

Contextuality and Intertextuality in Falcones' *The Hand of Fatima* From A New Historicist Perspective

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Abstract

New Historicism is a literary theory that examines literature by placing it in its cultural and historical context. It is concerned with analyzing the literary work along with other non-literary texts that cover the same historical period. New historicism also refuses the existence of an established unquestioned record for a certain historical event. In this sense, the new historicist approach embraces the concept of multiplicity; layers of the actual historical event as well as the historical literary work. The Fall of Granada¹ (1492) is a crucial and controversial historical event that involves a variety of historical narrations of the different parties of that

¹ The last Islamic kingdom in Spain. Its fall in 1492 by the Castilian forces marked the end of the Islamic rule in a-Andalus

conflict. The present research aims at reading Idefonso Falcones' *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) about the fall of Granada and the Moriscos¹expulsion from a new historicist perspective. The novel offers the reader new alternative ways of thinking about the Morisos' revolt and their expulsion in 1609 as the writer refutes the established truth and the historical stability of the past. Falcones also confronts and questions the idea of cultural and ethnic homogeneity and the possession of an absolute historical truth.

Keywords: New Historicism, *The Hand of Fatima*, Intertextuality, The fall of Granada, Alpujarra Uprising, Moriscos' expulsion.

The present research endeavors to examine Falcones' *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) within the paradigm of the New Historicism theory. Through this kind of reading, it is aimed to pinpoint the relationships between the novel and the period during which it was written, and between the novel and the non- literary texts written in the same period. It also attempts to show how Falcones looks at history and uses it in his fictional text, as well as the modes and methods through which he re-tells history. To show how far this novel can be read from a new historicist perspective, it would be appropriate to begin with the definition of a New Historicism theory as well as its methods.

New Historicism (1980s) is a recent theory based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts. It asserts that a literary text cannot be separated from the history and culture in which it was produced. New historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through the cultural context surrounding the historical event and to understand and investigate history through literature. In other words, New Historicism rejects the text-based

theories which denied the importance of anything except the text in determining the meaning of the work and relied completely on close reading of the literary work itself for its interpretation. “Instead, new historicists conceive a literary text as “situated” within the totality of the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes”(Abrams 219).

In his “Introduction” to *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance* (1982), the American critic Stephen Greenblatt, one of the founders of New Historicism, writes about New Historicism: "The critical practice challenges the assumptions that guarantee a secure distinction between “literary foreground” and political background” or, more generally, between artistic production and other kinds of social production” (5-6). This means that literature and history should be conceived as the products of the same culture and both should be read and interpreted together in its present context. Hence, New Historicism deconstructs the traditional opposition between history and literature as it considers both literature and history as parallel texts. Its parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts also distinguishes it from old historicism formal analysis of a literary work. As Peter Barry states:

The practice of giving 'equal weighting' to literary and non-literary material is the first and major difference between the 'new' and the 'old' historicism. As these earlier approaches made a hierarchical separation between the literary text, which was the object of value, the jewel, as it were, and the historical 'background', which was merely the setting, and by definition of lesser worth. (117)

The American new historicist Louis Adrian Montrose describes the relationship between history and literature as: “the historicity of text” and “the textuality of history” (20). Montrose’s historicizing the text and textualizing history became the key concern of new historicist critics. In his article “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture” (1989), Montrose explains:

By the historicity of text, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing – not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived and material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’ (20).

“Textuality of history” means that history is represented and recorded in “written documents”; in a constructed text that can be interpreted like any other literary texts. According to new historicists, history is no longer considered as a scientific and objective record of facts because the truth itself has been constructed, created and narrativized by the historian. They believe that History is made up of language with perceptions so history is a text that needs to be interpreted like other texts. As Tyson explains:

Like all human beings, historians live in a particular time and space, and their views of both current and past events are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own experience within their own culture. Historians may believe that they are being objective, but their own views of what is right and wrong, what is civilized and uncivilized, what is important and unimportant, and the like, will strongly influence the ways in which they interpret events. (279)

Thus, history can only be perceived in a textualised form because it is not a fixed truth rather it is constructed and fictionalized. History, for new historicists, is presented “through the ideology or outlook or discursive practices of its own time, then through those of ours, finally through the distorting web of language itself” (Barry 117). The new historicist Joseph Childers also confirms the textuality of history and how it resembles other texts that need to interpretation. As they state:

Instead of a body of indisputable, retrievable facts, history becomes textualized; that is, becomes a group of linguistic traces that can be recalled, but which are always mediated through the historian/interpreter. Objective history is therefore impossibility; every account is just that—another text, and like any novel, play or poem, it is open to the same kind of critical interpretive scrutiny... History itself is a large amorphous text consisting of various and often disparate accounts. (207)

According to new historicists, history is “textualised” as it can be read just like any piece of literature; it is a constructed and fictionalized text to fit some ideological purposes, surrounded with complex web of socio-political networks. Therefore, new historicists refuse to treat historical records as closed or final but as always open to new readings and interpretations. As Tyson states, “there is no history, in the traditional sense of the term. There are only representations of history.... history is a matter of interpretations, not facts, and that interpretations always occur within a framework of social conventions.” (289). Thus textuality of history is the reason behind why the new historicists read texts and their contexts together as they see them expression of the same historical moment (Zengin 15). This is known as “the historicity of text.”

The historicity of text refers to the importance of reading the literary text alongside the historical context and the socio-political conditions of its production. Therefore, new historicists subvert the idea that literature is purely subjective and supplies fictional data. Instead, they believe that literary text may present factual data as it is based on particular socio-political and historical realities. From this perspective, a novelist can also be treated as a historian. In his article “Historicizing the New Historicism: Understanding the Past in Criticism and Fiction,” Brian Rosenberg explains that a novelist could “create a diverse contentious past always in the process of being formed; rather than encouraging the study of the past, novelists could allow one to enter into it, and to see it from the perspective of those for whom it was present (85). In contrast, historicists fictionalize history and consider it as another form of fiction. Thus both the historian and the novelist exchange their place as “history becoming fictionalized and fiction becoming a 'true' history” (Selden 170).

Thus, new historicists treat literary texts as equal sources with other texts and documents of all kinds “in the attempt to describe and examine the linguistic, cultural, social and political fabric of the past in greater detail.”(Brannigan 12) They believe that no literary text can be seen as an objective description of reality because a written narrative is always subjective. For new historicists:

History is not objective knowledge which can be made to explain a literary text...literature is not, however, simply a medium for the expression of historical knowledge...For new historicism the object of study is not the text and its context, not literature and its history, but rather literature in history (Brannigan 3).

Thus both literature and history are narratives and are in the form of discourses. For new historicists, literature is one discourse like many cultural discourses. Hence, the role of new historicists is to "analyze the interplay of culture-specific discursive practices" (Montrose 415). New historicists believe that there is no text can express pure things or events. Instead, everything has to be seen as a text that needs to be interpreted. In other words, everything about the past can only be available in a textualised form because any text involves language that carries the perspectives of the writer (Barry 117). Thus, New historicists treat all traces of the past, all historical accounts as narratives; texts to be interpreted. As M.H. Abrams clarifies:

History therefore is conceived not to be a set of fixed, objective facts but, like the literature with which it interacts, a text which itself needs to be interpreted. Any text, on the other hand, is conceived as a discourse which, although it may seem to present, or reflects, an

external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations-that is , verbal formation which are the "ideological constructs" or "cultural constructs" of the historical conditions specific to an era. New historicists often claim also that these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm, and propagate the power-structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society.(219)

Hence, the concept of culture has become prominent in new historicist criticism. Instead of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists seek to connect “the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations” (Abrams 218). They tend to read literary texts as “material products of specific historical conditions” (Abrams 182). They refused to treat the literary text as “somehow unique but as a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses-religious, political economic, aesthetic-which both shaped it and, in their turn, were shaped by it”(Abrams761). For new historicists, literary texts are cultural artifacts that can show something about the interaction of discourses, the web of social meanings, operating in the time and place in which those texts were written. (Tyson 287)

For new historicists, any text is a cultural construct rather than the isolated and unique creation of a genius; a text cannot exist in a cultural vacuum (Brannigan 22). As they believe that text is an intersection of discourses that establish a dominant ideology. Thus, they insist on reading a literary text alongside other non-literary texts whether historical, political or penal documents, because this enriches the

interpretation of the literary work and gives it a plenty of possible meanings. As Tyson explains:

We can't understand a historical event, object, or person in isolation from the web of discourses in which it was represented because we can't understand it in isolation from the meanings it carried at that time. The more we isolate it, the more we will tend to view it through the meanings of our own time and place and, perhaps, our own desire to believe that the human race is improving with the passage of time. (286)

It is through this process of parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts of the same period that the notion of "intertextuality" is brought into practice. As Graham Allen states:

Intertextuality reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader's own presuppositions, lacking in clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic 'voices' which exist within society. A term which continually refers to the impossibility of singularity, unity, and thus of unquestionable authority, intertextuality remains a potent tool within any reader's theoretical vocabulary. By that same logic, however, it also remains a tool which cannot be employed by readers wishing to produce stability and order, or wishing to claim authority over the text or other critics. (209)

For new historicists, historical events are interpreted by the writers through their personal experiences and the social and cultural sphere in which the author lives. Thus, in analyzing literary text, new historicists do not only focus on the time in which the author wrote the work but also examine the background of the writers and the different factors that may have influenced them (Zengin 12). In other words, in reading the literary work, a new historicist critic has to focus on all factors that may influence the work of art such as social and psychological background of the author. New historicists also acknowledge that the critic's response to any work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, prejudices and other circumstances. Thus, the meanings of the literary and historical texts are linguistically constructed by the critic or the historian. Hence, New Historicism stresses the importance of studying literature within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Therefore any work of art is influenced by many factors such as its author's times and cultural background as well as the critic's response to the work.

Hence, in reading a literary text, new historicists emphasize the need to examine and reexamine any piece of literature in relation to the culture, society, or ideology in a given time. Literature has to be studied “within the broader context of its culture, in the context of other discourses ranging over politics, religion and aesthetic, as well as its economic context”(Habib 760). In other words, in order to get a more understanding of history, new historicists insist on reading and analyzing more than one perspective, voice, and text. These various and dissimilar texts can be literary or non-literary. They can be diaries, movies, presidential speeches, audio tapes, etc. The reading and analysis of such texts serve to “supplement or ‘rework’ reality” (La Capra 11). Thus, a new historicist critic has to return to other literary texts, historical, political and penal documents

because “Questions are not directed to what lies beneath the text but to those other texts and events which surround the work.” (Colebrook 207) In other words, new historicists evaluate literature through a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural events that surround the event

According to new historicists, it is vital to merge all these dissimilar discourses to shape “a culture and interconnects all the human activities, including the writing, reading, and interpretation of a text” (Bressler 187). Thus they can construct a new written text by juxtaposing the text with a chosen document; thereby a new concept is formed by resituating the past in the present situation.

New historicists also believe that both literary text and its historical contexts should be read and treated together in its present context because they result in indeterminacy and various 'truths'. This parallel reading provides multiple readings and possibilities to a text as they believe that there is no single historical discourse of a period. Hence, the critic must trace out the multiple and complexly interconnected discourses that make up an age. In other words, while reading a text with reference to all historical forces, it is possible to have multiple and various meanings. As Tyson states:

Thus, new Historicism focuses on the contexts of all kinds in which a work of art is produced because no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power. For there is no monolithic (single, unified, universal) spirit of an age, and there is no adequate totalizing explanation of history (an explanation that provides a single key to all aspects of a given culture). There is, instead, a dynamic, unstable interplay among discourses: they are always in a state of flux, overlapping and competing with one another

(or, to use new historical terminology, negotiating exchanges of power) in any number of ways at any given point in time. Furthermore, no discourse is permanent. (285)

Thus, the new historicist premise that a literary text, like all other cultural texts, was shaped by the history and culture in which it was written has become a major point for reading the literary text. In other words, the reader can read the literary work alongside with other non-literary texts usually of the same historical period to understand the dominant ideology of that time. From this perspective, in order to show how far *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) is shaped by history and culture in which it was written, it is important to begin with the historical background of its time and then shed the light on the other non-literary discourses of the same period of the novel's publication to show how the novel is a product of its period.

The Fall of Granada as a Historical Context

Muslims had ruled the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal) between 711 and 1492 (approximately eight centuries). In 711 a mixed force of Arabs and Moroccan Berbers, under the leadership of Tariq ibn-Ziyad, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar from northern Africa into the Iberian Peninsula. Having been asked for help against Roderick², the tyrannical Visigoth ruler of Spain, Muslim forces managed to defeat the Visigothic³ kingdom. By 720, after Muslims' subsequent conquests, the Iberian Peninsula

² The last Visigothic king in Hispania between 710 and 711. He was a tyrant ruler who was overthrown by Islamic forces in 711.

³ It is a kingdom that occupied Iberian Peninsula from the 5th to the 8th centuries. Roderic was the last Visigoth king in Hispania between 710 and 711. He was a tyrant ruler who was overthrown by Islamic forces in 711. (Harvey Islamic Spain 325)

almost entirely became under Muslim control. Muslims gave the name, al-Andalus, to the territories of Iberia ruled by them (Harvey Islamic Spain 325). From 756 to 1031, Muslims established a strong united Andalusian Umayyad dynasty.

During the period of Islamic rule, there were three great monotheistic religions: Muslims, Christians and Jews live peacefully with each other. However the unity of Umayyad state did not last forever because of a series of uprisings and the disunity among Muslim rulers. All these led to the dissolution of the Umayyad caliphate. In the 11th century, the caliphate shattered and divided into numerous independent principalities called “taifas” (Civantos 4). The Catholic Monarchs, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon seized the opportunity of the disunity among Muslim rulers to restore their lands from Muslims. By the early 13th century, Islamic territories began to fall one by one under the Spaniard’s control. This restoration of the lands is called “Spanish Reconquista.” or the Reconquest of Spain by Catholic monarchs. On January 2, 1492 the last Muslim kingdom of Peninsula “Granada” was surrendered by king Muhammad XII Abu ‘Abd Allah, known in the West as Boabdil, to the Catholic Monarchs (Harvey Islamic Spain 326). Thus, Muslims lost their rule and power in al-andalus in 1492.

The surrender of the last Islamic Kingdom of Granada in 1492 doesn’t refer to the end of the Muslims’ existence in Spain as they remained for another hundred years. In his historical book, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New Historicism Of Islamic Spain*, Brian A. Catlos asserts that: “Nor can the end of Islamic Spain be pegged to January 1, 1492, when Boabdil handed over the keys of the Alhambra to Fernando and Isabel. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims remained in Spain until 1614, suffering discrimination, forced conversion, and eventually, expulsion.”(2). After the official

capitulation of Granada, the catholic monarchs; Ferdinand and Isabella had signed with the king Abu Abdullah what is known as 'The Treaty of Granada.' The treaty had guaranteed the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion, language, and customs. However, the terms of the surrender treaty came to be violated by Cardinal Ximenes Cisneros; the Catholic Inquisitor who violently forced Muslims to abandon their religion and convert to Christianity. In an attempt to eliminate Muslims' culture and customs, King Philip II came with a decree on January 1st 1567 that issued:

New legislation to end all toleration of Muslim practices. He banned the speaking of Arabic or Berber, banned Muslim dress, (for women that mean the jalabiyah and for men the traditional Maghribi thawb), required Muslims to adopt Christian names, and ordered the destruction of all books and documents in Arabic script. Morisco children would be educated exclusively by Catholic priests. This edict superseded all before it and effectively broke the many promises of toleration offered previously. It set January 1st 1568 as the deadline by which all old Muslim clothes had to be replaced by Christian ones (Al Muhajir 132).

In response to these events, Moriscos revolt against the Spanish authorities in what is known as Alpujarra uprisings that starts from 1499 till 1571. Thus this period of the history of Islamic Spain marks the beginning of the exploited and reviled Moriscos against Spaniards' authority. In his book *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614*, the historian L.P. Harvey describes this period of history as "a significant divide in the history of the Iberian Peninsula as a whole and

the beginning of the process that led to the end of Spanish Islam altogether, 114 years later” (Preface). Between 1609 and 1614 King Phillip III issued a degree of the expulsion of all Moriscos from Spain.

Thus, it can be said that Muslims ruled Iberian Peninsula from 711 to 1492. 1492 is an important period in the history of Spain as it refers to the completion of the “Spanish Reconquista” by the Catholic Monarchs as well as the end of the Islamic rule. There are multiple perspectives to the concept of “Reconquista” among Spanish writers. There are two contradicting views about Reconquista among Spanish writings. There are some historical discourses of the traditionalist narrative about medieval Iberia, which extols the Reconquista as the birth of Spanish nationhood, aiming to exclude al-Andalus from this national identity. On the other hands there are other historical contexts which question the perceived vision of the past and rewrite the history of Granada with a new vision aiming at defying the Eurocentric notions of history. Thus, two opposing understandings of al-Andalus and Reconquista come into conflict among Spanish writers and historians. One presents the Islamic past with shame and humiliation while the other favors its integration into national historical memory.

In dominant Spanish historiography, Spain was seen as a victim of almost 800 years of Muslim occupation and aggression. For Spaniards, Moors⁴ are presented as invaders who landed on the shores of Iberia in 711, drove out the Visigoths, and inaugurated Arab Muslim rule one that would last for nearly eight centuries. In his book *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (2004), the American historian Joseph F. O’Callaghan, author of a history of Medieval Spain, illustrates that the Moors in Spanish

⁴A Spanish title refers to the Muslims who were living in Iberian Peninsula during the period of the Islamic rule.

writings, “came to be regarded as invaders who wrongfully occupying territory that by right belonged to the Christians, and whose entire way of life was foreign to that of the Christians.”(11) In other words, the Moors for Spaniards were perceived as a common enemy who had militarily seized territory from native Iberian Spaniards.

The Islamic rule in Hispania is also viewed as a devastating national catastrophe and disaster. Therefore Spanish Reconquista is praised by the most Spanish writers as an act of liberation from the yoke of Islamic rule. For example, the Spanish historian Sánchez-Albornoz celebrated the Reconquista, saying:

But in spite of the wonders of Muslim Spain, and even though I have considered them as the most brilliant manifestations of medieval and modern Hispanic-Christian culture, when I contemplate the present situation of the Muslim peoples, I am terrified to think what would have been the destiny of Spain if all of it would have been attached to the yoke of Islam.(quoted in Garcia- Sanjuan 627-628)

Hence, the standard Spanish historical narratives that have been written about the fall of Granada consider the conquest of Spain by the Castilian forces and the end of Islamic rule as a glorious achievement. Therefore, The Reconquista is seen as an opportunity of retaking rightfully Spanish lands and the Muslims had no right to the lands they held and would eventually be driven out. Thus, Reconquista in traditional Spanish historiography meant the recovery of the territory which had been illegally snatched in 711.

The transformation of Spain into a democratic state, especially after the end of Franco⁵ dictatorship in 1976 created an atmosphere of cultural liberation which begins to question and rewrite the classical notions of Reconquista. The coming of democracy (1978) caused a rejection of the official record of history associated with the notion of Reconquista and the dominant narratives of al-Andalus. Therefore the interest in Spain's Islamic past and the history of al-Andalus began to grow as it became the focus of much academic research (Elliot 32). For example, the belief that Muslims were invaders is also challenged by these scholars.

These scholars consider Muslims as autochthonous to Spain, questioning how the Muslim Andalusies even after eight centuries, are seen invaders. In his book *invertebrate Spain* (1974), the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega claims that Moriscos did not deserve to be expelled from a territory that had become their home. According to him, invasion by Fernando and Isabel cannot be considered a Reconquista after eight centuries. As he writes: "I do not see how you can call a thing a Reconquest when it lasted eight centuries." (80)

However, this alternative view of Reconquista did not last for a long time in Spain as the traditional discourse of Reconquista is restored once again due to political changes. In his book, *Writing the History of Al-Andalus Spain and the West* (2020), the Spanish historian Alejandro García-Sanjuán says: "Although with the arrival of democracy (1978) it was called into question for the first time, the mid-1990s doctrine of the Clash of Civilizations provided a fresh ideological framework in which the idea of Reconquista could be refashioned."(620)

⁵ A dictator ruler who ruled over Spain from 1939 to 1975. He also led the Nationalist forces in Spain. This period of his rule until his death is known as Francoist Spain or as the Francoist dictatorship.(n.p)

Falcones' *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) challenges the prevalent ideology of his time about that period of history. Falcones offers a new alternative way of thinking about the period of Islamic Spain. Before reading the novel in its historical context, it would be appropriate to recall the story in the novel briefly.

Ildefonso Falcones is one of the Spanish writers who challenge the classical discourse of Reconquista. He is a Spanish lawyer and award-winning author. He is a bestseller writer whose work has been translated into different languages worldwide. His first bestseller novel *Cathedral of the Sea*, achieved over a million copies sold in Spain alone. It then becomes a European bestseller. His second bestseller novel *The Hand of Fatima* which was written in 2011, "marks the four hundredth anniversary of the expulsion of the Moors from seventeenth century Spain."(Falcones, cover page)

The Hand of Fatima (2011) is a historical novel, set in 17th century Spain after the official surrender of the kingdom of Granada in 1492 and the Moriscos' final expulsion in 1609. The novel deals with the Moriscos' revolt in Alpujarra in 1568-1570 and their expulsion from Spain in 1609. It presents the Moriscos' different ways of the resistance against the Spaniards' control.

The title of the novel, The Hand of Fatima (al-hamsa) is an amulet in the shape of a five-fingered hand. In the novel it refers to a forbidden religious symbol prohibited by the Spanish authority to be kept in Muslims' homes. As Falcones clarifies in his author's note: "According to some theories, these represent the five pillars of faith: the profession of faith(shahada); the five daily prayers (salat); the giving of alms (zakat); fasting(sawm); and the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime(haj). (*The Hand of Fatima* 971) "The hand of Fatima" in the novel refers to a golden necklace of a Muslim girl called Fatima who insists to wear it secretly in an attempt to preserve her Islamic identity.

The protagonist of the novel is Hernando; an apprentice muleteer from a poor village in the Alpujarra. He is the son of a Morisco woman who was raped by a Christian priest. He is despised and regularly beaten by his own step-father, Ibrahim for his “tainted” heritage. Moriscos don’t always trust him as they see him to be a double agent. As Falcones explains: “although the villagers pitied the raped girl, they did not feel the same towards the illegitimate fruit of the crime” (21). Hernando learns Islamic religion under the influence of the Holy Man called Hamid whom Hernando loves and sees him as a substitute to his father. He is named among Moriscos by Ibn Hamed. Hernando is surrounded by internal conflicts and sufferings because of his origin. As Falcones points out: “He had spent his whole life cought between Christians and Muslims. The son of a priest who had raped a Morisco girl, as a child they had wanted to kill him in Juviles church for being Christian.” (632)

Thus, having “mixed blood”, he finds it difficult to be loyal to either side and through strong friendships with those from both religions he plans to unite the two warring faiths – and the “two halves of his identity”. Hernando represents a moderate Muslim character as he refuses to kill Christian Spaniards during AlPujarra uprising. He also rescues a Spanish girl and a grandee from certain death during the uprising. He is also camouflaged as a devout Christian while he secretly translate, copy and distribute holy books including the Koran in order to preserve the Islamic identity. Hernando falls in love with Fatima whom the novel bears her name. Despite all difficulties and separation, they finally meet each other and promise to achieve their main purpose to unite the two religions.

***The Hand of Fatima* (2011) from a New Historicist Perspective**

Concerning New Historicism, it is essential to shed the light on the culture and the society that helped produce the text. In order to reveal that the novel is deeply embedded in the values and debates of its own time, it is essential to link it to other kinds of texts written in the same epoch. The novel can be read along with articles' of Sanjuan's "Rejecting al- Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain, Al Muhajir's "An incomplete History The Muslims Of Spain Post 1492", and Rawya's "Attempts to preserve the Andalusian Islamic identity following the fall of Granada Mousse ibn Abi al-Ghassan and Mohammed bin Ummayya" as well as historical books of Draysons' *The Moors' Last Stand*, Prescott's *History of The Reign of Philip The Second King of Spain* and Fernandez's *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* as well as the speech of the former Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar (2004).

This parallel reading between the novel and other non-literary texts of the same period is of fundamental importance to pinpoint the relationship between the novel and the period during which it was written. It is also essential to show to what extent the novel is against the ideology of its time and, and to what extent it is the product of the ideology of its period.

The new historicist rewriting of history and the refusal of universal truth or grand narratives become the main approach for Falcones' *The Hand of Fatima*. He deconstructs the "official", "recorded" history of Granada. Unlike the twentieth common Spanish accounts about the fall of Granada and the Reconquista, Falcones questions the perceived vision of the past and rewrite the history of Granada with a new vision. Hence, in order to read *the Hand of Fatima* (2011) in a new historicist perspective, one should be aware of the historical background against which Falcones wrote his text. *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) is written in the

twentieth century where the classical view of the Reconquista reappeared once again.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004, many Spaniards turned to books against Islam, predicting the impending return of Islamic Caliphate in Spain once again. In his article, “Rejecting al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain,” Alejandro Garcia- Sanjuan clarifies:

although Franco’s death (1975) and the coming of democracy (1978) caused a temporary retraction of the historiographical discourse associated with the notion of Reconquista, due to its strong identification with the dictatorship, the twenty- first century has witnessed an intensification of these outmoded nineteenth-century ideas. Since September 11 terrorist organizations have insisted on the need to recover the lost Islamic lands of al-Andalus. Spanish conservatives have repeatedly used such claims, especially since the terrorist attacks of 11 March 2004, to argue that Islam has posed a continuous threat to Spain throughout history. (7)

On March 11, 2004, Spain suffered the worst terrorist attacks in its history. The Madrid train bombings in March 11, 2004 renewed the outmoded eighteenth and nineteenth-century ideas of Reconquista. This clearly appears in the speech of José María Aznar, the former Spanish Prime Minister as he repeated the classical paradigm of the Reconquista once again. In a conference on “Global Threats, Atlantic Structures,” he explained that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 had their roots in the Muslim invasion of Iberia in 711. He says:

The problem Spain has with Al Qaeda and Islamic terrorism did not begin with the Iraq Crisis. In fact, it has nothing to do with government decisions. You have to go back no less than 1,300 years, to the early eighth century, when a Spain recently invaded by the Moors refused to become just another piece in the Islamic world and began a long battle to recover its identity. This Reconquista process was very long, lasting some 800 years. However, it ended successfully..... It's them or us. The West did not attack Islam; it was they who attacked us.(quoted in Wacks 137)

In 2010, the Spanish writer Josep Anglada wrote a book in which he condemns Islamic conquest and praise Spanish Reconquista, describing it as an act of liberation from the yoke of Islamic rule. As he states:

Spain is also, as a nation, the result of this historic and endemic battle for liberation from the Islamic yoke imposed upon us in the eighth century, taking advantage of the moral weakness of the Visigoths (...). After the Reconquista, Islam remained a latent threat because the recovery of Al-Andalus was still vindicated in Muslim ideology. Contrary to what some might think, Al-Andalus is not simply Andalusia, Murcia, and Badajoz, but all of Spain and even the South of France.(quoted in Garcia- Sanjuan 9)

These previous events and the terrorist attacks create discourses were written and circulated during the twentieth century and together they form the dominant ideology of that

age. These events renewed the classical notion of the Reconquista as the Muslims' existence in the Iberian Peninsula in 711 is seen as an invasion and a terrorist act.

Falcones *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) rewrites the dominant Spanish historical narratives which consider the Reconquista as the key element shaping Spanish national identity. While the dominant versions of history in Spain idealize the Reconquista and the role of the Catholic Kings Isabel and Ferdinand in establishing the model nation of Spain, Falcones is reluctant to consider Spain's acquisition of a new world and the expulsion of the Moriscos as a victory. Instead he challenges the official unified discourse of history by reconfiguring the characters of the Moriscos and deconstructing the official version of the national past. Moreover, he idealizes the Islamic Civilization that ruled the Peninsula for over 500 years. In this novel, Falcones portrays an intellectually advanced Islamic civilization. The reader experiences this from Falcones' depiction of Cordoba as "the most important city in Europe, cultural heir to the great capitals of the East, with more than a thousand mosques, thousands of dwellings and businesses, and some three hundred public baths. It was in Cordoba that the sciences, arts and letters flourished."(295)

The novel proposes a rereading of the historical events that took place in Granada between 1492 and 1609. He describes the relationship between Moriscos and Spaniards as one of the many episodes of xenophobia in Spain's history. As he writes in his authorial note: "The history of the Morisco community in Spain, from the conquest of Granada by the Catholic monarchs to their final expulsion, is one of the many episodes of xenophobia in our history."(n.p) Therefore, to challenge this xenophobia, Falcones makes use of his novel to rewrite the classical concepts about Spanish Reconquista. He begins his novel by citing an important quotation from the historical book *The War in Granada* by the Spanish writer Diego Hurtado doubting the Monarchs victory over Moriscos. He states:

and so, fighting each day against enemies, the cold, heat, hunger, a general lack of arms and equipment, fresh disasters, and continual deaths, we finally saw that warlike nation, once so solid, well armed and defended, favoured by barbarians and Turks, now defeated, subjugated, driven from their lands and dispossessed of their homes and goods; made prisoner, their man and women in chains; captive children sold at auction or taken to live in lands far from their own. A dubious victory, and full of so many dangers that we at times doubted whether it was us or the enemy whom God sought to punish.(n.p)

Falcones also provides a different image of the Muslim's existence in Iberian Peninsula. Unlike most Spanish writers, Falcones refuses to describe Muslims as invaders. He corrects the outmoded belief that describes Muslims as invaders as he clarifies that Muslims enter al-Andalus according to an appeal for help against, the tyrant Visigoth ruler of Spain, Roderic. In order to change this fixed belief, Falcones lets Hernando with other Moriscos characters in the novel to create an imaginary Arab manuscript, intended to "show that the conquest of Spain by Muslims from Briary had been to liberate the Christians suffering under the tyranny of their Goth kings. After the conquest, as he pointed out, there had been eight centuries of peace when the two religions had coexisted side by side."(658-659)

In the process of rewriting history, Falcones deconstructs the Spaniards founded and inherited beliefs about the Moriscos. He aims to combat the negative stereotypes attached to the Moriscos when he directs the reader to the importance of publishing books, providing new image of Muslims. This is

highly evident in the novel when one of the Moriscos character says:

We have to combat the image the Christians have of the Moriscos, Their writers and priests are creating the fiction that we Moriscos are extremely fertile because our women marry as girls and have lots of children. But that's not true! They have the same number as Christians. They also say our women are promiscuous and adulterous. And as for us men, they say since we do not have to do military service or go into the Church, the new Christian population is increasing out of all propotions, and is amassing gold, silver and all kinds of possessions, and so ruining the kingdom. But that's false! They say we are perverted, and murderes. That in secret we profane the name of God. It's all lies! But when it's repeated over and over, when it's shouted out in sermons or published in books, they start to believe it. So we have to use the same weapons to convince them the opposite is true (659).

In a new historicist reading of the novel, the new historicist assumption that the literary work has to be studied with the different factors that may have influenced it has become another major point for this study. Falcones states that he is influenced by some Spanish books and chronicles concerning AlPujarra Uprising. These books focus on the Moriscos' atrocities towards Spaniards and Spaniards' martyrs in the Alpujarra. As he says in his authorial note:

It is also true that studies were made about the Christian martyrs in the Alpujarra, although

these were carried out much later than described in the novel. The first recorded attempt, according to the information collected by Archbishop Pedro de Castro, dates from the year 1600. In the annals of Ugijar (1668), where most of the killings of Christians that occurred in the Alpujarra are recorded, a boy by the name of Gonzalico is mentioned. He described his sacrifice for God as "beautiful" before he was martyred. Tearing the heart out through the victim's back as described in the novel is repeatedly cited by Marmol in his chronicles as a sign of the Moriscos' cruelty towards their Christian victims. (970)

In this sense, *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) represents the ideologies of the Spanish historians and intellectuals regarding the Moriscos' revolt in Alpujarra. Thus, it can be said that although Falcones tries to rewrite history and change the core of history, he is still affected by being "a Spanish writer". In other words, he agrees with some ideology of his age concerning the Moriscos' atrocities towards Spaniards in the Alpujarra uprising. This proves the new historicist assumption that the literary work is the product of the ideology of its time. Many Spanish writers in the twentieth century assert that Moriscos committed some atrocities like, attacking Christian towns, officials, clergy and settlers, as well as killing inhabitants and defiling churches. For example, In his book *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* (2014) the Spanish writer Dario Fernandez Morera writes: "Several morisco uprisings occurred, involving the stoning, dismembering, beheading, impaling, and burning alive of Christians."(57)

Like most Spanish writers, Falcones asserts that Moriscos committed a lot of atrocities in Alpujarra uprising. As he mentions: "all the church's treasures were piled in front of the

priest and the other Christians: chalices, patens, lamps, gold-embroidered robes; and, all the while, there was a deafening noise as the Morisco men shouted and the women whooped with delight.”(39)

Falcones also shows the Moriscos’ cruelty towards their Christian Spaniards victims. He shows how fanatic Muslim rulers forcing the captured Christians of Alpujarra to abandon their faith and convert to Islam. He describes the scene of Moriscos’ violation towards the captured Spaniards in Alpujarra, saying:

All the Christians from Juviles were locked in the church under Hamids watchful eye. He was to try to get them to renounce their religion and convert to Islam...They were naked and barefoot, shivering from the cold, and had their hands tied behind their backs. Their terrified women and Christian children under ten brought up the rear. Scattered among the others were the village lads who had decided to join the uprising. They cursed the Christians, and threatened them with a thousand horrific tortures if they did not renounce their faith and convert to Islam...The wild ululations of the Morisco women mingled with the tears of the Christian women, who were kept at a distance from their fathers, husbands and sons. If any of them looked down or closed their eyes, the Moriscos immediately beat them and forced them to watch (54-60-46)

On the other hand, non-western sources negate that Muslims committed any violence. In his historical book, *An Incomplete History the Muslims of Spain Post 1492*, Ibn Abi Hisham Al Muhajir clarifies:

There are reportedly increasingly frequent killing and torturing of Christians by Muslims living in conquered Christian areas. There are also reports of Churches being looted and defaced. However due to the nature and source of these reports, (i.e. Christian sources), they necessarily have to be doubted at first glance. (69).

The novel can also be read with the historical book *The Moors' Last Stand* concerning the depiction of King Abu Abdullah Muhammad XII (Boabdil in Spanish)- the last king of Granada- who surrenders the city of Granada to Castilians in 1492. Like most Spaniards' depiction of Abu Abdullah, Falcones gives him the nickname of "a little king" or ('el rey chico' in Spanish; the small king) when he says: "most of all the Muslim nobles and grandees left Spain with the "little King." (35) Unlike Falcones' depiction of King Abu Abdullah, Elizabeth Drayson rewrites the negative characteristics associated with Abu Abdullah, describing them as "false" and "myth." In her important historical book, *The Moors' Last Stand*, Drayson describes King Abu Abdullah Muhammad XII as "a man of culture and war: a schemer, rebel, father, husband and brother. He was a king, yet also the pawn of the Catholic monarchs." (n.p)

Abu Abdullah is one of controversial historical characters that are surrounded by various myths and legends. One of these legends which is frequently mentioned in most of western and non-western accounts is his mother's reproach for the loss of the kingdom of Granada. Falcones also mentions this legend; as he says " Aisha, mother of Boabdil, the last Muslim king of Granada, condemned him for weeping as he abandoned the city to the Catholic monarchs: 'You are right to cry like a woman for what you did not have the courage to defend like a man.'" (639) On the other hand, there are other historical accounts that negate that his mother reproached him for the loss of Granada, describing that as a myth and invented legend of the 'last sigh'.

According to Drayson, this legend of ‘last sigh’ has long been used by historians to weaken Boabdil’s legacy, ignoring the immense sacrifice to “save his city and people from further tragedy by relinquishing his kingdom to the Catholic Monarchs, in exchange for the return of his son. The Muslim ruler has become a courageous, wise and strong sultan, though the final scene reverts to the conventional legend in which he looks back and weeps. He demonstrated in saving his people from certain slaughter at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella’s irrepressible armies which encircled Granada.”(n.p)

The novel can also be read with the historical book, *History of the Reign of Philip the Second King of Spain*(2005) by William H. Prescott concerning the presentation of Aben-Farax, the dyer and the former prisoner of the inquisition and the leader of Moriscos in Alpujarras’ revolt. Both Prescott and Falcones describe him as a cruel, brutal and bloody fighter. As Falcones says: “Farax the dyer not only followed king Aben Humeya’s instructions to bring him all the booty taken from the Christians, but took it upon himself to decree death to all Christian males aged over ten who had not already been killed. He further ordered that their bodies were not to be buried, but left out in the open to be eaten by wild animals. He also declared that any Moriscos who hid or protected a Christian would themselves be put to death. (81)

Like Falcones’ description, Prescott portrays Farax as a fighter “whose appetite for blood seems to have been as insatiable as that of any wild beast in the Alpujarras.” He continues saying, he is:

a man of a fierce, indeed ferocious nature, hating the Christians with his whole heart, and longing for the hour when he could avenge on their heads the calamities of his countrymen. As his occupation earned him frequently into the Alpujarras, he was extensively acquainted

with the inhabitants. He undertook to raise a force there of eight thousand men, and bring them down secretly by night into the Vega, where, with the aid of his countrymen in the Albaicin, he might affect an entrance into the city, overpower the garrison in the Alhambra, put all who resisted to the sword, and make himself master of the capital (n.p)

Falcones also focuses on the intertextual relationship between the text and its context, encouraging the reader for the linear reading of the literary and non-literary texts to understand the literary text. He incorporates historical letters to create credibility and put the reader in the heart of events. These historical letters enhance the authenticity of the historical representation. One of these letters is the letter sent from the Spanish ambassador in Paris who related how an entire village was complaining that its women were raped by the priest, and their children were born with the stigma of his blue eyes. In a Letter from Frances de Alava, Spain's ambassador in France, to Philip II, 1568, Alava wrote:

It is true that the Moriscos have risen up in rebellion, but it is the old Christians who have driven them to despair by their arrogance, larcenies, and the insolence with which they seize their women. Even the priests behave in a similar manner. When an entire Morisco village complained to the archbishop about their pastor, an investigation was made into the reasons for their complaint. Take him away from here the faithful pleaded, or if not, let him be married, because all our children are born with the same blue eyes as his. (Falcones 18)

This is exactly as in the case of the protagonist of the novel, Hernando who was born with the stigma of the priest's blue eyes; "Hernando was born a strong, healthy baby with the blue eyes of the rapist" (Falcones 21).

Intertextuality is also evident in the anecdotes that Falcones inserts inside his novel. The anecdote is a new historicist technique which refers to history in new way. In *Practicing New Historicism*, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, define anecdotes, saying :“That both the literary work and the anthropological (or historical) anecdotes are texts, that both are fictions in the sense of things made, that both are shaped by imagination and by the available resources of narration and description helped make it possible to conjoin them.” (31)According to Greenblatt, the purpose of anecdotes is to prove that history is not a number of fixed and factual events but it is merely a fictional discourse. He clarifies that “ new historicists linked anecdotes to the disruption of history as usual, not to its practice: the undisciplined anecdote appealed to those of us who wanted to interrupt the Big Stories...The anecdotes would open history, or place it askew, so that literary texts could find new points of insertion.”(51)

In the novel, Falcones inserts a number of anecdotes to create interaction between the real and the fiction. One of these anecdotes is from Don Quixote' novel, part one “Cide Hamete Benegeli, Morisco”. Chapter 11. The anecdote tells a story that exactly resembles the life of the protagonist Hernando. Falcones starts his chapter with this anecdote to prepare the reader to Hernando's long, exhausted and adventurous journey to Granada to achieve his plan of uniting the two religions in an attempt to prevent Moriscos' expulsion. The anecdote narrates:

But the author of this tale, who has searched with great curiosity into the deeds that Don

Quixote performed in his third adventure, has been unable to find any mention of them, at least in authentic writings. Only legend has reported, in the annals of La Mancha, that Don Quixote, the third time he left his house, went to Zaragoza, where he took part in the famous jousting tourneys held in that city, and things happened to him worthy of his courage and understanding. Nor could he discover anything relating to his end or destiny, apart from having the good fortune to find an old physician who had in his possession a leaden chest that according to him had been uncovered in the foundations of an ancient hermitage that was being demolished and rebuilt. In this chest were found parchments written in Gothic characters but in Castilian verses. (764)

This symbolic anecdote refers to the two Morisco physician-courtiers, Alonso del Castillo and Miguel de Luna (factual characters) who participate with Hernando in his plot to hide the invented ancient parchment and relics high up in the Turpian tower to be later discovered by Castellians in an attempt to reconcile and unite the two religions. The ancient hermitage which is mentioned in the anecdote refers to the old minaret of the oldest mosque in Granada that has been destroyed, while its minaret survived.

Finally, Falcones himself refers to the importance of reading the literary work with its historical contexts of the same period. In his authorial note, Falcones recommends to his readers some of the chronicles that the novel can be read along with such as Juan Vernet's *Mahoma* which shows the dispersal of the Moriscos and the discriminatory laws (Falcones 964), Henry Charles Lea's *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion*, in addition to other Spanish

documents depicting the Moriscos' revolt in the region of Alpujarra. Falcones noted that these "chronicles constantly give prominence to the efforts to win spoils and share them out, to ambition being the only strategy, and to desertion by men satisfied with the booty they had accumulated" (964).

In conclusion, by presenting the dynamic relationship between history and literature and showing new historicism theory and its newness in acceptance that a literary text, like all other cultural artifacts, cannot be separated from the history and culture in which it was produced, and its denial that a literary text has a universal significance and fixed meaning in itself, it is evident that *The Hand of Fatima* (2011) challenges and rewrites the history of Granada with a new vision as well as it is a product of its time, place, and circumstances.

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