions preparatory to prostrating yourself in prayer; no, they are a preparation for the act of leaving the house. Oh, to be able to leave the house! Once you have put on your suits, knotted your ties, you can cross the threshold, every threshold. The street awaits you ... You can present yourself to the world, you fortunate males! Every morning of every day, you can convey your bodies into the dazzling light, every day that Allah creates! ...”²⁸

After months of loneliness and restraint, Hajila decides to go out whenever possible without her husband’s approval or even knowledge.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Hajila sees the monotony. She fills her void with escapes when the husband is at work. During her secret outings, she observes free women in the streets, her gaze falls on unveiled women. These repeated scenes will trigger in her the desire to free herself and do the same.

Women marginalized in the presence of their men: her escapes represent for her a way of creating a story, all her own, a story that she can remember and tell herself in order to give herself value and self-confidence.

She sneaks out of her apartment in a veil and explores the city on her own. At first, she is uncomfortable and afraid of being exposed to the outside world but over time, her desire for freedom overcomes her fears. Later, she even takes off her veil. When her husband finds out that she is out of the house, he hits her and tries to blind her with a broken beer bottle. Her husband thinks he owns her because he paid for her at the time of marriage and helped her family financially. Like him, her mother Touma thinks he owns her daughter, which is why she always refers to him as Hajila's lord or her master, not as her husband. She expects her daughter to remain submissive at home, obligated to her husband and becomes angry when she finds out her secret.

"Hajila, my daughter, you will bring misfortune on us all! On all your lineage, daughter of my withered loins, born of my cries of pain! We, poor lost sheep, who thought we were all fingers of one hand! ... O, Sidi Abderahmane, ancestor of the ancestors of my dear departed mother, who is now happy in paradise!"²⁹

Hajila is subjected to torture and ill-treatment for leaving her home without her husband's permission.

"He strikes you across the face. You make no move to avoid the blow. He takes an empty bottle, breaks it on the edge of the sink and mutters, listening to his own eloquence, I'll put out your eyes and then you'll never see again! And no one will ever see you either! 'When he raises the broken bottle, you protect your eyes while calling on the Prophet; the blow catches you on the arm and the man stands, his hand poised, staring at the blood that spurts from the gash ... It is your turn to gaze at him wide-eyed ... You have fallen back on the floor between the open door and the refrigerator. You hear him muttering now, far above you, at an enormous altitude, like a storm breaking on distant mountain peaks.'"³⁰

Hajila, a revolutionary being, filled with anger, incomprehension and revolt, tired of the silence, of her life and of the mistreatment of man. The old Hajila has disappeared, she has given

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

way to a new, free and independent woman. However, later, during the “marital rape” process, she first breaks her silence and tried to fight, although it is ineffective. After her marriage is ‘consummated’, a new woman appears, heard and challenged. Her painful physical encounter with her husband enables her in a way that gives her voice, and the strength to protest. She remembers her mother Touma, who herself suffered from child marriage and subversion by her mother-in-law. Hajila begins finding her way to freedom. She starts to confront the man, and even to resist his advances, demanding her right to go to a public Turkish bath.

“The father was buried far away, in his native village; neither of the girls went to the funeral. Only Touma and little Nasser. ‘Mother, married at the age of twelve!’ you repeat to yourself this morning as you prepare the breakfast, tight-lipped. ‘Still a child! Every child’s blood! Am I like her this morning, although I am twenty-four? I shall never know; she will never tell ... ‘The village women would have brandished the pathetic bridal nightgown, the match-maker would have danced with the blooded cloth, her mouth gaping wide to reveal the gleam of her gold teeth! After the father’s death, Touma had had to sell her jewellery ... When you’ve given the children their breakfast, Hajila, you go to bathe again. You lock the bathroom door. The steam from the hot water mists over the pink tiled walls. The man tries the lock. He bangs unceremoniously on the door. You open it and stand rigidly facing him. “I’ve a right to the Turkish baths!” you declare “I shall go to the Turkish baths!” I shall go to the local Turkish baths!” you repeat louder, as you let him in. I’ll fetch your mother tomorrow; she can accompany you!’”³¹

Hajila’s crossing the threshold of her apartment is her first attempt to recover her body, to replace her husband as her owner. This is followed by another symbolic act – revealing her body and studying it in the mirror, then demanding the Turkish bath, which also bears symbolism as the only space for women where they can reveal their body and their feelings. It is a place of freedom where Isma and Hajila first meet and talk to each other, and it is where they launch their plan to free Hajila:

“Hammam, refuge where time stands still. The very concept of enclosure and thus of imprisonment, dissolves or disintegrates. Seated between two doors, between two extremes of temperature, my skin exposed by turns to the sting of icy water and scalding steam, suddenly I was aware of nothing but voices finding relief in sighs, purified of the triteness and dissonance of words. I let the sounds alone pervade me, sounds which also seemed to be washed clean. The murmur of water constantly flowing, the flickering forms and fluctuating noises around me brought on an incipient lethargy- or rather, Hammam, the only temporary reprieve from the harem ... The Turkish bath offers a secret consolation to sequestered woman (such as organ music offered in former times to forced religious recluses).”³²

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Being out of her home is not only a rebellion against the restrictions of patriarchy but also a struggle for identity and self-discovery. It is her attempt to get out of a marginalized space into a free space. Her struggle to regain ownership of her body culminates when, after obtaining duplicate apartment keys from Isma in the Turkish bath, Hajila exits again and aborts her fetus by throwing herself under a car. She survives the accident but loses her child, which is portrayed as a symbol of coercive marital responsibilities, domestic obligations and her husband's dominance. Terminating her pregnancy is her final attempt to free herself from the bondage of parental and social norms.

"From that day you accept the fact that you are pregnant; you carry a future within you; for whom? For the drunkard who vomits every night at the end of the passage. For yourself? You couldn't care less; you have resumed your escapes. Since the fridge has been stocked up with beer, you can sleep; you no longer need to annihilate the misery you felt in the beginning, and the numbness that ensued. Alone, on your mattress, you spend your nights undisturbed. It is daybreak. You rapidly perform all your domestic duties. In the afternoon, once you are out of the house, you discover new faces."³³

Towards the end, our two heroines reunite, and Hajila comes out into the light as Isma sinks into darkness. They are like the moon and the sun, like day and night; one cannot exist without the other. They are two sides of the same coin, both ruptures of the harem, but at its extreme poles; one is in the now exposed sun, and the other sinks into the resurgent night.

"The second wife stands on the threshold, devouring the space: I now the first one can put on the veil, or go into hiding. The man, searching for the same wounds, gesticulates in the darkness as the day ends. The shore of morning is still. At the end of the long night, the odalisque is in flight."³⁴

Isma's role lies in retrieving Hajila's history, and revealing to the reader Hajila's gradual transformation from a naïve young woman to a more independent person who has the strength to take control of her life in the future:

"... I can tell at first glance, where the woman is going from shadow to sunshine, from silence to speech, from night to truth stripped bare. The first step reveals both the silhouette and the hope"³⁵

Much of the restoration of Hajila's story takes place through Isma's spying gaze:

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

“I followed you quite openly I feel I’m not only walking for walking’s sake, but as a spectator ...”³⁶

Hajila, trapped between her role and responsibilities as a submissive wife and her craving for freedom, is on the verge of rebelling against her restrictions. Her story is told by Isma, who arranged the marriage for her and made her walk the same path, climb the same cliff and experience the same feelings as if the author wants to say that marriage is the same experience for all female characters and will not change even if time changes.

4.2.3. Manipulation

Jane Austen and Assia Djebbar introduce to readers a new type of relationship between heroine women and other characters in their novels. A new interaction is taking place in order to control others to achieve their desired outcome. Using observation, penetration, planning and other types of manipulation, they reach their goals successfully. We will study this kind of relationship in more detail depending on the game theory concept and strategic thinking concept. To understand manipulation, we need to address the term strategic thinking because strategic thinking is the umbrella term that shadows manipulation, penetration, perspective taking, eye reading, planning and getting to know how others think strategically and it largely depends on the situation and to know how others will act before taking an action. Strategic thinking is the central concept of game theory which considers interactions among two or more people and is built upon rational choice theory, which looks at the choice of a single individual.³⁷ The most advanced skill of strategic thinking is manipulation which means planning and creating situations in which you make people act as you want them to act and provide choices that you know they will choose in order to get the desired outcome that you worked for without realizing that they have been controlled.

Game theory is basically a method of mathematical games, but recently has been used in a wide range of topics including Literature. If one considers literary texts as a series of decisions in which each character’s decision or choice is dependent on the choices and preferences of others,

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 156-157.

³⁷ Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Jane Austen, Game Theorist*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, Kindle Edition, 2013, p. 11.

it looks like a game, according to game-theory definition. Therefore irrational decisions or choices are rational in the context of a game.

Michael Chwe, associate professor of political science at the University of California, came out of a movie session eight years ago. He had seen the film *Clueless*, released in 1995, and based on the novel *Emma*, by Jane Austen. An adaptation that inspired him to write a book, *Jane Austen, Game Theorist*, in which he develops the strategic intelligence of Austen's characters. He states:

“Austen makes five particular advances in game theory. First, Austen examines how two people form an intimate relationship by strategically acting in concert to manipulate a third. Second, she looks at how the relationship between a person's multiple selves can be more complex than a simple chain of command. Third, Austen considers how a person's preferences change, for example, when an alternative takes on a new social connotation. Fourth, Austen argues that true constancy is not the same as individual obstinacy but rather requires active faith and strategic thinking in cooperation.”³⁸

according to Chwe, Jane Austen was the first female writer who used game theory before even inventing the term and the key component is manipulation which is to come up with effective plans that involve creativity and ingenuity and are not so easy to teach. The best way seems to be the case study method, discussing those manipulations that are particularly unexpected and brilliant.

Assia Djébar in *A Sister to Scheherazade* also creates interactions between characters who make decisions to reach the desired outcome by using strategic thinking and manipulating other characters to free themselves as Isma the heroine of the novel did by manipulating Hajila who replaced her as a wife, or even to escape situations such as death as Scheherazade manipulated the Sultan so he postponed her death every night:

“According to the myth, Sheherazade, the storyteller of the Arabian Nights, requires the complicity of her sister, Dinarzade, who is hidden under the bed in the master's chamber. As each day dawns, Dinarzade succeeds in awakening her sister, so she can continue inventing tales, a means of entertaining the Sultan in order to spare her life. It is the Sultan's discovery of his wife's infidelity which motivates the Sultan to systematically kill a virgin every morning after he sleeps with her the night before. This extraordinary bond between the two sisters is directly inserted into the novel in the relationship between Isma, the first wife who has left her husband, and Hajila, the co-wife, who is her replacement.”³⁹

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

³⁹ Nancy Arenberg, “Mobile Bodies and Kindred Sisters in Djébar's ‘Ombre Sultane’,” *The French Review*, Volume 82, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 353–65. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25481551>. Accessed 8 July 2023.

However, in another version of *The Arabian Nights*, Dinarzade was the real heroine who was secretly hiding under the royal bed all night, so she could wake up Scheherazade at dawn. Scheherazade's narration of her unfinished story over a thousand-and-one nights meant that Dinarzade had to stay under the bed and repeat her job at the risk of her own life. In the light of this, the following quotation by Mildred Mortimer is particularly relevant:

"Djebar reminds her readers that Sheherazade, storyteller of the *Arabian Nights*, needs the complicity of her sister Dinarzade, the voice under the bed announcing each dawn, to succeed in telling tales so inventive that the sultan spares her life. The novelist reconfigures the legendary complicity between sisters in the relationship between Isma, the autobiographical self, and Hajila, the fictional self."⁴⁰

In this relationship between the two characters Isma and Hajila, Djebar introduces a postcolonial perspective upon the Algerian woman's new feminism. A kind of feminism that puts the Algerian woman (Hajila) in solidarity with her traditional or westernized sister.

4.2.3.1. Women's Manipulation in *Emma*:

In *Emma*, Austen first shows the reader the flaws arising from Emma's own personality and then corrects them by raising Emma's mind.

"The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her."⁴¹

Emma constantly observes and tends to manipulate people around her in the novel. However, she is aware that she is also being observed. All these observations have the aim of bringing herself to the forefront. Emma considers herself successful in her interest in manipulating the lives of the people around her by setting roles for Harriet and others. She is aware that others are watching her with the same consistency as she watches them.

One of the characters, Mrs. Elton, is a woman who embodies the temperaments Jane Austen dislikes. Mrs. Elton is a wealthy, cocky, and ignorant woman who has married Mr. Elton, a priest.

⁴⁰ Mortimer Mildred, "Edward Said and Assia Djebar: A Contrapuntal Reading," **Research in African Literatures**, vol. 36, no: 3, 2005, pp. 5-67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821363>.

⁴¹ Austen, *Emma*, p. 1. Kindle Edition.

Emma does not like this woman, whom she got to know after a few tea invitations, and sees her as quite vulgar and unfit as a lady.

“Mrs. Elton was a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; that she meant to shine and be very superior, but with manners which had been formed in a bad school, pert and familiar; that all her notions were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living; that if not foolish she was ignorant, and that her society would certainly do Mr. Elton no good.”⁴²

Harriet Smith is a boarding student at the school where Miss Goddard is her principal. She is the illegitimate child of a rich man, although not much is known about her family.

“Harriet Smith was the natural daughter of somebody. Somebody had placed her, several years back, at Mrs. Goddard’s school, and somebody had lately raised her from the condition of scholar to that of parlour-boarder. This was all that was generally known of her history. She had no visible friends but what had been acquired at Highbury, and was now just returned from a long visit in the country to some young ladies who had been at school there with her.”⁴³

Being someone’s illegitimate child will put Harriet’s marital status in danger in the future. One of the reasons for the prominence of marital sexual relations in the 18th and 19th centuries was to eliminate the problem of illegitimate children since this state of affairs was not pleasant for both the woman and the child to be born.

“Harriet certainly was not clever, but she had a sweet, docile, grateful disposition, was totally free from conceit, and only desiring to be guided by any one she looked up to.”⁴⁴

The emotional relationship between Emma and Harriet is one of friendship, although it is a slightly peculiar one. Emma has chosen Harriet, interestingly, to fill the gap that Miss Taylor has left in her life after the latter’s marriage to Mr. Weston. She expects Harriet to be available to provide unconditional companionship on her daily walks because Emma does not like to walk alone. In return, he wants to do something nice for her, and that is to pair her up with a good suitor.

The social relationship between the two determines how events unfold. Emma Woodhouse belongs to the highest social class in the novel, with aristocratic origins and wealth of her own.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 255. Kindle Edition.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 17. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20. Kindle Edition.

Harriet Smith belongs to a much lower social class within the hierarchy; her origin is uncertain, she does not know who her parents are, and she has been raised and educated in a boarding school all her life.

This difference between the social classes they belong to distinctly marks the responses that Harriet gives to Emma's speech and the effects that this speech has on her. Harriet considers Emma her superior in every way and feels an eternal gratitude to her.

The place where the action is triggered is Emma Woodhouse's house, Hartfield. Here, Emma has power and wields it. The mere fact that Harriet is admitted to this house already generates an attitude of submission that will conflict with how she feels towards Robert Martin, and what her friend Emma Woodhouse, whom she calls Miss Woodhouse in deference to superiority, will proclaim with the farmer, Mr. Martin.

The motives that move Emma's character to achieve her goal are emotional because she wants to do something good for Harriet; in turn, they are also altruistic, because she is convinced that what she is pursuing is good for her, and therefore is just and worthy reasons from the point of view of the protagonist; at the same time there are secret motives – she cannot say them openly because they are part of what Emma has planned for her friend, and they are also fully conscious reasons.

What drives the character of Harriet, antagonist of the established situation is emotion, and a desire not to contradict Miss Woodhouse, for whose attentions she is eternally grateful. She denies what she feels towards Robert Martin and the fact that she does not want to lose him. The reasons are secret – she cannot reveal them to Miss Woodhouse, as she would be angry with her. They are partly conscious reasons and partly, given the little experience and the naivety of Harriet's character, unconscious. It is quite possible that this is the first time that Harriet has feelings of this type towards a man, and she does not even know very well how to define them.

To achieve the first part of her objective, the protagonist of the novel, Emma, develops an entire interrogation program in relation to Robert Martin. Harriet admits that he is not handsome, that at first, she thought his appearance was rather vulgar but now does not think so. Harriet asks Emma if she has ever seen him, and she tells her that she has seen him many times.

“That may be, and I may have seen him fifty times, but without having any idea of his name. A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is, therefore, in one sense, as much above my notice as in every other he is below it.”⁴⁵

Emma makes it very clear to her friend that she does not notice people of the farmer’s social class unless they are a notch or too even lower than Mr. Martin, and then only for the purpose of charity. Harriet, increasingly stunned, recognizes the great social difference between the farmer and the distinguished Miss Woodhouse, that from her lofty status, she does not notice him.

So far, Emma has managed to convey to Harriet that what she thinks of Robert Martin is that he is practically illiterate, because what he reads does not deserve comment, is vulgar and of low social class.

She keeps asking for more information about Mr. Martin. The next question is in relation to his age. Faced with Harriet’s reply that he is twenty-four, Emma considers him too young to marry. She states that he has to wait another six years, and then find a woman of his own social class, whom the protagonist presumes will have little money, where he will have reached the situation of being able to marry.

Social class difference is quite evident in *Emma*. For example, Emma believes that the farmer considered to be husband to her lovely Harriet is quite inferior. Emma lives with her father, Mr. Woodhouse. She lost her mother at a young age. Mrs. Taylor, who is a governess, was taking care of Emma until she married Mr. Weston. Emma takes advantage of this marriage. After that, she chooses Harriet Smith, whom she met at a tea party, as a student, and educates her in words. Her goal is to marry her to a priest, Mr. Elton. As she puts Mr. Elton into the head of Harriet Smith, she first manipulates Harriet, convinces her (without evidence) of being a noblewoman and turns her head away from Mr. Martin, the farmer who truly loves her. In doing so, she belittles Mr. Martin and praises Mr. Elton. She implies that all of Mr. Elton’s benign behavior was designed to

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23. Kindle Edition.

win Harriet herself. She does not find Mr. Martin noble or suitable; she considers herself quite superior, as she is at the summit of her class.

Emma's stubbornness and arrogance continue throughout the novel. Austen presents the stubbornness and arrogance inherent in Emma's creation to the reader as Emma's flaws. Because of these flaws, Emma makes three basic mistakes. The first of these is that she manipulates Harriet, whom she took under her protection, into thinking that she is the daughter of a gentleman, and therefore into setting her sights on Elton, whom she regards as a gentleman, as her husband. Emma manipulates Harriet, appointing herself as the unofficial guardian of her education. She feeds Harriet's self-opinion, and, perhaps, arrogance, by convincing her that she is a gentleman's daughter.

"There can be no doubt of your being a gentleman's daughter, and you must support your claim to that station by everything within your own power, or there will be plenty of people who would take pleasure in degrading you."⁴⁶

Harriet becomes increasingly influenced by the power of Emma's words, and this illustrates one of the key themes in all of Austen's work; the power of language to manipulate people's behavior. Certainly, Emma, through the power of her words, manages to transform Harriet's feelings towards the farmer, as well as making her aware of her social disadvantage, and the fact that she has to be grateful that a person from a much higher social ladder like Miss Woodhouse, who has the deference to go to such trouble for her. Some of these notions are implicit in her speech, communicated indirectly rather than being stated openly.

"Yes, to be sure, I suppose there are. But while I visit at Hartfield, and you are so kind to me, Miss Woodhouse, I am not afraid of what anybody can do."⁴⁷

Emma persists at this point because she sees Harriet's vulnerability to the situation of her uncertain and unknown origin.

"The misfortune of your birth ought to make you particularly careful as to your associates. There can be no doubt of your being a gentleman's daughter, and you

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Kindle Edition.

must support your claim to that station by everything within your own power, or there will be plenty of people who would take pleasure in degrading you.”⁴⁸

Emma points out that although Mr. Martin’s sisters have a higher education than that of Mr. Martin’s hypothetical and future wife, her relationship with them should not lead Harriet to develop a relationship with whoever ultimately becomes the farmer’s wife.

“You understand the force of influence pretty well, Harriet; but I would have you so firmly established in good society, as to be independent even of Hartfield and Miss Woodhouse. I want to see you permanently well connected, and to that end it will be advisable to have as few odd acquaintance as may be; and, therefore, I say that if you should still be in this country when Mr. Martin marries, I wish you may not be drawn in by your intimacy with the sisters, to be acquainted with the wife, who will probably be some mere farmer’s daughter, without education.”⁴⁹

In this way, the protagonist continues to take for granted the improbability of Harriet’s union with the farmer, since she is already assuming another possible relationship. In fact, the framework that Emma devises to achieve her goal is Machiavellian and distorted. She takes advantage of Harriet’s innocence; Harriet, who is in conflict with what she feels inside, replies, “To be sure, so it is,” agreeing with Emma, all the time.

After several such attacks, Harriet becomes seemingly more and more convinced of Emma’s own ideas as she states:

“To be sure. Yes. Not that I think Mr. Martin would ever marry anybody but what had had some education—and been very well brought up. However, I do not mean to set up my opinion against yours—and I am sure I shall not wish for the acquaintance of his wife. I shall always have a great regard for the Miss Martins, especially Elizabeth, and should be very sorry to give them up, for they are quite as well educated as me. But if he marries a very ignorant, vulgar woman, certainly I had better not visit her, if I can help it.”⁵⁰

Before these words from Harriet, Emma has seen the first part of her goal achieved; he thinks she has managed to get Robert Martin out of her friend’s head and heart.

Emma, watching her through the fluctuations of this speech, sees no alarming symptoms of love. The young man had been her first admirer, but she trusted there was no other hold, and

⁴⁸ **Ibid.**

⁴⁹ **Ibid.**

⁵⁰ **Ibid.**, pp. 24-25. Kindle Edition.

that there would be no serious difficulty from Harriet's side in opposing any arrangement of her own. However, despite the certainty that Emma believes she has achieved the first part of her goal, the incident that happens unexpectedly the next morning serves to secure it more.

The plot continues when Emma and Harriet accidentally run into Robert Martin while walking along Donwell Road. Emma is glad of this fact, for it gives her the opportunity to examine him more closely, and, with some alarm, she also recognizes the spirit that this unexpected encounter produces in Harriet, who wastes no time in asking Miss Woodhouse if she had really found it vulgar.

Faced with this, Emma once again pursues the first part of her objective, seeing so closely the direct effect that Mr. Martin still has on her friend, thus making her determined to strengthen Harriet's resolve not to marry the farmer, before moving on to the second part of her scheme.

"He is very plain, undoubtedly—remarkably plain:—but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility."⁵¹

Harriet continues, agreeing with Emma:

"To be sure," said Harriet, in a mortified voice, "he is not so genteel as real gentlemen."⁵²

The action continues, throughout which Emma continues to deploy a whole series of tricks to undermine the image of Mr. Martin, and also implements the second part of her objective, to get Harriet to take an interest in Mr. Elton, whom Harriet has been able to observe closely in Emma's home, Hartfield, to which he has access due to his friendship with the Woodhouses.

All the time indirectly communicating to Harriet how grateful she should be for this gracious condescension, Emma persists in the strategy of degrading Mr. Martin and unfavourably comparing him with real gentlemen, thus paving the way for Harriet to take more interest in the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26. Kindle Edition.

⁵² *Ibid.*

gentleman she has in mind for her, Mr. Elton. Finally, Emma nearing the final conclusion of her objective, introduces the subject of her choice, the vicar.

“I think a young man might be very safely recommended to take Mr. Elton as a model. Mr. Elton is good-humored, cheerful, obliging, and gentle. He seems to me to be grown particularly gentle of late. I do not know whether he has any design of ingratiating himself with either of us, Harriet, by additional softness, but it strikes me that his manners are softer than they used to be. If he means any thing, it must be to please you. Did not I tell you what he said of you the other day?”⁵³

Mr. Elton is the vicar of Highbury. His ambition drives him to improve his social situation through a good marriage. His attempts to woo Emma are misread by her, believing them to be aimed at Harriet. When this mistake is discovered, both Emma and Mr. Elton are paradoxically surprised by each other’s wishes. Mr. Elton considers Harriet far below his social class; Emma, in turn, considers Mr. Elton far below hers. Mr. Elton was the person Emma deemed fit to wipe the young farmer from Harriet’s head. It was so clearly desirable, natural, and possible that she could not even be proud of herself for planning it. Although it was certain that she planned it before anyone else, no one could compete with her on this issue. Harriet, significantly, has little or no say in these events.

Emma’s second mistake is flirting with Frank Churchill and making unnecessary disparaging comments about Jane Fairfax, even though he displays no interest in Jane. Frank Churchill, the biological son of Mr. Weston, and adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Churchill after the death of their mother, is the heir to the fortune of his adoptive parents, thus placing him in the highest stratum of the social classes presented in the novel. This male character will play a fundamental role in relation to Emma, who will be chosen by him as a means of diverting the attention of the rest of the characters from the secret relationship that he has with Jane Fairfax. Although the two are committed to one another from the outset, they have decided to keep their relationship secret for much of the novel.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28. Kindle Edition.

The reader, as well as the characters that surround them, are left to join up the dots, which the author leaves subtly outlined, but it is not until very late in the plot that the truth of what is happening is revealed to the other characters, and consequently, also to the reader.

We witness one of these details, loaded with meaning, at the dinner that the Woodhouses host in honor of the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Elton, in Hartfield; in which are present Mr. Knightley, his brother John, Mr. and Mrs. Weston, Jane Fairfax, Mr. Woodhouse and Emma.

John Knightley had seen Jane Fairfax in the morning when he was walking with his children, just as it was starting to rain. This incident provides an excuse to chat over dinner, and he asks if she got home before the rain became heavier, whereupon Jane explains that she went to the post office to pick up her mail since walking was good for her.

“I went only to the post-office,” said she, “and reached home before the rain was much. It is my daily errand. I always fetch the letters when I am here. It saves trouble and is a something to get me out. A walk before breakfast does me good.”
“Not a walk in the rain, I should imagine.”⁵⁴

John Knightley, not completely convinced of the explanations that Jane Fairfax has given him, and to start a conversation, replies that for everyone, the post office has had a special interest in some period of their lives, even on rainy days. He is not deceived regarding her countenance and her unfinished gesture.

“The post-office has a great charm at one period of our lives. When you have lived to my age, you will begin to think letters are never worth going through the rain for.”⁵⁵

This causes Jane Fairfax to blush. This blush that arises, caused by the inner world of the character, serves to communicate to us that the letters that Jane goes to get from the post office are emotionally important to her. The color on her cheeks is a sign that emerges from the deep river that flows within the character, and, like John Knightley and those present at dinner, the reader also witnesses this emotional reaction, strategically placed by Austen. John Knightley also tells Jane Fairfax that over time the interest we put into some things diminishes, and that surely in ten years she will also have few objects where she can put her attention, as that has happened to him.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 276. Kindle Edition.

Although he says this generously and with no intention of offending, Jane Fairfax's emotional demeanor once again reveals that something important is getting to her.

"I went only to the post-office," said she, "and reached home before the rain was much. It is my daily errand. I always fetch the letters when I am here. It saves trouble and is a something to get me out. A walk before breakfast does me good."⁵⁶

Austen, giving these details of Jane's reactions, is communicating to us that there is something in her inner world which, although it is secret to everyone around her at that moment, is intense enough to cause her to blush, bring a tremor to her lips and tears to her eyes.

"A pleasant "thank you" seemed meant to laugh it off, but a blush, a quivering lip, a tear in the eye, showed that it was felt beyond a laugh."⁵⁷

When it comes to Mrs. Elton's notice that Jane went to the post office to collect her letters while it was raining, she proposes that the person who collects her letters in the future be the same person who collects hers, her servant Patty. In this way, Mrs. Elton thinks she's saving Jane's bothering. The latter explicitly refuses to accept her offer.

"Excuse me," said Jane earnestly, "I cannot by any means consent to such an arrangement, so needlessly troublesome to your servant. If the errand were not a pleasure to me, it could be done, as it always is when I am not here, by my grandmama's."⁵⁸

It is precisely the seriousness with which Jane refuses the offer that tells us how important it is to her to collect her own correspondence. This seriousness puts the reader, as well as some of the characters around her, on alert.

The scene continues: the characters talk about the effectiveness of the mail as well as the different typefaces – but the main theme, Jane's insistence on picking up her own mail, does not go unnoticed by Emma, who wonders why Jane would have picked up the letter that morning, despite the rain, at the post office. She relates this to the happiness that Jane Fairfax seems to emanate.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 277. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 279. Kindle Edition.

“She thought there was an air of greater happiness than usual—a glow both of complexion and spirits.”⁵⁹

The happiness that Emma sees in Jane throughout the scene, as well as the blush, the tears and the seriousness, are again signs of that inner world that she carries, and the fact that it is loaded with meaning.

We will also look at examples of subtext in the behavior of Frank Churchill. One of them is seen at the beginning of the dance at the Crown Inn when inside the room, he is waiting for the next carriage to arrive – that of Mr. and Mrs. Elton, which will supposedly also transport Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax. His restless demeanor and his attention to the sounds he hears both communicate that he is expecting someone he cares about. “Frank was standing by her, but not steadily; there was restlessness, which showed a mind not at ease. He was looking about, he was going to the door, he was watching for the sound of other carriages.” In the following example, Mr. Knightley is placed by Jane Austen in the position of the reader of the novel. He has suspicions that there is ‘something’ between Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, after observing some signs of complicity between them. These signs will be enough to make him keep looking for clues in subsequent encounters. When he is again in their company, he cannot help but remember what he had seen; nor can he avoid observations which strengthen his suspicion of there being something of private liking, a private understanding, even, between Frank Churchill and Jane.

One day after dinner, Mr. Knightley joins Emma and Harriet on their walk, where they meet Mr. Weston, Mrs. Weston, and their son Frank Churchill, who is also out walking, and then Miss Bates and her niece, Jane Fairfax, doing the same. The entire entourage is invited by Emma to come to Hartfield for tea. It happens that at that moment they see Mr. Perry riding by. This causes Frank Churchill to ask Mrs. Weston if Mr. Perry has gone ahead with her plan to install a carriage, whereupon she responds with surprise, saying that she has not heard anything on that subject. Those around her who have listened to her question come to the conclusion that it must have been a dream that Frank Churchill had. Miss Bates admits to having heard something about this from Mrs. Perry, but stresses that it is a secret that must not be revealed, and also says that her niece Jane was present when Mrs. Perry shared this confidence, but that she has full confidence

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 281. Kindle Edition.

that her niece has not revealed anything, and that perhaps it was herself who did so, without realizing it, given her peculiar habit of non-stop talking.

Faced with these explanations, Mr. Knightley, like the observant reader, looks at everyone for clues, and most especially at Jane Fairfax, who Austen has placed behind the action, fixing her shawl. Thus, the 'stage director' is subtly preventing Jane Fairfax, and especially her face, from being easily seen by any of those present. By putting her behind the action, fiddling with her handkerchief, she is presumably covering her face, which would undoubtedly be showing embarrassment, as both Mr. Knightley and the reader imagine, though they cannot see it directly. Upon entering the hall, Mr. Knightley's eyes precede Miss Bates's in a glance at Jane. From Frank Churchill's face, thinking he saw confusion suppressed or laughed away, he had involuntarily turned his gaze to hers; but she was indeed behind, and busy with her shawl. Once everyone is inside, Frank asks Emma about the alphabet game and they start playing, highlighting the fact that Jane is looking straight ahead rather than at the table, even though they aren't playing in pairs.

The author is again communicating to us, through Jane's behavior, that something is preventing her from paying attention to the game. At one point, when the word 'blunder' is placed in front of her by Frank, Jane blushes.

This reaction does not go unnoticed by Mr. Knightley, who relates it to the explanation of the supposed dream that Frank has had regarding Mr. Perry's carriage. But still, for Mr. Knightley as for the reader, there is more to be revealed in order to reach firm conclusions.

"Frank Churchill placed a word before Miss Fairfax. She gave a slight glance round the table, and applied herself to it. Frank was next to Emma, Jane opposite to them—and Mr. Knightley so placed as to see them all; and it was his object to see as much as he could, with as little apparent observation. The word was discovered, and with a faint smile pushed away. If meant to be immediately mixed with the others, and buried from sight, she should have looked on the table instead of looking just across, for it was not mixed; and Harriet, eager after every fresh word, and finding out none, directly took it up, and fell to work. She was sitting by Mr. Knightley and turned to him for help. The word was blunder; and as Harriet exultingly proclaimed it, there was a blush on Jane's cheek which gave it a meaning not otherwise ostensible. Mr. Knightley connected it with the dream; but how it could all be, was beyond his comprehension. How the delicacy, the discretion of

his favourite could have been so lain asleep! He feared there must be some decided involvement.”⁶⁰

The blush on Jane’s cheeks, proclaimed by Harriet, is a very significant sign, which, if it had not been conveyed so ostentatiously by Harriet, would have gone unnoticed by the others present. Despite this, Mr. Knightley does not fully understand what is actually happening. The same feeling that Mr. Knightley has is shared by the reader at this point in the plot.

Characteristically of Austen’s writing style, Jane Fairfax secretly talks to Frank Churchill using the sounds the piano makes. Through the reactions that reflect her inner world – her gaze, the expression on her face, the color of her cheeks as she is intensely playing the piano – the reader receives the message that she is secretly communicating through musical notes with Frank, who is busily fixing Mrs. Bates’s glasses.

At the Crown Inn ball, Frank Churchill asks Emma Woodhouse to dance the first two dances with him. This fact will lead to a whole series of conjectures between these two characters because of the social meaning implicit in this petition. This is precisely what Frank intends, to divert attention from any speculation about Jane Fairfax and himself.

On the day of the Donwell Abbey excursion, Jane Fairfax is finally inspired by the sheer force of nature to break her secret engagement to Frank Churchill on the road between Donwell Abbey and Highbury. In the land around Donwell Abbey, as everyone picks ripe strawberries from the bushes and struggles with Mrs. Elton’s comments, Jane Fairfax breathes the pure air, smells the countryside, looks at the color of the sky and the clouds, sees the huge trees above her head, listens to the sounds of leaves and birds. For these brief moments, she breathes again what freedom is. In nature, the claustrophobic limits of her home in Highbury, the home of the Bateses, fade away over the horizon, almost disappearing.

She has lived outside Highbury in other settings, in the company of other people. Now, since she has returned to Highbury, the secret within her chest oppresses her so much that she suffocates, unable to breathe. She needs to break away from everything and feel free again. Yes, she loves him, but she can’t go on living like this. When she is returning to Highbury alone,

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 327. Kindle Edition.

escaping from everyone, she meets Emma, and at the urging of the latter to order a carriage to take her, or to call a servant to accompany her, Jane answers from deep within her overloaded heart: “Oh! Miss Woodhouse, the comfort of being sometimes alone!”⁶¹

Jane Austen takes advantage of the visit that the characters make to Donwell Abbey and its surroundings to describe to us with an exquisite style, a precursor of naturalism, the beauty of the English landscape, from a serene and calm contemplation, which reminds us of how to contemplate and describe the more urbanized landscape that Emma sees in her mind and in front of her eyes, from the door of the Fords store.

“It was hot; and after walking some time over the gardens in a scattered, dispersed way, scarcely any three together, they insensibly followed one another to the delicious shade of a broad short avenue of limes, which stretching beyond the garden at an equal distance from the river, seemed the finish of the pleasure grounds.—It led to nothing; nothing but a view at the end over a low stone wall with high pillars, which seemed intended, in their erection, to give the appearance of an approach to the house, which never had been there. Disputable, however, as might be the taste of such a termination, it was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty.”⁶²

When Jane breaks her engagement to Frank, the first thing she does is return the correspondence she has received from him during their secret relationship, thus symbolizing that she has pushed him out of her heart, where he has lived while she kept his letters.

While every human being is expected to learn from their mistakes, although experience tells us over and over that learning is not easy, and we keep repeating our errors, so Emma Woodhouse makes mistakes again and again. She continues to let her fantasy world and restless mind create fictional stories between real characters, who suffer the consequences of their actions. This is the case once again when Emma encourages Frank to enter Harriet’s heart, and then learns of Frank Churchill’s hitherto secret relationship with Jane Fairfax.

The clarity of this thought will also lead her to realize how terribly badly she has behaved towards her friend, despite believing she was doing something good for her. She finally comes to analyze the depth of the repercussions of her actions and she wonders how it is possible that she

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 236. Kindle Edition.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 338. Kindle Edition.

failed to see what she was actually doing. This recognition and repentance for her mistakes continues to bring Emma Woodhouse closer to the readers who, far from rejecting her, will probably take her into their hearts.

For her part, Jane Fairfax is a young woman who has received a good education. She is beautiful and talented, but orphaned. Jane lived with Mrs. and Miss. Bates, her grandmother and aunt respectively, until Colonel Campbell, who, with generosity, gratitude and affection for the late father of Jane, decides to take over her education and invites her to live with his family in London as a companion for his only daughter. The Campbells felt a sincere appreciation for Jane and treated her like another daughter, allowing her to access a social circle. They also provided an education that would allow Jane to make a living in the future as a “governess.” When the daughter of the Campbells gets married, Jane has no other choice but to confront her future as governess. Austen describes the moment of decision as if Jane had decided to become a cloistered nun:

“With the fortitude of a devoted novitiate, she had long resolved at one-and twenty to complete the sacrifice and retire from all the pleasure of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification forever.”⁶³

Her fate is pitiable, and even Emma, who does not feel much sympathy for her, feels pity for the destiny that awaits her.

“... when she considered what all this elegance was destined to, what she was going to sink from, how she was going to live, it seemed impossible to feel anything but compassion and respect ... nothing could be more pitiable or more honorable than the sacrifices she had resolved on...”⁶⁴

Young women like Jane Fairfax did not have the possibility of being financially independent outside of marriage. Jane Fairfax refers to a “slave trade” and describes employment agencies as “offices for the sale - not quite of human flesh - but of human intellect” (*Emma* 196). Jane finally manages to escape from a painful job by marrying Frank Churchill, a member of the aristocracy, but to do so, she has to expose herself to great risks. However, we can imagine that the desperation she feels for her future is what drives her to take such disproportionate risks. But what makes marriage an acceptable aim for these women? The economic crippling of women,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 106. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107. Kindle Edition.

whether of rich or poor class, restricted their autonomy. Barbara W Swords comments on the status of women:

“...daughters of wealthy fathers frequently became prey of fortune-seeking men, and daughters of fathers of limited fortunes often had difficulty finding husbands at all. The laws of inheritance further limited women’s economic freedom for they often excluded settlement of property on women... A woman’s economic independence was further restricted because of the stigma attached to a woman who earned money through working...An unmarried woman could become a governess, but this was a position beneath the social rank and status of middle and upper class young women and was thus regarded as humiliating.”⁶⁵

This opinion is best reflected through Harriet’s words to Emma, in which the latter expresses a desire not to marry at all.

“But then, to be an old maid at last, like Miss Bates! “. “But still, you will be an old maid! And that’s so dreadful! ““...dear me, how shall you employ yourself when you grow old?”⁶⁶

The third mistake made by Emma is that she loved Knightley but did not realize it, saying that she would never marry. All this delays Emma’s happiness, which negatively affects her and other characters. Trying to make Emma an ideal character, Austen puts an ideal exemplar in front of the flawed heroine.

4.2.3.2. Women’s Manipulation in *A Sister to Scheherazade*:

A Sister to Scheherazade is a novel of more than 214 pages, divided into three parts (I, II, III). Each part has a title: the first part is called “Every woman’s name is ‘wound’; the second, “Destruction At Dawn”; and the third is “The Sultana’s Bride Looks On”. The first part is built on a constant opposition and role-playing exchange between the two main characters. It tells the story of two different women married to the same man: one is Isma, an educated, independent and liberated woman who found her freedom after having had her divorce, and the other is Hajila, from a slum. She represents the despised, obedient and wise woman, the housewife who is chained to

⁶⁵ Barbara W. Swords, “Woman’s Place in Jane Austen’s England,” **Jane Austen Society of North America**, 1988, pp. 76-82.

⁶⁶ Austen, **Emma**, p. 46. Kindle Edition.

her house and her husband. This difference does not pose any problem in the two women's lives but, on the contrary, later becomes a kind of solidarity.

In her struggle to escape her confinement, Hajila gets aid and encouragement from her husband's ex-wife. Isma is sexually and physically a liberated woman who returns to Algeria from France to help other women fight persecution and gain freedom. After freeing herself from the responsibilities of her married life by divorcing her husband and finding a mother-in-law to take care of her daughter, Meriem, Isma travels to France. Later she returns to Algeria after realizing that she has done the worst thing imaginable by manipulating Touma into arranging the marriage of Hajila, an innocent girl, to her husband, whom she also manipulated into divorcing her after finding a woman to take care of the house and the children, and in turn, leaving her daughter with her new step-mother, who is suffering from a marriage that Isma herself has escaped, she comes back to settle in her hometown with her daughter and to help Hajila, who herself is responsible for her poor conditions. She also asserts that she speaks on behalf of other women and wears the veil again to reconnect with her traditions. Through this decision, Djebbar highlights the importance of women's solidarity in their fight against oppression.

Although Isma also saved the unsuspecting Hajila from falling into a hypothetical trap in an unwise marriage, this development does not occur until the end of the narrative, after Isma assumes responsibility for her role in bringing about Hajila's unhappy fate, albeit without intending any malice towards her. Accepting the explicit narrative of her role in this marriage, which was clearly evident at the beginning of the text, is the first step in the chain of events leading to her salvation:

"Did I intend to offer you up as a sacrifice to the man? Did I intend to model myself on the queens of the harem? These, by presenting a new bride to their master, were in fact liberating themselves at the expense of a pseudo rival...Was I, in my turn, reaffirming my power? No, I was cutting my self adrift. To be sure, you were the innocent victim whom I enslaved, from the day when, according to tradition, your mother became my ally or my accomplice."⁶⁷

In her book *Asia Djebbar in Dialogues with Feminisms*, Priscilla Ringrose states that the novel strongly emphasizes a message of sisterhood and solidarity between women. According to

⁶⁷ Djebbar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 1.

Ringrose, the relationship between Isma and Hajila is a journey which begins with subversion and ends with solidarity:

“Djebar recounts how Isma match-makes her ex-husband with the hapless, illiterate Hajila, and charts the trajectory of a relationship between the two women as journey that begins in ambiguity and ends in solidarity.”⁶⁸

The two women in the novel, Isma and Hajila, are wives of the same man, but they are not rivals. Isma herself, in order to find a mother for her daughter Mereim, arranges her husband's marriage to the young Hajila with the help of a local matchmaker. But after the marriage, Isma realizes that she had played a major role in harming Hajila by luring her into the trap of a bleak situation from which she herself has fled. She accepts that she was only freeing herself from the shackles of patriarchy, but in the process, has abandoned her daughter, Mereim. Therefore, she decides to fight for the freedom of all women, having discovered the impossibility of separating herself from others' women fate. This is why, during one of their meetings in the *Hammam*, she persuades Hajila to flee and gives her a set of duplicate keys to the apartment

Throughout Djebar's novel, she critically explores how patriarchy affects women. First, Isma is the one who, in her quest for freedom, trapped another woman in an unpopular and abusive marriage. Apart from her, Hajila's mother, Touma, also contributes to her daughter's suffering by urging her to submit to her husband despite the restrictions he imposes upon her.

“Now, the mothers keep guard and have no need of the policeman's badge of office. The seraglio has been emptied, but its noxious emanations have invaded everything. Fear is transmitted from generation to generation. The matriarchs swaddle their little girls in their own insidious anguish, before they even reach puberty. Mother and daughter, O, harem restored.”⁶⁹

For her part, Touma, as a young woman, was mistreated by another woman, her mother-in-law. Touma was married at the early age of 12 and has faced major difficulties in her marital life after the birth of two daughters. Her mother-in-law begins to treat her cruelly, while at the same time loading all of the household responsibilities upon her. Likewise, the mother-in-law hated her granddaughters, often starving them and praying for their death. According to Djebar, women themselves act as allies of men in perpetuating the oppression of women and their

⁶⁸ Priscilla Ringrose, *Assia Djebar in Dialogues with Feminisms*, New York, Rodopi, 2006. p.24

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

separation from society. Isma, for example, in one of her accounts, recalls an incident from her childhood when she heard one of her mother's friends mourning her miserable life as a married woman before being silenced by other women. Isma reprimanded them, too, when she naively repeated the woman's complaint without understanding its meaning. Years later, she recalls the memory of the woman's complaint and the indifferent response of the other women, who silenced rather than comforted her. The complaint is repeated, this time with a full awareness of its meaning, with the intent of opening the consciousness of all women through its narration. Representing the dire consequences of such a lack of solidarity helps Djébar to highlight the importance of unity among women. According to Elia, the novel is a call for "building an alliance and a common condemnation of the oppression of women" from the internal colonizers – "Arab men whose strength lies partly in the lack of solidarity and support between women."⁷⁰ Through her main female characters, Djébar clearly states that women can overcome oppression and escape forced confinement through their solidarity.

The dream of a luxurious life lures the impoverished young Hajila's family into marrying her to a divorcee with two children. The shantytown family cares more about money than the man. Touma, Hajila's mother, seduced by hopes for a better future for the whole family, immediately accepts the offer that Isma herself proffered to them. Isma is the manipulator and the narrator of the novel. Being poor and a widow, Touma has sacrificed her daughter in alliance with Isma, who manipulates her with the big house and the black car.

"The whole family was excited at the forthcoming wedding arranged so hurriedly, as soon as this unforeseen suitor had introduced himself on his return from a long period spent abroad. A widower or divorced, with two children. from one wife or two, how could they find out? who was going to inquire? "My daughter will have room for everything in that kitchen!" Touma concluded. "Truly blessed be Hajila, my first-born, so aptly named! When I expressed the wish on the day of her birth that she would find herself in Paradise one day, I could never have imagined such a home. Marble and glass! Blessed be the beloved Prophet for having answered my prayers!"⁷¹.

After months of Hajila's marriage, Touma was eagerly expecting her to announce her pregnancy with a boy because if she gets pregnant with a girl this will not give her the power to

⁷⁰ Nada Elia, *Trances, Drances, and Vociferations: Agency and Resistance in African Women's Narratives*, New York, Garland Publishing, Inc, 2001, p. 21.

⁷¹ Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 14.

be the only queen or the only wife in the house. Djebbar here presents woman's body as a reproductive tool on one hand and as an erotic signifier on the other hand. Hajila's encounter with her pregnancy confused the reader wither it was rape or male power in deciding the reproductivity process. When Touma gave birth to Hajila, it was a disappointment to her mother -in -law and when Kenza was born with a health issue her old grandmother said:

“Let the Lord take her back! ... If it's written that her destiny is to be cut short! ... What do we want with yellow-faced females!”⁷²

Djebbar sheds the light on the Algerian woman place where women's body belong to houses to the enclosed while men are assigned to public and the open. A women who is liberated or free in the outdoor is not respected and is not a marriage matter. Hajila is not faithful when she starts to go outdoor after her husband leaves home. Here lies the importance of the Isma-Hajila collaboration to stand together in such society where women has no right and no voice and this bonding paves the way for Djebbar's gaze towards an Algerian feminine ideal.

4.2.4. Self-discovery:

The use of literature in general as a means of moral education or for the analysis of moral concepts and problems has a long and well-established history (Armstrong, 2002). Robert Eldridge (1989), discussing the place of ethics in literature in his book *Self Understanding: Imagination, Emotion and Social Stance in Emma*:

“a person's moral understanding cannot be captured by general theories, but must be developed and sustained by an awareness and relation of her story to the stories of others,an awareness that literature is peculiarly well placed to articulate and extend.” (p. 20)

Jane Austen's work *Emma* has been given a central place by both philosophers and literary critics and *Emma* in particular has been considered as an example of the classic novel of moral growth and development⁷³. As seen in all of Djebbar's works, women's liberation is the central

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷³ Richard. Eldridge, **Self Understanding: Imagination, Emotion and Social Stance in Emma**, Online <https://www.swarthmore.edu/news-events/philosopher-richard-eldridge-imagination-emotion-and-social-stance-jane-austens-emma>.

topic. During their journey to reach freedom Hajila and Isma, in *A Sister to Scheherazade*, could not avoid discovering themselves in order to be free.

Manipulation might make the person selfish but not necessarily bad or evil. Human beings are the only creatures who have wisdom and emotions besides creativity and the desire to control other people. Some people are clueless and unable to recognize that they are manipulated by other people. Other people are genuine and capable of controlling other people's preferences but they reach self-discovery during their journey of controlling others forgetting to look into themselves.

4.2.4.1. Self-Discovery in *Emma*:

Although we are studying the female characters of our novel *Emma*, the ideal character in Jane Austen's novel is the male character, Mr. Knightley. Knightley guides Emma at every opportunity, and Emma matures by developing herself in her relationship with Knightley. Mr. Knightley, also located on the highest rung of the social ladder presented in *Emma*, symbolizes the figure of the "eternal pedagogue", constant vigilant of his vivacious, intelligent, rebellious and charming pupil, Emma Woodhouse.

Within the historical context, it was always the male figures who were in charge of telling women what their behavior should be. Austen, fully aware of her expected role in society, reflects it in this character.

As Mr. Knightley lives at Donwell Abbey, only a mile away from Highbury, he knows the Woodhouses well and is one of the few characters in the novel who finds fault with Emma's behavior, and the only one who is allowed to do so in her face. Likewise, he considers that our protagonist has been spoiled, on account of being the most intelligent of the family.

When Emma befriends Harriet Smith, Mr. Knightley strongly disapproves of her and confronts Mrs. Weston, who defends her. Knightley considers Harriet ignorant and flattering; she is the worst company he can think of for Emma. At the same time, he thinks that Harriet cannot gain anything good from her friendship with Emma, since this implies that she will get used to being with people and in places other than those of the social class to which she really belongs.

“Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others,” rejoined Mr. Woodhouse, understanding but in part. “But, my dear, pray do not make any more matches; they are silly things, and break up one’s family circle grievously.”⁷⁴

“She will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her home. I am much mistaken if Emma’s doctrines give any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life.—”⁷⁵

When Emma persuades Harriet to answer farmer Robert Martin and reject his marriage proposal, Mr. Knightley judges Emma harshly.

“You saw her answer!—you wrote her answer too. Emma, this is your doing. You persuaded her to refuse him.”⁷⁶

For Mr. Knightley, the aspect of social class is one of the most important, and on this basis, Harriet Smith should not have rejected the farmer, considering that both would be within the same social stratum and therefore their union would be highly advisable. Mr. Knightley recognizes that Harriet is beautiful and has a good character but in his opinion, these are not the greatest attributes to look for in women in general. This point of view of a male character indicates a small advance with respect to the vision of the woman. In turn, it contrasts with the opinion he gave Mrs. Weston when the two of them argued about the desirability of friendship between Emma and Harriet. On this occasion, Mr. Knightley showed a point of view that, from our current perspective, would be considered highly masculine but that in this historical context was common. Women at this time were educated so that their opinion was always subject to that of their husbands. Miss Taylor, according to Mr. Knightley, had a good apprenticeship prior to her marriage to Mr. Weston, always submitting her will to that of Emma Woodhouse.

“but you were receiving a very good education from her, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid; and if Weston had asked me to recommend him a wife, I should certainly have named Miss Taylor.”⁷⁷

In turn, this male character will take an important step in relation to the role expected by men of this time. When Mr. Knightley marries Emma, it is he who moves into the wife’s residence,

⁷⁴ Austen, **Emma**, pp. 8-9. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁵ **Ibid.**, p. 32. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁶ **Ibid.**, p. 55. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁷ **Ibid.**, pp. 31-32. Kindle Edition.

and not the other way around, as custom dictated. Emma celebrates as if it were a game, the attitude that “her eternal pedagogue” has towards her.

“Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you know—in a joke—it is all a joke. We always say what we like to one another.”⁷⁸

Emma is proud of herself in that she was able to match Mr. and Mrs. Weston. She firmly believes that it was due to the influence that her actions had that she made the marriage happen.

“that I made the match myself. I made the match, you know, four years ago; and to have it take place, and be proved in the right, when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for any thing.”⁷⁹

Mr. Knightley considers that Emma is incapable of doing anything that requires determination and patience, recognizing that Emma is capable of ordering the list of books that she intends to read according to varied and often spurious criteria – for example, alphabetically – but in fact she does not finish reading any of the books she has begun. The same has happened to her with painting and music, despite having shown a talent for both. Undoubtedly, Mr. Knightley’s vision of Emma brings us closer to seeing her as a capricious and spoiled character, used to always flitting around after her ever-changing desires.

“Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them: and though this was not particularly agreeable to Emma herself, she knew it would be so much less so to her father, that she would not have him really suspect such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by every body.”⁸⁰

One of the defenders of the character of Emma is her governess, Miss Taylor (Mrs. Weston after her marriage). She is not so blind as not to see the faults in Emma, but her attitude is to always defend her virtues.

“With all dear Emma’s little faults, she is an excellent creature. Where shall we see a better daughter, or a kinder sister, or a truer friend? No, no; she has qualities which may be trusted; she will never lead any one really wrong; she will make no lasting blunder; where Emma errs once, she is in the right a hundred times.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6. Kindle Edition.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Kindle Edition.

The key moments in the growth of Emma's character are marked by realizing her mistakes. Some of these are illustrated when she discovers that Mr. Elton is in love with her and not with Harriet and that he considers Harriet far below the social class to which he aspires.

The fact that Emma wishes that all the repercussions of her mistakes had fallen on her, in order to avoid the damage that her friend is undoubtedly going to suffer, places her in a place of regret that makes the reader, in some way form, forgive and accept. She goes through moments of great despair, especially because of the consequences that her actions had on Harriet Smith when the latter discovers the truth of Mr. Elton's feelings.

"It was a wretched business indeed!—Such an overthrow of every thing she had been wishing for!—Such a development of every thing most unwelcome!—Such a blow for Harriet!—that was the worst of all. Every part of it brought pain and humiliation, of some sort or other; but, compared with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken—more in error—more disgraced by mis-judgment, than she actually was, could the effects of her blunders have been confined to herself."⁸²

Likewise, we see the brilliant reflections that she makes by analyzing the reaction that Mr. Elton has when he declares his love for her, where the intelligent journey he undertakes to make sense of what has happened is appreciated. Perhaps it was not fair to expect so much acuity from him considering how very inferior he is to her in talent and elegance of mind.

"But he had fancied her in love with him; that evidently must have been his dependence; and after raving a little about the seeming incongruity of gentle manners and a conceited head, Emma was obliged in common honesty to stop and admit that her own behaviour to him had been so complaisant and obliging, so full of courtesy and attention, as (supposing her real motive unperceived) might warrant a man of ordinary observation and delicacy, like Mr. Elton, in fancying himself a very decided favourite. If she had so misinterpreted his feelings, she had little right to wonder that he, with self-interest to blind him, should have mistaken hers."⁸³

In this social context, class differences are a matter of the utmost importance. Just as Mr. Elton considers Harriet Smith far below the social class where he would look for the purpose of getting married, there is the paradox that Emma Woodhouse herself rejects Mr. Elton's marriage

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 127. Kindle Edition.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 129. Kindle Edition.

proposal, arguing her opposition with the same reasoning; the difference between their social classes is an insurmountable impediment for such a company.

Mr. Knightley is also a character who expresses the perspective of 18th and 19th-century society. Mr. Knightley warns Emma not to interfere with Harriet. By saying that Harriet is a woman with a dark past, born out of wedlock, she does not hesitate to humiliate the young girl over her family's uncertainty.

“Not Harriet’s equal!” exclaimed Mr. Knightley loudly and warmly; and with calmer asperity, added, a few moments afterwards, “No, he is not her equal indeed, for he is as much her superior in sense as in situation. Emma, your infatuation about that girl blinds you. What are Harriet Smith’s claims, either of birth, nature or education, to any connection higher than Robert Martin? She is the natural daughter of nobody knows whom, with probably no settled provision at all, and certainly no respectable relations. She is known only as parlour-boarder at a common school. She is not a sensible girl, nor a girl of any information. She has been taught nothing useful, and is too young and too simple to have acquired any thing herself. At her age she can have no experience, and with her little wit, is not very likely ever to have any that can avail her. She is pretty, and she is good tempered, and that is all.”⁸⁴

Extramarital affairs were definitely not approved of in society in the 18th and 19th centuries. Such a situation was thought to cause strain and confusion. It was very important to know who the children were to be born to and to be sure of how the lineage would be perpetuated. Extramarital affairs were therefore anathema. Harriet is the child of a disapproved relationship. Nothing is known about her family. That’s why her past is considered dark. According to Mr. Knightley, it is a great chance for Harriet to marry Mr. Martin because he loves her and there is no use in manipulating her into believing that she is noble and dragging her into needless adventures.

“I have always thought it a very foolish intimacy,” said Mr. Knightley presently, “though I have kept my thoughts to myself; but I now perceive that it will be a very unfortunate one for Harriet. You will puff her up with such ideas of her own beauty, and of what she has a claim to, that, in a little while, nobody within her reach will be good enough for her. Vanity working on a weak head, produces every sort of mischief.”⁸⁵

In the 18th and 19th centuries, women understandably preferred men with assets. However, in order for them to receive such preference, they had to behave with dignity, wisdom and reason.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58. Kindle Edition.

Women who were driven into unnecessary adventures might have to marry impoverished men. They also fell out of favor with society. They had to suffer not only through their own actions, but also through the mistakes their families had made, as is the case with Harriet.

“Nothing so easy as for a young lady to raise her expectations too high. Miss Harriet Smith may not find offers of marriage flow in so fast, though she is a very pretty girl. Men of sense, whatever you may choose to say, do not want silly wives. Men of family would not be very fond of connecting themselves with a girl of such obscurity—and most prudent men would be afraid of the inconvenience and disgrace they might be involved in, when the mystery of her parentage came to be revealed.”⁸⁶

However, Mr. Knightley, after having danced with Harriet, expresses his opinion of her in the following way:

“An unpretending, single-minded, artless girl—ininitely to be preferred by any man of sense and taste to such a woman as Mrs. Elton. I found Harriet more conversable than I expected.” [...] “Whom are you going to dance with?” asked Mr. Knightley. She hesitated a moment, and then replied, “With you, if you will ask me.” “Will you?” said he, offering his hand. “Indeed I will. You have shown that you can dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper.” “Brother and sister! no, indeed.” (*Emma* 311-312)

After these words, the reader cannot help but conclude that Cupid has begun to shoot his arrows. The excursion to Box Hill and the incident that occurs there, with its consequences, marks a turning point in the relationship between Mr. Knightley and Emma; just as what happened in the dance described above, Box Hill marks another significant turn in the narrative.

The incident in question happens when Emma is openly rude to Miss Bates, in the presence of her niece and the other participants in the event. Emma Woodhouse proposes a game, and requests that each of the eight participants say a single very intelligent thing, in prose or verse, original or well-known, or to say two moderately intelligent things, or three very boring things, and laugh heartily at all of them. Whereupon, the well-intentioned and tirelessly talkative Miss Bates says that she is not uncomfortable with such a proposal, because she could say, without any problem, three very boring things. Emma cannot resist answering her in the following way:

“Oh! very well,” exclaimed Miss Bates, “then I need not be uneasy. ‘Three things very dull indeed.’ That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three

⁸⁶ Ibid.

dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I? (looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on every body's assent)—Do not you all think I shall?" Emma could not resist. "Ah! Ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once."⁸⁷

After this incident, while Mr. Knightley and Emma are waiting for the carriage that will take our protagonist home, he scolds her severely with the following words:

"Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?—Emma, I had not thought it possible."⁸⁸

The only person from whom Emma tolerates her criticism, though not without defending herself against it, is Mr. Knightley. Throughout much of the novel, we have seen how this character has acted as a friend-tutor to Emma. We cannot forget that this incident occurs after the day of the dance, where it seems that Cupid had begun to shoot his arrows. Emma returns home crying all the way after Mr. Knightley's reprimand, the author tells us. Is Emma crying only out of regret? Is she also crying for having failed Mr. Knightley? Is she beginning to feel something new for him? It is possible that her tears were the result of both?

"She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of this representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued! And how suffer him to leave her without saying one word of gratitude, of concurrence, of common kindness! She never had been so depressed. Happily it was not necessary to speak. There was only Harriet, who seemed not in spirits herself, fagged, and very willing to be silent; and Emma felt the tears running down her cheeks almost all the way home, without being at any trouble to check them, extraordinary as they were."⁸⁹

The next morning, when Emma goes to visit Miss Bates, extremely sorry for what she has done, she is still thinking about Mr. Knightley, looking towards where he lives but not finding him. With these glances towards Mr. Knightley's house, Austen is communicating to us symptoms of love in *Emma*. Returning to Hartfield, she finds Mr. Knightley there. The incident of the

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 353. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 355. Kindle Edition.

previous day has also left its mark on him. He was going to London to spend a few days with his brother John and his wife Isabella, and he wanted to say goodbye to Emma before he leaves.

“I would not go away without seeing you, but I have no time to spare, and therefore must now be gone directly. I am going to London, to spend a few days with John and Isabella [...] He took her hand;—whether she had not herself made the first motion, she could not say—she might, perhaps, have rather offered it—but he took her hand, pressed it, and certainly was on the point of carrying it to his lips—when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly let it go.—Why he should feel such a scruple, why he should change his mind when it was all but done, she could not perceive.—He would have judged better, she thought, if he had not stopped.—The intention, however, was indubitable.”⁹⁰

She has doubts that they were parting as friends, but also about Mr. Knightley’s unfinished gesture, what he had wanted to do, and why when he was going to kiss her hand, he stopped and did not continue. This is new to him and does not go unnoticed by her, and certainly not by the observant reader. If something new, or at least something more conscious for them, started on the day of the dance at the Crown Inn, more and more signs of that certainty appear, all of them communicated through the behavior that is motivating the deep river that flows in the characters, causing at any given moment tears, or the desire to kiss a hand, or simply a more serious face than usual. Later, when Emma discovers that the man Harriet is in love with is not Frank Churchill but Mr. Knightley, instantly she realizes what her own feelings are for Mr. Knightley, and that he must not marry anyone but herself.

“It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!”⁹¹

The clarity of this thought also leads her to realize how terribly badly she has behaved towards her friend Harriet, despite believing she was doing good for her. She analyzes the depth of the repercussions of her actions and she wonders how it is possible that she did not see what she was actually doing. All of this process of repentance and recognition of her mistakes continues to bring Emma Woodhouse closer to the readers who, far from rejecting her, in turn, draw her closer to them.

“How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! What blindness,

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364. Kindle Edition.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 385. Kindle Edition.

what madness, had led her on! It struck her with dreadful force, and she was ready to give it every bad name in the world. Some portion of respect for herself, however, in spite of all these demerits—some concern for her own appearance, and a strong sense of justice by Harriet”⁹²

Harriet Smith seems to feel that she deserves Mr. Knightley, and so communicates it to her friend Emma. She also tells her that if he were to choose her it wouldn’t be such a strange thing. Harriet herself, in self-defense, tells Emma that it was she herself who told her to observe Mr. Knightley’s behavior as a model.

Emma Woodhouse has had a good student in Harriet Smith. The latter has learned well the words of her friend when she defended the legitimacy of the relationship between Mr. Elton and Harriet. Now it is her own ward who tries to defend the legitimacy of a possible relationship with Mr. Knightley with the same arguments that Emma used in the past.

“Poor Harriet! to be a second time the dupe of her misconceptions and flattery.”⁹³

This reaction from Harriet causes bitter feelings in Emma, to the point that she wishes they had never met. This is the spontaneous bursting forth of Emma’s feelings: “Oh God! that I had never seen her!”⁹⁴

After this, Emma seeks solitude where she can reflect in different spaces – in her own room, next to the bushes...

“How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under!—The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart!—she sat still, she walked about, she tried her own room, she tried the shrubbery—in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly; that she had been imposed on by others in a most mortifying degree; that she had been imposing on herself in a degree yet more mortifying; that she was wretched, and should probably find this day but the beginning of wretchedness.”⁹⁵

It is these spaces, dedicated to self-discovery in solitude, that make her discover more of herself, and grow as a human being, even though the process of acknowledging her faults is painful. At this time, Emma judges herself harshly, and once again, we will see how it is these

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 385-386. Kindle Edition.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 380. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 388-389. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 389. Kindle Edition.

moments of personal criticism and regret that bring the reader closer to her. The fact that Emma is able to recognize, repent and propose to make amends places her among Austen's heroines who have much to learn, and this fact humanizes her. It is quite possible that this is where the success of the character lies.

Throughout the space dedicated to the character of Emma Woodhouse, the characters of Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith and Frank Churchill necessarily appear. The main lines of action that the protagonist runs through are in close relationship with these characters. We are also able to witness throughout the novel indications of another union strategically placed in this staging; that of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. Although they were aware of what they felt and the commitment they had acquired from the outset, they have decided, for justifiable reasons, to keep it secret for much of the novel.

Jane Austen thinks that a rich woman could not remain single. This is not just Austen's thinking. In the social life of that period, women without inherited means who remained single also remained poor. This fact places women in a miserable position in society, and women in this situation can be seen as belittled. In this novel, Austen also conveys her own feelings through Mr. Knightley, who speaks of the poor Miss Bates with pity, in fact subtly belittling her.

"Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness."⁹⁶

In fact, this is Austen's way of reflecting 18th and 19th-century society's perspective on unmarried women, since although the society of the period could accept a rich and wealthy woman as single, it could not extend this acceptance to a poor woman.

"Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion"⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354. Kindle Edition.

There are no love scenes in Jane Austen's novels, and the expression of love is non-sexual, conveyed by letter or speech. According to Austen, what happens between two people should belong to them. There is no need for love scenes, and in Austen's view, the end of every love must be marriage.

“and this letter was from him, from Mr. Martin, and contained a direct proposal of marriage. “Who could have thought it?” She was so surprized she did not know what to do. Yes, quite a proposal of marriage; and a very good letter.”⁹⁸

The author sees it as simplistic and vulgar for a woman to experience love scenes. She deals with people who fall in love in her novels but does not allude to how love is experienced among these people. Austen, who somehow blocks men who try to live their love openly, presents rational female characters in front of such men. Thus, the female characters halt the men who attempt this.

“To restrain him as much as might be, by her own manners, she was immediately preparing to speak with exquisite calmness and gravity of the weather and the night; but scarcely had she begun, scarcely had they passed the sweep-gate and joined the other carriage, than she found her subject cut up-her hand seized-her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her: availing himself of the precious opportunity, declaring sentiments which must be already well known, hoping-fearing-adoring-ready to die if she refused him; but flattering himself that his ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion could not fail of having some effect, and in short, very much resolved on being seriously accepted as soon as possible.”⁹⁹

Marriage, in turn, is linked to the theme of love. This is represented in three different ways, as it appears in William Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the youthful love shown in the union of Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill; the love between mature people like Mr. and Mrs. Weston; and the love caused by an enchantment, such as that suffered by Harriet Smith towards Mr. Elton, a consequence of the effects of the manipulative power of Emma Woodhouse towards her friend. There is a certain similarity between the ways in which Austen puts herself into the thoughts and feelings of the character of Emma, and those of the heroine herself, by aspiring to the same kind of omniscience. There are constant back-and-forth vectors, where the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Kindle Edition.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123. Kindle Edition.

author looks at herself, and sees Emma doing what she does on occasion. The creative and exuberant imagination of both is what inextricably unites them.

The question of Emma's self-discovery is intimately connected to the question of Emma's knowledge of others. The protagonist believes she knows the secret of everyone's feelings, as seen in the reflections she makes after the disastrous picnic at Box Hill. Also, Jane Austen tries to understand the motivations of the characters she creates, to endow them with an exquisite human dimension.

With insufferable vanity she believes that she knows the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance, she assigns herself the role of arranging everybody's destiny. She is proven to have been universally mistaken; and she has not quite done nothing, for she has created mischief. She has brought evil upon Harriet, upon herself, and, she fears, on Mr. Knightley. But she could not get to know herself: she did not know what she was like, were it not for the fact that she was so cold and reserved - apparent indifference whether she liked him or not - and then her aunt was such a tireless talker and made so many fusses with everyone and it had always been believed that they were very intimate because they were the same age, everyone had assumed that they felt affection for each other. These were her reasons, she had no better ones.

While *Emma* is a story about the protagonist's coming to self-discovery, it is also a story that dramatizes her difficulties. Austen is communicating to us how complex it is to understand some of the mysteries of the human soul. Why does a human being behave as she does? Why do we act in the way that we do? What are the engines that move our inner world? Emma herself comes to feel unworthy of having acted as she has and will reject herself for it on several occasions. However, that recognition and regret will not be enough to ensure that her mistakes will not be repeated.

"She was most sorrowfully indignant; ashamed of every sensation but the one revealed to her—her affection for Mr. Knightley. Every other part of her mind was disgusting. With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of every body's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange every body's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken; and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley. -Were this most unequal of all connexions to take place, on her must rest all the reproach of having given it a beginning; for his attachment, she must believe to be produced only by a

consciousness of Harriet's; —and even were this not the case, he would never have known Harriet at all but for her folly.”¹⁰⁰

Austen's representation of each day in *Emma* is a system of knowledge that helps us make sense of fundamental questions such as ‘Where do we come from?’, ‘What are we?’, ‘Where are we going?’, ‘What paths do we take?’ It is these details of everyday life, repeated over and over again, that tend to lead us, frequently, to the deepest questions about the mysteries that sustain life.

Another aspect highlighted in the novel is the meaning of the repeated word ‘enough’; ‘enough’, throughout *Emma*'s development. For example, in the description of the scene when the protagonist stands at the door of Ford's store, looking at what is in her mind and in front of her eyes.

“Emma went to the door for amusement.—Much could not be hoped from the traffic of even the busiest part of Highbury;—Mr. Perry walking hastily by, Mr. William Cox letting himself in at the office-door, Mr. Cole's carriage-horses returning from exercise, or a stray letter-boy on an obstinate mule, were the liveliest objects she could presume to expect; and when her eyes fell only on the butcher with his tray, a tidy old woman travelling homewards from shop with her full basket, two curs quarrelling over a dirty bone, and a string of dawdling children round the baker's little bow-window eyeing the gingerbread, she knew she had no reason to complain, and was amused enough; quite enough still to stand at the door. A mind lively and at ease, can do with seeing nothing, and can see nothing that does not answer.”¹⁰¹

Emma sees the image of the older woman going home from the store with her bag full, and presumably being said to have ‘enough’, if not more, than she needs. When you see the two dogs fighting over a bone, you will think they clearly want more, that it is not enough for the two. Emma was entertained enough; calm enough to stay at the door. These images, according to Adela Pinch,¹⁰² remind us that ‘enough’ is a word that we use frequently in relation to food, such as when we say ‘Have you had enough?’ which is why for some psychoanalysts the concept of ‘enough’ is associated with the fulfilment of psychological needs.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 389-390. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰² Adela Pinch, “Introduction and Notes”, *Austen, Jane, Emma, (1816)*, Ed. by James Kinsley, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 7-41.

Austen might be using the meaning of 'enough' metaphorically, not only in the realm of the materiality of food but to take it to other realms of personality and life. What is enough for the human being? What do we really need? What quantities do we want to have in order to satisfy those needs that arise as a result of a series of experiences repeated over and over again? It is frequently in those small daily details that we can answer ourselves: what are our needs? In what proportions do we need them?

Adela Pinch sees in one of the female characters, Miss Bates, a muse of everyday life, such as when she transmits, after dinner that the good Mr. Woodhouse has offered them, that the host did not think the asparagus was cooked enough, so he sent it off again.

"The baked apples and biscuits, excellent in their way, you know; but there was a delicate fricassee of sweetbread and some asparagus brought in at first, and good Mr. Woodhouse, not thinking the asparagus quite boiled enough, sent it all out again."¹⁰³

Miss Bates is an inexhaustible character, tirelessly measuring the quantities in which the details of daily life are constantly presented to us. Anything, be it from the past, present or future, will receive a perfectly calibrated measure from her, and she will also communicate it openly, just in case it had gone unnoticed by others. Similarly, Mr. Woodhouse also weighs with all measures what is 'enough', not only in terms of food but of good habits in general to prevent disease. Looking at these characters, we can think that much of their everyday life is based on the measurement of 'sufficient' quantities.

Another point that Adela Pinch chooses to emphasize in her study of *Emma* is the meaning of the word 'nothing'. What does seeing nothing mean for Austen? Why is the word 'nothing' always in the mouths of the characters in the novel? The people of Highbury emphatically give their views saying that a thing is 'nothing but', 'nothing less than', and 'nothing above'. 'Nothing' is part of Highbury's circulating gossip. Austen herself sees her character Emma, after the contemplation she indulges in at the doors of the Fords as seeing 'nothing'.

¹⁰³ Austen, *Emma*, p. 309. Kindle Edition.

“A mind lively and at ease, can do with seeing nothing, and can see nothing that does not answer.”¹⁰⁴

The meaning of ‘nothing’ in *Emma*, including from Pinch’s point of view, has long been a matter of literary and philosophical contemplation. Shouldn’t we think of Shakespeare, she tells us, who in his plays often and in complex ways navigates the meaning of ‘nothing’? To illustrate, this the author refers to some phrases spoken by Shakespearean characters that contain the word.

“‘Nothing will come of nothing’ (King Lear) ‘This nothing’s more than matter (Hamlet) ‘Is this nothing? Why then all the world, and all that’s isn’t is nothing’ (The Winter’s Tale)¹⁰⁵

In these great literary examples, the repetition of the word ‘nothing’ transforms it from merely ‘nothing’ into something both more substantial and more threatening: nothing here is not an antonym of everything, but a synonym for the essence of everything. This approach that Shakespeare takes, from the abstract and ethereal to the concrete, helps us understand the meaning of ‘nothing’ in Austen, which is one of the options that Pinch raises: ‘nothing as synonymous with the essence of everything’.

Tony Tanner is considered by Adela Pinch to be one of the greatest experts on Jane Austen and her work; he seeks an answer to the puzzle of why *Emma*, despite doing much that is not right, has not been marginalized in English fiction and refers to the book *Sex and Character* by Otto Weininger, published in 1903, seen as the culmination of the fashion for misogynistic works of the nineteenth century.

According to Weininger, “It is women who turn in the street to look at nearly every couple they meet and gaze after them. This matchmaking is the most common characteristic of the human female [...] matchmaking is essentially the phenomenon which, above all others, gives us the key to the nature of women” (Weininger 154)

For Tony Tanner, *Emma* spends her time matching people for fun, and she makes fun of the process. She is the only one among the Jane Austen heroines who is rich enough that she does

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁵ Adela Pinch, “Introduction and Notes”, *Austen, Jane, Emma, (1816)*, Ed. by James Kinsley, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. P.151.

not need to marry a suitable man who has property in order to properly exist in society. Marriage, for her, is a game that she can play with other people.

Jane Austen herself believed that her character Emma Woodhouse was not going to appeal to anyone but herself, yet, perhaps surprisingly, she became one of the most popular characters in English literature. Many were the critics who were inspired by this novel and its heroine, as already described in the first chapter of the analysis of this novel. What is in no doubt is the attractiveness for the public of a heroine who can act badly, admitting her mistakes and learning from them, and trying thereby to improve her behavior – even though she does not always succeed. Some critics have recognized this human side of Emma, which is what makes the reader feel closer to her.

4.2.4.2. Self-discovery in *A Sister to Scheherazade*:

Djebar: Out of Algeria by Jane Hiddleston, which deals with several works by Djebar, analyzes, among other novels, *A Sister to Scheherazade*. Hiddleston is interested in the identity and self-discovery of women in *A Sister to Scheherazade*, and her analysis of the novel is conducted primarily from a feminist perspective, drawing on other studies.

This novel, whose action takes place mainly in Algiers and its surroundings, is not only about Isma and Hajila, but also about women, or women from Algeria: mothers, sisters, neighbors, cousins. Like pieces of a mosaic, these women find their place in the story when Isma, the narrator, delves into memories of her childhood. She makes us experience scenes in closed spaces or under an open sky, where she discovers the limitations and conditions of women, sometimes hearing unexpected confessions, not made for her too little ears. Hence, she brings forth other women who in no way constitute a part of her past.

“Patios of my childhood! Settings for the daily assembly, you were at the heart of all the domestic conspiracies which continue to haunt me. Women seated there, sometimes several wives of one man, or grouped in the shadow of the same master-father, elder brother, both earning more respect than a husband, who might be temporary. For the most part, these women were related by marriage- near or distant relatives- but all warmed by the affection they felt for a common ancestor.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Djebar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 76.

Isma and Hajila – these are the two women who are at the center of the story. Being married to the same man, “the man” or “he,” never mentioned by name, unites them, but Hajila ignores the existence of Isma. Wanting to free herself from “the love of the past and the arrested present”.

Isma, an educated woman, chooses Hajila to become her husband’s second wife. Hajila is the woman who makes the separation between Isma and her husband possible. Although Isma walks away and breaks free from married life, she cannot erase Hajila from her thoughts during her journey of self-discovery. In her story, she continues to address her and tell us about her daily life.

“This morning, Hajila, as you stand in the kitchen, which is to be the setting for the drama, you are suddenly, for no reason, overcome by grief. You are clearing the table on which breakfast has been served. Your eyes grow dim. You sniffle. Your fingers, suddenly out of control, chip a cup against the porcelain sink”¹⁰⁷

Hajila, of poor circumstances, is just a convenience for her husband, trapped in his apartment, from where she can even see the sea and part of the city. During the lonely hours, when ‘the man’ and his two children are gone, Hajila moves from room to room, isolated from the world. Only the din and the light from outside reach her.

One day she secretly goes out, when the husband is at work and the children are in school, Hajila sneaks out of her house, removes her veil and walks with her head bare. Thereafter she goes on other outings, even though she decides to give up going out. She goes out again. She takes off her veil. But the implication is there, from the very beginning, that there is a tragedy brewing.

“once out of the house, you never tire of walking; you learn to make discoveries. Objects and people dissolve into shapeless, colourless blobs. Spaces open up through which your body can pass without disturbing anything. You tell yourself that no one takes any notice of you, once you have dropped your veil falls: you are a stranger whom no one knows, moving freely about, with open eyes. Sometimes men stand aside to let you pass. And you sweep majestically by.”¹⁰⁸

It is true that Isma and Hajila are both the Sister and Scheherazade, in turn, they exchange roles with regard to the man, in an atmosphere of feminine solidarity, in order to cross the threshold

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

of the “Harem”, to come out of the shadows into the light, to be reborn by finding their voices outside.

“Scheherazade said to her: My dear sister, I need your help in a matter of great importance; I beg you not to refuse me this. My father is about to take me to the sultan, to be his bride! Let not this news dismay you; listen to me patiently. As soon as I am in the sultan’s presence, I shall beseech him to let you sleep in the bridal chamber, so that I may still enjoy your company tonight. If I obtain this favour, as I hope to do, remember to wake me tomorrow morning, one hour before daybreak!”
So, A Thousand and One Nights¹⁰⁹

Isma and Hajila are at first glance very different. However, their past and their differences are no problem for the future of their lives that is emerging little by little – self-discovery and the coming together that develops into a kind of solidarity. Hajila went through the same places and same experiences that Isma went through and without Hajila Isma has never reached self-discovery and without Isma, Hajila will never reach self-liberation. Despite the fact that they have not met, at least not until the latter part of the novel, Isma begins to regard Hajila as her sister.

“O, my sister from the shantytown, who has followed my footsteps into this tangle of misfortune, I used to walk naked when, as an adolescent, I first met this man! I went to high school and to university, but how was I to walk like this beside the man I loved? There was no tradition to serve me as a beacon. Much later I was to jeer at him, ‘Are men ever really naked? You are never free of fetters, you are bound fast by fears of the tribe, swathed in all the anxieties handed down to you by frustrated mothers, shackled by all your obsessions with some ill-defined elsewhere! ... Show me one really naked man on this earth, and will leave you for that man! I did better still.’”¹¹⁰

The title of the novel, “A Sister to Scheherazade”, refers to the two sisters: Scheherazade and Dinarzade, from the Thousand and One Nights. This is an allusion which, at the beginning of the novel, is not very clear. Without knowing the story of the Thousand and One Nights, it is difficult to understand the designations of the protagonists, Isma and Hajila, sultana or shadow. In the preamble to the novel, we read:

“Isma, Hajila: arabesque of intertwining names. Which of the two is the shadow who will become the sultana’s bride? Which one is to be the bride at dawn, only to dissolve into a shadow before noon?”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

In *The Thousand and One Nights*, one of the sisters, Dinarzade, saves the other, Scheherazade, by awakening her before dawn so that she can continue to tell her tales, thus surviving one more day. Scheherazade, the sultana, is the storyteller that Dinarzade must awaken. Every night Dinarzade watches under the bed of the Sultan and the Sultana, like a shadow.

By introducing the characters of Scheherazade and Dinarzade in the second part of *A Sister to Scheherazade*, the designations “Sister” and “Scheherazade” become clearer, and we understand that this is an identification of the protagonists, Isma and Hajila, to the sisters of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

This intertext of *The Thousand and One Nights* serves, therefore, to shed light on the relationship between Isma and Hajila, on their self-discovery which led them to solidarity. We can see the resemblance between Isma and Dinarzade: Isma helps her sister Hajila at the end of the novel. Both Isma and Dinarzade help their sisters. At the same time, Hajila, like Scheherazade, is the sister who needs and receives help. However, Hiddleston (2006, pp. 93-94) points out that even the seemingly straightforward determination underpinning the connection between Isma and Dinarzade or Hajila and Scheherazade is not so transparent. Isma, by giving the key to the apartment to Hajila, watching her movements, watches and helps her sister, as does Dinarzade. But at the same time, Isma is the storyteller; it is she who narrates, and this narration is her tool of resistance – and the same is true of Scheherazade (Hiddleston, P. 94). Isma is therefore a mirror of the two sisters at the same time. In addition, the protagonists both expose and conceal themselves, rendering the roles of Scheherazade and Dinarzade indistinct, so that not only Isma but also Hajila is reflected in Scheherazade and Dinarzade, alternately or at the same time. Hiddleston sees a sign of this idea that both can identify with the sisters of *One Thousand and One Nights* in the phrase already quoted above:

The choice is not unexpected, and is striking; Scheherazade, a literary myth exemplifying the woman writer, the woman who expresses herself freely by inventing stories according to the situations she encounters in order to be able to live and exist. She is forced to invent and narrate in order to save her life. This idea of emergency writing is the common point between Assia Djebar and Scheherazade, on the one hand; on the other hand, this choice contains hidden meanings about the intelligent woman who refuses to stand idly by and accept her fate as a victim. Instead,

Scheherazade manages, through her wits and with her sister's help, to emerge victorious from certain death. This feminine solidarity applies to our two heroines, Isma and Hajila, who do not consider themselves to be enemies as society demands, but rather two sisters who share the same concerns. What good is a battle of two women for one man to prove who is best, and who will gain his attention? They live only by dependence on him, and represent an object of pleasure despite his abuse:

“Derra: the word used in Arabic to denote the new bride of the same man, the first wife's rival; this word means ‘wound’ - the one who hurts, who cuts open the flesh, or the one who feels hurt, it's the same thing! Is not the second wife, who appears on the other side of the bed, similar to the first one, almost a part of her, the very one who was frigid and against whom the husband raises avenging arms? At which the first wife smiles, an ambiguous smile. The man stands naked. The first wife slips away when the second enters, or makes her exit, only to reappear the following night: small consolation, the Book imposes on the polygamist the duty to bestow on each and every w-wife a strictly equal share of the nights of conjugal love.”¹¹²

With this intertextual call from *Thousand and One Nights*, our writer seeks to restore her text to its oriental character with all its traditions and common Arab cultures. She wants to convey a message through her text by implicitly including all the Arab countries and others concerned.

The solidarity that occurs between the protagonists means that Isma stands with Hajila. Hiddleston (2006, p. 85-88) sees in Djebarian work what she calls the feminist project, that is to say, the solidarity and complicity of women functioning as a means of feminine resistance against social inequality.

In this novel, Djebbar portrays her female characters as rebellious and brave. They valiantly cross the threshold of the male-dominated sphere and challenge the patriarchal concept of female ownership. They refuse to follow the rules laid down for them and strive to be free from all restrictions. For Djebbar, they are. Hajila, Asma, Maryam, Touma, and Kenza represent all women, “except for midwives, and forbidding mothers to stand guard over mothers and those carrion beetles” who were disfigured in “adolescence... cast out from the enclosing warmth of the house” (Djebbar). Their struggle, silence and suffering are indicative of the eternal story of femininity. Their awakening or self-discovery symbolizes a new dawn

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

4.2.5. Narration:

Narration or narratology is a discipline that aims to study the processes of storytelling, techniques and narrative structures in literary texts. It studies the narrative text by obeying the rules of the story according to the narrative content.

This discipline appeared in the 16th century via the works of Russian formalists Victor Chklovski and Boris Eichenbaum with the appearance of the tales of Vladimir Bopp. It was further developed in France, and in 1969 the theorist Tzvetan Todorov coined the term ‘narratology’ in “Grammaire du Décaméron”.

In 1983, Gérard Genette began to further develop this notion by producing new concepts. He found that there are two narratologies:

“Two narratologies: one thematic, in the broad sense (analysis of history or narrative content), the other formal, or rather modal: analysis of the narrative as a mode of ‘representation’ of stories, opposed to non-narrative modes like the dramatic, and undoubtedly some other non-literature”.¹¹³

The narrative voice is one of the essential steps in narratological analysis; it is first necessary to understand that the narrator is not the author of the work but rather a character invented by the person writing the story and who in turn is the one who takes charge of the act of telling this story in the text. So the narrative voice in this case is that of the narrator, who can play a leading role in the events to which she is also a witness as we will see in both of our novels.

4.2.5.1. Narration in *EMMA*:

In his acclaimed essay *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes, writing in the 1960s, stated that, in essence, the impact of a piece of writing depends less upon the thought processes, emotions and intentions of the author than upon the reader’s interpretation of the text; the writer is largely irrelevant¹¹⁴. The works of Jane Austen would seem to give the lie to this theory, since she always gives the impression of being entirely in control, not only of the narrative but of the effect she intends it to have upon the reader. Her precise and – apparently – considered use of language, and

¹¹³ Gérard Genette, *New Narrative Discourse*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ Ronald Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, Ubu Web Papers, 1967.

her deft employment of a variety of techniques in her writing, seem to serve this purpose well. The reader is not left to form his or her own view of the text, or even his or her own emotional responses, but these seem, rather, to be guided by Austen herself. The English novelist Ford Madox Ford said, in the early 20th century, “You must have your eyes forever on your reader,” and this seems born out in Austen’s works.

Emma, like all of Austen’s works, is narrated in the third person, though mostly through the eyes and voice of Emma Woodhouse herself. The reader primarily perceives the world of Highbury as she perceives it. Nevertheless, Austen employs a number of techniques to subvert the reader’s view and to sow doubt in his or her mind about Emma’s worldview and/or her judgement. In this way, the reader’s reactions are subtly and ably manipulated by Austen into more complex forms.

One way of achieving this effect is to periodically switch from Emma’s voice and point of view to objective observation of events (though never to the viewpoint of another character, which we discover only through the characters’ own direct discourse, the veracity of which, of course, depends upon the intention of the character to enlighten or to deceive his or her fellow characters). According to Kuldip Kaur Kuwahara, in her book *Jane Austen at Play: Self-Consciousness, Beginnings, Endings*, In *Emma* the action subtly shifts from Emma’s point of view to the narrator’s and includes both; then very subtly Austen comments on her heroine’s viewpoint ¹¹⁵. Subtlety is key here – the reader’s perception shifts with the author’s, without the reader necessarily noticing the shift.

Emma Woodhouse’s view of events is the lens through which the reader, for the most part, views the world of the novel. She is not an omniscient narrator – and the reader is given a sense of this. Her world-view is coloured by her own self-regard and by her prejudices, and punctured by those moments when the author’s own voice intrudes upon the narrative:

“The real evils, indeed, of Emma’s situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself: these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger,

¹¹⁵ Kuldip Kaur Kuwahara, *Jane Austen at Play: Self-Consciousness, Beginnings, Endings*, New York, Peter Lang Pub Inc, 1993, pp. 50-160.

however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.”¹¹⁶

Nevertheless, the reader remains close to Emma and, in spite of Austen’s conviction that nobody would like her heroine, she retains the reader’s sympathy. This is facilitated by the fact that, however imperfectly, Emma does realize her mistakes and seeks, somewhat falteringly, to become a better person.

“The first error and the worst lay at her door. It was foolish, it was wrong, to take so active a part in bringing any two people together. It was adventuring too far, assuming too much, making light of what ought to be serious, a trick of what ought to be simple. She was quite concerned and ashamed, and resolved to do such things no more.”¹¹⁷

This is a promise which, of course, she finds herself breaking. The journey that Austen takes her heroine on is strewn with pitfalls and instances of backsliding from her resolve. Nevertheless, the reader is carried with her on her journey, perhaps because Austen paints a picture of Emma with which most of us can identify – struggling towards betterment, falling by the wayside, but getting up and trying again.

Characteristic of – and crucial to the narration in – all of Austen’s works is the subtle yet razor-sharp use of irony to undercut her own narrative. Most famously, the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* claims that “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” Austen’s use of the word *truth*, further buttressed by *universally acknowledged* sends a clear signal to the reader that, by its very absoluteness, this statement is being set up by the author to be progressively probed and demolished in the pages that are to follow. It serves as an enticement for the reader – a tantalizing hint of what is to follow. Similarly, the first line of *Emma* – “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.” – leads the reader to anticipate that this view of her life, her own view, will be chipped

¹¹⁶ Austen, *Emma*, p. 1. Kindle Edition.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66. Kindle Edition.

away at through the novel and that she will, indeed, find much to vex her. The fact that she is perhaps not as clever as she likes to think is shown again and again as the narrative progresses. She is, quite simply, often wrong. She is wrong in assuming, without any evidence, that Harriet, although illegitimate, is the child of a gentleman – and compounds this error by misjudging Robert Martin, a mere farmer, as being beneath Harriet in terms of social status. She is equally wrong in interpreting Mr. Elton's solicitousness towards Harriet as a sign of his love for her when it is she herself who is the object of his affection. Again, she entirely misreads the emotions and aspirations of both Frank Churchill and his (admittedly secret) love, Jane Fairfax; she incorrectly surmises that Jane has had an affair with Mr. Dixon and that Frank is available and on the marriage market. Finally, she gets the wrong end of the stick when Harriet declares her love for an unnamed gentleman. Emma assumes this to be Frank, who has rescued her from a threatening encounter with some gypsies, when it is, in fact, Mr. Knightley. Perhaps most fundamentally of all, she is blind to her own emotions, not recognizing the feelings she has for Mr. Knightley or those that he has for her until Knightley confesses his love for her at the end of the novel. For a woman who considers herself both clever and an expert in the art of matchmaking, this catalogue of errors of judgement, often with consequences for others that she barely acknowledges, paints a starkly ironic counterpoint to the opening of the novel, where Emma's misplaced self-regard is the first thing that we read.

Apart from Emma herself, the most important voice that we hear is that of Mr. Knightley. He serves as a prick to Emma's conscience – almost as a one-man Greek chorus. His relationship with Emma throughout the novel is one of openness and frankness. He is quite prepared to tell Emma when he thinks she is wrong (though she often contests his point of view) and, such is their friendship, Emma receives his criticisms without rancor. Moreover, he is, more often than not, right. Of the friendship between Emma and Harriet, he says to Mrs. Weston "I think they will neither of them do the other any good." This is swiftly born out when Emma dissuades Harriet, based upon her lofty fantasies about Harriet's unknown past, from marrying the supposedly inferior Robert Martin. Unlike Emma, the much more clear-sighted and realistic Mr. Knightley considers Robert Martin a perfectly good match for Harriet. Of Emma, he says to Mrs Weston:

"Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. At ten years old, she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled her sister at

seventeen. She was always quick and assured: Isabella slow and diffident. And ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all.”¹¹⁸

In Mr. Knightley, the reader can find a trustworthy voice – one whose judgement, in contrast to Emma herself, can be relied upon. Yet at the same time as he criticizes and admonishes Emma, his friendship and regard for her are never in any doubt, and this serves to help in keeping the reader broadly in sympathy with her: if the wise Mr. Knightley continues to hold her in high regard, how can the reader do less? This is why, when, at a picnic at Box Hill, Emma eventually goes too far in publicly humiliating the mild and good-hearted Miss Bates over her tendency to talk interminably about trivia, and Mr. Knightley rebukes her with true outrage, it provides a moment of high drama and a marker for the reader of how far Emma has allowed herself to stray from the norms of kindness and propriety.

“Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation. situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her—and before her niece, too—and before others, many of whom (certainly some,) would be entirely guided by your treatment of her.”¹¹⁹

This is notable for the fact that it is driven home to Emma with great force, and by someone whose judgement she – albeit grudgingly sometimes – respects. Its effect on Emma is striking: she is mortified by her own behavior and cries all the way home from the picnic.

“She was vexed beyond what could have been expressed—almost beyond what she could conceal. Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118. Kindle Edition.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178. Kindle Edition.

circumstance in her life. She was most forcibly struck. The truth of this representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart.”¹²⁰

The narrative voice here shifts from Emma to the author without the reader even noticing. From Emma to Jane Austen the narrative continues unveiling the truth of Emma’s self-discovery. Here the reader sees in Emma not just her most extreme manifestation of her remorse, but also, perhaps, an inkling that her feelings for her accuser run deeper than she has hitherto acknowledged to herself.

The arrival of Frank Churchill in Highbury is preceded by much anticipation, skillfully built up by Austen as much by what she leaves out as by what she writes. His letters are eagerly seized upon by the whole village, rather than just his father and stepmother, the Westons, and his eventual appearance is several times delayed, tantalizing and frustrating the expectations of both the characters and the reader. In fact, when he finally arrives, expectations have been raised so high that he seems a disappointment – amiable and good-looking, but unremarkable. Here, Austen is playing a game with the reader: while the novel is replete with misunderstandings and false assumptions, in Frank, we have a character who is actively practising a deception – albeit one with no malicious intent. His partner in deception is Jane Fairfax; they are engaged but are keeping the fact secret, for fear of the wrath of Frank’s formidable aunt and benefactor, Mrs. Churchill.

Jane’s arrival is also teased in advance, but in a somewhat comedic way, through the enthusiastic recounting of every mundane detail of her life and activities by her aunt, Miss Bates. This alone dims Emma’s view of her – a view that worsens upon their final meeting, whereupon Emma sees that Jane matches her in beauty and outstrips her in accomplishment. Moreover, Emma judges her as overly reserved, and unwilling to share information and gossip with the people of Highbury. This is, of course, in part due to the secret that she and Frank share.

Most of the false assumptions and misunderstandings in the novel arise from flaws in the characters themselves, such as Mr. Elton’s delusion that he can woo Emma or Mr. Woodhouse’s belief that marriage is a sort of tragedy both for the parties involved and for those (primarily himself) that they leave behind as they embark on married life, Frank and Jane’s story adds a

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179. Kindle Edition.

deeper element of mystery, since it involves deliberate deception. *Emma* is, in fact, a novel interlaced with as yet unanswered questions, whether it be the identity of the person who anonymously sends Jane a pianoforte (in fact, Frank), the truth of Harriet's parentage or the air of mystery and perhaps skullduggery surrounding the death of Mrs. Churchill. It is questions such as these – blank pages in the narrative – into which the author pours her characters' hopes, delusions and suspicions. It is within these blank spaces that the characters are revealed.

Austen presents the residents of Highbury as engaged in a sort of semi-comedic social fugue – a dance of social interaction, gossip, speculation and misunderstanding, with Emma, somewhat artlessly, and sometimes irresponsibly, trying to be its choreographer. In his book *Jane Austen* (2005), Robert Irvine suggests that Highbury itself takes the form of a distinct character in *Emma*¹²¹. Certainly, it seems a highly self-contained world, with few of the major characters ever leaving, and then not for long. Emma herself at one point declares that she has never seen the sea, while her father rarely shows any inclination even to leave his house, let alone the village. Visitors from beyond the village are received with enthusiasm and curiosity, and everyone in the village seems to know everyone else's business and to be happy to have their business known by all. Their close symbiosis reveals itself through the narrative when facts stated are often accompanied by adjectives which seem to reveal the view of the village as a whole. Even when we are seeing the world through Emma's eyes, it is clear when she is reflecting the shared view of the village as a whole (which she, for the most part, shares) and when she is indulging her own personal views. Both from a narrative point-of-view for the reader, and from the character's view of herself, Emma is the heart of this communal organism. The novel is often described as a 'comedy of manners', and Emma herself, through Austen's narrative technique, is the maypole around which the whole village dances – as indeed does the reader.

4.2.5.2. Narration in *A SISTER TO SCHEHERAZADE*:

According to Gérard Genette (1983), there are two types of story: one with a narrator absent from the story he/she is telling, the other with a narrator present as a character in the story. The narrator in *A Sister to Scheherazade* represented by Isma, is the focal point of the narrative; she is tasked by the author with telling the story regardless of whether it is fictional or real. If the narrator

¹²¹ Robert P Irvine, **Jane Austen**, London, New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 91-142.

confesses her own story, she is self-governing. We have already seen that the narrative voice, the voice of Isma, is addressed to Hajila or to herself. Isma therefore tells her own story as well as that of Hajila. Let's consider how the narrator's speech varies between different personal pronouns. Indeed, the personal pronoun of the first person singular, the "I", dominates the story, followed in frequency by that of the second person singular: the "you". Isma, the "I", makes Hajila appear by familiarity with her:

"Here am I speaking to you Hajila. As if, in truth, I were causing you to exist."¹²²

There is, however, a short portion of *The Man* chapter where Isma decides not to speak from familiarity with Hajila. This happens when Isma recounts some childhood memories of Hajila, which follow the scene of the rape. As she recounts them, Isma begins, as always, by addressing her familiarly:

"You would hurry to join her when you were little, Hajila, and even as an adolescent You would listen to your mother story [...]"¹²³

But in this chapter, unlike in the rest of the novel, Isma ends up changing "you" into "she":

"the long wake of misfortune: it was as if the visitors had been waiting for this, Hajila tried to find her father, her father's body, the body they had buried...[...]"¹²⁴

This change from "you" to "her" is interpreted by Prabhu (2002, p. 72-73) as a desire on the part of Isma to separate Hajila the child from Hajila the adult, and thus to appropriate the image of Hajila the adult, the wife¹²⁵. Such an interpretation is linked to the control position that Hiddleston discussed. As the sole narrator, Isma is in control of the story. Perhaps we can see from the following sentence that Isma herself is aware of this power she has when she represents Hajila in the story, especially when she uses the word "create":

"Here am I speaking to you Hajila. As if, in truth, I were causing you to exist." (p. 82).

¹²² Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 82.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

¹²⁵ Anjali Prabhu, "Sisterhood and Rivalry in-between the Shadow and the Sultana: A Problematic of Representation in *Ombre sultane*," *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 2002, pp. 69-91.

We are talking about two stories, that of Isma and that of Hajila. But we might as well speak of stories that come together, seeming to become, or else to be becoming, one. During the first part of the novel, the story of Hajila, appearing every two chapters, stands separate from that of Isma, until the eleventh chapter titled *The Return*. This chapter begins with the sentence:

“Hajila, you did not know that I had returned to this city after so many years away.
(p. 69).

As we see, the “I” and “you” of the two previously separate stories are found together in one and the same chapter. The meeting of “I” and “you” begins here in Isma’s imagination, evidently caused by her return. *The Return* is also the chapter where Hajila first hears Isma’s name, which happens when she hears the husband say her name. Hajila therefore learns of the existence of Isma. The encounter, initially abstract, will eventually develop into a real encounter, which will take place at the beginning of the last part.

In the first chapters, the stories of the two women are contrasted and the differences between Isma and Hajila are very apparent. First, we see Hajila in the closed apartment. Isma writes:

“what sinister ceremonial haunts these newly-whitened walls?.”¹²⁶

This confinement becomes even more evident since the next chapter describes Isma, outside, being able to move freely. She remembers days gone by:

“O memory; summer days or rainy days, I saunter through the streets of some capital city;[...].”¹²⁷

In addition, Hajila, who, unlike Isma, did not choose her husband herself, finds herself in a marriage that lacks love and tenderness, while Isma bathes in loving memories, describing her enjoyment, of the bodies of lovers. These memories that she shares with the husband, whom she left, are written in the present tense, as are the scenes between Hajila and the husband. We see this use of the present as a way of reinforcing the contrast between Isma and Hajila in their relationship with the husband.

¹²⁶ Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 10.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

From the chapter *The Return*, it is no longer a question of contrasting the two women and their differences. Moreover, their differences seem to be diminishing, even disappearing. There is a search for resemblance when the narrator shows that she and Hajila have some common traits:

“the smell of beer sickens you, Hajila, as it does for me. You make an effort to tolerate it. Afterwards you have to wash your hands and face and rinse out your mouth, even if it’s the other person who’s drinking”¹²⁸

We can note that the memories that Isma continues to evoke after the change of narrative form, after the mixture of “I” and “you”, no longer concern the husband and their past love. On the other hand, the reminiscences evoke her childhood and especially the women with whom she was surrounded. This means that the “we” she used when recounting the past with the husband is no longer relevant. Here is an example:

“All the gentle words welling up in his throat draw us close against each other. We crumble these words as we simultaneously crumple the sheets that unfold us each night.”¹²⁹

This “We” of the past dissipates, stops with the change of form and allows it to be replaced by the “we” of the two co-wives:

“There has been no real communication between us, either by word or gesture. We have avoided any confrontation and scarcely spoken a word until the final act of the drama, when we sat side by side in the hammam,... Have we reversed our roles?”¹³⁰

When the narrator no longer separates the “I” and the “you” in the story, a bond can develop between the two women. Perhaps it even manifests itself through this suppressed separation. Either way, one of the clearest moments of complicity is that of the hammam scene, where Hajila receives the key to the apartment. There are others as well, for example during *The Drama of Part One*. In this chapter, we find the sentence:

“The sun is watching you, O Hajila, as you stand in for me tonight.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Isma continues and explains that a man cannot deprive Hajila of her feelings about the world outside. Then we read what Hajila thinks, but doesn't dare say to her husband:

“The only reason why I'm not out of doors now, 'you would like to say softly, 'is because it's dark!' Let us imagine days which have no nights, O my sisters! Dusk would merge with dawn! The man would remain in this kitchen, soaking himself in alcohol and potions, while I would never weary of the world! ... And the sun watching me!”¹³²

The sense of bond between the two women might not have been so strong without the variation of “I” and “you”. If Hajila's story, for example, had been told in the third person by Isma, who would have continued to use the “I” when telling her own story, would their complicity have seemed so clear to us? Replacing the personal pronoun “you” with “she”, proximity would have been lost, giving rise to distance. It would have been a description rather than an attempt to identify with Hajila. If, on the other hand, both had been described in the third person, the position of control could not have manifested itself since it occurs when Isma speaks for Hajila, without Hajila being able to speak for herself. This means that the voice which varies between the pronouns has an importance in relation to the content. In the latter case, it is the very use of “I” and “you” that makes the interpretation of the control position possible.

The first and last parts of the book deal only with the story of Isma and Hajila. In contrast, the middle part, *The Rampage of Dawn*, is where Isma's presence is less apparent and Hajila only emerges on the last page. So it is no longer her own experiences that are at the center, but those of other women from her childhood. Here, for the most part, the storytelling seems to be in the third person, but it's just an appearance – there is still a first-person narrator.

This intermediate part begins with the meeting with the sisters of the Thousand and One Nights. This is when we understand Isma's identification with Dinarzade. But before continuing on this subject it should be mentioned that a clear intervention by the narrator in the first pages of this part is missing. Almost everything is written in the third person. Despite this, we can sense the presence of the narrator in the questions asked.

¹³² Ibid.

The following exclamation makes the narrator's presence noticeable:

“To throw light on the role of Dinarzade, as the night progresses!”¹³³

The next chapter, *The Child*, only reveals Isma's presence through one “we”, while the writing of the next chapter is entirely in the third person.

The chapters after *The Sister* are devoted to the women of Isma's childhood. The narrator of these chapters is unmistakably Isma, so the narrative act is performed in the first person. What is interesting is that this placement, in a sense, speaks for itself: first, the sentence that ends *The Sister* and then Isma's cavalcade of memories. The sentence explains that Isma is Dinarzade, the sister who brings out all the women of her past, who brings them together. Women or victims.

But, to draw upon Hiddleston's idea, Isma, in addition to rounding up these women – victims – of the past, tells their stories. She can also be identified with Scheherazade since she makes up her story. So despite the fact that *The Sister* deals with the role of Dinarzade, which is quite clear, we can conclude that Isma's narrative voice makes the identification of either sister ambiguous¹³⁴.

In short, Isma is the sole narrator of the entire story although she is not clearly visible on every page as she is absent and present in the story at the same time.

Another important factor in narratology is the time of the story. In *A Sister to Scheherazade*, the events as presented chapter by chapter do not fully correspond to the chronology of history, in other words, the main story is interrupted by anticipations and flashbacks. As for the history of Hajila, we find temporal indications which allow us to establish a chronology of events. The story begins with a chapter where we follow Hajila into the apartment on an ordinary day. In this chapter, there are no specific time indications, but we understand, as we continue reading, that it is a day before the start of the outings. On the other hand, the following chapters which deal with its history are full of temporal indications.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹³⁴ J. Hiddleston, *Assia Djébar: Out of Algeria*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006, p. 5.

Unlike this clarity of temporal order that marks Hajila's story, we note a difficulty in putting the events of Isma's story in chronological order. The difficulty is not exactly a lack of timing. As we read we come across phrases like "every night", "these days", "on a summer vigil" or "a whole white winter". The problem is not knowing when events happen in relation to other events but in relation to certain periods of her life. Did they happen at the start of the marriage, after Meriem's birth, or some time before the separation? In particular, the chapters of the first part which deal with the marriage between Isma and the husband are difficult to put in order. These are the chapters *The Room*, *Sails*, *The Other* and *The Words*. It is impossible to say which of the events described in these chapters comes first, which follows and so on. In one specific case, at the end of the *Sails* chapter, it is possible to see that the scene described is after the birth of the daughter Meriem. Despite this, we cannot set the scene within a larger timeline. The fact that the daughter Meriem is absent from the three chapters *The Room*, *The Other* and *The Words* does not allow us to say that the events of these chapters predate her birth, and therefore precede the events of the *Veil* chapter. Meriem is simply not mentioned and we do not know the reason.

The chronology of Isma's story therefore remains a bit hazy compared to that of Hajila's story. Why is there this difference between the two stories? This can be explained by a desire on the part of the author to make the narrator of the story more authentic. The way Isma remembers days gone by is the same as it is in reality. We remember events of personal importance. One evoked memory leads to another memory, and the evoked memories do not necessarily come in chronological order. This is the impression Isma gives when telling her story – that is, she is recounting what she remembers right now, which could explain the lack of timeline. The same is true of the childhood memories of the second part. These memories seem to be told without precise chronology. We do not know, for example, whether the complaint episode comes before or after the excluded woman episode. As to the decipherable chronology of Hajila's story, we can imagine that in order to be able to gaze at another person's story, so as to have control of the story, Isma indicates the order of events. This difference between the two stories may therefore manifest Isma's position of control.

We have to note that about 70 pages of Part I deal with the story of Hajila while about 30 pages deal with that of Isma. As for the pages that deal with Hajila's story, more than half of the pages are scenes and the rest are summaries. The scenes and summaries therefore determine the

pace of Hajila's story. Most often the summary forms the background of the scene and covers a smaller part of the chapter. Scenes are normally written in the present tense while some summaries are in the past tense, but this is not always the case. For example, there is the scene that introduces the chapter Outside, an analysis of the past which tells of the first visit to the apartment that Hajila made, accompanied by mother Touma.

Finally, according to Genette, every story has a part of the storytelling which is a representation of action and event. Above all, it presents events unfolding over time; that is to say, faced with a statement, the reader expects an event to unfold. The description, which is a representation of an object and of characters, asserts statements of state, presents arrangements in space, or that of a physical and moral character becomes a portrait.

4.3. Results of Comparison

After the in-depth study of the work of Assia Djebar, *A Sister to Scheherazade* and *Emma* by Jane Austen, we have found a number of similarities and differences that we are going to illustrate:

4.3.1. Similarities:

In both novels *A Sister to Scheherazade* and *Emma*, writers discussed the conflictual relationship between women and women, women and men and women and society in their novels. These are stories that happen every day to hundreds of women who echo the drama of their society and their country.

In spite of many stark differences in tone and intent between the two novels, there is much which, at a deeper level, is strikingly similar. Both centres around marriage motivated primarily by social and financial considerations. In all of Emma's attempts at match-making, as much consideration is given to the financial means and social standing of potential spouses as to their character, looks and compatibility. Emma initially sabotages the marriage of her friend Harriet and the farmer Robert Martin because, in spite of his amiable character and a decent income, she (erroneously) considers Martin to be Harriet's social inferior:

"He is very plain, undoubtedly—remarkably plain:—but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect

much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility.”¹³⁵

In *A Sister to Scheherazade*, Hajila’s family push her into a loveless marriage to a rich man in the hope that it will raise them from poverty and add to their social prestige:

“The whole family was excited at the forthcoming wedding arranged so hurriedly, as soon as this unforeseen suitor had introduced himself on his return from a long period spent abroad. A widower or divorced, with two children. from one wife or two, how could they find out? who was going to inquire? “My daughter will have room for everything in that kitchen!” Touma concluded. “Truly blessed be Hajila, my first- born, so aptly named! When I expressed the wish on the day of her birth that she would find herself in Paradise one day, I could never have imagined such a home.”¹³⁶

There is also a sense of social and physical confinement in both novels. Again, it is more overt in *A Sister to Scheherazade*, where the husband’s apartment, while undoubtedly luxurious, is effectively a prison for Hajila. Her life consists of looking after the house, and the children of her husband, from his previous marriage to Isma. The husband – her jailer – is unnamed throughout. He is a sinister silhouette – a baleful shadow, approaching footsteps, stern silence. When, after months, he finally has sex with Halija, it is cold, unloving and mechanical. To Hajila, it feels like rape. Hajila’s excursions from the apartment are kept secret from everyone within – she is terrified of discovery, only leaving the apartment when her husband is away at work, heavily veiled and terrified when anyone, particularly men, notices or addresses her. Even at home, she feels constantly watched, by the husband, by his children and by the concierge of the apartment block:

“You who can all go forth into the sunshine! Every morning, you splash water over your face, neck and arms. These are not the ablutions preparatory to prostrating yourself in prayer; no, they are a preparation for the act of leaving the house. Oh, to be able to leave the house! Once you have put on your suits, knotted your ties, you can cross the threshold, every threshold. The street awaits you ... You can present yourself to the world, you fortunate males! Every morning of every day, you can convey your bodies into the dazzling light, every day that Allah creates! ...”¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Austen, *Emma*, p. 26. Kindle Edition.

¹³⁶ Djebbar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 14.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Djebar also uses women's body language. This language is a way women use to express their pain, sadness, joy and happiness. Being aware of the importance of body language, Djebar depicts the screams, moans, breathing, and screams of women:

“You clench your teeth. Rape! Is this rape? People assert that he is your husband, your mother always refers to ‘your master, your lord’ ... He has forced you down on to the bed, you try to fight him off, finding unsuspected sources of strength.”¹³⁸

The only place women enjoy the freedom of their bodies is the Turkish bath. The bath, which is the witness of all freedoms of women, is the only place where they can be freer even than their homes. They exhibit their bodies that are forbidden for others to see and accepted as sin, without hesitation. Women behave very comfortably in the bathhouse; they use words they cannot utter in their homes like prisoners. However, although they are only among women, they still speak in a low voice when voicing sexual words. At the same time, women express their views freely in these baths and generally unite in the idea of unity against male domination. Another place where women can be free apart from baths is holy places. They often go to holy places to see each other again. Their purpose of going there is to see their friends, to listen to their troubles and to voice their thoughts away from men. For this reason, after the baths, these places become places where sorrow and pain that are not described anywhere else is expressed:

“The Turkish bath offers a secret consolation to sequestered woman (such as organ music offered in former times to forced religious recluses).”¹³⁹

In *Emma*, the village of Highbury, too, feels, at least to the modern reader, confined and claustrophobic. Emma – near the top of society in terms of class and wealth – at one point announces that she has never seen the sea. Departures from Highbury, such as Mr. Elton's trip to London, are few, brief, and much commented upon. Arrivals from outside, such as the visits of Jane Fairfax and, in particular, Frank Churchill, are eagerly anticipated by the entire community. The action (such as it is) takes place entirely within the village and the houses of its inhabitants, and we never catch even a glimpse of the world outside. Although there is little or no sense that the people of Highbury feel trapped, the smallness of their world, the essentially repetitive nature of their actions and the fascination that they show to visiting outsiders suggests an unexpressed

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

hunger for novelty, variety and broader experience. The only way to practise their favourite rituals is through tea parties or tea gatherings:

“Tea was made downstairs, biscuits and baked apples and wine before she came away: amazing luck in some of her throws: and she inquired a great deal about you, how you were amused, and who were your partners.”¹⁴⁰

There is also, just as in *A Sister to Scheherazade*, a sense that everyone is being observed by everyone else. Everyone’s business is known, and their movements are noted and commented upon. Moreover, everyone’s family background, social connections, income and future financial prospects are a subject of open scrutiny and shared intelligence among the entire community, with no sense of delicacy or regard given to what we would now regard as private information. In the late 18th century, the philosopher Jeremy Bentham published his ideas for a ‘panopticon’ prison, where all of the inmates could be watched all of the time. Bentham’s panopticon-prison exercise similar power deployed by the mere means of sight is the precursor of CCTV in our contemporary society:¹⁴¹

“to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power; the prisoner, by watching himself, becomes the principle of his own subject.”¹⁴²

We also found that both novels are fundamentally about the issue of female agency. Both Emma Woodhouse and Isma are women who enjoy relatively high degrees of freedom, and indeed power, within the limits of the worlds they inhabit. Other characters in *Emma*, such as the respectable but poor Miss Bates, spinster of the parish, and especially Harriet Smith, of unknown parentage and few social connections beyond her friendship with Emma, have no such freedom of action. Emma does not need to find a husband – and, early in the novel, declares a disinclination ever to marry – whereas Harriet has no choice. Miss Bates, who has missed any chance of marrying, faces an impoverished old age; unless she finds a husband, this is the fate that awaits Harriet too. Similarly, in *A Sister to Scheherazade*, Halija appears wholly without agency – a matrimonial offering from her family to a rich, unloving husband.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Penguin Books, 1977.

¹⁴² David Murakami Wood, “Beyond the Panopticon? Foucault and Surveillance Studies,” *Space, Knowledge and Power Foucault and Geography*, Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden, Routledge, 2016, pp. 245–258.

An interesting parallel between Emma and Isma is revealed in the way they both initially abuse their agency to interfere in the lives of their powerless peers. Emma, convinced of her own (in fact, erroneous) insights, dissuades Harriet from marrying Robert Martin. Isma engineers the marriage of Hajila and ‘the man’ in order to facilitate her own freedom. This contrast between those women with some degree of agency and those without any is demonstrated with particular starkness in *A Sister to Scheherazade*. The novel employs an unusual and distinctive narrative structure: Isma’s story, and that of Hajila, are told in alternating and highly contrasting chapters. Isma’s tale is one of love, sex and freedom – of bright colours and warm sunshine:

“Every day, in every street of every town in which I might happen to be. Ever walking and ever in love. The sun would look down on me. As I roved, with an insatiable appetite for the wind, new prospects and fresh skies, I forgot the times of meals, an important appointment, some humdrum sedentary task. The intense light made me inveterately absent-minded.”¹⁴³

Hajila’s is one of confinement and cold, loveless silence. It comes as a shock to the reader to realise that they are both, at different times, in fact, married to the same man, though in very different circumstances:

“This morning, Hajila, as you stand in the kitchen, which is to be the setting for the drama, you are suddenly, for no reason, overcome by grief. You are clearing the table on which breakfast has been served. Your eyes grow dim. You sniffle. Your fingers, suddenly out of control, chip a cup against the porcelain sink”¹⁴⁴

This contrast in agency between the two women is emphasised by the fact that while Isma tells her own story, in the first person, she also narrates Hajila’s story, in the third. Hence, Hajila has no voice of her own; she is the slave of her husband and a puppet of the more powerful Isma’s machinations:

“Did I intend to offer you up as a sacrifice to the man? Did I intend to model myself on the queens of the harem? These, by presenting a new bride to their master, were in fact liberating themselves at the expense of a pseudo rival...Was I, in my turn, reaffirming my power?”¹⁴⁵

What we are presented with in both novels is a hierarchy of power among the female characters, but one in which even the most powerful remain impelled in their actions by the yet more powerful external forces of a male-dominated society. Another highlight in Assia Djébar’s

¹⁴³ Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 134.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

narratives is the number of women. In almost all of her narratives, women outnumber men. The reason for this is that Djébar, who managed to silence men through her novels, wanted to give women more voice.

“In our time, little and young girls - shortly before the motherland shaken the colonial yoke - were able to use four different languages to express their desires, when four women were still regarded as rights to men: French in secret correspondence, Arabic when we direct our suppressed sighs to God. Libyan Berber language when we think we have reached the oldest of our goddesses. Whether young or old or The fourth language used by all women, whether confined to home or semi-free, was body language (...)” (Djébar, 2003, p. 211).

Djébar made us experience the situation of Algerian women through her work. Through the female characters in the novel, we have come to know the difficult condition of women, representative of Algerian traditions and culture. Woman and Algerian are two identities that are deeply part of the narrator’s being; who will later tell us about the drama experienced by its protagonist, however, Algerian society does not easily grant freedom to women, they are forced to stay behind the walls, condemned and drowned in the thickness of the shadow and silence.

While Austen’s Emma enjoys using her supposed skills as a match-maker, she is still serving – albeit badly – the requirements of the age that a woman needs to marry to obtain, at the very least, security in life. A happy marriage, should it be achieved, is not an alternative to a socially and financially appropriate one, but merely an added bonus. Isma, too, is forced to find a replacement for herself in her husband’s household in order to gain the freedom that she desires, and this drives her manipulative actions towards Hajila.

In spite of all else, neither novel is without hope, nor are the female protagonists beyond redemption. Hajila’s frightened yet daring pushes for freedom in her confinement are a testament to her courage and resilience.

“... I can tell at first glance. where the woman is going from shadow to sunshine, from silence to speech, from night to truth stripped bare. The first step reveals both the silhouette and the hope”¹⁴⁶

Harriet eventually finds love with Robert Martin. Both Emma and Isma recognise and make amends for their manipulative arrogance and compliance to the forces driving their actions by seeking to put things right. None of the principal female protagonists are flawless nor entirely

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

without agency – they are stirringly human, capable of growth and of displaying some degree of strength within the oppressive worlds which they inhabit. Beyond the trials through which they must pass, this seems to be the ultimate message of both *Emma* and *A Sister to Scheherazade*.

4.3.2. Differences:

Austen's female creations reflect an emphasis on women's ability to draw and paint, to sew and embroider, to sing and play the pianoforte, as well as to their elegance and beauty. Assia Djébar, by contrast, was committed to the enhancement of women's rights and freedoms within traditional Muslim society, and her work is redolent with this commitment.

After the comparison that we have done between both novels, differences between *A Sister to Scheherazade* and *Emma* therefore, manifold. Assia Djébar's voice is strident in its plea for women's emancipation. Her protagonists – Hajila in particular – suffer and yearn for freedom. Austen's protagonists, by comparison, seem broadly contented with their lot; though they are aware of the social and economic bearing upon them, they do not see any alternative to securing a decent future through marriage and willingly participate in this game. Emma Woodhouse, herself financially prosperous, attractive, reasonably accomplished and self-assured, positively relishes arranging matrimonial matches for others. For her, it is, indeed, a game. Curiously, this does not match Jane Austen's own experience. She was the daughter of an impoverished clergyman, who died before she wrote *Emma*. She was, thus respectable, but poor, and remained unmarried, seeking to earn a living through her writing, though, of all of her works, only *Pride and Prejudice* sold moderately well during her lifetime, and she is estimated never to have earned more than 600 pounds over the entire span of her career. In circumstance – though assuredly not in character or capacity – her life comes closest to that of Miss Bates in *Emma*. Nevertheless, on the surface, Austen seems to accept the situation of women, whereas Djébar rails against it. Djébar's female characters battle, emotionally, and internally, against their sufferings, their small acts of defiance and furtive grasping at moments of freedom are both heartbreaking and inspiring. Austen was, of course, as constrained as her characters by the social conventions of the time, whereas Djébar, thanks to her education, success, and relative freedom, was freed, financially, socially and intellectually, to pursue her cause with passion and even stridency. Austen's ideas, therefore, are conveyed more subtly, through the subtext underlying her very proper prose, and above all by the

masterful use of irony. Certainly, from a 21st-century perspective, her famous opening line from *Pride and Prejudice*, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” seems to strongly hint to the modern reader that she intends to test this ‘truth’ (which seems to come straight from the mouth of Mrs. Bennet), perhaps to destruction. Similarly, the opening line of *Emma*, “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich,” immediately casts doubt upon its own veracity. While Djebbar is free to assault the bastions of rigid, oppressive culture, Austen’s ideas, perhaps less distinctively formulated, seem to arise from instinct, and from a sort of questioning acceptance of her own life. There is no sense in Austen that she wishes to change the world about which she writes – probably an inconceivable notion at the time – simply that she finds its assumptions amusingly questionable.

It is unclear whether Austen and Djebbar were aware of this concept, but Highbury is a form of panopticon, where everyone sees, knows and comments upon everything done by everyone else, meaning that nobody (especially the women, of course) dare step out of line:

“And I am quite serious too, I assure you,” replied Mrs. Elton gaily, “in resolving to be always on the watch, and employing my friends to watch also, that nothing really unexceptionable may pass us.”¹⁴⁷

In *A Sister to Scheherazade*, Isma is the one who sees others, describes them, narrates their stories, manipulates their lives and comments on their actions.

As previously noted, the mores, conventions and dictates of the society in which they live and work must inevitably shape the style of any author’s work, and the thoughts and actions of their protagonists. It is significant that Jane Austen lived and worked within the society about which she wrote, whereas Assia Djebbar escaped hers, and is commenting from outside it, though drawing upon knowledge and experience of her past; *A Sister to Scheherazade* was written in Paris. This gave Djebbar both an outside perspective and a freedom to express herself which was unavailable to Austen. Hence, Djebbar’s writing is highly sensual, and in places sexual; both Isma and Hajila seem to gorge on the fruits of their senses – light, colour, sound – though Isma does so from a position of freedom whereas Hajila has to snatch her experiences in secret during her brief escapes from domestic captivity. Austen, by contrast, dwells little upon the senses; her protagonist, Emma herself, spends much more time analysing character, motive and social propriety, often

¹⁴⁷ Austen, *Emma*, p. 143. Kindle Edition.

debating such matters with her friend Mr. Knightley, or passing her wisdom down to her rather submissive friend, Harriet



CONCLUSION

At the end of this research, we can claim to have answered faithfully the questions asked in the problem. What societal constraints shaped the lives of these women? Why did marriage emerge as the only route to freedom? How do both authors portray the strategies these women use to achieve self-discovery and empowerment? Answering these questions would not be possible without applying feminist criticism, a socio-critical analysis and a psychoanalytical approach. In this regard we tried to answer these questions by giving detailed information about the social environment of that time including education, class differences, concepts of family and friendship, marriage, customs, manipulation, place of women, male characters, and self-discovery in the nineteenth century. We are also concerned with the root of their friendship and its influence on their modification. Based on our main characters' relations with each other and with the other characters, we observe their personalities and events since we give special care to the characters' modification. This study is the only study in its field that compared between an English writer like Jane Austen and a French Arabic writer as Assia Djebar and our results are the first in this field of comparison but of course our results are not complete and we still need other studies to be done to enhance and enrich this area of comparison. There have been so many challenges in this study manifested in collecting references of Assia Djebar because her books were in French and were not translated into English or Turkish. Also all the studies that were done on her books most of them were in French so there was a limitation in references of *A Sister to Scheherazade*.

In both novels, female characters manage to see their mistakes and repair them, and some of them fail to complete the process of achieving self-awareness. It is great to see the end of their journey of self-discovery. There are a great many aspects that make the characters reach self-discovery. Very different in personality, the main characters of the two novels nevertheless show some similarities.

At the beginning of the novel, both of them seem to forget their own lives exploring other lives and getting involved in their private affairs

We turned to the socio-critical approach in order to unveil the status of Algerian and British women in their respective societies, and also carried out a study of the social status of women in the lifetimes of both writers. We discussed marriage in terms of the patriarchal relationship and of women's economic dependence on men. We showed through both novels how women manipulate other women in order to free themselves or to have authority over other women's lives and can also arrive at self-realisation and seek forgiveness through self-discovery. We also dealt with the concept of feminism and how our writers considered feminists through their writings, and towards the end, we carried out a comparative study between both novels in terms of narration and the main narrator characters Isma and Emma. We also tackled the similarities and differences between both writers and their characters in the novels. We showed that Emma and Isma are powerful women who are free and manipulative of other characters (Harriet and Hajila) who are weak and have no power to act.

In the first chapter, the status of women was symbolized from the fifties and sixties of the last century and had a relation with feminism. Feminism in general is defined as a social movement. It is from this movement that its founders try to represent the role of women in societies.

At the time when the concept of gender (gender in English) appeared in literary criticism, feminism was more and more imposed on Western Europe and North America. In the theories which result from it, a more precise terminology of feminism made it possible to relate the English terms of female, feminine, women, woman, and feminist literature. It is from these new concepts that feminism has appropriated the term gender, which is opposed to that of sex, and which distinguishes the biological oppositions between male and female and the particularities of gender, which themselves distinguish between a socio-cultural point of view of "masculinity" and "femininity".

This concept is defined, in general, as a number of ideas which have as objectives first: to establish and enforce equality between men and women in different areas where she is marginalized. The second objective is to promote the rights of women.

Feminism comes from the analysis of women of their experiences (such as social, political and historical construction), from an awareness. In its content, it is above all a policy. Feminists

have shed light on the difference between women and men sometimes even between women themselves. This concept is where the woman is ignored. The feminist discourse exists with the existence of sexism, male and patriarchal dictatorship to shake up the institutions established by society so that men and women become equal before the law: education, work¹...

As we have seen, in a patriarchal society like ours, claiming female identity is considered a rejection of traditions and the daily life of women in Algeria is characterized by glaring disparities due to male domination.

We can also conclude that through the two protagonists of the novel, Assia Djébar and Jane Austen encourage women to make more efforts to be able to free themselves from their prison. They urge them, not only in *A Sister to Scheherazade* and *Emma* but also in most of their works to revolt against the injustice of their society. The novels studied are works that represent the situation of many women in relation to men.

Through the second chapter of this study, we have come to know the difficult condition of women marginalized by Algerian and English traditions and culture. Woman, Arab and English are three identities that are deeply part of the narrator's being, yet Algerian society does not easily grant freedom despite intellectual status as the English society does.

According to Algerian traditions, the women remain behind the walls and are condemned to be drowned in the depths of prohibitions and silence. The female body must be hidden from the gaze of the male sex. In English society, women are beautifully dressed and taught but cannot decide their destiny alone, they need a man to be complete and happy.

We have seen the support that the writers give to women, in the form of denouncing the irregularities inflicted on them by the family, society with its traditions and customs, attest to their participation in this event on a global scale. The aim is to improve the social condition of all women.²

¹ Priscilla Ringrose, *Assia Djébar in Dialogues with Feminism*, New York, Rodopi, 2006, pp. 9-34.

² Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1991, pp. 123-197.

In the third chapter, we looked at some important moments in the lives of Jane Austen and Assia Djébar who defended women despite their marginalization. With their writings, they encourage women to impose themselves in society by claiming their rights, because they are: the mother, the wife, the daughter, the sister, and the cousin, and they deserve all the respect by having a considerable place in the family and in society.

Austen defended Women, who were pushed to the second plan in the 18th and 19th centuries and had no legal rights. They could not prepare wills, could not do business without the permission of their husbands, and could not benefit from the right of inheritance. At that time, the desire of women to receive an education as much as that of men was not welcomed in society. This is also a political problem. The degree to which women should be educated was a matter of debate. Single women had various legal rights. However, their use of these rights was limited. Women who married well could find a place in society. The concept of a good marriage, which society understood, was to marry a rich, upper-class person as we have seen in the fourth chapter.

While writing her novels, Austen took into account society and society's perspective on women and marriage. She viewed the events with the eyes of society and evaluated them from this perspective. She looks at every behavior of her characters through the eyes of society. In her works, the relationship between society and the individual is observed. At the same time, there is a mixture of satire and fun in her works.

This is what makes Austen's narrative style different from Djébar's since Djébar's style is more serious. Assia Djébar's *A Sister To Scheherazade* highlights a historical moment of women's presence in North African writing and their interrogation of patriarchy. Her dialogue with Algeria's history, culture(s), worldview, and male-dominated texts fundamentally paints the Algerian Arab-Islamic woman as human, different, and a sign of a new dawn. However, its representation of women seems to initiate a new politics of gender relations in which femininity and sexuality are as problematic as they are (re)constituted. However, this dialectical reality succeeds in imposing the visibility of women in society and literary texts, especially in the post-colonial Algerian social and cultural context.

"O, my sister, I who thought to wake you, I'm afraid. I'm afraid for all women, not just we two or three, Isma, Hajila, Meriem, but all women - barring midwives, barring mothers

standing guard and those carrion-beetle-matriarchs, I fear lest we all find ourselves in chains again, in this West in the Orient', this corner of the earth where day dawned so slowly for us that twilight is already closing in around us everywhere."³

Austen and Djébar's novels dealt with women in 18th and 19th century England and 20th century Algeria and with society's point of view on women and marriage. They considered the protagonists of their novels by selecting two women who stand against each other, fighting each other to win a battle that women can never win and then realize the truth and search for self-discovery and start to amend their misbehaviour. In chapter five, using the strategic thinking method we looked at the relationship between characters and the games played by heroine females to manipulate other characters to achieve the desired outcome and the self-realization that they reach at the end of the game. Then we intersect points of similarities and differences between both of our novels *Emma* and *A Sister to Scheherazade*.

Finally, we came to the conclusion that women were and still suffering from society standards, patriarchal authority and still need marriage as a solution to these problems but marriage sometimes is a trap rather than freedom from these problems. In Britain may be a lot has been changed since the suffrage movement till now, but in Algeria and the middle east in general women are still living the same conditions. Women should learn that allegiance with each other is the only way. we should learn that there is nothing more beautiful than caring about other human beings, caring about what they are doing and how they live and sometimes giving advice to them, but when we exceed the lines of caring it transforms into something else. This might change the kind of relationship from caring to manipulation or penetration. Assia Djébar and Jane Austen were very brilliant in introducing these kinds of problems in society especially in women's society to make us aware of such domination from others at the same time they give examples of women writers who write for women's liberation, women's freedom, women education, women justice and women self-recognition.

³ Djébar, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, p. 160.

Bibliography

- Allis, Eva: **Sheherazade through the Looking Glass: The Metamorphosis of "The Thousand and One Nights,"** Surrey, Curzon, 1999.
- Allola, Malek: **The Colonial Harem,** Minneapolis, University Of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Arenberg, Nancy: "Mobile Bodies and Kindred Sisters in Djébar's 'Ombre Sultane'," **The French Review**, Volume 82, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 353–65.
- Armstrong, J.: **Conditions of Love,** New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002.
- Austen, J.: **Northanger Abbey. In Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sanditon,** Ed. by J. Kinsley and J. Davie, introd. by C. L. Johnson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Austen, J.: **Persuasion,** Ed. by J. Kinsley, introd. by D. S. Lynch. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Austen, J.: **Emma,** Ed. by J. Kinsley, introd. by A. Pinch. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Austen, Jane: **Emma,** London, Penguin, 1996.
- Barlas, Asma: **Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an,** Austin, Texas UP, 2002.
- Barthes, Ronald: "The Death of the Author," Ubu Web Papers, 1967.
- Bendjelid, Fouzia: **Le roman algérien de langue française, Alger,** Alger, édition Chihab, 2012.
- Booth, Wayne C.: **The Rhetoric of Fiction,** "Control of Distance in Jane Austen's Emma", 1961 Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C.: **The Rhetoric of Fiction,** "Control of Distance in Jane Austen's Emma", 1961 Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Burton, Richard: **The Arabic Nights: Tales from A Thousand and One Nights,** New York, Random House, 2004.
- Butler, Marilyn: **Jane Austen and the War of Ideas,** Great Britain, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Carson, Susannah, ed.: **A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen,** New York, Random House, 2009.
- Chapman, R. W.: **Jane Austen: Facts and Problems,** Oxford, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1948.
- Chapman, R. W.: **Jane Austen: Facts and Problems,** Oxford, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1948.
- Chwe, Michael Suk-Young: **Jane Austen, Game Theorist,** Princeton, Princeton University Press, Kindle Edition, 2013.

- Cixous, Hélène, et al.: "The Laugh of the Medusa," **Signs**, Volume 1, Issue 4, 1976, pp. 875–93.
- Darraj, Susan Muaddi: **Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing**, Westport, CT & London, Praeger, 2004.
- Davidson, J.: "Austen's Voices." In **Swift's Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and Its Legacy**, ed. N. Hudson and A. Santesso, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- de Beauvoir, Simon: Simon de Beauvoir, **Le Deuxième Sexe**, Paris, Gallimard, 1949.
- Dixon, Rebecca: "Mis-Representing Jane Austen's Ladies," **Jane Austen in Hollywood**, Ed: Linda Troost, Sayre Greenfield. Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1998.
- Djebar, Assia : **Ces Voix Qui M'assiègent**, Paris, , Albin Michel 1999.
- Djebar, Assia: **A Sister to Scheherazade**, Translated by Dorothy S. Blair, Heinemann, New Hampshire, Portsmouth, 1993.
- Djebar, Assia: **Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade**, Translated by Dorthy Blair, Portsmouth, Heinemann Publishers, 1993.
- Djebar, Assia: **L'Amour, la fantasia**, Paris, Editions Jean-Claude Lattes, 1985.
- Djebar, Assia: **Sister to Scheherazade**, Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1987.
- Djebar, Assia: **The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry**. Trans. Tegan Raleigh, New York, Seven Stories P, 2006.
- Djebar, Assia: **Women of Algiers in Their Apartment (African and Caribbean Literature Translated from French)**, New York, University of Virginia, 1999.
- Eagleton, Terry: **The English Novel: An Introduction**, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Eldridge, R.: **On Moral Personhood: Philosophy, Literature, Criticism and Self Understanding**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Eldridge, R.: **Self Understanding: Imagination, Emotion and Social Stance in Emma** Online
<https://www.swarthmore.edu/news-events/philosopher-richard-eldridge-imagination-emotion-and-social-stance-jane-austens-emma>.
- Elia, Nada: **Trances, Drances, and Vociferations: Agency and Resistance in Africana Women's Narratives**, New York, Garland Publishing, Inc, 2001.
- Fanon, Frantz: "Algeria Unveiled," **A Dying Colonialism**, Hakoon Chevalier, New York, Grove Press, 1965.
- Fanon, Frantz: **A Dying Colonialism**, New York, Grove Press, 1994.

- Fanon, Frantz: **The Wretched of the Earth**, New York, Grove Press, 2002.
- Faulkner, Rita: "Assia Djébar, Frantz Fanon, Women, Veils, and Land," **World Literature Today**, 1996, pp. 847-55
- Foucault, Michel: **Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison**, London, Penguin Books, 1977.
- Fraiman, Susan: "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet," **Refiguring the Father: New Feminist Reading of Patriarchy**, Eds. Patricia Yaeger and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, Carbondale, Southern Illinois, 1989.
- Gauch, Suzanne: **Liberating Shahrazad: Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Islam**, Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 2007.
- Genette, Gérard: **New Narrative Discourse**, New York, Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Ghaussy, Sohelia: "A Stepmother Tongue: Feminine Writing in Assia Djébar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*," **World Literature Today**, Issue 68, 1994, pp. 457-64.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar: **The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination**, New Haven, Yale, 1979.
- Hiddleston, J.: **Assia Djébar: Out of Algeria**, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006.
- Hill, Bridget: **Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century**, Oxford United Kingdom, Routledge, 1993 <https://www.swarthmore.edu/news-events/philosopher-richard-eldridge-imagination-emotion-and-social-stance-jane-austens-emma>
- Irven, Robert P.: **Jane Austen**, London, Routledge, 2005.
- Jackson, K.: "The Dilemma of Emma: Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Values," **Jane Austen Society of North America**, 21, 2, 2000, <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/online/vol21no2/jackson.html>
- Jackson, Stevi: "Feminist Social Theory." **Contemporary Feminist Theories**, edited by Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, pp. 12–33. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrxc7.4. Accessed 6 June 2021.
- Johnson, Claudia L.: **Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel**, "Emma: Woman, Lovely Woman, Reigns Alone, 1988", Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1988,
- Johnson, Claudia L.: **Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel**, "Emma: Woman, Lovely Woman, Reigns Alone, 1988", Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1988,
- Kaplan, Deborah: **Jane Austen among Women**, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1992.

- Khanna, Ranjana: **Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present**, Stanford, Stanford UP, 2008.
- Kirkham, Margaret: **Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction**, Sussex, Harvester, 1983.
- Kristeva, Julia: "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," **Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art**, Ed. Leon S. Rougiez, Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia UP, 1980.
- Kuwahara, Kuldip: **Jane Austen at Play: Self-Consciousness, Beginnings, Endings**, New York, Peter Lang Pub Inc, 1993.
- Kaur: **Jane Austen's Emma on Television: A Study of a BBC Classic Serial**, Sweden, Minab, 1981.
- Lauritzen, Monica: **A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover, in Sex, Literature and Censorship**, ed. Harry T. Moore, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1953.
- Lawrence, D. H.: "Islamism and the Recolonization of Algeria." In **Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Third World**, Ed. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, New York: Palgrave, 2000.
- Lazreg, Marnia: **The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question**, New York and London, Routledge, 1994.
- Maalouf, Amin: **Les Identités Meurtrières**, Paris, 1998.
- Malti-Douglas, Fedwa: **Woman's Body Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing**, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1991.
- Marzolph, Ulrich and Richard Van Leeuwen, eds. **The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia**, Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, & Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2004.
- McCall Smith, Alexander: **Emma: a modern retelling**, Toronto, Knopf, 2014.
- Merini, Rafika: "Two Major Francophone Women Writers, Assia Djébara and Leïla Sebbar: A Thematic Study of their Works," **Francophone Cultures and Literatures**, Volume 5, New York, Peter Lang, 1999.
- Mernissi, Fatema: **Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World**, Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland, Cambridge, Perseus Publishing, 2002.
- Meulenbelt, Anja: **A Creative Tension: Key Issues of Socialist-feminism**, Boston, South End Press, 1984.
- Morgan, Susan: **Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction**, Oxford, Oxford U. 1989.
- Mortimer, Mildred: "Edward Said and Assia Djébar: A Contrapuntal Reading." **Research in African Literatures** 36, no. 3 (2005): 53–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821363>.

- Mortimer, Mildred: "Assia Djébar's Algerian Quartet: A Study in Fragmented Autobiography," **Research in African Literatures**, Volume 28, Issue 2, 1999, pp. 1-17.
- Moura, Jean-Marc: **L'Europe Littéraire et l'Ailleurs**, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1998.
- Moura, Jean-Marc: **Littératures Francophones et Théorie Postcoloniale**, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2013.
- Mulhall, S.: 'Moralism, Moral Individualism and Testimony,' in M. Balaska (ed.) **Cora Diamond on Ethics**, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2021.
- Nagy-Zekmi, Silvia: "Tradition and Transgression in the Novels of Assia Djébar and Aïcha Lemsine," **Research in African Literatures**, Volume 33, 2002.
- Newton, Judith: **Women, Power and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778- 1860**, Athens, U. of Georgia, 1981.
- Perkin, Joan: **Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century**, England Routledge, 1989.
- Pinch, Adela: "Introduction and Notes," **Austen, Jane, Emma, (1816)**, edited by James Kinsley, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Ringrose, Priscilla: **Assia Djébar in Dialogues with Feminisms**, Rodopi, New York, 2006.
- Schorer, M.: "The Humiliation of Emma Woodhouse," In Watt, I (ed) (1963), **Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays**, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959/1963, pp.98-111.
- Shanley, Mary Lyndon: **Feminism, Marriage, and The Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895**, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Spencer, Jane: **The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen**, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986,
- Spender, Dale: **Mothers of the Novel: One hundred Good Women Novelists before Jane Austen**, London and New York, Pandora, 1986
- Stafford, Fiona : "Introduction," **Jane Austen's Emma, A Casebook**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Staves, Susan: **Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660- 1833**, London/Great Britain, Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Steeves, Edna: "Pre-Feminism in Some Eighteenth-Century Novels," **Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose**, Eds. Cheryl L. Brown and Karen Olson, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow. 1978.
- Tötösy, Steven: "From Comparative Literature Today Toward Comparative Cultural Studies," **CLCWeb: Comparative**

- Literature and Culture**, Volume 1, Issue 3, 1999, P. 14
<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1041>
- Wiltshire, John: **Recreating Jane Austen**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Wood, David "Beyond the Panopticon? Foucault and Surveillance Studies," **Space, Knowledge and Power Foucault and Geography**, Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden, Routledge, 2016.
- Murakami: **Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson: 1856-1863**, ed. E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1913.
- E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes



ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Asmaa Şehade, 2005 yılında Umm al- Shahid Ortaokulundan mezun oldu. 2005-2009 yılları arasında Humus Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı'nda lisans öğrenimi gördü.

Yüksek lisansını 2013 yılında Humus Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde tamamladı. 2016 İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Karşılaştırmalı Edebiyat Anabilim Dalı'nda doktora çalışmalarına başladı. 2009-2016 yıllarında özel üniversitelerin hazırlık okullarında İngilizce okutmanı olarak çalıştı. Evli olup Hatice ve Fatıma adında iki kızı vardır.