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Multilingualism in the novel *The Gypsies Love Too* by Wassini Al-Aradj as a means of reclaiming a collective identity

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Abstract:

This research paper seeks to explore the theme of multilingualism in the novel *The Gypsies Love Too* by the Algerian novelist Wassini Al-Aradj, as a means of restoring the collective identity of the Algerian city of Oran, Since language is part of identity, the author deliberately conveys his narrative to the reader in several languages—Arabic, French and Spanish—using this linguistic diversity to reflect the succession of civilisations and cultural diversity that mirrors the coexistence of Algerians and Spanish Gypsies under French occupation.

The novel *The Gypsies Love Too* falls within the postcolonial discourse that has granted the Spanish Gypsy minority, who settled in Algeria, the right to a historical account of their contributions to cultural diversity, particularly in the city of Oran, as well as affirming their active role in supporting the Algerian revolution against French colonialism. Thus, the multilingualism and cultural dimension of the sport of la tourmachi (bullfighting) serve as a metaphorical representation of the dynamics of coexistence and conflict in Algeria between Algerians, Spanish Gypsies and the French.

Keywords: contemporary novel – experimental fiction – identity – dialect – multilingualism.

Introduction:

Contemporary Algerian fiction has undergone fundamental transformations at various levels of writing, with novelists embarking on a phase of experimentation by adopting a different approach to the creative process, by innovating their writing style across all their creative works, so that the contemporary Algerian novel has become a forum for current issues that seek to reinterpret history, bring to light

what has been overlooked, and address other previously uncharted topics. Perhaps one of the horizons opened up by the contemporary Algerian novel is the linguistic level, which has come to face challenges through writing in multiple voices within a single discourse, giving rise to what is known as 'polyphony' in the novel, or what has come to be termed the 'polyphonic novel' (Polyphonie) as defined by Bakhtin.

Wassini Al-Aradj is among the contemporary novelists who have embarked on a phase of experimentation, beginning with the revival of his texts in a different spirit, through which he has sought to reclaim Algeria's marginalised history; and what appears in his novel **The Gypsies Love Too** is no different from what appears in his previous novels; works that can be regarded as an extension of an experimental project that elevates the Algerian novel to the international stage through the constant evocation of the cultural and identity-based diversity that Algeria has experienced across various eras.

What prompted us to explore this topic was a desire to examine one aspect of experimentalism by analysing a novel in which the author employs multilingualism to create a discourse within which cultures interact: the novel **The Gypsies Love Too** by Wassini al-Aradj. It may well be one of the contemporary examples in which the novelist has sought to preserve national identity, with multilingualism serving here as a means of restoring the full identity of a nation that has been shaped by successive civilisations, each of which has played a part in leaving its mark and exerting its influence on the components of our identity. To this end, we pose the following question:

- How does multilingualism serve as a dimension of contemporary fictional experimentation?
- What are the overall representations of polyphony in the novel **The Gypsies Love Too**?
- How is the conflict over identity reflected against a backdrop of polyphony?
- To what extent has it contributed to the restoration of a collective identity?

1--Polyphony and its representation in the novel:

The novel is a polyphonic discourse characterised by a multitude of characters and the voices that represent their roles; this is what contemporary Algerian fiction has sought to embody within the context of the experimental movement. Before addressing the issue of polyphony, we shall examine the definition of 'experimentation', which Salah Fadl describes as: "the invention of new methods and techniques in various forms of artistic expression; it is the essence and reality of creativity when it transcends the familiar and ventures into the heart of the future."¹ It could be said that experimentation is "a literary horizon born of an obsession with renewal"²; experimentation is used "to demonstrate mastery of structure, a commitment to stylistic refinement, and a quest to challenge the mainstream—a

challenge that is also imbued with aesthetic value"³. In other words, experimentation is a means of devising mechanisms and tools for creative writing.

Wassini Al-Aradj's novel **The Gypsies Love Too** operates on the basis of multilingualism, which led us to regard it as the most suitable text for exploring this phenomenon and its relationship to the restoration of a holistic identity that had been absent for a long time; The novel features a multiplicity of voices dictated by its characters' diverse identities (Arabic, French, Spanish, Romani, Amazigh, etc.) The novel thus embodies 'the social diversity of languages, and at times of individual languages and voices, a diversity organised literarily. It dispels the accepted assumptions that the national language is divided into social dialects, the affected speech of a particular group, and professional jargon, languages for modes of expression, and ways of speaking according to generations, ages, schools, authorities, clubs and passing fashions, and into languages for social and political days (or even hours) (every day has its own slogan, vocabulary and phrases)"⁴. This statement reflects the nature of pluralism, its main forms, the ways in which it is embodied, and its effectiveness in creative texts.

Our discussion of multilingualism requires us to address the concept of the polyphonic novel, the definition of which Bakhtin bases on his knowledge of music and its distinctive characteristics; from his perspective, polyphony is thus what unites music and the novel, as is evident in his statement: " 'Polyphony is a feature of music; the blending of multiple voices within a single narrative text is akin to the blending of different colours in a musical composition'⁵ .

In other words, this type of novel is based on the polyphony created by the multiplicity of languages, as exemplified in the novel **The Gypsies Love Too**. 'The image of language in literary art is, in essence, a linguistic hybrid (intentionally so), and this necessarily requires the presence of two linguistic consciousnesses: the personalised consciousness and the consciousness that personalises; both belong to different linguistic systems' Classical Arabic is the dominant language in the novel's discourse, as Wassini al-Aradj deliberately imbues his novel with an academic character that reflects, first and foremost, his status as a professor of higher education at the university, whilst also ensuring the distinctiveness of his fictional writing, which relies primarily on Classical Arabic as its medium.

The author presents the characters' dialogue whilst preserving their own languages; however, he often renders it in Arabic to break down language barriers, as well as to clarify meaning and make it easier to pronounce for the Arabic-speaking reader, for whom other languages remain unfamiliar and foreign. This includes the use of Spanish words written in Arabic script; for example: 'Mi abuela, ya Nur Yankhi'⁷. He also employs the phrases 'al-karakol'⁸ and 'Qarathias mi crédo, amigo'⁹ All these phrases have blended and interacted with the Algerian (Oranian) dialect, to the extent that the listener can no longer distinguish between them due to their widespread use, nor does he care to uncover their origins. This reveals to us the

relationship of coexistence imposed by the interaction of the self with the other at all levels of life during that period.

The French language appears in the body of the novel in a number of places, and there is no doubt that its presence was not arbitrary, as it serves as an expression of the spirit of the age dictated by the prevailing trends of that period, particularly given that the events of the novel take place in the 1950s, a period of French colonial rule which sought to disseminate the principles of its identity, based primarily on the French language. The way these expressions were used did not differ amongst the multicultural inhabitants of Oran, as depicted by the novel at various points through phrases such as: (weekend, merci and 'les grasses matinées')¹⁰; these expressions were not used exclusively by the French, but were also employed by both Arabs and Spaniards living in Oran under French rule. Furthermore, the use of French occurred on two levels: a phonetic level, as mentioned, and a cultural level, represented by the inclusion of passages reflecting an openness to French culture, as embodied by Angelina in her reference to a passage from Georges Bizet's opera:¹¹

Tucarois le tenir ilt'évite

Tucaroisl'éviteiltetient.

There is no doubt that the linguistic diversity in Algeria during the 1950s—as reflected in the novel through its portrayal of characters of diverse origins and identities—contributed significantly to the formation of the distinctive character of Algerian Darija, which we regard as the cradle of the inclusive identity forged by the convergence of these languages and the fusion of their cultures. Indeed, researching the origins of this dialect and analysing its structure leads us to the cultural dynamism embodied in this complex dialect. Wassini Al-Aradj evokes this in his novel, particularly when discussing its phonetic structure, which is a blend of Arabic, Spanish and French. This is what we recall from the novel in the words of one of its characters: 'They call me Fermachio. I don't know the origin of the word, but it means "the person who has lost his teeth"¹².' Through this example, we highlight the blurring of identities as languages merge with one another, to the point where the original source of the words can no longer be identified, eventually settling into the realm of dialects—a situation common to many phrases that were used, without any awareness of their origin, by all the multinational characters in the novel. A creative linguistic interplay that prompted Khoussi to wonder and say to Angelina: 'Where do you get all these misfortunes and these strange linguistic discoveries from?'¹³ . In this character, we can discern elements of multilingualism and the interaction between languages.

The heroine, Angelina, embodies a model of identity-based interaction; although of Spanish origin, she spoke for the people of Oran and adopted the Oranese dialect as a symbol of her belonging to Oran. Addressing Mohammed, she says: "What's up, mate? Did you think I was an Italian from Bakri? Hahaha, I'm a

proper Oranese – sharp-tongued and cheeky. And on top of that, I've got a mind of my own.”¹⁴

A discourse that alludes to the adoption of what she regarded as an ingrained trait in the nature of the people of Oran; and this is nothing but evidence of the fusion of nationalities and the dissolution of borders to such an extent that they identify themselves with the very heart of Oran in her words: “This is so I can show you that I am Rani, daughter of Al-Kamil.”¹⁵ The colloquial dialect used in the novel thus serves as a means of revealing the multiple identities that have passed through Al-Jarair and taken root there, without reference to the relationships that bound all these opposing parties together at this stage of the investigation.

2 -The Language of the Matador and the Conflict of Identities:

Multilingualism in the novel embodies a polyphonic structure that aligns with the concept of identity, which encompasses ‘everything that defines and distinguishes the self, and which essentially signifies uniqueness; It is the essential, overarching characteristic of a group’s culture; identity is not a ready-made, definitive system, but rather a project open to the future—that is, a project intertwined with reality and history—and therefore its function is to protect the individual and collective self from factors leading to assimilation.”¹⁶

On the other hand, as postcolonial studies have argued, these studies have provided the legitimacy to explore the issue of the Other’s hegemony—an Other that has long sought to obliterate the identity of the self through the subjugation of marginalised nationalities united within a territory defined by a single set of geographical features.” For conflict, tension, fragmentation and cultural difference (not cultural pluralism) fragment identity and render it a complex interplay of intersections and negotiations between spatial domains, historical timeframes and multiple positions of the self.”¹⁷

Having referred in the first section of this paper to this coexistence of identities, we find in the novel another facet of this pluralism, behind which lie the characteristics of national conflict. The novel’s characters are open to identities that are pulled in different directions by ebb and flow, through the conflict embodied in the relationship between the self and the other; by ‘the other’ we mean everything that is other than the self, everything that lies outside the scope of the self and transcends its boundaries to what lies beyond it, whether an individual, a category or a group; for epistemological reality guides us to recognise that everything outside the individual self is the ‘other’ in relation to that self, and everything outside the intellectual or ideological group is the ‘other’ in relation to that group. Discourse on the ‘other’ leads us to what is termed ‘the other/us’.¹⁸ A dichotomy governed at times by the dialectic of domination/submission, and at other times by that of domination/resistance.

In postcolonial discourse, the term ‘the Other’ refers to “anyone distinct from the self; the existence of others is essential to defining what is ‘normal’ and

determining one's position in the world. The colonised self is characterised as the 'Other' through colonial discourses in order to cement the separation between coloniser and colonised and to affirm the nature and primacy of colonial culture and a holistic worldview."¹⁹ Through the language of the matador—which formed the bedrock of the narrative that the novelist primarily employed to express the diversity of identities that revealed a conflict embodied by the bullring in Oran ²⁰ — his portrayal of the interplay between cultures and identities was veiled behind the concept of 'the sport of la tourmachi, which was part of Oran's culture', as the matador represents the hero who came to be beloved by all cultures, saying: " 'I have spent my entire life travelling and striving to raise the profile of this great city, which has forged all nationalities into a single, diverse culture.'²¹ .

The term 'matador' refers to a bullfighter, who is represented in the novel by the character of José. It is worth noting that the matador (José) was the reason why fans of the sport gathered for a discussion about its extreme cruelty, given that the contest is unequal because the bull does not enter the ring at full strength; this is evident in the author's words, spoken through Angelina: ' 'I'm on Nafour's side, of course, because he's the victim in this unjust situation. Why do you bring in a bull only to kill him in secret before his public execution? Then you pierce his back repeatedly before presenting him as easy prey to the matador.'²² This passage reveals the criminal and inhumane nature of the treatment meted out to the bull before it is led into the bullring – a nature that exposes to us the pattern of colonial domination, which engaged in a far from equal battle against the rebels and fedayeen in Algeria.

The novelist raises the issue of the sport of Laturmache being used as a cover under which a more fundamental cause is being promoted, namely support for the Algerian revolution; A group of young people, like him, were seizing the opportunity to call for the continuation of this form of wrestling as a symbol of preserving the collective identity of the people of Oran, in order to promote their stance in support of rallying around the revolution. The novelist says: "Young people are distributing, almost secretly, public leaflets defending the idea of continuing the sport of bullfighting; and alongside these, they are distributing another document—depending on the individuals—calling for an end to the senseless killing of Arab citizens and racism against other nationalities, under the title 'We Are Not Lost Snails'²³." Thus, behind this sport lies a discourse that reveals the underlying pattern the novelist sought to convey by representing it through the sport of Latormachi, which could be considered a mass sport at the time, offering a contrasting image of the face of the liberation revolution, which the novelist chose to portray through the marginalised 'other'—whose presence was not recorded in official history and who remained sidelined under the label of 'absent history'.

The novel's characters raise several issues concerning identity; these take the form of dialogues that ebb and flow, marked by a kind of conflict stemming primarily from differences in cultural, civilisational and religious affiliations, The novel

attempts to chart the recurring relationships between the successive waves of immigrants who have come to Algeria and settled there, thereby highlighting the legitimacy of the author's portrayal of these dialogues through the sport of Lattormachi. If we consider the wrestling ring to be the homeland, and the bull to be the oppressed Algerian people, and the matador is the coloniser, then the minority groups—who find themselves caught between multiple allegiances—necessarily emerge as the audience for this conflict. Their views differ and their allegiances are divided: some sympathise with the suffering endured by the bull, whilst others believe in supporting the matador who controls the course of the game. The cause of the Algerian revolution is thus called into question amidst this diversity and division of opinion, revealing to us the dialectic of domination and subjugation that unfolds throughout the narrative and its events.

The underlying pattern of the Algerian Revolution's presence in the body of the novel **The Gypsies Love Too** is revealed through several dialogues within discussions centred on the legitimacy of the sport of **la tauromaquia** (bullfighting), particularly as it relates to the positions of the novel's heroine, who serves as the most important witness chronicling the attitudes of the Spanish during the liberation revolution, as Angelina's stance is derived from two fundamental sources. The first perhaps reflects a historical awareness of Romani heritage and the marginalisation and injustice they have endured over the ages; this is clearly evident in her statement: " 'How can a Romani woman like me be expected to regard someone defending their own land as a terrorist? And to remain silent about the crimes of the Vichy government, which, from the beginning of 1940, drove the Romani people—including some of my own family—towards the hell of the internment camps at Arc-lès-Sour-Mer and Les Parcarès, in the Eastern Pyrenees?' Before they rounded up the Gypsies in 1942, in Les Ayelles, in the Bouches-du-Rhône region, can you imagine twenty thousand people gassed to death on the night of 31 July 1944 alone? "Of those who were deported to Auschwitz, before the number swelled to 600,000 and perhaps more"²⁴, in addition to a reference drawn from the stance of her father, who had previously supported the revolution, particularly as he supplied the rebels with weapons through his smuggling activities, which are a way of life for the Roma.

In one of her conversations with the matador, Angelina says: "Who is the oppressor, José? ... Is it the one who found himself in this place, enacting laws on land that did not belong to him alone? Or is it the landowner from whom he was expelled? Who is the bull here? And who is the matador?"²⁵ . Angelina questions José about the issue of the land's identity and the problem of ownership rights, whilst acknowledging that the Spanish Gypsies never possessed permanent land, yet we find her championing the indigenous landowners, particularly in the face of what she perceives as the coloniser's injustice and tyranny, and she continues to defend what might be considered the novelist's underlying cause behind the frame story centred on bullfighting: ²⁶"She also says: ' 'Why doesn't the matador die too? All the simple folk and all the marginalised are like that bull whose death is decreed, no

matter how bold his defence or how brave he is.' It goes so far that Angelina challenges the prevailing view among most minority groups, who regarded the rebels during the liberation revolution as terrorist groups. Angelina says: "Define for me who the terrorist is: the one who kills thousands of people every day with poison gas, aeroplanes and tanks, or the one who defends their most basic right to live?"²⁷ It is also a statement from the marginalised about what Algeria was going through under colonial rule, a statement that reflects the depth of sympathy for the cause of liberation—a cause embraced only by those who believe in the people's right to reclaim their oppressed land and to stop the bloodshed of its people.

Whilst Angelina defends her cause, we find that José is taking the opposite stance and identifies as French, justifying this with his identity document. He says: "Enough of this mockery of me. My Andalusian ancestors run through my veins, but I'm not caught up in a war of identities. I don't have just one nationality; I'm French, and that's that. I grew up here and I'll die here."²⁸

osé continues to express his embrace of French identity, as in his statement: "Yes, I was born in Oran and grew up there. Oran is not Spanish; it is French through and through. Perhaps it was in the past, but that past cannot live on forever. Rotting bones cannot steer a new world,"²⁹

This statement reflects the profound impact of the other side's media disinformation campaign, which has harnessed every available means to take centre stage, a legitimacy derived from the quasi-privileges with which it attracted settlers who had settled in Algeria in earlier eras preceding the period of French colonialism; this is the group referred to as 'second-class French' in the novel.

Angelina then refutes his view and casts doubt on what he believes to be correct when she says: "And are you, in their eyes, any more than a Karakol carrying his house and belongings on his back? You were here before them and in their time; did that allow you to become citizens like the rest? No, my love, a Karakol remains a Karakol, even if he wears the finest clothes that adorn the body of a matador." ³⁰ A scene he recalled from one of his encounters with the Frenchman, who had looked at him with contempt when he singled him out by describing him as a 'karakol' and deemed him to be outside the French fold.

The novelist evokes the character of Ahmed Zabana, one of the most important symbols of the liberation revolution, who was a friend of El Matador (Jose), whom we have previously noted as embracing a French identity and viewing the guerrilla operations carried out by the revolutionaries as criminal acts, A friendship that unravels due to differing political orientations and a clash of identities: how could one of the revolution's most prominent figures have a clearly defined relationship with someone we regard as an outsider in relation to what the Algerians were going through?

Among the terms included in the matador's lexicon is 'corrida', which occupies a significant place in the author's argument and which we might use to represent the

homeland as the arena in which the conflict between the matador and the bull takes place, thus serving as a metaphor for the long-standing conflict between the coloniser and the colonised. Mohammed says: "There is another 'corrida' today, in which human flesh is thrown to stray dogs and wolves; just yesterday, the security forces killed more than ten people, demolished their homes and displaced their families."³¹

A passage describing the intensity of the conflict during the revolution through its account of the various forms of torture endured by the Algerian people.

The characters in the novel are therefore diverse, and their positions conflict depending on their affiliations, cultural backgrounds and upbringings, and the languages and dialects here served as a means of reflecting this diversity, with each language conveying the characteristics of a particular civilisation and distinguishing it from the rest. We note that French identity was dominant during this period, as it represented the identity of the powerful who sought to eradicate the identities of others and silence their voices. However, we lift the veil on a pattern of resistance, particularly towards the end of the novel, where the matador met his death despite the unequal balance of power between him and the bull.

Conclusion:

- From our analysis of the blog, we conclude that Wassini Al-aradj employed multilingualism and wrote a polyphonic narrative with the aim of restoring Algeria's complex and inclusive identity.
- The multilingualism in the novel **The Gypsies Love Too** reflects the pattern of coexistence that existed at a certain stage in Algerian history and contributed to the formation of an inclusive identity which, for periods of time, was obscured by overarching issues and the dialectic of conflict between the self and the other.
- The multiplicity of voices in the novel served as a means of conveying the dynamics of conflict and coexistence that existed between conflicting identities in Algeria before they settled under the banner of Darija, which came to act as a cradle of diversity and linguistic pluralism amongst all parties: Arabic, Spanish and French.
- Wasini al-Aradj's novel is a counter-narrative in which the author endeavours to convey patterns that would restore to Algeria a part of its erased history, which is an integral part of Algeria's authenticity and its inviolable identity—were it not for the regimes that have long worked to silence the voices of minorities who have not been able to stand firm against the dominant other.
- Wassini Al-Aradj breaks one of the taboos surrounding marginalised history; we might say that he subverts the centre through the multiplicity of voices the novelist has granted to the characters in his creative narrative, as well as by demonstrating the presence and agency of the Roma in the liberation revolution, thereby making his narrative a parallel to the official historical official historical narrative .

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