

## The problem of writing in the Other's language in the Algerian novel

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### Abstract :

Algeria has known special historical periods that influenced the literary and cultural movement of the homeland, including the French colonial tide. This latter established its language by making it an official language. It has great luck in the emergence of Algerian literature written in the French tongue because of the spread of the language of the colonizer among the Algerian writers and encouraging the colonizers for a variety of reasons. This created the problem of language and identity related to this modern and contemporary literature. Thus, the 1920s writers went for colonial habits and its tradition of spreading its culture through promoting their creativity. This led to a reaction in the beginning of the fifties where the Algerian novel with a French tongue took cultural and ideological perspectives. An ideology that stems from the pure Algerian environment. It reflected the suffering of the people languishing under the oppression of a brutal colonizer. The colonialist's lies and allegations were exposed on the spread of civilization and culture, this was the matter. A turning point in the identity components of Algerian literature through the introduction of several questions, including what are the contents that make literature written in the language of the colonizer Algerian? How did it get its Algerian identity? And why? And what contributed to its continuity in the Algerian literary scene?

**Key words:** language, identity, colonizer, colonized, literature.

Algerian identity has been shaped by distinct cultural dimensions—historical, linguistic, religious, and even political—that are difficult to erase or abandon. Although temporary circumstances have threatened it, Algerians have refused to yield. The waves of colonialism that swept over the country instilled a spirit of resistance and a refusal to allow others to strip the nation of its fundamental components. Even though the formation of identity involves specific epistemological and intellectual criteria, it has been difficult for Algerians to change because they have clung to its most important elements—religion and language—for “cultural identity... is a worldly historical existence, and worldly history is inseparable from transformation, change, and flux. Identity—as Stuart Hall writes—is by no means a stable existence; it remains unchangeable outside of history and culture... Cultural identities are a subject in the process of formation, not in a static form but through the discourses of history and culture. And identities are not essences but rather a movement of positioning; therefore, there are always politics of identity and politics of the position”<sup>1</sup> in which identity settles for a moment before shifting to another position.”

<sup>1</sup> - Nader Kazem, *Identity and Narrative*, 2nd ed., Dar al-Farasha Publishing and Distribution, Kuwait, 2016, pp. 131–132.

Time shapes human identity and develops it into a distinctive form that makes one proud of it and of belonging to it.

The historical events that Algeria has experienced have shaped the identity of its people and made them unique in their way of life, language, and lifestyle. Since the modern era witnessed a wave of colonialism across the Arab world, Algeria was no exception; in fact, this period is considered the longest era of colonial rule, during which certain concepts regarding language and identity underwent significant changes. Customs foreign to the Algerian environment emerged. Since the colonizer sought to establish a foothold in Algerian soil, it adopted a deliberate policy of encouraging the intellectual output of the local population in anticipation of the centennial celebration of the occupation of Algeria, under the guise of “the cultural and civilizational achievements of colonialism.” This policy succeeded in persuading some Algerian writers of that time to participate in the centennial commemoration. Consequently, their creative works were published—works that posed no threat to the colonizers but rather promoted colonial ideas such as assimilation and the glorification of the colonizer’s benevolence, especially since they were written in French and published in France. Literary works by indigenous authors—who were products of the French educational system and mostly came from privileged backgrounds—were also published. What most distinguished them was their belief in coexisting with colonial rule and integrating with the settlers, expressing their admiration for French culture and civilization. Among the issues they also discussed were the freedom to consume alcohol, gamble, and engage in prostitution—customs that reflect the French way of life but are prohibited under Islamic law. Among these literary works is *\*Zahra, Wife of the Astrologer\** by Abdelkader Haj Hamou." All these themes did not emerge spontaneously but were a social concern driven by intellectual and political questions and concerns regarding the

boundaries between the forbidden and the permissible in religion and civil law, and between individual freedom in the Western sense and religious and moral imperatives in the Islamic sense. and this is where the identity crisis that has accompanied French-language Algerian literature since its very beginnings takes shape<sup>2</sup>.

France closed all the doors that connected Algerians with Arabs and reinforced this isolation by granting the children of the notables and a small segment of the indigenous population the freedom to learn and immerse themselves in French culture, thereby creating a class that emerged during the interwar period and aligned itself with the principles of the occupying power "This call emerged with remarkable speed alongside the political leadership... Its proponents sought to mask the glaring deficiency Algeria suffered from its traditional Eastern civilization; thus, they rushed to champion this “progressive” slogan—at times alongside colonial socialism, and at other times alongside the scientific mindset and principles of the French Revolution. The development of this dangerous call led to the emergence of the French Revolution. The development of this dangerous call led to the emergence of a group of thinkers, writers and poets after the Second World War, whose experience was Algerian but whose methods and orientations were entirely Western<sup>3</sup>." The French language was imposed on the occupied country, and the French worked to make it the official language; as a result, the teaching of Arabic was banned, except in the independent schools affiliated with the Association of Muslim Scholars, which played a reformist role, particularly with regard to the memorisation of the Holy Quran. This ban had an impact on Algerian novelists, who found no means of expression other than the language of the coloniser.

One of the reasons for the delay in Algerian literature’s emergence on the creative scene was the « policy of aggression pursued by the colonial powers throughout their occupation of

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<sup>2</sup> - See: Ahmed Manour, *The Identity Crisis in the French-Language Algerian Novel*, Dar al-Sahel, Algiers, pp. 93–94.

<sup>3</sup> - Abu al-Qasim Sa’d Allah, *Studies in Modern Algerian Literature*, 5th ed., Dar al-Ra’id al-Kitab, Algiers, 2007, p. 24.

Algeria, and their fierce war of extermination against the Algerian nation and its fundamental values, which reduced the relationship between the occupiers and the legitimate inhabitants of the country to one of constant war and tension, preventing any positive interaction between the two sides and standing in the way of any fruitful cooperation, whether on the political, intellectual or cultural level. The second factor was the education policy implemented by the occupiers on the ground, which was a policy of keeping the people in ignorance »<sup>4</sup> the relationship between them was marked by constant conflict due to tensions and colonial arrogance that led to animosity; France was thus unable to establish a civilisation based on justice and equality, even in the literary sphere. Jean Dieudonné, the first historian of Algerian literature written in French from 1920 onwards, marks the true beginning of this emerging literature, and considers the work by El Kaid Ben Cherif, entitled 'Ahmed Ben Moustapha El Qoumi', to be the starting point of this movement. It is regarded as the first novel written by an Algerian in French, as writing during the colonial era was by no means a simple or easy task, particularly given the lack of freedom of expression and freedom of publication.

In its early days, Algerian literature was influenced by Western culture due to its direct contact with the colonial power in economic, political and intellectual spheres; "The occupation managed to take control of the material aspects of the people's lives and direct them to serve its own ends, but it did not succeed in taking over intellectual and cultural traditions until much later. When it began to direct these aspects to its own advantage, it found that a large section of the population did not recognise its right to oversee the management of cultural institutions. Consequently, a number of graduates from these Western institutions questioned their direction and philosophy."<sup>5</sup> Even though French publishing houses had for many years

given a platform to voices that glorified France and its actions, their voices were soon drowned out by the resounding call of the victorious revolution—a revolution that was not only a revolt against the tyranny, injustice and destruction inflicted upon the Algerian people, but also a struggle to reclaim the nation's foundations and all that ensures the nation's survival. These people were satisfied neither with assimilation nor with equality, and they did not surrender to the aggression that sought to make Algeria a French colony. "The intensity of this influence has waned since the revolution, as other nationalist influences have prevailed, and nationalist tendencies have emerged—voices that colonialism had long stifled because they carried the seeds of secession from France and expressed the people's views on their own identity, values and history"<sup>6</sup>. This contributed to his failure to adhere to the goals he had set for himself; instead, he clung to his original identity, which reveals that he is here and cannot shed or merge with the self of another, lest he become a hybrid figure without an identity.

The idea of classifying Algerian literature did not arise merely with the existence of literature written in French; rather, it took on historical dimensions stretching back to the Phoenician and Roman periods, with the works of Apuleius, Augustine and others. In his book *\*The Africans\**, Paul Monso acknowledges that 'the study of Latin African literature', specifically that relating to the works of Apuleius and the priest Augustine, "African literature is certainly one of the regions of Latin literature, but it is a region with its own distinctive character, traditions and unique genius." The foreign influence continues to leave its mark on Algerian writers due to their exposure to other cultures, even if there are those who wish to distinguish themselves from them and carve out a different path for themselves. The label 'Algerian writers' was adopted by writers who had settled there since 1906, to distinguish themselves from French

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<sup>4</sup> - Ahmed Manour, *The Identity Crisis in the French-Language Algerian Novel*, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> - Abu al-Qasim Sa'd Allah, *Studies in Modern Algerian Literature*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> - *Ibid*, p24.

writers in France, and their literature from what the latter wrote about Algeria, which they described as superficial and as “postcard literature”; this was when, on the date in question, they founded an association called “Les Algérianistes”, a term also applied in the 1920s to those known as the “Les Indigénophiles” or sympathisers with the Algerians, and which was also used in the 1930s by the writers ‘The School of Algiers’, led by Gabriel Audesso and Albert Camus. Naturally, writers of Algerian origin, whom the colonisers distinguished as ‘Muslim writers’, saw themselves as the first to hold this title above all others, and from there the debate branched out to the identity of the literature itself: is it Algerian or French”<sup>7</sup>.

The writings of authors in colonised countries reveal the suffering they have endured through the obsession with expressing themselves in the language of the other, which often unsettles the creative spirit, particularly as their sense of being occupied forms a cornerstone of their national identity; here, the concept of exile within one’s own homeland becomes apparent “We find that the first work written by a North African writer is usually a personal translation in which he expresses his dual belonging to two different worlds, whilst also expressing his pain at being unable to find a place in either of these worlds. For the writer, drawn to the Western world he discovered at school, soon realises that he will not be able to return to his traditions because ‘Westernisation’ has taken hold of him.”<sup>8</sup>

A tragedy had befallen the homeland in every sphere, making it imperative to launch a creative uprising that would portray the criminal acts committed by the coloniser against defenceless citizens throughout the country, and the moral and material devastation they inflicted upon them. Thus, the novels of ‘Mohamed Dib’ were steeped in the suffering of the working class, addressing their concerns by depicting harsh living conditions and reflecting difficult social realities such as hunger, oppression and poverty, and, through a

tightly constructed narrative, addressed the political struggle, crystallising the true national identity of the Algerians within the contradictory relationship between coloniser and colonised. This continued, particularly with the outbreak of the blessed revolution and the torture, displacement, repression and murder suffered by the people, followed by the novels of Mouloud Mammeri , ‘Khatib Yassin’, ‘Asia Jabbar’ and ‘Malek Haddad’, who conveyed the destruction and devastation, and the suffering of a nation that refused to have its identity obliterated and erased, despite France’s relentless efforts to exterminate the indigenous population with its vile ideas, which would almost have succeeded were it not for the vigilance of this people, who rejected all such attempts and temptations.

One of the most distinguished writers of the modern era is “Khatib Yassin”, a native of Constantine who took part in the events of 8 May 1945 and was subsequently arrested and imprisoned. He wrote the novel \*Najma\*, which highlights the political and economic injustices in Algeria and the various forms of exploitation. The significance of \*Nujma\* lies in the fact that it introduces a new dimension to the Algerian novel through its poetic language and the influence of the American writer William Faulkner. This enabled Yacine to win the admiration of scholars, to the extent that he was almost regarded as a French writer, and the scholar included Yassin among French writers and classified his novel as part of the French New Novel. He appears to be one of those local writers who preserved and learnt the language of the coloniser and most of its civilised customs, and came to express himself in a very distinctive style; consequently, his novel has attracted attention and been the subject of scholarly study.

If we turn to Algerian literature written in French after independence, we find that French continues to be used in novels, and that it has remained committed to just political and social causes. Algerian writers have taken the armed revolution as their subject, depicting the

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<sup>7</sup> - Ahmed Manour, *Literary Profiles*, Dar al-Sahel, Algiers, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> - Abu al-Qasim Sa’d Allah, *Studies in Modern Algerian Literature*, p. 98.

colonialist's brutality, and the atrocity of its practices, and celebrated the men who confronted it with resistance and valour in order to deepen the sense of national consciousness and the unity of the nation that had chosen armed struggle to regain its freedom and forge its future with all its religious, linguistic and historical elements, thus dealing the coloniser a blow that forced him to surrender. Among these works are those written by the novelist 'Asia Jabbar' after independence, such as 'Children of the New World', and Mouloud Mammeri's 'Opium and the Stick'.

### **Socio-historical themes in French-language Algerian literature:**

Ahmed Manour raises a number of issues that have been raised regarding the identity of Algerian literature written in French during the colonial period, particularly with regard to its classification: is it French literature, as some argue, given the language in which it was written and the audience it was aimed at, or is it Algerian literature, given the spirit in which it was written?

Malik Haddad believes that Algerian literature written in French is "the result of a mere temporary circumstance brought about by the French occupation of Algeria, and is bound to fade away with time, particularly as the first signs of independence were already on the horizon at that time; it is only natural that the Arabic language, the country's official language, would regain its status in all cultural and intellectual spheres."<sup>9</sup> Had it not been for the presence of the coloniser on our homeland and his targeting of the local language, French would never have emerged as a means of expression; Malik Haddad believed that Arabic was the original language and that the coloniser had worked to Westernise and marginalise it; it would inevitably return to prominence. Once the people had regained their freedom, they would have to work to elevate its status and make it the country's official language, just as it had been before the colonial invasion.

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<sup>9</sup> - Ahmed Manour, *The Identity Crisis in French-Language Algerian Fiction*, p160.

<sup>10</sup> -Ibid, p163.

Because Malek Haddad is regarded as one of the first to raise the issue of the French language in Algerian literature written during the colonial period and thereafter—and his views seemed impossible to some because they had no other language in which to express themselves—he rejected the terms 'Algerian literature written in French' or 'Algerian literature in the French language', he rejected it, instead calling it "French literature expressed in Algerian", a term used by no one before or since him. He emphasised the Algerian "spirit" in which he wrote, evident in the content he expressed, yet he considered it French in terms of the medium of expression »<sup>10</sup>. A contradiction thus arose in his view: how can we consider literature that recounts the fate of a people who have suffered misery and hardship to be French simply because it was written in the language of the coloniser.

The French language presented Algerian writers with a crisis of expression; they had no alternative to it as a language that offered ample scope to convey their concerns, thoughts, and feelings. If Malek Haddad felt exiled within it and alienated by its direction, this stemmed from the isolation he found himself in after independence. For whom would he write, given that his pen had been fighting for a free homeland? But today, with independence achieved and illiteracy rife amongst Algerians, he must cease writing fiction. This was a shocking decision for the public and critics alike, for Algerian literature is in danger if it does not rid itself of its linguistic dependence on France. In contrast, the writer Mouloud Mammeri takes a positive view, saying: " We must not weep and feel lost because we write in French; personally, when I write in French, I do not feel any sense of inferiority, for whatever language a writer uses, he is merely translating his own emotions and thoughts... I say: this is an opportunity; indeed, it is a treasure for Algerian culture"<sup>11</sup>. His view suggests that language is merely a means of communication; we must not allow it

<sup>11</sup> - Souad Mohamed Khedr, *Contemporary Algerian Literature*, Al-Maktaba Al-Asriya Publications, Saida-Beirut, 1967, p. 90.

to become a barrier to creativity, nor should we view ourselves with a sense of inferiority or a split personality. Rather, we should regard it as one of the diverse cultural resources of Algeria, a country rich in ideas and knowledge; Here, the nation's cultural heritage is enriched rather than diminished, and thus Algerian literature written in French reflects the linguistic diversity of the Algerian people, particularly following independence.

As for the connection between Algerian literature written in French and Arab identity, critics reject this on the grounds of the language in which it is written; they argue that it cannot be included within the Arab cultural heritage and so it has been excluded from it, even though it embodies the characteristics of the Algerian people and their suffering. It has been rejected by French critics because its content satirises and exposes France's heinous acts. We therefore maintain that this literature is Algerian literature from a specific historical period which was characterised by a political and linguistic crisis for writers who found no means of expressing their innermost feelings other than through the French pen. We thus describe it as literature with a nationalist bent, whilst excluding any Arab nationalist tendency on account of the language in which it is written: "It is Algerian by virtue of the land in which it was born, but in my view it cannot be described as national literature, if by 'nationalism' we mean the cultural identity of a nation in which language forms a fundamental basis"<sup>12</sup>.

### **Contemporary Algerian Fiction and the Historical Context:**

Algerian novels written in French continue to reflect the events of the colonial era and the devastation it wrought, particularly following the First World War when epidemics and mass massacres befell the local population; these horrific images resonate clearly in contemporary fiction, particularly in the works of the novelist Yasmina Khadra. The conditions are truly appalling and unliveable; although the period between the writing of the novel and the

colonial era is distant, the author has skilfully transported us back to a difficult time for the people of the homeland, even though the text is written in the language of the coloniser: "In those days of 1930, misery and epidemics were wiping out families and animals with a strange ferocity, forcing the survivors into emigration or homelessness. Our few remaining relatives show no sign of being alive. As for the tattered rags whose ghostly forms we see in the distance, we were certain they were merely passing like the wind. The path leading to our hut was being erased, yet my father paid it no mind"<sup>13</sup> ", Algerian novelists have not abandoned the language of the coloniser today, not for the same reasons cited by Malek Haddad and others, but because they feel at ease with it; it represents a cognitive and cultural diversity for them.

The novel *\*Night is Better Than Day\** explores various specific relationships between the local people and the qaid or notables affiliated with the colonial authorities. The following passage illustrates the poverty and marginalisation experienced by the Algerians: after a fire had ravaged the land, the qaid arrived to seize the opportunity and seize the land from its owners "A week later, a man came looking for my father. He had the bearing of a sultan, dressed in the finest clothes, his beard carefully trimmed and his jacket adorned with medals. It was the Qa'id, surrounded by his personal guards. Without stepping down from his luxurious 'caliche' carriage, he ordered my father to affix his fingerprints to the documents"<sup>14</sup>. Opportunism and exploitation are evident in the novel: because someone set fire to the wheat crop, the land and the house were lost, and the Algerian family found themselves out in the open, homeless and lost, with no roof to shelter them, no food to satisfy their hunger, and no future for their children.

Colonial rule denied Algerians access to education and schooling, except for a very small group of notables or children of the upper classes, whom France wished to use as a

<sup>12</sup> - Abu al-Qasim Sa'd Allah, *Essays on Literature and Travel*, National Book Foundation, Algiers, 1983, p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> - Yasmina Khadra, *\*Preferring Night to Day\**, trans. Mohamed Sari, Sidia Publications, Algiers, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> -Ibid, p11.

showcase to boast of their development and as a symbol of French civilisation. After his son Issa joined his pharmacist uncle and changed his name to 'Jonas' to fit in with the liberal, Francophone mindset of the family. "My uncle was reassured and enrolled me in a school just two blocks from our alley. It was an ordinary building with uninspiring corridors and two large fig trees in the courtyard. It seemed to me that the place was somewhat gloomy, and that daylight barely reached the upper parts of the building. Unlike the teacher. A rough and stern man who taught us French in the strong 'Auvergne' accent, which some of the pupils imitated quite well... There are two Arabs in my class, Abdelkader and Ibrahim. They are the sons of notables, accompanied by servants right up to the school entrance »<sup>15</sup>.

The novel explores a variety of cultural and religious dimensions, ranging from Spanish customs to the monuments of Oran, which possess global heritage significance and are associated with specific religious rituals; The novel did not confine itself to political and social aspects, but also conveyed a set of inherited ideological ideas, given that Algeria has been home to several successive civilisations. Among the Christian festivals mentioned is 'Ascension Day', a universal Christian festival commemorating Christ's bodily ascension to heaven forty days after Easter, on 'The Ascent' takes us, Lousat and me, to gaze upon the city from the heights of the Marjago Mountains. We first climbed up to visit the medieval castle before joining the procession of pilgrims circling the "Santa Cruz" chapel; there were hundreds of them—women, elderly people and children jostling at the feet of "the Virgin". Some of them were climbing over others, their knees raw with sores. This entire devout crowd swayed in the scorching sun, eyes wide, faces bloodied, as they invoked the righteous saints and implored the Lord to save their wretched lives. Lusat explained to me that the worshippers were Spanish, making a pilgrimage every year on the day of the 'Ascension' and enduring this gruelling ordeal to thank the 'Virgin' for

saving the old city of Oran from the cholera epidemic that had wiped out thousands of families in 1849"<sup>16</sup>. The Day of the Ascent is characterised by a kind of purification accompanying the suffering endured by the people as they make their way up to the shrine of Saint Cruz, so that they may give thanks to the Lord for saving their lives from the cholera epidemic—one of the plagues that befell colonial Algeria, claiming many lives. For it was not the coloniser alone who inflicted harm upon the people; rather, as misfortunes rarely come singly, a health crisis befell the country, decimating both people and livestock.

Because France was an active participant in the Second World War and had fought alongside the Allies against the Nazis, its warships targeted the anchorage at Sidi el-Kebir beach in Oran, inflicting human and material losses. This made conditions even worse for the Algerians; the aerial bombardment caused great panic amongst the people." Our first summer in Rio Salado got off to a bad start. On 3 July 1940, the country was shaken by Operation Catapult, which saw a squadron of the British Royal Air Force, 'Force H', bomb French warships at the naval base of Mers-el-Kebir. Three days later, Her Majesty's aircraft returned to complete the bombing raid, leaving us no time to fully grasp the scale of the disaster. A major catastrophe befell Algeria at the start of the Second World War, a country that suffered its ravages both internally and externally, with its sons taking part in a war that was not solely theirs, merely so that France might fulfil its promises to grant it independence.

With the end of the Second World War, the world celebrated the Allies' victory and the defeat and eradication of Nazism; cries of triumph also rang out across the country as citizens took to the streets, hopeful that France would honour its promise, having themselves stood by her side in her bitter war. But France not only reneged on its promises but also crushed the celebrants with every form of repression and tyranny, killing forty-five thousand victims. Its true nature was revealed,

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<sup>15</sup> - Ibid, p64.

<sup>16</sup> -Ibid, p77.

and the Algerians realised that day that what is taken by force can only be regained by force. And so came 8 May 1945. Just as the whole world was celebrating the end of the nightmare, another nightmare erupted in Algeria—more devastating than a plague, more brutal than the apocalypse—and the people's celebrations turned to mourning. Near Rio Salado, in Ain Timouchent, the police suppressed marches calling for Algerian independence. In Mostaganem, the demonstrations spread to neighbouring villages. But the horror reached its peak in the Aures and the Constantine region, where thousands of Muslims were killed by security forces backed by militias formed by the colonists."<sup>17</sup> The demonstrations of 8 May will come to an end, and France will pay the price once the people are united, for their eyes have witnessed the calamity and they have tasted destruction; they can no longer submit. Another voice will rise: the voice of the bullets of the glorious revolution.

The Algerians drew their courage from the crucible of suffering and the calamities that befell them; the turning point came with the massacres of 8 May and France's policy of scorched earth and mass extermination in the hamlets and villages. The people's uprising was an inevitable fate, merely postponed; but the people agreed on the night of 1 November 1954 to launch a seven-year war of relentless struggle from which there could be no retreat. The land was saturated with the blood of the fighters to the point of saturation, yet this did not deter their resolve in response to the betrayal they suffered following the end of the Second World War. Ranks were united, spirits were lifted, and they offered their lives as a sacrifice for Algeria so that it might live free and independent. "My uncle never saw his country take up arms against the coloniser... otherwise, how can we explain his death five months before the flames of the long-awaited liberation, which had been postponed time and again? On 1 November 1954, we were taken by surprise... the War of Independence had

begun... three letters covered every wall: FLN, the National Liberation Front. A whole programme. With its laws. And its instructions, its calls for a general uprising, the curfew it imposes, the prohibitions it enacts and the courts it establishes, its administrative division of Algeria's regions, and its effective networks. And finally, its army (the National Liberation Army)."<sup>18</sup>

Ridding the country of colonial rule was no easy task; the people paid a heavy price to live in peace and security. The injustice and tyranny they had bitterly endured returned in the early 1990s, when Algeria once again experienced a wave of violence and destruction; blood was everywhere. Following the politicians' botched handling of the situation – with the cancellation of the parliamentary elections won by the Islamic Salvation Front – extremist political parties emerged. They embraced bloody violence as a means to seize power and began spreading their poisonous ideas amongst young people who were adrift socially, economically and even psychologically. They exploited them and turned them into a bomb exploding within the homeland, so that its sons began fighting amongst themselves." And here I say that I am with the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) with joy, my brother. This is necessary... At least the Islamists have a chance to mobilise us and present us with major projects. All I want is to do something with my miserable life... Although the FIS has declared musical gatherings completely forbidden, just as it did with night-time noise, I am certain that it will let me sing the praises of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in an atmosphere of respect and happiness..."<sup>19</sup> The Islamists have captured the minds of young people by making them grand promises that will bring them glory and elevate their status if they establish the so-called Islamic Caliphate; even if these young people abandon their original outlook, which embraced life and its joys, for the sake of Al-Faisal, everything becomes easy.

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<sup>17</sup> - Ibid, p130.

<sup>18</sup> - Ibid, p130.

<sup>19</sup> - Yasmina Khadra, *What Do Wolves Dream Of?*, trans. Abdelsalam Yakhlaf, Sidia Publications, p. 83–84.

The Islamic Salvation Front sought to instil fear in people's hearts, and so its rhetoric was repressive, taking the form of threats and warnings directed at those who disagreed with it; It also targeted the educated class of Algerians, and letters were one of the means it used to deter its opponents from exposing its schemes to public opinion; the language of violence was its *modus operandi*, particularly as it regarded all its opponents as opponents of the Islamic religion, having appointed themselves its protectors and God's vicegerents on earth. They would threaten their victims with death and torture... Following the threatening letters, the telephone entered the fray, thanks to its effectiveness in conveying threats. It would ring at unreasonable hours. The voice on the other end would make one's blood run cold: 'You will die, enemy of God.'<sup>20</sup> The rhetoric during the Black Decade took on a tone of tyranny due to the prevalence of obscurantist thinking among the general public; if they deviated from what the Al-Faisal movement advocated, they were deemed to have departed from the Islamic faith and thus fallen into unbelief and polytheism, and their inevitable fate was death as apostates. Riots raged and chaos reigned across the land, with death hanging in the air. Algeria was shrouded in mourning for its sons, who were at each other's throats and fighting amongst themselves. Tensions flared, guns were taken to the streets, and the sound of gunfire rang out once more; Bodies lay piled up, and all that could be heard was the wailing of women and the sirens of ambulances or emergency vehicles. 'The mothers' wails echo the blare of the sirens. The burials confirm the tragedy. Death strikes everywhere. Every day. Every

night. Without truce. Without mercy. Six policemen were cornered at a street bend. Their attackers sprayed them with bullets, then dragged them out of the car and slit their throats in full view of the eyes watching from behind the window panes,"<sup>21</sup> Fate decreed that a wave of violence should spring from the womb of the sons, so that some brought about the destruction of others; it was a decade of bloodshed, dominated by anxiety, fear and a loss of trust, and an atmosphere of terror prevailed over all Algerians.

Algerian fiction written in French has been accompanied by an air of suspicion and mistrust. How, then, can an Algerian writer loyal to his homeland write in the language of the enemy, have his creative work attributed to the coloniser, and deny his own Arab identity—all because of the linguistic barrier that has prevented him from accessing the Arab cultural heritage? The colonial tide in Algeria was overwhelming; it destroyed the Algerians' sense of identity and obliterated the Arabic language, which has a historical and religious dimension to which Algerians cling, as it constitutes a sacred emotional unity. Yet it continued to fade due to the ban on its teaching in schools and the colonial struggle against it, becoming a heavy burden from which modern Algerian literature suffered. Yet the element of surprise persisted beyond independence and continues to this day, for there are Algerian writers who have mastered the French language and used it skilfully to express colonial and political issues across different eras. This is what my novel *Yasmina Khadra* reveals, for the language no longer poses a threat to the identity of Algerians; rather, it is indeed the spoils of war .

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<sup>20</sup> - *Ibid*, p 208.

<sup>21</sup> -*Ibid*, p 210.