



***Exile and memory dominance in Malika Mokèddem's writings
-My men, forbidden, rebellious novels as a model***

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Abstract

Exile in its reference formed an obsession that disturbs man's sleeping, surrounds him and disturbs his existence and his resignation to his reality. It carries with it a form of permanent exclusion and rejection that continues to haunt the exiled and stalk him in his dissolution and his travels. It generates a phobia of fear, anxiety, confusion and the inability to reconcile neither with oneself nor with the past. This article entitled " Exile and Memory Dominance in Malika Mokèddem's Writings " attempts to extrapolate the pain of exile and wounds of memory in the writings of Malika Mokèddem and by answering a fundamental question: How was Malika Mokèddem able to transmit the pain of the exiled and express the wounds of memory dominance in her narrative writings?

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1. Introduction

Exile, in its context, is a haunting obsession that plagues humankind, besieging and disrupting its existence and resignation to reality. It requires memory to extract its essence. Most Arabic dictionaries agree on the root of the word "exile," meaning exile, which denotes expulsion, banishment¹, exclusion, and disappearance.

As for foreign dictionaries, the word "exile" refers to an absolute departure. An exile is someone who is forced to leave his town for a long period of time, as punishment for him². So every "exile" includes alienation and estrangement in some form.

Exile is ultimately a spatial (forced) alienation from one's homeland. Exile is "forced residence in another country³ due to oppression, persecution, or the absence of freedoms in general." ⁴Hence, it represents a refuge for rebuilding oneself after the tremors and wear and tear that have occurred on the psychological and social levels.

Exile, then, is a estrangement from one's homeland, a rejection, a denial of familiarity, and a temporary place located between two spaces: one of them a past within the homeland, and the other a present looking to the future outside of it.

This article, "The Pain of Exile and the Dominance of Memory in Malika Mokadem's Writings," attempts to explore this issue by examining the pain of exile and the wounds of memory in Malika Mokadem's writings, and by answering a fundamental question: How was Malika Mokadem able to convey the pain of exile and express the dominance of the wounds of memory in her narrative writings?

2. Exile is a kind of exclusion

Exile, with its openness, fertile creative and cultural climate, and diverse genres,

represents an opportunity to express the conflicting thoughts that simmer in the soul and overwhelm the human being's existence in a terrifying world dominated by alienation. "Exile is one of the most depressing destinies."⁵ It carries within it a kind of permanent exclusion and rejection that continue to haunt the exile and lie in wait for him in his movements and travels. This creates within him a phobia of fear, anxiety, confusion, and an inability to reconcile with himself and the past. His days become nothing more than crowded and accelerating numbers in the chain of his chronological age, shrouded in bitterness. He lives an abnormal life, under the weight of obsessions that disturb his sleep.

There is always a relationship between the act of threatening exile and the reaction of terror that overwhelms the person concerned, fearing that he will become one of the lepers, which means that the person lives in a state of social and moral rejection⁶, where the exile always lives in a state of permanent in-betweenness (between/in-between).

It is a condition that leaves him - as Edward Said says - unable to integrate and assimilate into the new environment; he cannot rid himself of the consequences of his past environment. He lives in constant distress, because the semi-interferences and semi-separations hurt and upset him. He is obsessed with nostalgia and dreaming. In addition, he is emotional on the one hand, and a skilled imitator that no one knows about. On the other hand, he lives in a state of alienation.

Alienation is not an illness or a sudden condition, but rather an essential characteristic of human existence. It is a general phenomenon that can be observed in various systems, cultures, and societies. Alienation occurs when a person realizes that there is no place for him in the place where he lives, even if it is his homeland.

Then the pain of confession and the dominance of memory come to besiege and control the person.

Perhaps anyone who follows the path of contemporary Algerian narrative writing will acknowledge the extent of diversity and innovation that has permeated the entity of narrative writing, through imitating the present, recalling the past, and working on opposing dualities such as the conflict between the self and the other, the center and the margin, coalition and difference, etc

This is what we perceive in Malika Mokadem's writings, where psychological time has become a reflection of the pain that pervades her exile writings, through repercussions of obsession and depression and a presentation of the painful memories that haunt the character and besiege her in her exile.

3. *Exile and spaces of remembrance*

The theme of exile stirs the imagination of many writers, either because they experienced persecution and alienation, or because they felt discontent and a lack of freedom. They chose to leave their countries for a horizon of freedom and prosperity, and their choice was conscious and responsible.

The novel "Exile" is a novel of overwhelming longing for one's homeland, to express new ideas of openness and emancipation that are not available in one's homeland. It is an opportunity to free oneself from the burden of memory and its dominance through an independent vision, free from political, social, moral, and religious pressures.

The events and incidents of the narrative in Malika Mokadem's novels (My Men, The Forbidden, The Rebel) are distributed over a number of spaces that include the writer/narrator's childhood and youth, and thus they are distinguished by their realistic reference that surrounded the

suggestive narrative discourse with the characteristic of truthfulness and credibility, and established bonds of cohesion and closeness with the Algerian recipient in particular. Because he knows the places and spaces that the writer made the stage for the events.

The writer does not know the outcome of this until after the novel is finished, and he does not know its fate until the readers judge it. Where the writer, in his narrative writing, addresses new topics and contents that distance themselves from the traditional trend, from immersion in idealism, and from directing literature in a reformist direction.

Malika Mokadem's writings explode language, violate norms, and reflect the anxieties and threats of instability at the individual and societal levels, within a fragile system still burdened by the constraints of slavery and colonial dependency. They attempt to trace the dominance of memory by relying on the retrieval and recollection of the past.

Malika Mokadem* declares her rebellion in most of her writings. Rebellion, in essence, is a person's maladjustment to the laws of society and "the weakness of the ability to adapt socially as a result of the conflict and clash between values and the escape from the tension of maladjustment to the standards of the society in which he lives."⁷

Hence, the individual believes that rebellion is the most successful behavior that leads to self-realization first and psychological comfort second. In contrast, others, including sociologist Muhammad Radi Jaafar, believe that rebellion results from a person's feeling of alienation..

In her writings, Malika Mokadem reveals a rebellious, revolutionary personality, rejecting traditions and customs, flouting social and moral laws. "In order to satisfy

her marginal ego and eliminate her sense of inferiority, she established intimate relationships outside the institution of marriage during her university studies.”⁸

Then she moved to Paris to work as a doctor, but ended up as a lonely woman suffering from isolation, alienation, and longing for the desert, which she hated. She says: “I never imagined that I could one day return to this region, and yet I never left it completely. All I did was attach the desert and the intense sadness to my displaced body, and I remained fragmented between them.”⁹

She attributes sadness to the desert as an objective equivalent to it, this environment in which she was born and hated for its harsh nature and the isolation of its people. She realized this when she studied medicine in the city of Oran, which is bustling with life and noise. There is a huge difference between her desert environment and the new environment in which she merged and in which she found her freedom.

The writer/narrator's memory takes her back to childhood, where the struggle and awareness of difference begin. She says to herself: “I have not forgotten that the children of my country have a sick, depraved childhood. I have not forgotten their transparent voices that ring with

4. Autobiography between evasion and being

In Malika Mokadem's novels (*My Men*, *The Forbidden*, *The Rebel*), it is clearly evident that the writer/narrator is Malika Mokadem herself, given the information she reveals, and it appears that we are facing an adventurous type of literature, which is the literature of revelation or the literature of confession, which used to appear in Arabic literature timidly from time to time.

The courage required enabled the writer to confront society, but he boldly paved his

nothing but the most obscene things. I have not forgotten that, since early childhood, the opposite sex is only adorned in their desires as a vague ghost that threatens them.

“I haven't forgotten that they beat the dogs severely. I haven't forgotten that they are aggressive because they haven't learned to pet, even by looking at them. They haven't learned to love. Yes, I haven't forgotten, but memory is a defense against nothing.”¹⁰

Malika repeats the introduction of the phrase “I have not forgotten” six times in a row, in a sad and monotonous tone. Repetition is a certain psychological state in its user. Repetition may come to draw attention to importance, as if it is asking us to put more than one line under this repetition. It may come to increase the degree of color, pain, joy, danger, beauty, ugliness, and so on, among other things that defy enumeration.

Her fragile childhood crumbled, her imagination flashed before her eyes, and only now, as she experienced psychological and physical alienation, did she realize how a young child could be lost and deprived of his childhood. She was faced with a memory that was defenseless, for it was a memory penetrated and open in a collapsing way with the past.

way with the wave of liberation embraced by Arab women, influenced by their counterparts in the West.

Autobiography is described as an “elusive genre”, as it is sometimes a novel, a story, a picture, a description, a narrative, a history, or a memoir, and as noted, they all fall within the circle of narration.

The maturation of the art of autobiography as a literary genre took a long time, as it “was shaped by the laws of acculturation and cognitive coexistence that emerged in the Abbasid era, which was characterised by cultural fertility and openness on the

one hand, and was awash with major cultural events and transformations on the other hand.”

Shawqi Dayf believes that the images of personal translation among the Arabs are a new art, in which they imitated other foreign nations whose works they read and whose concepts they incorporated, especially Persian, Greek and Indian. However, in the modern era, they have become intertwined with literary genres to the point of identification.

Therefore, we cannot “overlook the creative formulas that were close, or almost, to autobiography in aim and purpose, form and vision; there are many literary genres that have the data of autobiography in its broad sense,

“So the literature of the council, the literature of travel, literary tales, stories, news, evening conversations, debates, and narrative narratives are full of artistic features that make them approach the genre of autobiography after they are treated artistically and critically,” but they were neglected because they did not fall within the interest of critical taste.

The time of the biography oscillates between three poles that interweave in an integrated narrative structure:

- A recalled past time, which is the time of events.
- An anxious and tense present time, which is the time of writing (a present time in which the recall takes place).
- An indeterminate time linked to the consciousness of the recipient/reader when performing the act of reading (which consists of two time periods: the time of reading, which is indeterminate and extends toward the future, and the time of writing, which is the present, continuous time).

The ego in the autobiographical novel manifests itself in three axes:

- The real authorial ego, with its realistic personality and characteristics.
- The narrator/narrator ego, who controls the narrative mechanism and directs it in an autonomous manner.
- The personal ego, whose biography is presented and defined within the novel, which sometimes assumes a similarity between the author and the character

5. The pain of exile and the revelation of the ego

The novelist stands before the threshold of the ego like a child who speaks his name when he speaks about himself, so he signs his confessions and groans, and feels his way through the associations of memory that besiege him with the weight of memories. And the ego, “when it takes the lead in speech, has a clamor of arrogance and conceit, and is a focus from which radiates an individualistic will and a desire for perfection, and there is a companion that accompanies it, which is isolation and solitude.”¹¹

In turn, it constitutes a field of research in which the reader delves, to discover the identity of the narrator based on linguistic facts (letters, structures, etc.) and non-linguistic facts (social incidents, circumstances of place and time, etc.).

The pain of exile prevails and the dominance of memory dominates the narrative structure in Malika Mokadem’s writings. Exile becomes a whip that lashes the writer/narrator whenever she gives free rein to her painful memory. This prevents her from emancipating herself and integrating into the new society in which she lives, which is evident in the novels: *My Men*, *The Forbidden*, and *The Rebel*.

Banishment and exile were the harshest and most severe punishment that could befall an individual, because he was well aware that his exile would return him to square one, would deprive him of the best years of his life, and would even prevent

him from living in the place he had grown accustomed to and was raised in. Only the taste of bitterness and the dominance of memory from which he could hardly find escape.

It is no exaggeration to say that the narrative writing in Malika Mokadem's novels translates the author's own autobiography, a biography characterized by emotional dispersion, psychological loss, and social oppression, fueled by the alienation and exile that ravage her being.

It is true that it is a voluntary, voluntary exile, chosen by the writer/narrator, but it is painful, how could it not be; as she lives alone without family, denying the desert and its customs and traditions, which is something that her father denounced, especially after she attacked Islam in her writings and openly declared her atheism. He refused to see her and eliminated her presence from his life, which is what her heroine "Sultana" translates in the novel "The Forbidden" (1993).

Who lived a harsh life full of disappointments in a male-dominated society that confiscates women's rights and monopolizes them; the writer/narrator says to her father: "I left you to learn freedom, the freedom to love men, for that freedom means shame, sin, and debauchery to you, my father. That life remains forbidden to you. I will write about it until the end."¹²

In this statement, the writer/narrator's boldness in confronting the other represented by her father is evident. This is a shocking statement in a conservative society like the Sahrawi society, in which the writer declares her love for men and the freedom to do so. She says: "There are many of us who have made truth, equality, freedom, love, and the choice of our sexual relationships our only religion. What better way than to continue challenging them by writing about men?"¹³

Malika Mokadem's words sound like a slogan for a feminist movement, due to her immersion in European culture and her willingness to immerse herself in it. However, after years of self-flagellation and shirking all restrictions, she finds herself alone, depressed, and besieged by exile, absence, and alienation from herself; She says: "The years sway, piling up in the present within whirlwinds of light... My heart almost trembles, my oasis is only a few kilometers away, a palace of sherbet surrounded by dunes and palm trees... Time breaks under the pressure of escape, estrangement, absence and exile."¹⁴

She acknowledges exile, absence, and estrangement, all themes of alienation and fragmentation, as she is overcome by nostalgia and besieged by memories in exile. She says, evoking the days of childhood and innocence:

"I get out of bed, leave the communal bed, escape from its murmurs, and with cautious steps, I reach my grandmother's bed in the kitchen. My stealthy entry into her deep sleep no longer frightens her at all. She opens her usual arms to me and murmurs a few words of encouragement."¹⁵

This evocation is contrasted with a heartbreaking and painful reality, covered in melancholy and loneliness, when the writer/narrator declares, "This morning I am alone in bed, alone this evening in our scent."¹⁶

In her narrative writings, Malika Mokadem relies on the mechanism of disclosure and confession of what burdens her self, which has become unable to bear the burden of alienation, exile, and the dominance of memory. Most of her books are close to the genre of autobiography, which the writer/narrator uses to present her personal experience to the recipient after she has reached the stage of maturity and has become a mass of anxiety from which she

cannot escape except through writing and self-questioning.

"This self-questioning exposes the main character/writer in the novel, MY MEN, to her own suffering from the marginalization and discrimination she was subjected to for no reason other than that taa that accompanies her, which she calls "Fadhila Al-Farouq," the taa of shame."¹⁷ Writing appears to Malika Mokadem as a vital and important element, like the air she breathes and the water she drinks.

The feeling of marginalization, inferiority, and conflict with the other - her father - deepens. This other whose cruelty and discrimination between her and her male siblings made her open her eyes. How much his screaming in her mother's face, "My sons and daughters," hurt her. And when she remembers that she wished for death one day, She says: "I once had the urge to die. I thought about your sadness over the death of my younger brother. I wondered how you would feel if I were to leave this world."¹⁸ She protests this double standard, but silently, day after day, the barrier of hatred, defiance, and revenge rises.

Memory dominates and increases the pace of melancholy that undermines her being, and returns her to the past. It is a return for the sake of writing in the present, and provoking memory as an important component in constructing the reality of the writer who wanders towards exile and alienation, so the longing for the desert intensifies. "The voice of the desert that sometimes comes monotonous, and at other times hallucinatory, and as is the case with the desert, I have nothing but words, and nothing but its studded memory in order to cross the abyss."¹⁹

The revelation and dominance of the writer/narrator's memory continues as she confuses the reader by describing and displaying her behavior that is contrary to customs, traditions, and religious teachings. She does not hesitate to eat

during Ramadan, nor to smoke in public, but rather does so with pleasure and triumph. She says, "I feel ecstatic because I no longer have to eat on the balcony of my dorm room during the month of Ramadan." , when food is a victory in some battles, I enjoy it in Algeria. I started smoking in the hospital, in the stands, and in restaurants out of shamelessness, so that everyone would know that nothing is forbidden to me. I would say, down with all restrictions, because finally consuming all freedoms is an unparalleled ecstasy."²⁰

The writer/narrator has found in writing an outlet to say whatever she wants without fear or shame. She declares that she has been an atheist since she turned fifteen, saying: "I have been an atheist since I turned fifteen. How comforting it is for me to finally be able to declare this and be open about it, as such a confession is fraught with danger in one of the least tolerant societies."²¹

She undermines all the norms of the religious system and sheds the cloak of her conservative family with the word "atheist." She did not stop at the threshold of confession, but rather went on to declare her romantic relationships and her liberation in an explicit language and in a blatant challenge to the social system that does not accept that this comes from a woman in particular.

did not stop at the threshold of confession, but went on to declare her romantic relationships and her liberation in an explicit language and in a blatant challenge to the social system that does not accept that this comes from a woman in particular. "The creator here is a woman who writes about herself, about her encounter with the other, about her lust and her deprivation of intercourse and her color. She is a woman who takes on the role of writing, so she speaks to the body and reveals its vocabulary, in a special language, which is a real language."²²

In a self-flagellation that heightens the degree of pain that undermines and violates her being, revealing the tyranny of the act of writing to reveal the pain of exile in her writings through self-disclosure and the psychological burdens it contains that have exhausted her self, she oscillates between submission to the pain that lurks around her and the memories that surround her and pass before her eyes in a boundless tape.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that:

- Malika Mokadem's writings tend, in part, toward confessional literature, a genre imported into our Arab culture by way of the West.
- The novel "Exile" is a novel of overwhelming longing for the homeland that inhabits the writer/narrator.
- Exile is a whip that lashes the writer/narrator, and the decision to speak out is a forced act created by an overwhelming desire to break through the familiar.
- Painful memory prevents emancipation and integration.
- The dominance of memory traps the writer/narrator in the dilemma of breaking away from the social system and pushes her to the point of no return.
- Using writing to forget the troubled present and recall the confusing past with its painful memories.
- Considering writing as a process of self-healing and healing the wounds of exile.

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