

Narrative Structure and the Representation of History in Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*: A New Historicist Approach

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Abstract

In his article, "Professing the Renaissance," Louis A. Montrose advocates the idea of "the textuality of history and the historicity of the text" (20). According to Montrose's idea, the literary text has a certain social, political, historical and cultural context and the textuality of history focuses on providing a representation of history or history as a narrative reflecting the ideology of its time. New Historicism as a critical approach highlights the interlinking relationship between history and literature and how the narrative structure with its elements of plot, point of view, themes and setting represent history and demonstrate the textuality or fictionality of the text. In other words, the New Historicist literary approach explores the dialogue between history and literature. This research attempts a New historicist approach to Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015). *The Kindness of Enemies* is Aboulela's recent novel. The novel can be regarded as a historical chronicle of the Russian invasion and Islamic Jihad in the *Caucasus in the 19th century as contradictory to present day terrorism*. *The Kindness of Enemies* is a framed story as it has two plot narratives that weave the present and the past in a dramatic way that reflects Aboulela's innovation with the narrative structure as a means of representing and interpreting history. Investigated from a New Historicist approach, *The Kindness of Enemies* is a novel which presents a crucial period of history through depicting factual historical characters as well as juxtaposing them with fictional characters in a way that shows the novel as a product of historical, social cultural and biographical factors.

Keywords: narrative structure, New Historicism, textuality of history, historicity of text, history as a narrative, power, Leila Aboulela, *The Kindness of Enemies*

Born to a Sudanese father and an Egyptian mother, Leila Aboulela (1964-) is an acclaimed writer who tackles in her novels a certain historical context showing how historical events are the structural constituent that shapes the narrative and dictates the development of the plot. *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015) is Aboulela's recent novel that weaves the present with the past. The novel has historical, social, cultural, spiritual and psychological overtones which make it a complex text open to rich and fresh analyses.

The Kindness of Enemies has been subject to a number of book reviews. Erica Wagner views it as a complex novel handling "faith,

nationality and history.” Ron Charles holds a similar view as he believes that *The Kindness of Enemies* “pierces the fabric of its fiction to explore a largely forgotten historical moment.” In Rebecca K. Morrison’s review of the novel, she underscores *The Kindness of Enemies* as a “fictional narrative” that combines together Aboulela’s childhood memories, contemporary war on terrorism, the nature of radicalization and Jihad. The crisis of belonging in *The Kindness of Enemies* has been also explored in a recently examined dissertation on cultural conflict in Leila Aboulela’s novels (Abdel Raouf 144-177). However, this novel has not been given its due analysis because of the scarcity of studies conducted on it.

The present research endeavours to examine the novel through a New Historicist approach pinpointing the interaction between history and literature. Notably, this paper is an attempt to provide a fresh reading to *The Kindness of Enemies* through focusing on the interplay of the past and the present, the shattering of the barrier between literature and history through the framed narratives and the employment of varied techniques as well as the parallelism between fictional and historical characters.

The political, social and cultural factors are in flux not static. Some people have power over others. The culture of any society is an amalgam of different ethnic groups where some are on the center and others on the margin. New Historicism as defined by Stephen Greenblatt, is a “shift away from a criticism centered on verbal icons toward a criticism centered on cultural artifact” (*Learning to Curse* 3). In this way the literary text can be considered a site of history as it represents the historical, social, cultural, anthropological and ideological forces in conflict at a certain epoch as well as its implications or connections to present clashes. The New Historicist approach focuses on the different interpretations of historical events through

the *parallel* reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period... instead of a literary ‘foreground’ and a historical ‘background’ it envisages and practices a mode of study in which literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other. (Barry 166)

In the New Historicist approach, the literary and non-literary texts are complementing each other in the interpretation of the literary text. Reading the literary text along with the non-literary texts deepens our understanding of the hidden overtones and enhances the interchange

among the multiple disciplines of representation. This view is at the core of New Historicist analysis.

New Historicism as a literary theory emerged in 1980s, and was developed by the critical views of the American literary historian, Stephen Greenblatt who refers to New Historicism as “cultural Poetics” (Veenstra 174). New Historicism is deeply rooted in the cultural studies. It encompasses the concepts of many theorists and historians. Louis Adrian Montrose, Stephen Greenblatt, Michael Foucault and Michel de Certeau are among the influential figures in New Historicism.

New Historicism reads the text in its historical context, focusing on the writer’s background and the readers’ reception to the text and the critic’s ideology. It historicizes the text as it combines the cultural and the political orientation in unraveling the context of the text. In New Historicism context is replaced by con-text, asserting the interlinking relationship between history and literature. The “*con-text*” in this way, refers to “a text or body of texts that goes “with” (“con”) the text under scrutiny” (Prendergast 91). However, Peter Barry uses “co-texts” rather than “contexts” where the text and the co-text will be interpreted “as expressions of the same historical moment” (173). The text works on a hermeneutic level pertaining to the interpretation of the text’s meaning(s). From a New Historicist perspective, the literary text is “the product of a negotiation between a creator and a class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions and the institutions and practices of society” (Greenblatt, “Towards a Poetics” 12). The literary text is understood and interpreted within the scope of social and cultural forces of its time and production. Hence, the literary text is open to interpretations that reflect the dialectical interaction between history, culture and literature.

As Terry Eagleton maintains, the literary text is not confined to the author’s background, but it “passes from one cultural or historical context to another” where new interpretations may be elicited from it (6). Eagleton’s view asserts the multiple interpretations of the literary work and how the past has its impact on contemporary world. Appropriately, history is not restricted to limited views but it is open to divergent perspectives that make it loaded with a referential character that acquires the text its ideological and cultural context.

Greenblatt in "The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance," presents four basic tenets of the New Historicist literary approach. These tenets can be summed up as the literary text is the product of historical and cultural factors; literature is a representation of history; the interpretation of the literary text is conditioned by the ideology of its time; and the literary text should be explored in the light of

history since literature and history are inseparable constructs (3-6). Accordingly, New Historicism is a postmodern heterogeneous and an eclectic practical method of analysis that encompasses cultural studies, Marxism, anthropology, psychology, history and literature. New Historicism in its approach to history exhibits features of postmodernism.

Both New Historicism and Postmodernism are concerned with the representation of past events since there is “an unending dialogue between the past and the present” (Carr 30). New Historicism provides a representation or revisionism of historical facts based on the belief in history as having discursive nature underscoring power relations. This discursive nature asserts what Louis Montrose advocates: “the textuality of history and the historicity of the text” (20). As a *Foucauldian* principle, the discursive nature reflects the intricate interaction between history and literature, underscoring the political, cultural, social and ideological factors beyond the text. As influenced by Foucault’s concept of power, Greenblatt and New Historicists approach the literary text as a manifestation of power relations which dismantle the historicity of the text and the textuality of history. In this respect, the New Historicists demonstrate the interaction between the present and the past or the dialogic interaction between the past and the present. Michel de Certeau, in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, asserts: “...the past is the fiction of the present” (10). Linda Hutcheon in her book, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, stresses the narrativity and contextuality of past events. Hutcheon holds that “[a]ll past events are potential historical facts, but the ones that become facts are those that are chosen to be narrated” (73). Hutcheon’s view reflects the textuality of historical facts and the contextuality of the past.

New Historicism situates the literary text in its historical context. The historical context becomes a display of power relations through the dialectical relationship between the literary text and history rather than history as a context. Foucault’s concept of power shows the struggle for supremacy and domination which undermine the personal and the public. Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, maintains that “where there is power, there is resistance” (95). Power is inherent in each structure “not because it embraces everything, but it becomes from everywhere” (93). John Brannigan demonstrates Foucault’s idea since “the literary texts are vehicles of power which act as useful objects of study in that they contain the same potential for power and subversion as exist in society generally” (6). The literary text as a site of history is a manifestation of struggle and

resistance; of a conflict of power between the oppressor and the oppressed, the powerful and the powerless.

The intermingling of history and literature in reading the literary text discloses the power structure that shapes the society at a certain epoch. Appropriately, the literary text becomes a discourse between conflicting powers. Greenblatt maintains that power relations are reflective of social discourse which he calls ‘self-fashioning.’ As described by Greenblatt, self-fashioning is “the process of constructing one’s identity and public persona according to a set of socially acceptable standards, and the conscious effort to strive to imitate a praised model in society” (Mambrol). In this process, the person re-fashions his persona to accommodate with the power structure. This self-fashioning is a form of submission rather than self-creation (Lai 7). Greenblatt used this concept in analyzing Shakespeare’s characters, asserting that the social and cultural factors influence the construction of the personal and public identity. In the light of “self-fashioning”, texts of literature “are complicit in mediating historical, political, social and cultural anxieties whether these anxieties are explicitly discussed or not” (“New Historicism”). These anxieties which the literary text evoke are connected with two circular concepts by Greenblatt; namely, ‘resonance’ and ‘wonder.’

Resonance and wonder are focal concepts in the New Historicist approach. On the one hand, resonance is “the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it may be taken by a viewer to stand” (Greenblatt, *Learning*, 170). Therefore,, ‘resonance’ hinges on the power of the literary work to display the cultural and historical forces beyond the work; in a sense that the work can be regarded as a metaphor for an intricate complex of historical interrelationships. This resonance is manifested in Montrose’s concept of “the historicity of the text and textuality of history”; in the endeavour to create the appropriate historical and cultural milieu (23). By historicity, Montrose means the cultural particularity, social implications and all modes of representation; whereas textuality is the inaccessibility of an authentic past and the subjectivity of all historical documents (20). New Historicism adopts the historicity of the text and the textuality of history as one of its salient tenets.

On the other hand, ‘wonder’, is the originality and uniqueness of representation and it is the text’s power to evoke a sense of excitement (Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse* 228). Wonder postulates the premise that “[t]he world is all-seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic—it does not provoke our gaze. When it begins to provoke it, the feeling of strangeness begins too” (Lacan 75). The literary text creates a feeling of defamiliarization of

what is thought to be real. This defamiliarization arouses wonder and anxiety. Wonder consequently generates excitement, astonishment and marvelousness. Resonance and wonder assert the interaction between history and literature as well as probing into the intricacies of power authority, underlining its complex structure. They explore the multi-faceted relationships especially in colonial contexts. Greenblatt articulates:

Actions that appear to be single are disclosed as multiple; the apparently isolated power of the individual genius turns out to be bound up with collective, social energy: a gesture of dissent may be an element in a larger legitimation process, while an attempt to stabilize the order of things may turn out to subvert it. (*Learning to Curse* 221-22)

Whereas Resonance gives the literary text its historicity or its historical context, wonder arouses in the viewer/reader feelings of surprise and admiration. Greenblatt asserts that “it is the function of the New Historicism continually to renew the marvelous at the heart of the resonant” (*Learning to Curse* 181).

As a practical approach to texts, New Historicism foregrounds the way literature and history interact. The New Historicist approach provides a profound scrutiny to the social, historical, cultural and anthropological potentials that underscore power relations and ideology. New Historicism focuses on historical narratives. Hutcheon equates historical fiction to fictional narrative, or as she states: “to narrate is to re-present by means of selection and interpretation” (*The Canadian Postmodern* 66). Therefore, both history and literature are forms of representation relating to selected human experiences. This idea is asserted by Hayden White’s concept of ‘history as narrative’. White believes in history and literature as narrative stories. He confesses that we give our lives meaning by telling stories about them where “[n]either the reality nor the meaning of history is “out there” in the form of a story awaiting only a historian to discern its outline and identify the plot that comprises its meaning” (“Historical Pluralism” 487).

White’s view is in tune with the perspective of history as an intrinsic historiographic narrative. ‘History as a narrative’ implies that history is an anecdote happening in a specific place and time as well as featuring characters and drawing on themes shaped by power relations and historical and social conditions. ‘History as a narrative’ is the core of historiographic narrative. Historiography is the writing of history based on its cyclical nature. The stories of the past fashion the narrative

structure. Shaping historical events and anecdotes in a narrative structure is influenced by the Marxist and cultural studies which show the impact of past events and their implication on the present. Greenblatt demonstrates this idea as he considers the past as “the impetus for political struggle in the present and make it clear that the discipline of literary studies is not removed from the sphere of politics” (Branningan 6).

History and literature are inseparable as representations of historical events underlining conflicting ideologies and power relations. The idea of representation permeates the New Historicist approach as manifested in Hayden’s historiographic narrative as well as Foucault’s concept of power and knowledge. Foucault makes a correlation between history and knowledge. Representation to Foucault is a discourse where knowledge is a manifestation of power struggle and the culture that dictate human beings’ actions. This discourse is distinguished by the repetitive patterns of knowledge which form an *épistémè* (Williams 123). By episteme Foucault means “the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized system” (*Archaeology* 191).

Foucault in his book *The Order of Things* distinguishes three major epistemes representing the Renaissance, the Classical and the Modern epochs. Each phase of episteme has distinctive characteristics reflecting the pervading power of kings, the supremacy of sciences and the complexity of the power/knowledge relationship in the modern era. In modern times, power is exercised through the imperialist institution where power is not necessarily military force, but the power of its politics, economics, and advanced knowledge. Power, therefore, is pervasive and discursive as it encompasses all types of relations including the oppressor/oppressed interaction and struggle for hegemony through the power of knowledge.

The literary text, consequently, becomes a representation of the historical events and the culture of its author as well as a manifestation of power/knowledge conflict. In the light of New Historicism, the narrative structure, including themes, characters, setting, point of view and style, is a manifestation of the historicity of the text and the textuality of history. As Said maintains, the “realities of power and authority...are the realities that make texts possible” (5).

Unlike the previous reviews of *The Kindness of Enemies*, the present study adopts a New Historicist approach which highlights the dialogic nature of history and literature since the literary text is not a self-sufficient construct but a culturally and historically oriented product. The current study endeavours to explore Aboulela’s contextualized

representation of a crucial period in the history of the Caucasus and its impact on contemporary events. Her representation asserts the *referentiality* and *figurality* of the text (*White Figural Realism* 56). Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* takes place in a specific time and place and the events in the novel are open to multiple interpretations depending on from which perspective we look at the events. Her tackling of a certain epoch in the history of Caucasus is well-manifested through the historical characters and the dates as well as the actual places which exhibit the referential aspect. Moreover, Aboulela's treatment of the events and interaction between the past and the present demonstrate the *figurality* of the text which makes it loaded with embedded meanings and rich with varied interpretations.

As a historical novel, *The Kindness of Enemies* has a unique plot that presents history as a discourse between the past and the present. There is an interplay between historicity and textuality. More specifically, there is an interaction between the fictional and the real. Commenting on the worth of plot in historical narrative, Wallace Martin maintains that the historian's knowledge of human feelings and thoughts as well as the social forces is instrumental in providing a hypothesis of what really happened (73). Martin's view emphasizes the idea of history as a plot where the novelist uses divergent techniques which help in contextualizing the literary text and evoking multiple interpretations.

The Kindness of Enemies is a framed narrative or a story within story. The embedded or the story within story juxtaposes 19th jihad in the Caucasus against Russian imperialism with 21st century terrorism, creating a historical context for the dichotomy between jihad as rightful self-defence and terrorism as an unlawful act that targets nations and individuals. The main plot of Natasha Wilson is weaved within the story of Imam Shamil and the Russian invasion to the Caucasus. In her framed narrative, Aboulela presents a complex story that interlinks the past and the present and widens the reader's perception of the conflicting issues of Jihad and terrorism. The framed structure is not ornamental, but it is a meaningful technique to represent historical events. Jeffrey Williams articulates that frames

represent the construction of a discrete and whole narrative act, a narrative of narrative performance. Thus, to invert the colloquial expectation of a frame, rather than being superadded to the narrative proper and external or extraneous, one might claim that a frame forms a coherent narrative proposition on its own terms in

relation to which the embedded narrative takes the position of an indirect object. (100)

Frames come to the foreground of the story, asserting its narrativity. The framed structure is an indispensable part of the narrative. It is not superfluous. This idea is also stressed by Werner Woolf who holds that frames are “integral part of the respective verbal representations which are located on a logically higher (diegetic) level. As narrative (or at least narrative fragment) they in addition partake in the narrative structure of the entire artifact” (180). The framed narrative asserts the rejection of absolute historical events. It provides the reader with the context of these events and the textuality of history is manifested in Aboulela’s attempt to represent and interpret history. New Historicism postulates that history is composed of multiple conflicting views and attitudes. Aboulela draws a comparison between Imam Shamil’s jihad against Russian invaders to the Caucasus in the 19th century and the assumed attacks by the Islamic State (ISIS) in the present time.

The first narrative plot in *The Kindness of Enemies* is the story of Natasha Wilson. Natasha was born in Khartoum to a Sudanese father, Hussein, and a Russian mother. Natasha is a professor of history interested in issues of jihad, especially Imam Shamil’s resistance to the Russian invasion to the Caucasus in the 19th century (*The Kindness* 99).. There is a great affinity between Aboulela and Natasha as both are Sudanese and exposed to the Other’s culture and have diasporic experience as well as sharing interest in Imam Shamil’s history. In an interview with Dunia El-Zobaidi in *The Arab Weekly*, Aboulela confesses:

I was interested in him fighting Jihad from a Sufi aspect. This kind of jihad is different from what we see practised by ISIS and al-Qaeda. Imam Shamil was eventually exiled in Moscow. He didn’t fight until death. He accepted peace and he accepted he lost the war.

Aboulela’s view underscores the New Historicist approach to the literary text as a representation of a certain historical and cultural context. Aboulela highlights the historical and social forces that prompt the events in her novels. The literary text widens our perception and understanding of history and culture as it attempts a historically documented representation to a certain epoch in the progression of history. The narrative presents fascinating events through which the reader draws his/her conclusions.

The story of Natasha’s interest in Shamil is deepened by Natasha’s encounter with her student, Oz, and his mother, the actress, Malak. Oz’s nickname is Osama, by connotation the leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin

Laden. Oz considers his surname unfortunate and this proves to be true (*The Kindness* 4). Oz is thought to be a descendent of Shamil. Reminiscent of Imam Shamil is his sword which Malak keeps at home and Oz's email carries the name of "the sword of Shamil" (*The Kindness* 101). During Natasha's visit to Oz's mother, she is forced to spend the night with them due to the heavy blizzard. This incident is a well-written anecdote. To Natasha's astonishment, in the morning of her stay, Oz is arrested by the anti-terrorist police and is charged of radicalization. Natasha's career is threatened as she is suspected of collaborating with Oz.

Natasha's story is an intertextual frame that shares contextual and textual features with the narrative of the main story, yet it can be seen as a separate narrative story. Natasha's anecdote depicts the period after 9/11 and the increasing tension in the West or what might be called Islamophobia. As a historian having a keen eye on events, Natasha observes the reshuffle in the Western policy towards Muslims and heightened fanaticism against Islamic groups. The plot of Natasha and Oz's story takes place in contemporary period post 9/11 and it runs parallel with the historical narrative of Imam Shamil and his son Jamaleldin who became a hostage in the hands of the Russians in 1839. As a retaliation to Jamaleldin's capture, Shamil's men kidnap Anna, a notable Georgian princess. The situation of Jamaleldin and Princess Anna is similar as both are exposed to different cultures as well as they are dislocated and deprived of their freedom.

The Kindness of Enemies' plot underlines the episodic and configurational dimensions of the narrative. Whereas the episodic dimension is concerned with the linear representation of events as it is manifested in Imam Shamil's story, the configurational dimension subverts the succession of events through presenting "temporal features directly opposed to those of the episodic dimension" (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 67). The text's historicity is underscored by its plot which places the reader at "the crossing point of temporality and narrativity: to be historical, an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening" (Ricoeur, "Narrative Time" 171). Aboulela's plot is not a mere prosaic account of historical events but a manifestation of the historicity of the literary text. Therefore, the development of the plot is not linear as Natasha's story is interrupted by Imam Shamil's narrative asserting the authenticity of the narration through displaying the temporal and spatial configurations that are in tune with the historical events. The historical narrative, in this way, refers to something beyond the text. This

referential level is the restoration of the past potentialities and their role in moulding and modifying the present.

As a historiographic narrative, the plot of *The Kindness of Enemies* is implemental in placing readers at the centre of a historical lived experience. As considered by Paul Ricoeur, the plot in historical narrative is not a structural element but rather a means of historical representation. This is apparent in Aboulela's framed narrative where there is a meaningful interaction between the past and the present. Aboulela masterfully intermingles historical events with contemporary ones to create credibility and continuity of history, asserting the capabilities of the past events and how they interpret current history.

The two plot narratives of Natasha and Oz on the one hand, and Imam Shamil, Jamaleldin and Princess Anna, on the other hand, add to the complexity of the novel in its representation of historical events. They encompass a number of anecdotes which underscore the intricacies of the issues of Jihad, terrorism, identity crisis and Stockholm syndrome which exhibits paradoxical feelings towards hostages.

The story of *The Kindness of Enemies* is made up of two parallel plots. Each narrative plot exhibits a number of anecdotes which contextualize history. The anecdote in New Historicism is the literary form that refers to the real through "description, ostentation, definition, etc. — that are not anecdotal" (Fineman 56). The anecdote is an essential part in the representation of history as it crystallizes certain historical themes. It imparts textuality to the historical text. Remarkably, it is apparent that the anecdote presents history in a conjuring and innovative way that creates interaction between the real and the imaginative. In *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt comment on the significance of anecdotes, advocating that "the anecdotes would open history, or place it askew, so that literary texts could find new points of insertion" (51).

The anecdote as a structural technique in New Historicist criticism asserts the textuality of historical representation. It illuminates the multidisciplinary nature of history. In addition, the anecdote manifests the juxtaposition between the real and the imaginative, or more specifically history and its representation. The anecdote becomes a means of penetrating deep into the cultural and social factors that shape the context of the literary text. Gallagher and Stephen add that "the anecdote could be conceived as a tool with which to rub literary texts against the grain of received notions about their determinants, revealing the fingerprints of the accidental, suppressed, defeated, uncanny, abjected, or exotic-in short, the nonsurviving-even if only fleetingly" (52). Consequently, the anecdotes are a means of creating resonance and wonder in the literary

text. Resonance reveals the historical and cultural context which undermines power relationships. whereas, it is wonder which excites the reader to the historical representation of the anecdotes.

Aboulela employs a number of anecdotes in the fabric of the two framed narratives. These anecdotes add to the complexity of the plot and present life with its intricate relationships and anxieties. One of these anecdotes is about 'Adaats'. Imam Shamil narrates this anecdote to Jamaleldin before he departs to the Russian territory. Shamil tells him a story titled "Once a man stole a chicken":

... He stole a chicken from his neighbour's village. In reply the owner of the chicken stole a cow. The first man got angry and said, Shamil's voice rose, A chicken is a chicken. It is not a cow!" In revenge he stole the man's horse. when you steal a man's horse it is as you are stealing his honour. (*The Kindness* 24)

In this symbolic anecdote, Imam Shamil distinguishes Sharia from Adaats and how following Adaats results in blood shedding and altercation. This anecdote epitomizes the nature of conflict among people. The anecdote resonates with the themes tackled in the novel as it creates a kaleidoscopic opposition between Sharia and Adaats. It demonstrates that human relationships are conditioned by power. The powerful assumes power and launches aggression on the powerless who resists such aggression. The horses like one's land are symbols of dignity and honour. Any aggression on man's horse or land is a threat to his life and continuity. This anecdote is a cautionary tale reflecting that disputes beget disputes and aggression is endless. The anecdote shows how Sharia is subverted into feudalism. It reflects how Adaats are triggered by the erosion of authentic spiritual values. In the light of New Historicism, this anecdote manifests subversion and containment, which are two essential concepts discussed by Greenblatt in his essay "Invisible Bullets." Greenblatt considers subversion the outcome of repressive power and it directs its ends (48). In this respect, subversion is a representation of power struggle where it results in containment. Greenblatt clarifies that "the subversiveness which is genuine and radical ... is at the same time contained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 30). Subversion shows how one group imposes its hegemony on another group, which in its turn resists and subversion and containment are endless processes with the continuation of human history. The anecdote of the chicken is a representation of the

world wide conflict to have power and supremacy. Accordingly, the relationship between history and literature is inseparable and New Historicists “have paid considerable attention in their work to the effects of literature in both containing and promoting subversion, and to instances of state and hegemonic control over cultural expression” (Brannigan 4).

The anecdote of the chicken has implications beyond the text. This symbolic anecdote highlights the conflict among Muslims and the emergence of divergent ideologies which characterize the contemporary world. Adaats challenge the unification of the Caucasian mountain tribes as they “sapped their collective efforts by sanctioning things like blood feuds” (Reynolds 40). Imam Shamil has to fight not only the colonizers but also the mountaineers who collaborate with the Russians. Hence, New Historicism is employing the technique of pastiche as it is manifested in the anecdotal narrative and in this way new meanings are embedded in the text which perhaps never expected by the author or contemporary readers (Eagleton 53). Gallagher and Greenblatt assert the idea that

[a]necdotes can consciously be motivated by an attempt to pry the usual sequences apart from their referents, to use Barthes’s term, might also point toward phenomena that were lying outside the contemporary borders of the discipline of the history, and yet were not altogether outside the possibility of knowledge per se. (*Practicing* 51-2)

The stories of the capture of Jamaleldin and Princess Anna are historically exciting anecdotes triggering profound implications of historicizing the text and textualizing history. They reflect the intricate interaction between history and literature in signifying power-relations as well as the subjectivity of the individual or self-fashioning. The two anecdotes highlight Jamaleldin’s and Princess Anna’s endeavour to comply with the paradigm of power-relations. Incorporating the anecdotes of Jamaleldin and Princess Anna is a structural technique manipulated to present the double perspective of the Caucasian-Russian fight. Anna has a certain view of Shamil, but this view is modified as she has a revisionist closer view to him. Whereas Jamaleldin’s comments reflect his prejudice to the Russians due to their civilization, he reveals that he could penetrate all sides of conflict. He states that the Russians believed the Chechens were nilly and suspicious. The Chechens believed the Russians were aggressive and treacherous” (*The Kindness* 224). Using anecdotes is an emplotting technique which asserts the relative representation of history and the role of literature in textualizing historical anecdotes.

In portraying Jamaleldin and Princess Anna, Aboulela focuses on the characters' displacement, alienation, and self-fashioning to adapt to a new culture. Their anecdotes underscore Greenblatt's concepts of wonder and resonance as well as tactics of power struggle. On the one hand, Jamaleldin is taken as a hostage to force Shamil to cease fire. However, Jamaleldin is manipulated by the Russians for certain strategic purposes. Jamaleldin is the young child who was fascinated by the Russian civilization. The Emperor Nicholas manipulates Jamaleldin as a means of oppressing Imam Shamil and forcing him to submit to the Russian hegemony. Nicholas addresses Jamaleldin: "You will be my mouthpiece in the Caucasus. You will bring enlightenment to your people. For this I have *fashioned you*" (*The Kindness* 59 *Italics added*). Jamaleldin is the tsar's favourite (*The Kindness* 123). The tsar implements in the child Jamaleldin that he would be the ruler of Dagestan. Strategically, the Russian aimed from the capture of Jamaleldin to weaken Shamil's spirits and to create a new Caucasian generation who has alliance to the Russian civilization rather than to religion and their people. Before Jamaleldin's return to his family, the Emperor reminds him that he made him a civilized person (*The Kindness* 194). Jamaleldin himself is reluctant to come back to his family. When he comes back, his family members notice the change in his character; for example, his step-mother, Zeidat, tartly remarked the great resemblance between Jamaleldin and Princess Anna (*The Kindness* 260). A similar comment comes from Jamaleldin himself when he tells his brother: "I am no longer one of you. I've forgotten how to be. If I could, I would turn round and go back to what I know" (227). Painstakingly, Jamaleldin's comment reflects how the Russians used him a means to impose their culture, through creating wonder and excitement in Jamaleldin towards the Russian Civilization. This technique is one of the tools of contemporary new colonization.

On the other hand, Anna was a Georgian Princess whose husband, Prince David, was a commander who had alliance with the Russian forces. Anna was captured with her 10-year-old son, Alexander, her baby, Lydia, and her French governess, Madame Drancy. Anna was arrested by bandits who were given orders by Imam Shamil who retaliates to the hostage of his son by the Russians. Anna's journey to Imam Shamil's seraglio is one beset with hazards as her baby died on the way. The anecdotal narrative of Anna's displacement from aristocratic life to a new environment with divergent language and culture embodies the power struggle/relations.

Aboulela's account of Anna's capture is authentic as it intermingles historicity with textuality creating a historical narrative condoning

profound feelings of anxiety and wonder. Aboulela incorporates quotes from newspapers which reflect the Russian and Turkish reaction to the capture, thus highlighting the parallel reading of the text with non-literary historical documents, thus asserting the historicity of her text (*The Kindness* 129). In addition to the credibility of the capture, Aboulela touches on Anna's experience as one of anxiety with "the menacing sounds of the forest, the torrential river, the shores of the violent men" (*The Kindness* 92). It is a hazardous journey to Imam's harem as her baby Lydia slipped from her arm and died after a bullet hit the horse and flung its rider. It is a tormenting and nerve-shattering moment as if her insides "squished and bled" (*The Kindness* 94). In tackling the Ann's kidnapping, Aboulela illuminates the authenticity of her story through focusing on the minutest details of the capture, particularly the feelings of Anna, the mother rather than the Princess. The narrative creates empathy for Anna. In one moment of her journey, Princess Anna had to "undo her bodice" to feed her crying baby (86). The anecdote of Anna's capture and her journey to Shamil's residence is one of self-fashioning as Anna has to accommodate herself in a new environment to guarantee safety to herself and her companions as well as her estimation to all matters differently.

The reception of Princess Anna by Imam Shamil reflects his understanding of the tactics of power and the fairness of his resistance. He is strongly convinced that as a Georgian Princess, Anna is innocent of the Russian oppression since the Georgian villages have nothing to do with the war between Russia and the Caucasus. The only crime of the Georgians is their submission to the Russian Empire. This is the reality Anna has to face after her dislocation. In her recognition of power struggle, Anna told Shamil that "she was as Russian as she could ever be". However, she asserted to her husband that she was Georgian not Russian (*The Kindness* 122). Noticeably, the anecdotal narrative of Anna demonstrates power struggle politics where Anna takes power from belonging to Russia rather than from her real identity as a Georgian Princess since Georgia is under Russian supremacy.

The anecdotal narrative of Aboulela runs on parallel lines. This is manifested in the anecdotes of Jamaleldin and Princess Anna. Both are exposed to displacement and alien culture. The two anecdotal narratives present historical events that avow Greenblatt's concepts of resonance and wonder.

As a New Historicist structural technique, the anecdote asserts the multiplicity of historical views and provokes new interpretations to historical facts. The anecdotes in this respect become "counter histories". These anecdotes undermine history and counter-history as "a continuous conflictual process rather than substantial opposing activities with

independently distinguishing characteristics” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 52). The anecdotal spirit textualizes the literary text as the anecdote becomes “a conduit for carrying these counterhistorical insights and ambitions into the field of literary history” (52). It raises questions concerning the persistent issues of jihad, race, gender and terrorism. The anecdotes stress the relativity of historical facts as the anecdotes narrate histories or counter histories in an exhilarating style that distinguishes historical narration from the documentation of historical facts. In New Historicism, it is argued that “[t]he anecdote, as the narration of a singular event, is the literary form or genre that uniquely refers to the real” (Fineman 56).

Most significantly, the anecdotes incorporated in *The Kindness of Enemies* can be regarded as “thick description,” a term coined by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Thick description is a manifestation of the cultural context of the text. It is a means used by the writer to disclose and penetrate the embedded layers of meaning of particular events, illuminating inseparability of history and literature. Thick description is considered a synonym to Greenblatt’s ‘Cultural Poetics’ (Sharma 5). According to Geertz’s ‘thick description’, “the anecdote takes place in a network of framing intentions and cultural meaning” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 21). The anecdotes in *The Kindness of Enemies* are embodied in the framed narrative, manifesting the textuality of the historical text and the conflicting power relations. Therefore, the anecdotal thick description dismantles the implications beyond the written text, asserting the relativity of historical facts and the interchange between the literary text and anthropology where culture signifies a complex of interlinked relationships.

Being a historical novel, *The Kindness of Enemies*’ plot asserts history as a narrative in which the textuality of history can be captured in its narrative technique. In Peter Munz’s essay “The Historical Narrative,” significance is given to the method of narration to structure past events. Munz states that “in order to do justice to time, it must be described in a narrative form” (852). In other words, narration is the most appropriate method to represent the interlinking of past events and their relationship to contemporary conditions.

The Kindness of Enemies is narrated in an innovative technique asserting the divergence of historical representation. It has a multiplicity of point of view which highlights the dialogic nature of history. Present time events and overtones of 11/9 are narrated from the professor of history’s view, Natasha. In contrast, historical events of the Russian invasion to the

Caucasus are presented from the perspective of historical characters like Imam Shamil, Jamaleldin and Princess Anna. The multiplicity of point of view enhances historical representation. Natasha wonders: “How historical change in the definition of jihad did come about?” (310) This question is at the core of New Historicist criticism as it explores the factors prompting cultural and social change. This question is answered through the different perspectives to jihad. Malak asserts a similar view as she refers to Al-Qaeda as a modern phenomenon divergent from Shamil’s dedication to spirituality and Sharia (*The Kindness* 215).

Narrating *The Kindness of Enemies* from a multiple perspective highlights the relative nature of history and the narrative becomes polyphonic as it sounds as a dialogue between different views. The polyphonic narrative constitutes the diversity of histories not history since it penetrates the divergence between the past and the present. The multiple points of views and the dialogic nature of the work demonstrate the idea that in New Historicism we can talk about histories rather than history. Greenblatt reveals that in New Historicism, “[a]ctions that appear to be single are disclosed as multiple; the apparently isolated power of the individual genius turns out to be bound with collective social energy” (*Learning to Curse* 221).

Greenblatt rejects the concept of history as grand narrative. He believes in the representation and reinterpretation of history in which there are no absolute facts. He endorses the idea of social change prompted by power relations and the collective efforts to defeat oppression. The polyphonic nature is asserted by the framed structure which makes *The Kindness of Enemies* a story within story. The characters delineated, whether fictional or historical, express their points of view within the place and time in which they find themselves. The polyphonic aspect of the novel is very powerful in its representation of the disparity of historical views and the display of textuality of history. Furthermore, it underscores the socio-political and cultural factors of opposing periods; namely 19th jihad and 21st century terrorism. Ideologically and referentially, the polyphonic narrative structure makes *The Kindness of Enemies* a postmodern metahistory. The polyphonic narrative is fostered by the spacio-temporal diversity which creates wider implications of the representation of historical facts. The characters’ perspectives dictate the content and the textuality of history.

The narrative technique in *The Kindness of Enemies* allows Aboulela to explore the power struggle in two important epochs in human history; specifically 19th jihad in the Caucasus and 21st century terrorism, particularly 9/11 crisis and its aftermath. The novel focuses on the perspectives of Imam Shamil and Princess Anna, showing how each one

justifies his cause and assumes power. In the negotiations between Imam Shamil and Prince David, Anna's husband, to exchange Anna with Shamil's son, power relations are well-represented. In the New Historicist approach, power relations are seen as "the most important context for texts of all kinds" (Brannigan 6). Power permeates New Historicism and this reflects Foucault's influence as he advocates the idea that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere" (History 93). Power is exercised through the Russian imperialists who try to subdue Shamil and his murids who resist stubbornly. Therefore, power is discursive as it encompasses all types of relations between the Russians and the Caucasians.

One of the crucial issues tackled in *The Kindness of Enemies* is the issue of Jihad. Jihad is a signifier of the true Muslim's commitment to the obligations of Islam. Natasha addresses Oz: "Listen Oz, the door of Jihad is closed. Jihad needs an Imam and there is no Imam now. Jihad is for upholding the values of Allah; It isn't for scoring political point, it's not for land, it isn't for rights, it 'isn't for autonomy". She demonstrates that "It's for getting us power over our enemies. Jihad is not something we should be ashamed of" (*The Kindness* 10). As a professor of history, Natasha ponders how power is manipulated. Power, as Foucault holds, is productive not regressive (*Discipline* 194). Power in this respect is the catalyst of social interaction as power induces resistance. Natasha's view here does not legitimize terrorism but she highlights the discrepancy between jihad as a means of encountering oppression and hegemonic strategies and terrorism as a tool of achieving certain agendas or gaining dominance.

To historicize a text is to read it in its historical context to uncover the implications of past events and their interweaving with our perception of present conditions. Ron Charles expresses that *The Kindness of Enemies* "pierces the fabric of its fiction to explore a largely forgotten historical moment." As seen by Natasha, Jihad is rightful since it is against oppression and totalitarianism. In this regard, Imam Shamil's resistance to the Russian oppression is commendable as it is against the supremacy of the dictatorship of Russia to impose its regime in the Caucasus.

New Historicist approach is built on the assumption that the personal becomes political and the private becomes public. *The Kindness of Enemies* shapes the interconnections between the personal and political worlds (Charles). The private/personal history of Natasha is juxtaposed with the public history of Imam Shamil and Princess Anna as historical characters. The history of Imam Shamil is reshaped in Natasha's interest in

Islamic jihad. Therefore, the personal history of Natasha and the public history of Imam Shamil are interlinked, deepening the narrative and creating a multilayered polyphonic story. Because of her relationship with Oz, Natasha is accused of supporting terrorism and charged with ambiguous harassment. The novel explores the overwhelming dichotomy between jihad and terrorism as well as Sufism and secularism. This dichotomy is asserted through the discussions of Oz and Natasha on jihad and terrorism.

The historical context of *The Kindness of Enemies* highlights the disparity between Imam's movement of Muridism and contemporary terrorism under the call for Islamic freedom.⁽¹⁾ Malak, Oz's mother, believes that 21st century radical Islamists claim to work for Islam whereas they do not adhere to its principles of devotion and piety (176). Young men, like Oz, are influenced by the allegations of the radicalists. In reflecting her opinion about Oz's perspectives, Malak highlights the radical approach which is divergent from Shamil's jihad. In Malak's endeavour to clarify the opposition between radicalism and Shamil's jihad, the personal becomes public and vice versa. Issues of terrorism and radicalism are perplexing matters which torment individuals and people world-wide.

In addition, the public becomes personal as it is reflected in Princess Anna's opinion of Imam Shamil. At first Anna is afraid of Shamil, but when she looks at him from a close perspective, she discovers that he has the deepest human feelings. In her conversation with Shamil, she reflects on how her personal life is a public issue since she is deprived of the throne of Georgia as her grandfather bequeathed Georgia to the Tsar, believing that Russia would make Georgia a more prosperous and progressive country. Actually, this annexation of Georgia to Russia is no more than colonization which is similar to the Russian occupation to the Caucasus (*The Kindness* 183).

The narrative moves between the present and the past. This movement is achieved through the structural division of the novel into volumes and the volumes into chapters. This division pertains to the precision of historical representation and involves the readers in the events which happened in the 19th century. The textuality of history becomes Aboulela's rereading and reinterpretation of historical events.

Setting is a considerable component in creating a factual representation of reality and reflecting the historicity of the text. *The Kindness of Enemies* renders a depiction of people in a certain epoch. The manipulation of setting is meaningful in creating an assimilation of real places in a way that blurs the borders between history and fiction. Aboulela focuses on presenting the distinctive nature of the Caucasus and its inhabitants. The

Caucasus has its strategic position which has made it an outpost of Islam. It is considered the gateway between the "Near East and the Eurasian Steppes" (Reynolds 33). Moreover, The Caucasus does not only have an inspirational, imaginative landscape, but it also teems with natural resources and oil pipes which make "Chechnia Russia's Kuwait" (Gokay 57).

The Caucasus has been a recurrent motif in Russian literature. Russian writers especially at the 19th century had been fascinated by the grandeur and mysticism of the mountains and its people. The Caucasus has been "Russia's leverage for defining its own identity. ... Its function included being Russia's inferior, savage 'Orient', which needed to be civilized" (Breining 3). Olga Breining's view reflects the Russian mentality of imposing power on the Caucasus which is the conceptual meditation of politicians. However, writers such as Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy manipulated the Caucasus as an exotic space, "a volatile land of freedom-loving, untruly people" (Breining 4). Russian writers focused on the imaginative landscape of the Caucasus and how it determined their struggle for independence from Russian coercion. The impact of the Caucasus is remarkable that the Caucasus becomes "the 'literary home' of many Russian writers in the 19th century (Breining 15). Bruce Grant shares Breining's view as he identifies a "literary topos" in the Caucasus where the physical, mythical and narrative realities compete (41). Pushkin's poem "The Prisoner of the Caucasus", for example, was inspired by the romantic Caucasian landscape ⁽²⁾. It is a narrative poem which reflects queer fascination with the Caucasus's mystic exoticism and awesome beauty. Leo Tolstoy's *Hadji Murat* takes its setting the Caucasian mountains and features Hadji Murat's alliance with the Russians ⁽³⁾.

Aboulela through handling setting shows not only the atmosphere of the 19th century jihad in the Caucasus against Russian expansionism, but also juxtaposes it with current terrorism represented by ISIS. Malak considers Shamil's warfare as one defending Islam against European colonization and Shamil's struggle, in this case, is opposed to the abominable crimes of Al-Qaeda and other radical movements (*The Kindness* 9). Malak's view is notable as it reflects the perspectives of many supporters to Shamil's resistance. However, Oz estimates Shamil's fighting as guerrilla warfare since Shamil's troops lack organization and modern military equipment (9). Shamil's resistance depended mainly on harassment and surprise. Aboulela demonstrates Oz's view as she makes a correlation between the Russians' view to the Caucasus and the nature of

Shamil's struggle: "The Caucasus represented as Russia's wild west, Shamil the noble savage, as magnificent and inscrutable as a Native American chief" (*The Kindness* 12).

In manipulating setting, Aboulela inextricably highlights the disparity between 19th century jihad and 21st terrorism as represented by ISIS and the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. The two periods presented in the novel have their historical and cultural particularity. The 19th century represents the height of Western expansionism in the Islamic countries at a large scale. The Western imperialism in its turn stirred the emergence of "*jihad states*" on the limits of colonial state powers" (Hickman 267 Italics in the original). Aboulela depicts the power struggle as represented in Imam Shamil's battles against Russian Colonialization. She also juxtaposes Shamil's battles for independence to contemporary terrorism under the curtain of Islam.

Time shifting is a technique employed by Aboulela to put the reader in the heart of events. The first chapter in each volume in her novel takes place in Scotland; then the rest of the volume is devoted to the chronological narration of Shamil's struggle and battles against the imperial Russian regime. Aboulela's handling of time in the novel subverts the Historicist belief in the chronological and synchronic aspect of the period. Time in her novel becomes diachronic, confirming the cultural historical forces of change as represented in the anecdotal narrative. Time shifting makes the readers as eye-witnesses to the past and the present. Accordingly, they interpret history from their perspective and this enhances the New Historicist belief in histories rather than one history. Time shifting technique also supports the textuality of history and the historicity of the text as it focuses on the historical and cultural factors that are reshaped in the text and form our understanding of the relationship between the past and the present. The past and the present are indispensable constructs in people's life. To have a transparent view of the past is to see it in the perspective of the present and vice versa. The time shifting is manifested in the juxtaposition between the 19th century Russian expansion in the Caucasus and the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. These events cast their shadows on the interpretation of the literary text; in a sense that the past is powerfully summoned. The past and the present merge together in the attempt to penetrate the struggle between the East and the West.

The story of *The Kindness of Enemies* takes place in Scotland, the Caucasus and Khartoum, and this makes the novel enriched with profound implications of the significance of these places at the epochs tackled in the story. The Caucasus symbolizes "a tragic and never-ending struggle for freedom and independence waged by local peoples against the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Turks and Russians"

(Maab and Kubanek 6). The Caucasus has a strategic position which made it the target of the colonial Russian Empire. Firstly, Islam reached the Caucasus in the 7th century where the Arab Muslims encountered severe resistance to subdue the Caucasians to the Islamic law. It took centuries to convert the Caucasians to Islam because of the mountaineers' violent resistance to the new religion. Secondly, in the thirteenth century, the Caucasus was invaded by the Mongols who were fiercely defeated by the mountaineers. After the Mongols' attack to the Caucasus, the Caucasian land was occupied by imperial Russia which started its raids against the Caucasus in 1722 (Reynolds 32- 4).

Invaders to the Caucasus, as recorded in historical documents and as manifested in Shamil's battles with the Russians, were met by substantial resistance due to the geography of the mountains and the prowess of the mountaineers. Interestingly, the particularity of the Caucasus terrain has its influence on its inhabitants. In *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, John F. Baddeley makes a correlation between the Caucasian inhabitants' pugnacity and the typography of the area. As maintained by Baddeley, the unique typography of the Caucasus made its inhabitants men as they "fought with passionate courage and energy in defence of their beloved mountains, in whose fastnesses, indeed, they were well-nigh unconquerable" (pp. xxi-xxii). Likewise, the Ottoman historian, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, illuminates the impact of the Caucasus typography in fostering the mountaineers' desire for freedom (qtd in Reynolds 35). Remarkably, the invincible nature of the Caucasus and Imam Shamil's indomitability thwarted the long-cherished desires for expansion in the East (Blanch 12). Likewise, the Caucasus's geography and its steep mountains endowed its inhabitants with resolute resistance to colonial strategies. Its unique geography stands as an obstacle to form a central government in the Caucasus. This decentralization made the region one divided into clans embracing variant Sunni and Salafi Tariqats.

Aboulela smoothly weaves the narrative among 2010 Scotland, the nineteenth century Caucasus, and Khartoum during the fueling division between the South and the North Sudan. Natasha visits Khartoum in an attempt to reconcile with her father and resolve her identity conflict. The three places depicted in the novel have their significance in consideration with the time of events. The Caucasus shows how divergent interests and machinations of colonial expansion can create multiple alliances due to the interlinked interests and aspirations. These alliances, therefore, expose displacement and identity issues as well as the relationship with the Other. Scotland likewise demonstrates the prejudice against Muslims

after 9/11. Furthermore, Khartoum suffers from political instability with the declaration of the Southern Sudanese referendum (*The Kindness* 104). Significantly, these places impart historical relevance to the text, asserting its historicity and evoking wonder and reasoning in the representation of events.

Through setting, Aboulela manifests the interaction between the personal and the public. If the Caucasus reflects the Russian-Caucasian conflict and the emergence of Jihad, Scotland presents the contemporary diasporic experience and the dichotomy between jihad and terrorism after 11/9. Scotland is a place where cultures meet and conflict, where immigrants from the unstable Sudan and the other Arab countries fluctuate between adhering to their cultural identity or succumbing to the new culture. This is very well-manifested in the fictional characters in the novel; namely Natasha, Malak and Oz and their attempt to stick to their culture through spending most of their time talking about Imam Shamil's dedication and the disparity between his jihad and contemporary terrorism. Unlike Aboulela's other novels, *The Kindness of Enemies* does not make cultural conflict its major theme as she focused mainly on the struggle of Imam Shamil.

Characters are well-delineated to represent historical structures of variant spaces. In depicting characters, Aboulela is not portraying historical figures, but she is penetrating into human psyche to re-fashion people with conflicting and contradictory emotions. One of Greenblatt's basic concepts is self-fashioning. By self-fashioning Greenblatt means the way a person constructs his private life and public identity in the light of the accepted code of values. In his book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt starts with the conception that the autonomy of personality is the main denominator in the construction of identity and he comes to the conclusion that human identity is "the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society" (256). One's personality is constructed in its conception of itself in its relation with the ideology and power struggle in the society.

The depiction of characters in *The Kindness of Enemies* exhibits the contextual representation of history as Aboulela portrays historical and fictional characters in a way that shatters the borders between history and literature. She presents multi-dimensional characters who have depth and complexity. The purpose of fiction is not to chronicle historical events but to portray historical characters who are unquestionably human beings involved in intricate relationships. Aboulela draws a parallel between historical and fictionalized characters. *The Kindness of Enemies* does not have one protagonist or heroine, but it has a number of round characters

embodying power relations and the opposing concepts of jihad and terrorism.

Imam Shamil is the third Imam of Dagestan (26 June 1797 – 4 February 1871). He is a Sufi spiritualist and a rebel against Russian imperialism. As depicted in *The Kindness of Enemies*, Shamil is a courageous resistant to Russian colonization as he is determined to “cleanse their houses from the shit of the Russian soldiers” (*The Kindness* 25). He is drawn as “the noble savage, as magnificent and inscrutable as a Native American chief” (*The Kindness* 12). Shamil as a spiritual fighter is backed by mystical power which made him able to “tame a jackal or bless a handful of millet so that it would feed five men instead of one” (*The Kindness* 19). As a Sufi leader, he inspired his *murids* (i. e. followers) and convinced them of the legitimacy of their fighting for independence. Steadfastly, Imam Shamil aspired for an Islamic state where Quran and Sharia were to regulate and dictate all the Caucasians’ actions. Shamil’s movement to spread Sharia and resist the Russian invaders is called Muridism.

Muridism as a movement started with the Caucasian leader Ghazi Muhammad who followed the Naqshabandi Tariqat (Sufi doctrine). Muridism aimed at implementing Sharia laws against Adaat or customary traditions. It started as a moral response advocating the abandonment of Sharia and developed as a movement attempting to unify the mountaineers under the banner of Islamic freedom to encounter the socio-political intervention of imperial Russia (Kirsiev and Ware 4970. In this way, Shamil’s battles against the Russians are ideologically motivated (Reynolds 39; Tsvetkova 95). Islam provided the mountaineers with a distinctive group identity and unified the Caucasian tribes under one banner. This gathering of the Caucasians was not an easy task as Imam Shamil had to encounter not only the colonial forces but also the Caucasians who abhorred Sharia and conspired with the imperial forces. Ideologically, the Caucasus has been the theatre not only of the conflict between the colonial powers and the Caucasian fighters but it has also witnessed the dispute between the Caucasians themselves due to ethnic disparities. In addition to Shamil’s muridism which followed the Naqshabandi tariqat, other mountaineers followed different tariqats.

Shamil, his battles and his capture come to the foreground of *The Kindness of Enemies* and evoke a sense of wonder that resonates with the historicity of the text. The battles of Imam Shamil and his long resistance to the Russian imperialists are depicted in a masterful style that intermingles literature with history in a dramatic way. This style presents the battles and the negotiations between Imam Shamil and the Russians as

if they were taking place now. This, accordingly, asserts the power of literature in rendering a representation of past events in a unique and convincing way.

The power of literature and the writer as a historian are well manifested in Aboulela's depiction of the Caucasians' suffering under the Russian oppression. Shamil describes the Russians to his wife Fatma as "poisonous as the snakes that crawled in the steppes" (*The Kindness* 30). Out of fear of Russian persecution, young Caucasian women panic-stricken from rape drowned themselves in the river. The smell of death is everywhere where children are wailing, mothers fighting and the stench of corpses made grief seep into Shamil's soul as "the claws of death so close that he could almost hear them scratching" (*The Kindness* 31). Under the siege of Aklhulgo, Shamil's only solace is to supplicate to the Almighty to empower him and support him in encountering such ferocious enemy.

The scenes of the Caucasians' suffering and fighting their enemies are open to varied interpretations. Firstly, Aboulela intermingles history and literature in a way that presents the literary text not as a reflection of history but as an interpretation based on the idea of histories rather than history. Secondly, her description creates wonder and resonance which are basic New Historicist tenets. Wonder appears in the awesome description of the Caucasians' fighting for their freedom and this resistance resonates with the Russian encroachment to the Caucasian land under the allegations of enlightenment. Thirdly, the description of the Caucasians' suffering, their siege and battles create an intertextual relationship between the past and the present as well as the way the past interprets the present. The scenes of the Caucasians' suffering are seen every day in our contemporary world where people are escaping from oppression through fleeing from their homeland, exposing themselves to drowning, murdering or at least the penalties of illegal immigration. Aboulela asserts the significance of the past and how it deepens our understanding of history. Natasha confesses "History could be milked for this cause or that. We observed it always with hindsight, projecting onto it our modern convictions and anxieties" (*The Kindness* 41). History, therefore, is a net of interlinked relationships from the past to the present, where past events are instrumental in unfolding the present dilemmas.

The representation of past events is shown in the depiction of characters. The characters in *The Kindness of Enemies* can be classified into fictional and historical characters. The division of characters into historical and fictional is succinctly achieved to make the fictional characters articulate the disparity between the two perspectives. These characters do not present abstract ideas, but they investigate into the history of the Caucasus to give plausibility and historicity to their account. Natasha, Malak and Oz are

fictional characters who are well-delineated to express the contemporary Eastern perspective of Shamil and his struggle as opposed to the Western and Russian perspective as represented by Prince Anna and the other Russians and their allies.

The characterization of Shamil is one of the achievements of Aboulela. Shamil is a multi-dimensional character who is presented as the spiritualist, the courageous rebel, the intelligent negotiator, the husband, the father, and above all, the human being. Shamil has a deeply-rooted sense of his Islamic identity as an Imam. He addresses Jamaleldin: "You must always act honourably with courage and patience. Remember, you are an Avar (northeast Caucasian ethnic group). Remember always that you are the son of Shamil, Imam of Dagestan" (*The Kindness* 26). In portraying Shamil's character, Aboulela's talent as a historian is very obvious. Shamil as a complex character is seen through the eyes of the fictional as well as the historical characters. On the one hand, he is viewed through the eyes of Natasha, Malak and Oz. Natasha, the historian professor, is Aboulela's mouthpiece in the novel. She is doing a research on the weapons Shamil used in his struggle against the imperial Russia (*The Kindness* 12). Natasha is conscious of the disparity between the Imam's jihad and contemporary terrorism. Malak shows wonder and respect to Shamil's integrity and determination in his long struggle. She considers Shamil's resistance to the Russians legitimate as he was protecting the Caucasus from the Russian raids (*The Kindness* 9). Oz, in turn, gives a very significant comment on Shamil and his fighting. He expresses: "What I like best about his days is the certainty. Everything was clear cut. Shamil and his people were the goodies; the tsar's army were the badies. The Caucasus belonged to the Muslims, the tsar's army were the invaders" (*The Kindness* 14). In very simple and impressive words, Oz reflects the point of many Muslims who distinguish Shamil's jihad from contemporary terrorism.

On the other hand, Shamil is seen through the perspective of the historical characters. As a historical writer, Aboulela asserts the idea of counter histories rather than history; in a sense she gives credibility to her narration. At first, Princess Anna disdains Imam Shamil and is reluctant to converse with him. She articulates: "And I am a princess of Georgia. I will not be summoned by him" (*The Kindness* 112). Anna's view demonstrates power struggle and her belief in the superiority of one country over another. After talking with Shamil, she acknowledges the legitimacy of his struggle and she finds in him a noble man. Mme. Drancy regards Shamil as a monster (109), his murids as heathens who are alien to Christian compassion (80) and Shamil to them is "God's representative on earth"

(110). Moreover, Aboulela reflects the linear reading of the literary and non-literary texts to understand the literary text. She incorporates in her novel what the Russian and Western newspapers said about Shamil. In one instant Shamil was depicted as a “hawk-like figure.” As seen from Alexander Dumas’s view, Shamil is “the Titan”, the very strong and powerful man who fought from “his lair against the Tsar” (*The Kindness* 43). In quoting Dumas, Aboulela asserts the intertextual relationship between the text and its con-text. Shamil’s character is not an imaginary one but a historical celebrity which has been manipulated by other writers. Shamil was hailed by the MP in the House of Commons as “... a really splendid type who stood up to tyrants... and deeply religious even if he did have several wives...” (*The Kindness* 43). Opinions and quotes from newspapers are extratextual framing enhancing the authenticity of the historical representation.

Shamil resolutely continued fighting for about thirty years (1834-1859). After his long struggle against the Russian colonizers, Shamil surrenders as he chooses the safety of his people over fighting stubbornly. It is an honourable defeat which Shamil considers “Allah’s will” (*The Kindness* 314). A momentous event in *The Kindness of Enemies* is the capture of Shamil which, historically, “guaranteed the victory of Russia against the remaining poorly organized mountain tribes” (Barret 353).

Aboulela draws parallel lines between Shamil’s surrender and his prestigious reception by the Russian Tsar. The Tsar gave orders to receive Shamil as “a worthy, honourable adversary”. Shamil was received as a respected personality as people swarmed to have a look at such a valiant hero who was accompanied by a military parade (*The Kindness* 294). This prestigious reception is tackled in Thomas M. Barret’s “The Remaking of the Lion of Dagestan” (354). After surrendering in 1859 and pledging alliance with the Russian Tsar, Shamil and his family settled in an estate in Kaluga, south of Moscow for about twelve years after which they were given permission to perform pilgrimage. He stayed in Mecca until his death in 1871, a year after his pilgrimage.

It is questionable that Shamil who had been considered the arch enemy of Russia and its dauntless rebel was to be received as a national hero. From Barret’s perspective, the capture of Shamil is a manifestation of “the imperial mentality of the Russian in the Post-Crimean war period” (354). The Russian reception to Shamil as a heroic dignified warrior and leader rather than a savage or a rebel is an enigmatic issue. It is a matter of investigation that reflects the New Historicist belief in relativity of historical facts. His surrender and magnificent reception elicit disparate interpretations which demonstrate Greenblatt’s resonance and wonder

principles. Aboulela investigates this issue and gives a number of possibilities:

But what did the Russians want from him? To command every fighter in the Caucasus, whether they were Circassians or Chechens or Dagestanis, to lay down their arms? He would. To swear allegiance to Emperor Alexander II? He did. To support the new policy of enforced mass deportations of the highlanders, robbing them of their ancestral lands? He would not. (303)

Aboulela's questioning is an assertion of the inseparable relationship between history and literature. The literary text is structured on the interaction between a numbers of forces which make the literary work open to interpretations. She shows how the perspective from which we look at history shapes our understanding to it. Aboulela maintains that history is not absolute facts but it differs from which perspective one looks at facts (41). Accordingly, we do not have one history but histories.

Shamil's glorious reception is an attempt to foster him with psychological energy, as Barret advocates (355). In this respect, Shamil's magnificent reception is in line with the Russian colonial enterprise which made Russia's colonization to the East a mark of "Russia's belonging to the common civilization of imperial power" (Wortman 53). This is evident in the Russian Tsar's reception to Shamil on September 18, 1859 and inviting him to inspect the Russian troops.

The capture and reception of Shamil manifest Greenblatt's resonance and wonder principles. As historically seen, the capture of Shamil is a strategic annexation of Russia's colonial enterprise to the East. The Russians manipulated Shamil as a means to settle the indigenous Caucasian issue by convincing the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire to give them empty land from the Empire to establish a Caucasian immigrant colony. Consequently, Shamil and the immigrant issue will be settled and Russia is free from the European intervention in Caucasian affair (Barret 364).

Aboulela's narrative refashions historical events that exhibit wonder and resonance. It becomes a form of discourse where the context is the main factor that distinguishes the fictional and the real as well as enhancing the plausibility of the historical stories (White "The Question of Narrative" 2). Shamil and his family's honourable reception is reflected in their dressing their tribal uniforms and celebrating their special Islamic occasions. As featured in European magazines, Shamil and his family members appear as "exotic specimen hardly to be incorporated into Russian civilization" (Barret 357). Shamil's character as a spiritualist,

mystic leader and a heroic warrior arouse wonder and anxiety in the Russians.

Aboulela's depiction of Shamil's character is one of the landmarks of the novel. He is a multi-faceted character whose representation pinpoints the discourse between history and literature. Shamil's image as a modern Prometheus widens the gulf between Christianity and Islam in the globalization era (Hickhman 267). Imam's Shamil's dedication to the true cause of Islam to guarantee people's independence juxtaposes the colonial enterprise under the curtain of defending Christianity. John Milton Mackie is inspired by Shamil and considers his battles "anti-imperial autonomist for sovereignty" (19). Moshe Gammer advocates a similar view. He reveals: "Religion not tribal ethnicity is the main catalyst to fight to be identified" (*Muslim Resistance* 20)⁽⁴⁾. Shamil also appears as a "tough but just fighter for sharia" (Kemper 31).⁽⁵⁾ The best description to the multi-faceted nature of Shamil's character is that "there are many Shamils" (Gould 122). Shamil's long-cherished struggle is profuse material to historians and writers as "Shamil's many afterlives encapsulate two centuries of colonialism and anticolonial resistance from Chechen, Dagestani, Georgian, and Russian perspectives" (Gould 125).

Shamil and his resistance are recurrent motifs in a number of literary and non-literary texts. In his poem "Shamil Love," the Avar writer Rasul Gamzatov, draws a fascinating portrait of Shamil, the spiritualist and warrior.⁽⁶⁾ In *The Sabres of Paradise*, Lesley Blanch depicts Shamil as a "legendary giant" and his Gazwat as "Holy War" (16). Leo Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad* (1912) depicts Imam Shamil as a noble savage who reflects a certain culture that does not conform to the Christian values. In his review of *The Kindness of Enemies*, Jacob Rama Berman demonstrates the image of Imam Shamil in *The Spectator* (February 6, 1858). Berman shows how Imam Shamil is presented as a celebrated figure as "the Eagle of the Caucasus" who is a diligent administrator, indefatigable fighter and strict father (family man).

The representation of Shamil in Russian historiography is one of the debatable issues throughout the Russian history. Shamil's image in Russian historiography has taken different stages. This representation is instigated by the Russian politics and the idea of Russian expansionism. The image of Shamil in Russian historiography passed through two major periods which are deeply connected with the dominant Russian ideology. One before the Second World War in which Stalin formulated the theory of "lesser evil." (Gokay 38). The 'lesser evil' meant the Russian annexation to the Caucasus was seen as a civilizing step bringing enlightenment to the savage mountaineers. This idea is the screen beyond many colonial enterprises as it was reflected in postcolonial novels such as *Heart of*

Darkness and *A Passage to India*. Stalin and supporters to Russian expansionism hailed the conquest in the Caucasus to protect the Caucasus region from the Ottoman imperial desires. In this stage, the Russian majority, whether officially or publically found in Shamil a courageous hero dedicated to the cause of the Caucasus's liberation; whereas, the minority regarded him as a savage (Gammer "Shamil" 730). From 1834 prior to the Second World War, the image of Imam Shamil is fluctuating. With the collapse of Tsarism, the Tsarist's expansionism was seen as imperialism and Shamil's movement was seen as a liberation movement and Shamil a national hero (Gammer "Shamil" 731).

The second period covers the era after the Second World War in which Russia was seen as a Great Power and the Russian annexation into the Caucasus was considered progressive. The 'lesser evil' formula was discarded and replaced by "the elder brother" concept (Gammer "Shamil", 732; Gokay 43). In the light of this change in perspective, Russian historians focused on the benefits the Caucasians got from Russian expansionism rather than imperial evils. In this period Shamil was re-estimated as an anti-Russian rebel conspiring with Britain and the Ottoman Empire.

Aboulela diligently reflects the varying attitudes towards Imam Shamil through the perspectives of the Russian Tsar, Princess Anna and Mme. Drancy. As narrated in *The Kindness of Enemies*, the Tsar glorifies Shamil as a national hero. The Tsar's attitude represents the first perspective to Shamil in Russian historiography. Princess Anna's attitude is very profound, reflecting the similarity between Shamil's situation and Anna's. At first she considered Shamil a savage, but after coming closer to Shamil and addressing with him, she got convinced of the legitimacy of his resistance. Accordingly, Anna found Shamil a respectable fighter. Mme. Drancy's view is parallel to the Russian perspective to Shamil after the Second World War. Her estimation represents the anti-Shamil perspective.

From a New Historicist perspective, the changing views to Shamil are conditioned by the dominant ideology in Russia and the paradigm of power/resistance. After Russia's victory in the Second World War, the Russians endeavoured to build the Great Russian Empire through subduing the North Caucasus to Russian hegemony. This is apparent in the reversal of the 'lesser evil' formula to the 'elder brother' concept. With the technological development and the fast-sweeping changes, new-colonization takes new shapes. Territorial occupation is replaced by ideological, cultural and economic colonization. The powerful countries negatively influence the third world countries through the grants given to

these countries to make modifications in their cultural and educational systems. These modifications are dictated by the powerful countries to have supremacy. Decades after the Second World War and especially in 1980s, the Russians launched an attack on what they called religious fanaticism (Gokay 48). In this decade a fresh revision of Muridism was introduced as Shamil is considered “the most celebrated Islamic resistance fighter” who has a strategic significance regarding “the Russian role in the region as a Great Power” (Gokay 56).

In delineating Shamil’s character, Aboulela focuses on his relationships with his people and his enemies. *The Kindness of Enemies* is shaped by the cultural and historical parameters of its time. Significantly, the novel undermines a number of hidden discourses that can be disclosed through a deconstruct New Historicist approach. The historical context of the novel is enriched by the representation of Princess Anna and Jamaleldin, who encounter similar circumstances of capture and cultural dislocation. Princess Anna and Jamaleldin’s stories enrich the framed narrative of Shamil, highlighting the complexity of historical representation as it is conditioned by intricate factors.

In conclusion, New Historicism considers literary texts as instrumental tools in understanding history as it reveals the social and cultural norms of the period as depicted in the literary text. New Historicism is an influential practical revisionist approach based on history as a narrative discourse pertaining to the power-relations conflict. The discursive nature of the literary text is a manifestation of the basic tenets of New Historicism as professed by Montrose: “the historicity of the literary text and the textuality of history.” Accordingly, New Historicism can be viewed as a postmodern heterogeneous practical method of analysis encompassing multi disciplines.

The plot structure of *The Kindness of Enemies* is an investigation of the plausibility of historical stories, rejecting history as absolute facts. It exposes the disparity between Shamil’s rightful jihad and 21st terrorism, demonstrating how the past and the present are interlinked as forms of discourse. The 9/11 attacks and their aftermath cast their shadows on the interpretation of the literary text in a sense that the past and the present merge together in the attempt to penetrate the perpetual struggle between the East and the West. The structure consequently becomes a simulacrum of historical events and the narration becomes a representation of a real story. *The Kindness of Enemies* is an ideologically oriented discourse of the realities of jihad and terrorism.

Aboulela incorporates anecdotes and parallel plots that pertain contemporary implications of the social-political tension and the perpetual prejudice against the East. Aboulela widens the scope of representation

through the two framed narratives that are interlinked to certain contextualized historical epochs, reflecting certain discourses and asserting the multiple views of truth and rejecting the belief in grand narratives. She intermingles history and literature in unearthing historical facts; therefore giving wonder and resonance to the historical representation.

Aboulela's novel is a well-constructed written historical narrative. It provides a wide perspective of history through the innovative technique of highlighting the interlinking of the past and the present and how the past is influential in understanding present dilemmas. Her treatment of the topic asserts the inseparability of history and literature. In addition, it demonstrates the significance of place as a motive of colonization as well as the emergence of new- colonization with the changing perspective and rise of new alliances.

In a nutshell, Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* has thrown light on the issue of Russian expansion in the Caucasus which has not been tackled extensively. Aboulela's treatment of the topic asserts the inseparability of history and literature. Her novel opens new avenues to the exploration of the past and the present and how the past is helpful in understanding the present; especially regarding the issue of new-colonization and the long-life struggle of the marginalized. and oppressed people.

Notes

1. Muridism is an Islamic movement in the Caucasus in the 19th century. It called for observance of Quran and Sunna and the rejection of Adaats or customary law.
2. "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" is one of the most famous works written by Alexander Pushkin during his exile in Sothern Russian where he was inspired by the romantic and oriental landscape of the Caucasus. *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* is also the title of a novella written by Leo Tolstoy based on a real experience during Tolstoy's service in Russian military. Both the poem and the novella show the Russian writers' fascination with the Caucasus.
3. *Tolstoy's Hadji Murad* (1912) presents Imam Shamil's fighting against the Russians as lawful unlike the Tsar who is trying to impose his supremacy to annex the Caucasus to the Russian Empire. It mainly focuses on the depiction of Hadji Murad, a Caucasian fighter who conspired against Imam Shamil.
4. Moshe Gammer is a professor of Eastern and African studies in Tel Aviv University. He is the great historian of the Caucasus. He has explored the war between the Caucasians and the Russians in many of his works:

5. Michael Kemper, in his article “the Changing Images of Jihad Leaders: Shamil and Abd al-Qadir in Daghestani and Algerian Historical Reading”, provides an in-depth comparison of the resistance of the two Jihad leaders who found themselves in a similar context of colonization and they adopted similar ideological beliefs.

6. *Rasul Gamzatov has been considered as the most famous an Avar poet. Avars are the people of Northern Caucasus. There are many ethnic groups in this region. Among them lived Imam Shamil who tried to spread real Islam and abolish Adaats.*

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