ABSTRACT

MARA MASTERS. "I am a Woman of My Wording": Language, Love, and Violence in Assia Djebar's *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. (Under the direction of Professor Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi.)

In her novel *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, Assia Djebar undertakes writing a representative history of the 130-year French occupation of Algeria. Writing as an uncloistered and unveiled woman in a cultural patriarchy that heavily regulates female modesty, Djebar works to exhume and transcribe the buried history of Algeria's women, whose bodies were hidden behind the veil and whose stories were never written. Fanon and other theorists assert that the symbolic weight of the veil is about nationalism and resistance against the colonizer's cultural influence. In *Fantasia*, Djebar makes clear that whatever symbol the veil had become for men in Algeria, that was not the only symbolic power it held for women. For Djebar, it is not the veil that covers the body that wields its power over the women of Algeria, but the veil that shrouds the voices. As she wrestles with the workings of both her mother- and father/step-mother-tongues, she takes the European narratives and images of the conquering of Algeria and couples them with the previously untold stories of Algeria's veiled women. She acknowledges that both languages have enacted violence, first in the Algerian Muslim veiling of its women and denial of them possessing a public or written language, and then in French, as these silent women are condemned to oblivion, preserved only in their absence from the pages of history composed by the chroniclers of the French occupation. This capstone project explores how Djebar reverses that violence.