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The Use of Heritage in Contemporary Feminist Discourse

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Abstract:

The feminist novel raises a series of questions regarding its sources of beauty and its departure from stereotypical writing, which constitutes an active cultural source in Algerian literature—a field dominated by various pillars, including collective memory, customs and traditions, and religious rulings...— serving as one of the mechanisms of narrative discourse that conveys the distinctiveness of Algerian culture and the national spirit that is inextricably linked to it. We therefore pose the following questions: How has the contemporary Algerian feminist novel expressed national cultural identity? And what are the most prominent traditional representations that dominate contemporary feminist discourse?

Key terms: feminist fiction, heritage, culture, identity, narrative.

Introduction:

Feminist discourse is one of the concepts that has made its mark in both the literary and critical fields, having emerged as a creative and intellectual project that has re-examined traditional perceptions associated with feminist writing and sought to express the concerns of the female self and its multifaceted perspectives through new artistic approaches, Algerian fiction has been rich in manifestations of local heritage, drawing upon and reshaping it within diverse cultural and anthropological contexts, thereby enabling it to address social and political issues, as well as to depict the inner conflicts and transformations of the self. Through this interaction between heritage and reality, an aesthetic framework emerges that evokes disparate times and places, a feature clearly evident in the novel **A Line in the Sand** by the novelist Hajar Kouidri, The novel drew on a range of cultural references that helped to realise the horizon of narrative modernity, as it embraced diverse forms of expression that enabled it to transcend the classical model of novel-writing, and paved the way for experimentation and subversion, thereby becoming a unifying space for various representations of heritage and culture, On this basis, this study seeks to explore the mechanisms by which heritage is utilised, by examining its most prominent manifestations at the historical, folk and literary levels, and by revealing its semantic and aesthetic functions within the narrative text.

Feminist Discourse and the Reproduction of Algerian Cultural Heritage:

Algerian heritage has managed to permeate the narrative text, lending it a degree of distinctiveness and autonomy, which has helped to set the Algerian novel apart from other literary works. This has prompted novelists to draw inspiration from various elements of this heritage and to make use of its symbolic and aesthetic dimensions, thereby creating new narrative worlds that are either parallel to or distinct from reality. The use of heritage in contemporary Algerian fiction has been a prominent feature, and this trend is regarded as one of the manifestations of experimental fiction, which has allowed for a diversity of perspectives and approaches regarding the mechanisms for utilising and reinterpreting heritage in a manner suited to the specific characteristics of the narrative text and its semantic dimensions. From this perspective, contemporary fiction has drawn upon heritage as a cultural and aesthetic resource that connects the reader to their past and makes them more aware of their present, by reviving and bringing heritage to life within contemporary narrative contexts. The novelistic tradition offers vast potential for responding to the reader's expectations and aspirations, as a literary genre capable of accommodating diverse contexts and intellectual and cultural references. Furthermore, its artistic flexibility allows it to combine the realistic with the imaginative, thereby contributing to the construction of rich narrative worlds capable of representing reality and reshaping it according to a particular creative vision.

1- The Aesthetics of Evoking History:

In her novel **A Line in the Sand**, the novelist Hajar Quidri evokes significant historical periods in Algeria's history, including the Ottoman era, reconstructing the features of that period through events and characters that reflect the social

and political reality of the time. This historical dimension is brought to life through the voice of the narrator, 'Yamina bint Khouta', who states: "I began to fear this silence with which Si al-Zaboushi confronts me every time. I know that I am adding a new burden to his already heavy load. The man is still under threat and his life is in danger; the Ottomans in al-Taitri or in al-Dzair might take revenge on him, and the burden of a lost and wandering soul like me might weigh him down."

ⁱ This statement reveals the nature of the circumstances in which the characters lived under Ottoman rule, and the accompanying feelings of fear, apprehension and instability. It also highlights the novelist's ability to draw on historical references in constructing the narrative world of the novel, thereby lending the events a sense of realism and strengthening the text's connection to collective memory and national history. Consequently, the presence of history in the novel is not limited to a mere reconstruction of the past; rather, it goes beyond this to become an active element in shaping the narrative meaning and enriching the text's artistic structure, for 'the historical form has transformed the historical novel, which is concerned with narrating historical events in an artistic manner, blending historical facts with the writer's imagination, with the aim of educating, entertaining and drawing lessons from the past, by presenting history within the context of narratives that are more engaging for the reader to explore and through which they can gain an understanding of the era in which its various aspects (political, social and intellectual, etc.) unfolded."ⁱⁱⁱ It is this approach to heritage in its historical form that the novelist Hajar Kouidri has employed.

2- The Aesthetics of Spatial Setting:

Spatial setting takes on particular significance in the novel **A Line in the Sand**, as the author takes care to vary the narrative settings and utilise them as signifying elements that contribute to the construction of meaning and enrich the novelistic experience. The novel's events are distributed across multiple settings, such as the mosque, the room, the university, the train and other settings that carry distinct cultural, social and psychological characteristics, thereby lending the text a richness of meaning and reflecting the diversity of human experiences encompassed by the novel.

The spatial dimension is clearly evident in the evocation of the 'Belkour' neighbourhood, where the narrator says: 'Belkour makes you feel as though you are inside the crater of a volcano that is bound to erupt; and when it did erupt two decades ago and the civil war unfolded in all its twists and turns, I was growing up within it, with no fixed place of my own. I learnt to escape with my eyes whilst there; I would gaze towards the horizon, dwelling there in the company of my fantasies and illusions, at that point where the last building ends and the sky begins. 'On the line of the blue sky,' says Fairuz."ⁱⁱⁱ This description reveals the place as a space charged with tension and anxiety, reflecting the aftermath of the turbulent period Algeria experienced during the 'Black Decade'. Here, the setting does not merely serve as a backdrop for the events; rather, it becomes a symbol of the psychological and social turmoil experienced by the character, where a sense of alienation mingles with a desire for liberation and an escape towards broader horizons before the character's inner world explodes.

The passage also highlights the connection between place and individual and collective memory, as the narrator draws upon her personal experience within this space, transforming the horizon into a symbol of dreams and liberation from a troubled reality. Consequently, the setting in the novel becomes an active element in shaping the narrative vision, with its historical, psychological and cultural dimensions contributing to a deeper meaning and highlighting the uniqueness of the fictional experience. The 'Belkour' neighbourhood, one of the oldest traditional working-class neighbourhoods in Algiers, was among the working-class neighbourhoods hardest hit during the 'Black Decade'.

Artistic heritage is present in the novel **A Line in the Sand** through the evocation of the cinematic space as one of the cultural elements that contribute to constructing the narrative experience and enriching its meanings. The narrator recalls the moment she arrived in the city of 'Marseille', where her eyes fall upon a cinema poster, and she is overcome by mixed feelings combining surprise, hesitation and a longing for the world of art and imagery: 'When I arrived in Marseille and disembarked from the ferry, I wandered aimlessly, but the persistence of the elderly Moroccan man, who wouldn't leave me alone for a moment, made me get into his car and pay him a few francs—mostly on a whim—for an adventure whose outcome I didn't know. He dropped me off in the city centre and said, 'If you can't sort things out, I'll be at Café Le Bland every evening after seven.' Suddenly, I looked up and saw a sign that read 'Cinéma de Bonneveine', and I began to tremble. 'What if I were to spend my money watching a film in a cinema that says "Hello" to me?'"^{iv} These locations represent spaces scattered across a parallel world; the film **Marhaba** tells a human story about the plight of illegal migrants in northern France and has sparked widespread controversy that has reached the French National Assembly.

The cinema has become a cultural symbol that stirs the character's memories and awakens her desire to immerse herself in a different world, through which she can transcend the harshness of reality and the uncertainty of the future. The passage also reflects the narrator's sense of disorientation in a new environment, where the foreign city appears as a realm open to possibilities and adventure, whilst at the same time being a source of anxiety and uncertainty. Furthermore, the use of cinematic references highlights the novel's openness to various art forms, which is consistent with the nature of the contemporary novel as a multi-referential discourse that incorporates diverse cultural and artistic conventions. Here, cinema does not merely serve a decorative function, but contributes

to deepening the psychological dimension of the character and revealing her inner aspirations and her desire to seek a new meaning for her existence. The reference to cinema has helped to broaden the text's aesthetic horizons, as narrative forms interact with the arts as modern cultural references.

3- The Aesthetics of Time:

The narrative highlights details of life within the zawiya, reflecting aspects of the religious and spiritual heritage that forms part of the religious fabric of Algerian society, where i'tikaf and dhikr are practised as part of rituals lasting varying periods of time, ranging from ten to forty days, as part of a spiritual experience based on temporary seclusion from the outside world and devoting oneself entirely to worship, for 'it was clear that Jamal was very at ease as he went on at length asking questions about the details of study at the zawiya; They spoke at length about i'tikaf, and went to the lower zawiya where there are some small rooms barely large enough to lay out a prayer mat. They would cease all activity except for dhikr; this might last ten days and sometimes forty days, after which they would return to their lives as though they had found their spiritual breakthroughs.'"^v This represents the mystical dimension of the religious experience, in which the zawiya becomes a space for spiritual contemplation and inner purification, bestowing upon the characters a sense of tranquillity and a quest for meaning. The text also reflects the spatial organisation of the zawiya by referring to the small rooms that can accommodate nothing more than prayer mats, which reinforces the sense of asceticism and simplicity that characterises this space.

The passage demonstrates how the narrative discourse draws upon this religious heritage to construct a narrative meaning that transcends external description to express a profound spiritual experience, in which the soul is trained in self-restraint and detachment from the pleasures of this world, immersing itself in the pursuit of cosmic truth for the sake of worship; Afterwards, the disciples return to their daily lives as though they have attained a kind of 'revelation' or spiritual illumination: 'Perhaps it is that impassioned imagination which unites the senses in a single psychological crucible and folds them into its intimate chamber, revealing the new psychological existence from the heart of unchanging being.'"^{vi} sufi heritage thus transforms from a mere cultural backdrop into an active element in shaping the narrative vision with its semantic dimensions.

4- The aesthetic value of incorporating customs and traditions:

The novelist depicted a range of customs and traditions within Algerian society because 'customs are beneficial to social life and serve to foster social cohesion and strengthen bonds between members of society, such as general etiquette, modern etiquette, table manners, and kinship ties'^{vii} As for traditions, they 'express the extent to which people are connected to their heritage, and an attempt to revive it by reproducing it materially or spiritually through the holding of celebrations marking specific occasions; each celebration takes on its own distinctive character, and certain types of ritual and symbolic behaviour—which are often misunderstood or unreflected upon—and thus take on a popular character and a folkloric flavour.'"^{viii} The narrative text attaches importance to customs and traditions as a fundamental component in shaping the sociological fabric of Algerian society, as these elements reflect the cultural and symbolic dimension of collective identity. This is evident in the novel's exploration of a range of phenomena linked to social heritage, such as issues of infertility and childbearing, and the cultural connotations these carry within the social structure, as well as the presence of traditional folk cuisine as a sign of the connection and continuity of collective memory, as well as the portrayal of traditional dress, of which Algerian women take pride, and which expresses the distinctiveness of local identity and sets it apart from other forms of dress within the Arab context. The novelist has employed these elements in an artistic and aesthetic manner, lending the narrative a distinctive local character that reflects the narrative's deep roots in its cultural and social context. This approach has also helped to highlight the presence of heritage as an active element that interacts with the Algerian environment, which preserves its heritage, and as an embodiment of an aesthetic consciousness based on drawing upon and re-creating this heritage within the narrative discourse.

Traditional cuisine takes centre stage in the culinary heritage of the novel **A Line in the Sand**, as it is presented as one of the elements that embody the cultural identity passed down through the generations. The novel conveys this through its references to famous Algerian dishes, including 'couscous' and the traditional dish 'chicha', which is served in a wooden bowl and prepared with olive oil, reflecting the distinctiveness of Algerian cuisine and the social and cultural rituals associated with it. 'It wasn't long before the tchicha was set out before me exactly as I'd wished: a wooden bowl, full, piping hot and drenched in green olive oil. I ate with such gusto that her eyes followed me; then I realised what I was doing and said to her:

- Your tchicha is fresh and finely ground.'"^{ix}

The narrative reveals the sensory dimension of this heritage, as its presence is not limited to external description but extends to the experience of tasting and personal emotion, where the act of eating embodies a sense of immersion in the culinary heritage and its connection to pleasure and memory. Furthermore, the simple dialogue associated with traditional fare highlights a communicative dimension that reflects the social environment to which the text belongs, thereby reinforcing its local character; consequently, in this context, food is transformed from a mere everyday element into a meaningful cultural signifier, contributing to the consolidation of local identity within the narrative structure and affirming the novel's ability to draw on the simple details of everyday life.

Traditional Algerian dress reflects the authenticity of a people with deep historical roots; from one region to another, we find distinctive attire that expresses its local identity and culture, as well as the people's attachment to

it and its cherished symbolism. This also highlights the cultural diversity that the country is rich in, Traditional dress is closely linked to Algerian society. A prime example is the authentic 'al-Qwayat' or 'al-Qat al-Asimi', which did not originate merely as a traditional garment but has evolved into a cultural symbol laden with social and psychological connotations linked to identity, status, celebration and a sense of belonging.

The first thing that strikes one about the presence of 'al-Qwayat' is that it is invoked in the context of a desire to restore 'order' or 'put everything back in its place', that is to say, the garment here is not understood merely as adornment, but as part of a social ritual intended to reorder the external world according to a logic of joy or stability. Its white colour reinforces this dimension, as it is implicitly associated with serenity, celebration and a fresh start, in contrast to black, which evokes despair and inner sorrow, And so the 'white qwayat' becomes a symbolic attempt to impose a social mask of joy over the character's exhausted psychological reality: 'Will everything return to its rightful place, and will I forget and wear a white qawit despite the darkness of my despair deep in my heart? O beautiful one. I do not want your qwayat; my heart is sad and my joy in life is lost. All that matters to me now is hearing the latest news about our master Al-Budali. So I look at it as if I were putting all the frivolities of clothes and embroidery on hold during these trying times.'^x The narrator rejects this traditional dress because it does not suit her current emotional state, lest it be marred; the sacredness of the dress makes it befitting of the joy of the land and the joy of the soul, and this represents an inner refusal to conform to social norms, for she does not wish to wear the mask of beauty and femininity whilst the master of the house is absent. In contrast, the sadness that emerges here is a state of disintegration, for 'the darkness of despair in the depths of the heart' undermines any possibility of harmony between the inner and outer worlds, and so the 'qwayat' ultimately becomes a symbol of the tension between what is socially imposed (adornment, joy, whiteness) and what is deeply personal (sorrow, brokenness, rejection), signifying the failure of reconciliation between the social mask and psychological reality.

Family memory intertwines with the cultural symbols of Algerian female identity, as the grandmother and mother are regarded as sources of knowledge for preserving the traditional heritage of dress and jewellery, particularly what is known as the 'bride's trousseau', which was kept in a wooden chest for a lifetime as an idealised representation of a daughter's relationship with her family and her husband; in it, she is elevated to the status of a princess, adorned with all that bestows beauty upon her to capture the attention of those present. This shift from the real to the imagined reveals a cognitive mechanism based on the reconstruction of the mother through a childlike, emotional lens, bringing her closer to an aesthetic/heritage ideal than to an ordinary, everyday figure.

The narrative is based on evoking the material memory associated with wedding attire, whereby the wardrobe and the wooden chest become archival spaces that preserve traces of the past and reproduce them in the present, for 'her wedding clothes' are understood not merely as a factual act, but as a desire to recapture a symbolic time associated with joy, fulfilment and inherited feminine identity, thereby making the wedding attire a bridge between generations, as 'my mother enters the room, looks at the painting, and I see an Algerian princess in her full regalia, her head covered with a 'mahrama al-fatoul', and the 'thread of the soul' placed upon her forehead ...I take her hand and ask her to fetch her wedding clothes for me; on top of the wardrobe there's also an old bag where my mother keeps her wedding clothes and accessories, in the hope that I might wear them again one day, I never imagined they would be so magnificent. The top, made of green velvet karako, still felt enchanting – as soft as joy itself. Its gilded threads were intertwined and interlaced like tales of sea nymphs. The second piece was a pair of flared trousers made of heavy taffeta. My mother opened the small wooden box and took out the soul string and a small anklet »^{xi}

The 'karaku', 'circular trousers', 'thread of the soul' and 'anklet' carry cultural symbols rich in meaning; these elements are not presented merely as clothing and jewellery, but as markers of aesthetic and social identity. The 'green velvet karako', with its 'enchanting' texture and 'gilded' threads, symbolises joy itself, as the fabric blends with emotion, and the garment becomes an extension of a joy-filled emotional state. The 'karakou' is considered one of the most important traditional hand-crafted garments that flourished in Al-Andalus; its introduction to Algeria dates back to the Ottoman era, when it was regarded as the attire of kings and sultans until women adopted it, making it their exclusive preserve. As for the 'khayt al-ruh' and the 'khalkhal', they carry a ritual dimension that evokes adornment associated with celebration and the symbolic transition to married life. The narrative text offers a poetic interpretation of female memory within the Algerian family, where jewellery, dress and mythological symbols intertwine to construct an aesthetic identity rooted in tradition, yet reimagined through narrative fiction, thereby imbuing it with a renewed mythological aesthetic.

The narrative goes beyond a direct description of the scene, as the traditional 'qashabiya' garment becomes a trigger for memory and a evocation of an absent figure, 'Al-Sayyid Al-Boudali'. The narrator, 'Yamina bint Hawta', does not merely observe the man sitting before her, but links his outward appearance to a previous mental image, thereby transforming the very act of seeing into a rememorative act based on comparison and free association. When 'I sat opposite him whilst he held a book in his hands; he was wearing a striped qashabiya—Al-Sayyid al-Budali had one just like it—so I fixed my gaze on him even more. He lowered his eyes to the floor, not realising that I wanted to take my fill of the striped shirt.'^{xii} The qashabiya takes on a central symbolic function, transforming from a traditional garment into a symbolic medium that evokes emotional resonance; the resemblance between a man's qashabiya and the 'Al-Say al-Boudali' is not merely interpreted as a formal resemblance, but as

a catalyst for remembrance and a desire to reclaim what is missing from her life, an attempt to satisfy her need for memory, belonging and psychological compensation. She therefore resorted to a spontaneous act of projection through this garment, which signifies dignity and respect.

The 'qashabiya' has come to embody personal memories that evoke a sense of implicit nostalgia, as this traditional garment is a symbol of absence rather than presence, and of remembrance rather than a description of reality; This garment has been associated with popular resistance and the Algerian revolution; it was the official attire of the Algerian revolutionaries, helping them to endure the harshness of the Algerian climate. The qashabiya is no longer merely a garment that protects against the cold and rivals modern winter clothing, but a symbol of determination and strength »^{xiii} Traditional dress is an integral part of our folk heritage; it is a cultural reference point that reflects the creativity of Algerian men and women, and the authenticity of our national identity, which is rooted in the collective memory of preserving our heritage and developing it with contemporary creative touches, whilst retaining its aesthetic qualities.

5- The aesthetic use of folk songs:

The novelist drew on folk literature through the art of song, which harmonised with the context of the text and the unfolding of events; this lent an aesthetic rhythm to the work, as Salma's emotional state shifts from joy to sadness the moment she speaks to her mother "I don't know how to tell my mother that I am now in such a state of serenity that I have reached a point where I can swap roles with her.

— You are my daughter, my daughter Salma.

Bahja Rahal's voice came through my phone, hoarse yet clear...

Lay down your sorrows this evening, For you know not what the morning may bring.

At dawn, rise and drink the wine of delight, And spend your art and charms with those fair and bright.

Rise, seize this fleeting hour of grace, For this world is but a playful place.^{xiv}

The use of folk song in this passage serves as an aesthetic and semantic device that helps to open up the narrative text to the oral tradition of Algerian society; the song is not presented merely as a decorative element, but as a parallel discourse that reshapes the characters' emotional experience. The narrative's shift from a family dialogue centred on the mother-daughter relationship to the inclusion of the song creates an interplay between the psychological and collective levels, causing the text to oscillate between individual expression and cultural belonging.

The song carries a contemplative dimension based on a call to seize the moment and let go of worries, which resonates with the narrator's inner state as she experiences a sense of serenity and emotional rebalancing. Thus, folk singing fulfils both an interpretative and an evocative function, as it does not merely convey meaning but imbues it with a semantic depth linked to a folk worldview based on an awareness of the fragility of time and the transience of circumstances.

This use highlights the novel's openness to traditional forms of expression, whereby the lyrical text becomes a structural element within the narrative, creating a kind of intertextuality between the novel and oral discourse. This interplay enriches the narrative rhythm and lends it an aesthetic dimension based on stylistic diversity between prose and poetry, reflecting the nature of the contemporary novel as a hybrid space that accommodates various cultural references.

Thus, the presence of folk song in this context is not limited to a reference to heritage, but goes beyond that to become an active tool in constructing meaning, intensifying significance, and linking individual experience to collective memory within the fictional text; The inclusion of folk song is a clear utilisation of folk literature; it serves as a break from narrative convention and constitutes one of the aesthetic elements that shape the narrative structure, where the language of the novel intertwines with the song text to create a complex expressive space linking subjective experience with collective cultural memory. Here, the folk song does not serve merely as a decorative element, but fulfils a semantic function that helps to deepen the meaning and illuminate the character's emotional state.

National anthems embody a national heritage and a sense of belonging to the land for which the martyrs sacrificed their lives; the national anthem, with its stirring tone and powerful emotions, is linked to various concepts, including existence, struggle, love, loyalty, unity and independence... They have thus occupied an important place in Algerian literature, and in the novel in particular, with their psychological and social dimensions. They are considered one of the hallmarks of our ancestors' heritage; even when an Algerian is in exile, far from their homeland, there are always ways to reminisce and reconnect with their identity, for 'the night train was a time of its own; I do not recall ever sleeping anywhere quite as I did in that bed leaning against the window; the clatter of the wheels was like a song my grandmother used to sing that would lull me to sleep instantly: Why, my love, do you weep for me, When thorns have pierced my weary feet?

Algeria, you call to me— By God, I shall not turn back, Till freedom is won and our land is free.

I remember the song and smile, and I don't know what I'll come back with; so far, I'm happy with all the cities I've seen, with their tall buildings and bustling streets. I'm happy just to be here, feeling a bit lost amongst them,

and there's still so much for me to discover. My little diary is starting to fill up and has become an essential ritual every evening..."^{xv}

The night train is a transitional space whose function extends beyond the spatial to the existential and temporal, transforming into an independent realm of time that simultaneously reshapes the narrator's relationship with experience and memory. The sensation of sleeping on the train is presented not merely as a physical act, but as an experience of merging with the rhythmic motion of the carriage, which resembles the grandmother's song, thereby cementing the intertwining of mechanical rhythm with oral rhythm in the construction of the character's auditory memory. The presence of the national anthem plays a central role in shaping the text's semantic structure, as it evokes a heritage-based resonance that encapsulates both national and emotional memory. The lyrical verses linking pain – 'thorns pierce my feet' – with national belonging – 'Algeria is my duty' – lay the foundations for a discourse based on the intertwining of individual suffering and collective consciousness, whereby the national anthem becomes a medium for reproducing the idea of sacrifice and belonging within a contemporary personal context.

Amidst the tension between the past and the present, the self emerges against the backdrop of inherited memory; and amidst the experience of travel to discover the self and the world, the emotional sense of enduring belonging to one's homeland is reflected through tradition, where its evocation reveals a steadfast centre of identity despite an openness to modern cities. Furthermore, the generational shift from oral culture to the era of written record is marked by the 'little diary', which signifies the emergence of a new consciousness based on the documentation and gradual organisation of experience, in contrast to the spontaneous flow of oral memory. Thus, the text shifts from evoking a lyrical past to constructing a written and deferred present, reflecting a transition from oral memory to written memory. It can therefore be said that the passage operates through a complex interplay between three levels: the mechanical rhythm of the train, the folk song's rhythm, and the inner rhythm of memory; an interplay that produces a narrative vision based on constant movement and the reshaping of identity within the space of the journey.

6- The Aesthetics of Visual Art:

The novel addresses artistic heritage by evoking a work of visual art with historical and cultural significance: the painting **Women of Algiers** by the French artist Eugène Delacroix, which forms part of the collective memory of Algerian women and part of the personal and family memory of "Majda Al-Shehani". Through this evocation, the novel reveals the close relationship between art and memory; for every time she returns to this painting, it carries profound significance, as it is fundamentally linked to the image of her mother, who used to copy and sell it whilst practising and teaching the art of painting.

The painting's presence is not limited to its aesthetic dimension or to the purposes of copying and selling; rather, it transcends this to become a symbol of identity and individual memory, as the narrator recalls details of her childhood associated with it through the scribbles she used to draw on it, believing she was sharing in her mother's creative act. This childlike interaction imbues the painting with a symbolic meaning that reflects the self's attempt to reshape the world around her according to her own vision: 'I found an oil painting on top of my mother's cupboard, a painting I had scribbled on as a child; its background was complete and the faces remained in my memory, Delacroix's **Women of Algiers**—the painting my mother most often copied and sold when she was working as a painter and art teacher I placed the painting in front of me and began to analyse its details... When I was four, I used to scribble tightly packed vertical lines; I thought I was imitating my mother through them, waking up the seated women, removing their headscarves and then playing with them. Once, whilst I was at the Georges Brassan second-hand book market in Paris, my eyes fell upon that very same painting; I stumbled in front of the seller and was lost for words...' ^{xvi}

The enigmatic painting continues to haunt the character even whilst she is in Paris; this emotional and spiritual connection leaves Magda feeling bewildered by the painting **Women of Algeria** and prompts her to ask numerous existential questions regarding the past of Algerian women. For whilst her mother practises the art of painting a canvas brimming with the false trappings of luxury—a far cry from the reality of working Algerian women striving to provide for their families—contrary to the image promoted by the French Orientalist painter, between fascination and reality lie the childhood scribbles that tarnish the very standards for which the painting became famous. 'The painting suggests that Algerian women were pampered, sitting in endearing idleness, with maids attending to them, whilst carpets and zellige tiles enhance the luxury of their lives. What was my mother thinking as she redrew them?... All of Delacroix's women are women of waiting. My mother's answer terrifies me, and I feel that this concerns me deeply. When did I enter this painting? When did I become one of Delacroix's women? When did my mother paint me and trap me within the painting? I can now pinpoint my exact place within the painting, and I do not want to wait.' ^{xvii}

In the novel, the work of art becomes a cultural medium laden with multiple symbolic meanings, combining personal memory with a cultural dimension; its mention is seen as a drawing upon both global and local visual artistic heritage, serving the contemporary perspective of the protagonist, 'Magda', 'Magda' offers a dual interpretative reading that combines the aesthetic reception of the painting with the reconstruction of self-

awareness. She transforms Delacroix's painting **The Women of Algiers**—which is considered a fixed work of art—into an imaginative space open to reinterpretation, thereby opening the door to interpretation for the very purpose for which it was created, so that she does not merely describe the painting, but attributes a discourse to it: 'The painting says that the women of Algeria were pampered', which reflects a shift from visual observation to the analysis of the painting and the attribution of a meaningful voice to it, thereby making it a narrative agent within the text. However, this aesthetic discourse is subjected to critical deconstruction, as the orientalist image of Algerian women is reinterpreted as one of 'waiting' and stillness, in which women are reduced to a state of stagnation and indulgent idleness. This interpretation is not neutral; rather, it becomes a source of existential anxiety for the narrator, who begins to identify with this artistic image, feeling that she is part of it: 'When did I become one of Delacroix's women?'. Here, the act of viewing transcends the boundaries of art to become an experience of forced fusion between the self and the image, reflecting the power of visual representation in shaping consciousness.

The narrative centres on a tense and conflicted structure that revolves around the duality of the mother, who re-paints and reproduces the painting in the same manner as Delacroix, and the daughter's search for identity and affirmation of her existence, as she seeks to break free from this stereotypical image painted of Algerian women; Consequently, the act of 'painting' is a symbolic act that may imply fixation or confinement within a ready-made mould requiring no creativity or imagination; the painting thus becomes a closed structure that perpetually reproduces women in a state of waiting, which is reflected in 'Magda's' consciousness as she rejects this reductionism 'I don't want to wait'. Thus, the text can be read as a critique of the artistic representation of women, whereby the painting shifts from an aesthetic space to a problematic one that raises questions of identity and freedom. Here, the narrative does not treat the artwork merely as a subject for contemplation, but as a symbolic force capable of shaping or constraining the self, reflecting the novel's openness to a critique of the artistic image and a re-examination of its cultural connotations, for 'The novel, with its foundational texts, can be regarded as one of the great narratives that contribute to the shaping of nations' cultural identities, given its capacity to shape society's general perceptions and cultural transformations.'^{xviii}

7- Poetry:

The trajectory of creative writing in Algerian literature has shifted, with poetry becoming the counterpart to prose; together, they form a dyad and a connection that deepens the meaning of expression. For 'the complex nature of the novel and its flexibility have enabled it to draw upon several fields of knowledge, making the presence of poetry within it a natural occurrence and a kind of logical consequence dictated by the complex nature of the art of the novel, given that poetry is one of the most important manifestations of pluralism and a kind of spontaneous response to the flexibility of the novelistic genre.'^{xix} The novelist drew upon certain poetic passages to create a kind of textual interplay in a creative manner, utilising the protagonist's psychological state by incorporating lines of poetry by Mahmoud Darwish.

This psychological state played a significant role in shaping the narrative text and in expressing certain situations imbued with a sense of sorrow; the aesthetic openness to poetry reflects inner suffering and a rejection of the reality and environment in which the character is floundering: 'I feel as though I have reached the final gate, I am overcome by a sudden tranquillity—I do not know where it came from—telling me that there is nothing left within me: no time, no strength, no effort, no courage. It tells me that I have devoted myself time and again to making new beginnings and to fleeing from all the terrifying conflicts, and that I have given everything I possess to the very limit

May I be nothing but my dream.

And I have a mountain,

Cast upon the clouds,

For me to lift it high... Mahmoud Darwish says »^{xx}

The text is based on an internal monologue dominated by a sense of existential exhaustion, in which 'there is nothing left within me, neither time nor strength'; a monologue that reflects a state of gradual psychological depletion, intersecting with the idea of the 'final limit' or 'last gateway' as a symbolic threshold separating two stages of consciousness. In this context, the sudden tranquillity is not a sign of reassurance, but rather an indication of a moment of existential revelation in which the will recedes in the face of a sense of exhausting fulfilment or inevitable end, of non-resistance to the act of existence, and the state of loss and crisis experienced by the character. Darwish's text thus serves to deepen the image of brokenness and disorientation as a poetic horizon open to interpretation, imbuing the situation with a fantastical, miraculous quality. 'The mountain' symbolises the weight of worries, responsibility and ambition; lifting it above the clouds reflects the impossible act, For it is within the space between the image of the dream and the limits of human capacity—and the heroine's own capacity—that the semantic scope of the difficult narrative situation in which the character is floundering can be extended. Thus, 'he who masters the art of writing is, in truth, one who makes good use of their language, giving words their true value; it is they who possess the essence of language, breathing life into every word and every phrase through their ideas'^{xxi}, Intertextuality also reveals the novel's openness to poetic discourse as a space rich in meaning, where narrative language intersects with poetic language to produce a vision based on fragmentation and condensation

rather than linear narration. Here, poetry does not merely embellish the text, but redirects its meaning towards a deeper contemplative horizon, rendering the narrating self a being suspended between dream, possibility and the existential limit; It can therefore be said that Mahmoud Darwish's presence in this passage forms part of an aesthetic use of intertextuality, aimed at deepening the emotional experience and reframing inner turmoil in a densely symbolic image, transforming the narrative into a space where the personal, the poetic and the cosmic intersect.

Conclusion:

Our research has yielded a number of findings, the most significant of which are:

The novelist has succeeded in creating a narrative world in which a range of creative devices—relying on description and dialogue—intertwine, by tracing the characters' evolving trajectories across varying time periods, which demonstrates the author's artistic awareness as she wove the threads of the narrative across its various dimensions through the unfolding of real-life issues; she did not hesitate to offer a critical perspective on the series of events that dominated the text.

Contemporary Algerian fiction seeks to draw upon reference texts by employing the technique of intertextuality, which is fundamentally based on an understanding of the subtleties of social culture, in order to achieve an aesthetic structure founded on the utilisation of folk heritage and collective memory; this has led to its prevalence in contemporary fiction as a literary and critical phenomenon worthy of study.

Heritage represents a constructive cultural asset that serves as a vehicle for conveying ideas and inspires an appreciation of its value and the level of awareness surrounding it, so that it may be utilised in a way that adds value to the fictional text and engages the reader in reflecting on their perceptions of it, as we see how heritage can be revived in a manner different from what we are accustomed to—from realistic practice to imaginative inspiration—in order to convey a range of patterns whilst also preserving its existence.

Through this novel, the author has sought to present traditional narrative texts that reflect the culture of the local environment and reactions to specific issues; The novel thus became a hybrid structure that succeeded in blending literary forms, genres and various discourses, breaking with conventional style and freeing itself from classical constraints. Because the use of folk heritage in contemporary Algerian fiction stems from its authenticity, this enabled the novelist to formulate a distinctive model distinctive model within the narrative body, thereby working to document and preserve our folk culture through fictional storytelling. She has also taken care to highlight women's issues by depicting their traditional dress, jewellery, handicrafts—such as embroidery and sewing—and cooking... The novel adopts a fragmented narrative style that gives the reader the impression that there is no connection between its narrative segments; this is evident through the deconstruction of the temporal and spatial structure, whereby the reader is free to manipulate the sequence by delaying or bringing forward the stories at their own discretion. The novel's structure reveals a deep awareness of the issues raised, and an understanding of the challenges of narrative writing; engaging with reality through fiction was one of the key functions the text sought to fulfil. The novel's writing relies on a narrative style that captivates the reader, from the choice of the novel's main title to the subheadings, right through to the technical execution of the narrative.

The novel explores a variety of creative expressions that have an aesthetic impact on the reader; for this reason, it incorporates elements of the fine arts—such as music, songs and visual art—into its narrative, allowing them to interact within it through a poetic language that suits the literary context, The inclusion of these art forms in the narrative is neither purely coincidental nor arbitrary; rather, it serves as a means of venting sorrow and reviving memory.

References:

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