



**Constructing the Black Atlantic: History and Memory in Toni Morrison's
Beloved and Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge***



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Abstract :

The desire to revisit the past is a common practice for postcolonial writers. While the reconstruction of history remains central to most of these writers, some of them have dedicated their works essentially to the rewriting of the history of transatlantic slavery from the perspectives of slaves. The reliance on memory to retell the story constitutes the means through which the past is recovered. It is within this framework that Toni Morrison and Caryl Phillips revisit history to highlight the silences and gaps of master narratives.

Through their neo-slave narratives, these writers not only reinstall historical contexts as significant and determining for the rehabilitation of modern history, but their approach to

*history also problematises historical knowledge. These issues have been appropriated by the black Atlantic which seeks to establish the historical relation that exists between the Americas, Europe and Africa for the purpose of transcending the cultural barriers that have often led to racial discrimination as reflected in Morrison's *Beloved* and Phillips' *Cambridge*. In this respect as the paper will examine, however, the reconstruction of history through memory recollection also means the construction of the black Atlantic.*

Informed by new historicism and psychoanalysis, the paper therefore discusses how the hitherto silent voices (blacks) construct history by returning to their past through the work of memory and concludes that victims of slavery tell their traumatic experiences, and in this process, they not only assert their place in History, but also their narratives/narration release them from their trauma.

Keywords : *Psychoanalysis, new historicism, neo-slave narratives, black Atlantic, postcolonial writers*