

Narrative Identity in Abdellah Kerroum's Novel "Gharnoua: Labyrinth of the Alley of Darkness"

Saib Khedidja*¹, Aissaoui Aissa ²

1 Higher School of Teachers Asia Jabbar, Constantine (Algeria), Laboratory of Educational, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Algeria saib.khedidja@ensc.dz

2 Higher School of Teachers Asia Jabbar, Constantine (Algeria), Laboratory of Educational, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Algeria aissaoui.aissa@ensc.dz

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Abstract: The enduring aspiration to maintain dominance persisted beyond the colonial era, morphing in its methods but not in its essence. Therefore the Algerian identity had to recalibrate and articulate a new self-understanding amid ongoing challenges like the need to craft a discourse asserts intellectual resistance and a distinct worldview. This study delves into how the Algerian intellectual engages in shaping a narrative of self-definition against the 'Other' within the framework of postcolonial thought, with a particular focus on contemporary Algerian literature. This exploration is anchored in Abdellah Kerroum's novel "Gharnoua: Labyrinth of the Alley of Darkness"

Keywords: Postcolonialism; self and the other; narrative identity; imaginary self; Gharnoua.

INTRODUCTION

Criticism is inextricably linked with creativity, shadowing it as a relentless companion that neither leads nor lags. An artist's deep understanding of the societal context and the particularities of each historical moment empowers them to tailor their creative expressions to meet these evolving demands.

In the whirlwind of progress spurred by the last two centuries of scientific and technological advancements, the reliance on philosophical thought and intellectual discourse has become crucial. These serve as pillars supporting conscious artistic endeavors within the physical realm. Historically, European nations imposed colonial rule over Asia and Africa, driven by both philosophical rationales and

economic ambitions, often enforced through conventional military strategies.

This colonial imposition was eventually countered by the colonized nations through similar conventional responses, leading to their liberation. However, the postcolonial era ushered in a new form of influence, allowing former colonial powers and emerging global leaders to exert a more subtle form of control, eschewing overt violence for a 'soft power' approach predominantly executed through media and diverse discursive practices. This new era shifted the focus from mere resource extraction to a broader cultural and intellectual conquest, necessitating a novel form of resistance.

This resistance is characterized by the intellectual and creative efforts of those striving to safeguard their cultural identities against the encroaching forces of globalization. Within this complex geopolitical tapestry, the Algerian intellectual is compelled to define and articulate their position regarding these contemporary challenges. Thus, the problem of this article was formulated as follows: How does the Algerian creator contribute to formulating the equation of self-formation in opposition to the other in postcolonial thought?

This research is pivotal as it demystifies the concept of narrative identity, a term coined by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. By analyzing a significant contemporary Algerian literary work, "Gharnoua: Labyrinth of the Alley of Darkness" by Abdellah Kerroum, which skillfully blends elements of imaginary self-construction, diaries, and travel literature, this study illuminates its capacity to address modern existential and ethical queries.

The selection of Kerroum's novel as the focal point underscores the potency of narrative in the ongoing civilizational discourse, thereby enhancing our comprehension of how literature can reflect and influence ethical and existential dynamics in society.

The study's goal is to accentuate the enduring civilizational conflicts and underscore the efficacy of discourse as a formidable tool and weapon in reclaiming and dignifying the self amidst prevalent power imbalances. This discourse not only challenges but also redefines the contours of identity and resistance in the modern era.

Previous scholarly work on this subject has been somewhat limited, predominantly addressed within doctoral research with related themes. For instance, "The Algerian Narrative between Systematics and Identity in the 1990s" by Thuraya Burjoo, supervised by Dr. Saleh Mafqood in 2019, and "The Problem of Otherness Identity in the Narrative Experience" by Mohamed Mubarak for Wassila Bekis, supervised by Dr. Sofiane Zdadka in 2022.

Additionally, pertinent articles include "Time in the Algerian Novel" by Rashid Sultani in 2015, and "Narrative Modernity in the Algerian Novel: Critique of References in the Crisis Novel" by Salima Khalil in 2017. Particularly relevant are "From Narrative Identity to Visual Identity: Transformations of Bamboo Stalk from Novel Narration to Television Drama" by Abdelhak Omar Belabed in 2018, and "Narrative Identity: The Concept and Its Manifestations" by Mohammed Jabouri in 2021, which, while more precise, predominantly focused on theoretical aspects.

What sets this study apart is its practical application of Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity concept to a distinct literary work, providing a fresh perspective on how postcolonial discourse articulates the self. This investigation not only builds on but also diverges from previous studies by emphasizing the practical implications of narrative theories within specific literary contexts.

An objective approach to the text required the employment of analytical methods such as semiotic analysis and deconstructive reading. These methodologies enable a deeper penetration into the text's layers, unveiling its complex interplay of themes and structures.

Through these lenses, the study explores the nuanced ways in which Kerroum's novel engages with and reflects upon the themes of identity and alterity, thereby contributing a nuanced layer to the discourse on postcolonial identity construction.

1. The presence of the self in postcolonial discourse:

The precise selection of terms such as "the Self" and "Postcolonialism" rather than "the Ego" and "Post-imperialism" necessitates elucidation before advancing our discussion. The term "the Self," as utilized in this context, resonates with the conceptual framework articulated by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-

2005) in his seminal work "Oneself as Another." Here, "Self" is construed more expansively than mere pronouns such as "he," "she," or "it."

"In philosophical dialogues, the frequent articulation "he himself," applicable across all forms of verbal expression, be it the speaker, listener, or absent, underlines the term's broad applicability. Such linguistic conventions allow us to discuss "the Self" in conjunction with transformed pronoun forms, thereby elevating it beyond the Cartesian premise of "I think, therefore I am" to a proactive, cognizant entity." (PAUL, 2005 , p. 69,70)

This Self, enriched by the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger under the umbrella of phenomenology, transcends mere cognition to engage actively with self-awareness and relational dynamics. This philosophical enhancement posits the Self not just as an entity aware of its existence but as one deeply interconnected with others, drawing extensively from humanistic disciplines during its formation.

In addressing the choice of "Postcolonialism" over "Post-imperialism," it is imperative to align with Bill Ashcroft's analysis in "The Empire Writes Back." Ashcroft delineates "post-imperialism" as a term encompassing the era subsequent to imperial withdrawal, covering both the colonial and post-independence periods.

Conversely, "postcolonialism" extends beyond, encapsulating the enduring cultural impacts instigated at the inception of colonization and persisting into the contemporary epoch. This definition highlights the term's relevance to the enduring discourse of colonial influence, acknowledging the continuum of imperial engagement that transitions from overt armed conflict to more nuanced intellectual and cultural dominations.

Therefore, " "postcolonialism" aptly describes not just a historical period but also a dynamic field of cross-cultural criticism that probes the complexities of colonial legacies and their pervasive impacts on present intercultural relations " (BILL ET AL., 2006, p. 16). This reiterates that the cessation of traditional colonial practices, marked by armed aggression and significant human tolls, does not signify the end

of imperial dominance; rather, it transforms the means of influence, with potentially deeper cultural and intellectual repercussions.

To elucidate further, we begin by exploring two pivotal phases: the principle of dependency and what Ibn Khaldun terms as "the vanquished eager to imitate the victor." These concepts have profoundly shaped the portrayal of the East, particularly during its periods of decline and notably throughout the colonial era. This portrayal, solidified by Orientalist thought, faced significant challenges as the dynamics between the self and the other evolved, a transformation akin to what Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel describes in his master-slave dialectic (1770-1831). This dialectic played out as the Arab self persistently resisted the colonial other, striving to break free from the shackles of armed colonization across the Arab East and Maghreb, including Algeria. This resistance culminated when the "slave" recognized his intrinsic value and capabilities, ultimately rejecting the master's ideology and asserting his independence.

Postcolonial philosophy prioritizes the examination of discourse as a distinctly human product, integral to understanding the psyche and society of each historical epoch. Communication between diverse groups predominantly transpires through language, which, according to Roman Jakobson, serves a crucial communicative (or attentional) function. Thus, analysing and interpreting discourse becomes a vital tool for comprehending the comprehensive experiences that the self accrues over time and its capability to articulate these experiences. This process echoes Socrates' adage, "Speak so that I may see you"; true comprehension of the self or the other is contingent upon grasping the prevailing philosophical underpinnings and identity-forming discourses of the time.

In the realm of postcolonial literary studies, such an approach can "reveal distinctive qualities within Arab literature and prompt a revaluation of its broader implications" (ABDELFATTAH AHMED, 2021, p. 89). It is essential to recognize these developments as part of a broader process whereby the creative Arab discourse is continually redefined and reproduced. Frantz Fanon 1925-1961, a preeminent thinker and philosopher, extensively documented this transition in works such as *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon dissected the colonized individual's desire to emulate

the colonizer, to the extent that fluency in French was not merely a linguistic skill but a marker of cultural proximity and merit. This mindset has evolved significantly post-liberation; the discourse of the formerly colonized now reflects the philosophies of their liberators, encapsulating their aspirations and progressively reshaping their self-perception and, subsequently, their perception of those who were once their oppressors.

The awareness nurtured by the Algerian mujahideen has matured, enriched by scholarly investigations at each pivotal moment, which have articulated critical issues foundational to the philosophy of identity construction. This process has facilitated the development of additional layers in the evolving consciousness, allowing postcolonial discourse in Algeria to shape a self-identity distinct from the colonial 'Other.' This evolution resonates like Harold Bloom's (1930-2019) observations on the poetic influences borne from the relationship between the Western center and the Eastern periphery during this period. Bloom's commentary, while broadly applicable, but can be projected the binary conflict in Algeria between the newly independent self and the colonial other. Here, the periphery's enhancement is such that influence by the other shifts from a perceived flaw to a mark of distinction.

Being influenced, as Bloom suggests, “ does not mean making the influenced less authentic, but sometimes contributes to making it more distinctive, even if not necessarily of a higher level. ” (**HAROLD, 2019, p. 20**) This change is part and parcel of the human condition, a theme echoed by philosophers like Heraclitus, who famously stated, “ No man ever steps in the same river twice.” (**HERACLITUS, n.d.**) In this metaphor, history is akin to a continuously flowing river, every moment and every context is unique, even if one attempts to recreate it precisely.

The nuances of memory play a significant role in shaping the post-independence Algerian discourse. While there might appear to be common ground between the conflicting parties, both possessing memory archives that reverberate beyond independence, the nature and implications of these memories vary dramatically. “ For the French, memory serves a didactic purpose, subtly perpetuating a post-independence narrative about Islam, Arabs, and Berbers, despite broadly negative views of the colonial endeavor. ” (**PATRICIA, 2022,**

p. 309). Conversely, in independent Algeria, this collective memory evokes contentious histories that many deem necessary to confront, yet difficult to reconcile or erase. The divergent reactions of these groups, ranging from those who seek to entrench divisions to those striving to preserve their identity, underscore the complexities involved in transitioning from a colonial to a postcolonial state.

This transition is not merely about gaining freedom but involves an intricate redefinition of identity to see how well the self, with all its diverse attributes, fits within its local culture or in relation to the global 'Other.' " The depth of the identity crisis often reflects on the dynamics of knowledge production that define self-awareness and self-perception, emphasizing an awareness that must be understood as both independent of and interconnected with its broader context. " (GABER, 2010, p. 366). Dr. Jaber Asfour's perspective highlights the profound interconnection between identity crises and the intellectual products of a culture. He argues that before engaging in any confrontation with 'the other,' it is imperative to assess and ensure the self's readiness for such interactions. "Instead of developing and revolutionizing knowledge production tools to foster progress and self-creation, there is a tendency to shift focus from internal deficiencies to external adversaries, attributing blame for lack of advancements to external entities. This approach, according to Dr. Asfour, often results in a pursuit of acquiring what the foreign 'other' has, rather than cultivating indigenous capabilities." (GABER, 2010, p. 367)

Dr. Nasser Al-Din Saidouni describes this as a "counter-revolution," a phenomenon that generates internal disruptions, distracting the self from its developmental goals and maintaining the status quo for perceived safety. (NASSER AL-DIN, 2021, p. 170) This counter-revolutionary mindset not only paralleled the armed resistance against French colonialism but " continues as long as such a defensive stance remains prevalent. As scholars delve into the cultural dynamics of independent Algeria, they encounter the necessity to understand the motivations behind and the impacts of this counter-revolution." (NASSER AL-DIN, 2021, p. 172)

From this discussion, it is evident that the theme of self is a potent tool of intellectual and cultural resistance within the discourse of

postcolonial Algeria, especially evident in contemporary scholarly and literary efforts.

2. Narrative identity according to Paul Ricoeur:

In the realm of modern critical and cultural studies, the concept of identity and its inherent conflicts, both internal and with the 'other', stand as central themes. Philosophers have diverged in their approaches to these conflicts based on their interpretations of identity's components and the nature of these conflicts themselves. Edward Said, for instance, dedicated his efforts to unveiling the falseness inherent in Orientalist narratives, while Hassan Hanafi extended this critique by developing the concept of Occidentalism, which positions the Western 'other' as a subject ripe for analysis from an Eastern perspective, placing the Easterner in the role of the analysing scholar. In contrast, French philosopher Paul Ricoeur offered a nuanced view on the discourse of the self that synthesizes various philosophical strands. After translating Edmund Husserl's "Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology" between 1950 and 1985, Ricoeur's engagement with Cartesian cogito and phenomenology, alongside his hermeneutic philosophy, (FETHI, 2013, p. 154) led him to profound insights into the philosophy of history, time, and narrative. He notably proclaimed a distinct separation between historical narration and fictional storytelling, attributing significant importance to the role of time, which he argued plays differing roles in historical and narrative contexts.

Ricoeur's exploration of identity types is extensive, positioning narrative identity as distinct from other forms by grounding it in the concept of time. This temporal foundation allows for a unique relational framework within which various identity types configure themselves. To fully grasp Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, an understanding of these other identity forms is essential, as it highlights the unique position narrative identity occupies within his broader philosophical inquiries. This aspect of his work represents a crucial segment of his extensive research into how narratives serve as projections of the real world, with narrative identity being a pivotal focus:

2.1 Personal identity:

Paul Ricoeur delves deeply into the concept of personal identity, positioning it as intrinsically linked to the subject of a narrative. He posits that “ the person according to Ricoeur enjoys a dynamic identity system characterized by the narrative; thus, the narrative's identity is what forges personal identity ” (JANAN, 2014, p. 106). In essence, the overarching theme of a narrative initially helps us form a preliminary understanding of an identity, for instance, in detective stories, a character donned in blue attire wielding a pistol is typically not the antagonist but rather a police officer. However, a deeper comprehension of this identity unfolds only as we explore its more nuanced aspects:

2.1.1 The identity of sameness :

“ (in Latin *idem*, in English *sameness*, and in German *Gleichheit*) ” (PAUL, 2005, p. 253) which is the character trait or impression that remains fixed about it, and to define it more, it divides it into two types:

2.1.1.1 Numerical identity:

“This pertains to the psychological life as an emotional state that encompasses a series of consecutive and changing situations because in continuity, we are not facing static objects but changing ones. The flow of continuity is uninterrupted, not accepting breaks or cuts, and there are no links upon it between moments that the mind can perceive”. (JANAN, 2014, p. 107) Returning to the previous example of the police officer, the personal identity in the numerical sense is a characteristic of his personality that remains consistent with the events of the story, such as the policeman being naive or impulsive if the story is a comedic detective story, or quick-tempered or sharp-witted if it is a typical detective story.

2.1.1.2 “ Identity as continuity over time:

This is the opposite of diversity.” (JANAN, 2014, p. 108) It means that the chosen police officer has something that distinguishes him from other police officers. Just because all of them wear the same uniform does not mean they can be reduced to mere representatives of their uniform.

2.1.2 The self identity:

“(in Latin *ipse*, in English *selfhood*, and in German *Selbsttheit*)” (PAUL, 2005, p. 253) Selfhood represents a deeper and more personal

aspect of identity, distinct from mere sameness. It encompasses the conscious self, morally accountable for its choices. “ Since the act is personally his, he is morally responsible for it... For an act to be his, he must be aware of its consequences.” (JANAN, 2014, p. 108) Returning to our police officer example, his self-identity might be tested through scenarios such as facing a bribe. Here, his integrity or moral deviations are brought to the forefront. How steadfastly or errantly he responds to such temptations illustrates his self-identity, showcasing his capacity to navigate ethical dilemmas with full awareness of the implications. The self-identity does not negate but rather complements the identity of sameness, continuing the portrayal of the character as the police officer recognized by his blue uniform, firearm, and sharp intellect, yet also capable of ethically engaging in situations with profound personal consequences.

2.2 Narrative identity as another type:

Paul Ricoeur places significant emphasis on narrative as a means of constructing identity over time, encapsulating it as “the point where several elements intersect: narrative and time/history and imagination/self-identity and identity of sameness. Narrative identity comprises all that one garners through the narrative's mediating function. It evolves through the storytelling practices inherent within each culture, reflecting its unique styles and methods. Moreover, every historical group anchors its collective identity in foundational events, depicted and perpetuated through their narratives.” (JANAN, 2014, p. 111)

Taking the example of the police officer with predefined psychological and moral attributes (identity of sameness + self-identity), his character is not static but dynamically shaped through the plot. As he navigates through various experiences, his responses and actions evolve, like killing a criminal without mercy and subsequently grappling with regret over his impulsiveness. By the story's end, the narrative illustrates the flaws in such a human model, intelligent yet hasty. This portrayal is not a universal representation of all police officers but varies across narratives, shaped by the cultural, legal, and systemic contexts of the society in question.

Thus, the narrative acts as both a reflection of these character models and a recognition of their existence in reality, offering insights that enhance our real-world interactions. Ricoeur argues that narratives

fundamentally shape existence, marking one of his core philosophical assertions.

3. Practical application to Abdellah Kerroum's novel: Gharnoua:

Approaching Abdellah Kerroum's "Gharnoua" necessitates a flexible methodology that acknowledges the novel's complex exploration of identity within a postcolonial context. The novel does not conform to a single interpretive approach, as it explores a type of identity, narrative identity, that is fluid and varies from text to text. The novel's multifaceted identity exploration is best approached through a semiotic analysis of the title and key symbols, followed by a deconstructive reading of the text. This methodological blend helps unlock the deeper meanings and thematic concerns of the novel, particularly its commentary on identity formation in a postcolonial setting.

3.1 Reading the title:

The study of titles, or "Title science", has emerged as a distinct field within semiotics, pioneered by French critics such as Leo Hoek. This approach allows for an objective analysis with clear steps. In "Gharnoua," the title itself, a nominal sentence, offers profound insights. The primary title, "Gharnoua," serves as the subject, a proper noun signifying a dove, symbolizing peace or an elusive ideal.

The secondary title, "Labyrinth of the Alley of Darkness," functions as the predicate, enhancing the main title with complex layers, 'alley' and 'darkness' suggesting obscurity and complexity. This title structure hints at a narrative deeply embedded in the exploration of hidden truths and intricate socio-political realities.

The name "Gharnoua," initially representing the protagonist's pet dove, undergoes a profound semantic transformation throughout the narrative. Initially, it symbolizes a mere pet, but as the story progresses, Gharnoua evolves into a spiritual guide and a multi-layered symbol. This transformation includes becoming a bearer of the olive branch, a red emblem representing the sacrifices made at the Tadmamat plateau, and a white symbol of peace at the Santa Cruz Church in Oran. Moreover, Gharnoua assumes the role of carrying the poet's legacies back to his homeland. The name and its evolving symbolism are intricately linked to the "Alley of Darkness,"

representing the profound despair and injustice endured by the Algerian people during the colonial era. In this maze of despair, Gharnoua emerges as a guiding light leading the protagonist towards safety. This nuanced evolution underscores the title's role as not merely a label but a reductive element that encapsulates and communicates the text's core themes and ideas.

3.2 **Deconstructive reading of the novel "Gharnoua":**

Engaging with "Gharnoua" through a deconstructive reading, particularly utilizing Paul Ricoeur's framework of narrative identity, reveals layers of meaning that enhance our understanding of the text. Deconstruction focuses on unpacking the established narratives and reevaluating the meanings that seem apparent.

3.2.1 **Deconstruction of meaning and construction of meaning:**

In this process, we engage in what Jacques Derrida describes as the dual task of deconstruction and reconstruction, "which is pivotal for revealing and grappling with the concept of 'difference.' This approach challenges the central historical narratives around self, reason, and voice, paving the way for the construction of new boundaries of thought." (MUHAMMAD, 2022, p. 36)

In "Gharnoua," this manifests through the deconstruction of the perceived allure of Europe as the bearer of civilization and progress. Instead, the narrative reconstructs these notions to critique the French portrayal of civilization, which is contrasted starkly against acts of violence, theft, and exploitation. The character Hassani says: "Reggane has changed from its previous era when Sebaï visited ten years ago; it has now become a miniature Paris, according to those coming from there, with paved roads laid out, lights lit, and many vital facilities built... not for the love of our eyes, but for a need within de Gaulle and his government that will be fulfilled, and afterwards, they will destroy us." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 47) This statement highlights the superficial improvements made by the colonizers, which are ultimately self-serving and destructive to the indigenous populace. To thoroughly analyse European deceit and ensure the preservation of the logical sequence throughout this study, it is crucial to elucidate the methods of domination employed during the colonial period, juxtaposed against the contrasting tactics of subjugation, which involved either violence or intimidation. This discourse seamlessly

integrates the practical aspects previously outlined with the theoretical foundations.

The resilience and defiance of the self, despite enduring the brutal and infernal conditions of war, are poignantly illustrated. This analysis transitions into a discussion on the contemporary methods of domination that emerged in the postcolonial era, all of which are vividly depicted in the novel "Gharnoua". The colonizer's disregard for life, human, arboreal, or architectural, manifested most starkly in their execution of nuclear tests in the Algerian desert, aspiring to cement their status among the major global nuclear powers, tragically at the cost of innocent lives: "What crime did we commit, de Gaulle, for you to sow the seeds of poison in our lands?... The oasis, once vibrant, now a shadow of itself, erased from existence, sidelined from the stream of life even as wombs continue to yield deformed progeny. We find ourselves ensnared in an eternal corridor of darkness." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 120) This narrative backdrop sets the stage for the depiction of the enduring anguish experienced by the desert inhabitants, particularly around Reggane, and highlights their substantial contributions to the freedom struggle. This was achieved not only through their solidarity with the northern rebels, exemplified by their fundraising efforts, a task heroically undertaken by the novel's characters, Sebaï and later Ghiwani: "During a visit to my friend Sebaï's home, we engaged in a myriad of discussions,... Sebaï was of the view that by engaging in commerce, we could fortify our position on one front while bolstering the revolution on another" (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 120), but also through direct protests, which invariably exacted a heavy toll: "Before the execution of the explosion, news had already spread to the people of Taourirt and 'Azrefil.' They organized protests and lodged complaints at the first command post in the Targa region. However, these demonstrations were met with brutal retaliation by the French military authorities, who apprehended some of the dissenters and restrained them near the concrete base, their faces turned towards ground zero. They declared that any further protests would result in demonstrators being used as lab rats, a chilling threat that they enforced by bringing dissenters from various parts of the country to instill a profound sense of terror and fear among the populace." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 86)

The brutal tactics employed by the colonizer against these defenseless individuals eerily echoed medieval customs, where rulers would publicly display their dissenters in the town square as a dual-purpose spectacle, both punishing the perceived wrongdoers and broadcasting a stark warning to others to secure prolonged obedience. This historical phenomenon was a focal point of analysis for French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in his seminal work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault begins with an exposition on the prevalent methods of torture, proposing a thought-provoking juxtaposition, (and we wish to use him to witness a testimony from a native of France on the arbitrariness in the methods of inherited torture in an overseas society.) He describes a shift over the decades: “In a few decades, the tortured, mutilated, amputated body, symbolically branded on the face or shoulder, displayed alive or dead, theatrically presented, has disappeared. The body as a primary target of partial suppression has vanished.” (MICHEL, 1990, p. 51)

Foucault asserts that the aim was to subjugate the body in order to also suppress the spirit. Despite a reduction in these physical manifestations of control, the structures established to enforce compliance, prisons, hospitals, schools, still serve this underlying purpose. And torture must be mastered enriched by diverse philosophical references, notably Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, underpins the superior attitude with which the colonizers regarded the colonized, treating them as mere chattel.

This dynamic is vividly portrayed in the novel where the protagonist recalls being forcibly conscripted by France into a conflict utterly alien to him: “And I will never forget, nor tire from repeating the greatest conversation of my life, when they plucked me from among the sounds of strings and tossed me into the Indochina war as a conscript in the French army.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 60)

Additionally, the narrative incorporates insights from Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* on the nature of despotic rulers, as acknowledged by Jean-Paul Sartre in his preface to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*: “Our Machiavellian tactics have lost their grip on a world that has vigorously awakened and systematically unveiled our fabrications. ” (FRANTZ, 2014, p. 23) In this vein, the character Officer "David Johnson" exemplifies this despotic legacy by menacingly confronting Sebaï and Hassani: “In David Johnson’s

office, I witnessed his fury as he vowed retribution against our lineage, threatening to consign our bodies to the atomic abyss, his words imbued with an additional layer of animosity: 'If you survived the Vietnam war, your escape from death will not repeat.' The venomous grind of his teeth echoed like a serpent's hiss." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 56) This portrayal encapsulates the hubris and brutality that defined centuries of colonial oppression, framing the officer's revenge as a deeply ingrained yet irrational continuation of historical injustices.

The narrative in "Gharnoua" also introduces a nuanced depiction of 'the Other,' represented through characters like Bastian, Michel, and Nadine, who alongside the protagonist Hassani and his friend Sebaï, endure the catastrophic effects of colonial nuclear experiments. The passage highlights their suffering: "Medical tests confirmed Bastian's severe facial inflammation due to skin cancer, and Michel was diagnosed with stomach cancer, both conditions attributed to nuclear radiation exposure..." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 240) These afflictions stem from their unwitting involvement in a larger geopolitical agenda, illustrating the profound personal costs of such imperial endeavors.

The memoirs of French doctor Joseph de La Croix, encapsulated in the translated work "Diary of a Doctor in the Oases (1956-1962)" by Sebaï Wald Njoom, play a pivotal role in the story. They serve as a powerful testament to the impact of colonialism on the local communities. In these writings, Dr. de La Croix opts for transparency over complicity, his accounts offering a critical examination of the injustices inflicted upon a peaceful desert community. His reflections not only confess to the colonial crimes but also celebrate the cultural richness of the indigenous people: "These people are as sweet as the dates of their land, more peaceful than what our Lord Christ asked of his followers. Have you seen anywhere in the world people who dance with gunpowder, suffer for their play, yet never aggress others, including us, who came as invaders and occupied their land?" (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 36) This testimony underscores the stark contrast between the community's modest, traditional practices and the advanced but destructive technologies introduced by the colonizers, it highlights a fundamental disconnect in values and understanding.

But he describe Algerian society completely far from scientific and medical development, where people resort to treatment with ancient methods as the only solution, which facilitated the spread of infectious diseases. “ Why do you put these amulets on him? – To protect him from the evil eye and diseases. – Diseases? And why is he sick then? ... I examined the boy, visited her village, and discovered a disaster: lice-ridden children, lice women, and lice men” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 111) In contrast, there is self-awareness of the simple, naïve and peaceful philosophies and beliefs that have accumulated within it, “ ... Perhaps there is no one on earth who does not scream when run over except here in Tawat, where: a weak region subject to force. In every era, its people are as good as fruit, as peaceful as mud, and as calm as henna) one of the narrators reported” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 93)

but revolutionary awareness soon reached her, represented by the character of Sebaï, an awareness that chose an armed solution to the problem of colonialism in Algeria, thus confirming to the thought of Frans Fanon’s book (The wretched of the earth). A philosophy that Sartre agreed with, so he chose to write the introduction to this important book in the history of colonized peoples and newly liberated peoples, as Fanon tries to guide them on how to protect the gains they have eamed with their blood. This is what appeared clearly on the pages of creative people in the post-colonial era, where “monitoring the transformations in the Arab creative system, in addition to awareness of the emergence of literary genres as a result of the relationship between the margin and the center; where this relationship requires a fundamental transformation in the creative structure in the post-colonial era.. can reveal the ability of the Arab mind to practice dialogue, debate, and research about the self, with the center” (ABDELFATTAH AHMED, 2021, p. 84)

So, as a partial result of the presence of the self as a subject within the post-colonial discourse, it was mentioned in the novel under study through the demolition of the false image promoted by the colonial West as a disseminator of civilization to less civilized and developed peoples, and the construction of the true image through proven historical facts such as nuclear experiments in certain horrific places with the testimony of those who lived through the stage from the people of the region or from the rational French, and this demolition

and construction helped the self to appear and be formed as an equal to the 'Other' and to provoke an intellectual debate with him.

In "Gharnoua," the construction of **narrative identity** is intricately portrayed through the protagonist, **Hassani Ould Moulay Cherif**. At the outset, the novelist delineates Hassani's identity succinctly: "I am a son of these expansive deserts. I cherish the tranquillity and peace of its expanses. I am a person from the realms of Sufism. I have lived between a monk devoted to the Sadiqiyah path and Rumi indulging in wine in an Andalusian tavern, between a free Sherif in exile and a runaway slave in his homeland seeking his freedom." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 12) This introduction paints a rich portrait of a man deeply rooted in his cultural and spiritual heritage, yet open to the diverse influences that shape his worldview. Hassani's fluency in French, acquired through his interactions with Sebaï and Dr. De La Croix, alongside his profound connection to the harsh yet beautiful desert landscape, draws a parallel with the protagonist in Tayeb Salih's "Season of Migration to the North." This resemblance is particularly noted in the evocative descriptions of the desert and the complex interplay between the Arab self and the other, distinguishing between peaceful and hostile encounters. This dualistic identity enables Hassani to navigate and bridge the diverse worlds he inhabits, providing a deeper insight into his persona and the thematic currents of the novel. Moreover, the parallels with Tayeb Salih's novel extend to the interactions with women, as Mustafa Sa'eed's relationships end with the French women's suicides, a curse that also follows Hassani: "I love women to the point of extremism, wishing I could marry all the women in the world. Yet, I have not managed to secure even one in my country. Every time I courted a woman or came close, she would commit suicide, die, or vanish forever, turning my face into a harbinger of bad luck, feared and avoided with spitting, prayers, and invocations." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 12)

The curse was not only with the women of his oasis, but also accompanied him in his experience with Seraphia, the Jew with whom he immigrated to Spain, where the relationship ended in divorce and illness for both of them and resulted in a deformed son. The matter is nothing more than a mere indication of the turmoil in the relationship of the Eastern man in general and the Algerian man in particular with the 'Other' (the woman). Rather it goes beyond it in the novel

(Gharnoua) to an attempt to demolish the inherent perception of the marginalization of women by the Eastern male discourse, as one of the post-modernist perceptions, where “ the female presence stands as a stubborn legion that leans its weight on the dominant male discourse, which represented a decisive gender transition from describing women, as flawed souls or considering them socially despicable values compared to male” (MUHAMMAD, 2023, p. 68) the novelist tries to change him by turning it upside down, as he is an admirer who is loyal to women and they stay away from him, and his mother is the most sacred person in his life “Mother, my eyes, if I gave them to you, would not be worth the torment of a day waiting for me” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 39) and all points the similarity between the two novels reminds us of the saying of **intertextuality** in deconstruction.

This complex web of relations and experiences is further highlighted in Hassani's narrative, where despite all his sufferings, he transitions into an area of **interaction**: specifically, the protagonist's engagement with unfolding events and other characters, and his changing positions, which Paul Ricoeur defines as narrative identity, particularly derived from the collective history of the Algerian people.

Initially forced into conscription for the French war in Indochina, Hassani finds himself in an environment utterly foreign to him, leading to a profound transformation as noted when he tells his friend Ghiwani: “Yes, I learned things and lost things. I learned courage, gave up undue gentleness,... But I lost mercy, or rather fear; I became capable of crushing a fly, slaughtering a sheep, and perhaps killing any French soldier because I see him as a rapist of my land and honor.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 60) However, he later discovers, upon deciding to join the ranks of the National Liberation Front, that he is incapable of executing what he previously claimed; he cannot kill French soldiers, hesitating when one pleads for mercy by claiming he is his mother's only son.

This inner conflict illustrate self-identity Hassani's continuous and moral awareness, particularly in his ethical decision-making concerning acts of vengeance or reconciliation, he justified the contradiction between his desire to avenge his mother, who died due to nuclear radiation, and his fiancée "Al-Khadem" who committed suicide after being raped by a savage colonizer: That he could not

burden his sensitive artist's soul beyond its capacity, " But, reflections in the mirror of the self suggest that each soul has its own capacity to bear, especially for an artist as emotionally delicate as I am." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 119) Despite everyone's awareness of his art, these feelings and his reputation did not exempt him from being drafted a second time to endure his worst experiences at the nuclear site 'La Vie.' However, these prevented his death at ground zero, "We began to think about why the French officials decided not to use me and my friend Sebaï as experimental rats... until we realized with the help of Michel the chemist, especially after he learned about our case, that our survival from execution at ground zero was due to our fame in the French community." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 58) This experience provided him with significant awareness and insight into the perilous situation of the country and the diabolical colonial plans through his personal observations, " Unlike the Algerian workers, it didn't take me days to realize that we were executing the plan France had drawn up for conducting nuclear experiments in Reggane, here in the Hamoudia area," (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 50) and with Sebaï's help, " Sebaï handed me a document that had accidentally dropped from a French commander, ... he called it 'the document of crime with premeditation and surveillance " (ABDELLAH, 2023: 53), and with Bastian's assistance " he continued to expose what was happening to everyone he trusted that I met at the dugout base, telling me that he used to listen at night to Allery's declarations on French radio talking about his design to blow it up." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 86)

Hassani's preference for peace as a more noble message initially led him to the thresholds of ascetics and Sufis and then overflowed into his being, manifesting as dance and beautiful singing that took him to Europe. The pivotal moment in the evolution of this identity came when he decided to leave militant activity and turn to peaceful activism by raising awareness about the cause everywhere, "I had another opinion. I did my duty and managed to achieve what justice I could. I believe I have made one or more families cry, and therefore I saw that we should not all go in one direction, and we must move in different directions in activism. So, I saw no hope for me to stay here... I want to roam the earth in search of human truth, I want to migrate to God's vast land fighting for my country and exposing the evil." (ABDELLAH, 2023: 120)

In contrast, the narrative also explores the awareness of the unethical 'other,' embodied in the life-base officers who executed their crimes with premeditation and boasted to their superiors and the French media: "The criminal knew his explosion carried a poisonous fungus, yet he launched the explosive rocket and boasted to the world about directly overseeing it, cold-bloodedly documenting the moment." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 90)

This array of interactions, transformations, and the contrast between humane and inhumane actions vividly showcases the revolutionary consciousness that rapidly reached Hassani, but it embodied by the character Sebaï who held meetings in his home and shared the happiness of the Vietnamese upon gaining their independence: "I lived in Vietnam, saw with my own eyes their nation's joy at the blessing of independence, and we must engage in this path with the liberation army fighters against injustice, for independence." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 61) The narrative thus transcends a mere account of interactions between an Algerian man and others (women or colonizers) and ventures into a postmodern critique.

In Derridean deconstruction, **the deferral** of the signified from the signifier is the essence. The Hassani signifier was not fully understood at first glance; at each stage of his life, a specific aspect emerges that he tries to strengthen. Similarly, the doctor preferred a different narrative method, diaries, which formed a document of confession and condemnation of the French Other, as did Hassani's narrative, which is a testament to his experiences. Here lies the parallel and convergence between the two narrative tracks of the creative work, which the outer cover of the novel names "novel," although its carriages are composed of 'narratives of the self: "the self-imaginary spoken by the novelist initially attributing events to a fictional character representing him", which is the journalist Hanin Harma from Al-Waha Satellite Channel, hence it is not an autobiography but a self-imaginary as termed by Dr. Tunisian Salwa Saadawi. (SALWA, 2020) The same applies to the fictional character Hassani Ould Moulay Cherif, and the diaries of Dr. Joseph De La Croix, in addition to the travel literature through the changing narrative locations where Hassani moved from one place to another across the desert, reaching Oran then Spain and France.

In the narrative of "Gharnoua," we conceptualize the storyline as a train journey where two tracks run in parallel. The first track

represents the temporal line that encompasses both the plot and the formation of identity, both personal and narrative, reflecting their inherent coexistence. The second parallel track marks significant points, tracing the movement of the signifier (Hassani) and the evolution of what his signified becomes, embodying the concept of deferred meaning and the incompleteness of truth from a deconstructive perspective.

Initially, at the first narrative point, Hassani is introduced merely as a guest on a radio show, where the narrator briefly summarizes his life story. This presentation evolves at subsequent points; he is next seen embodying the identity of a peaceful individual reveling in the simplicity, clarity, and joy of desert life. Later, his identity becomes more conflicted as he is conscripted, fighting alongside France against those who never wronged him, expressing his turmoil: "I couldn't bear that terrible job, I got sick there and by God, it was a twist of fate that brought me back to you." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 40) The narrative trajectory concludes as these points coalesce, crafting a comprehensive identity of an Algerian shaped by harsh trials yet unchanged at his core, a metaphorical flower of the sands and deserts, cultivated by millennia of ethical values, possessing a noble spirit that opts for forgiveness over revenge, guided by the lucid wisdom of the desert that inherently knows to distinguish between the peaceful and the unjust.

3.2.2 Searching for contradictions in deconstructive thought:

In the framework of deconstructive philosophy, the search for contradictions is pivotal, challenging the traditional hierarchies established between binary opposites. This approach reframes the conventional understanding of these opposites, such as darkness and light, beauty and ugliness, revealing that these dichotomies often distort and prioritize one element over the other. In deconstructive thought, as espoused by Jacques Derrida, such superiority is dismantled, presenting both elements as two sides of the same coin, without favoring one. Consequently, beauty in this context is seen merely as a different expression of ugliness. (AHMED, n.d.)

This conceptualization aligns with the ethical considerations explored by Paul Ricoeur regarding self-identity, where the conscious self recognizes the ethical dimensions of its actions. This is a critical

aspect of the narrative in "Gharnoua," where postcolonial discourse often privileges the margin over the center. The novelist deconstructs the vaunted position that the Western center, epitomized by figures like De Gaulle, attempts to uphold.

De Gaulle's refusal to sign the international nuclear weapons treaty, driven by a covert desire to elevate France to the ranks of major nuclear powers despite global calls for disarmament, underscores this contradiction: "After America detonated nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, France, ignoring the Soviet Union's pleas to restrain the arms race, was determined to secure its place within the nuclear club. De Gaulle acted cunningly, evading any agreement with Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, and Eisenhower, the American president)." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 51) Attempting to showcase his superiority and power with a bomb three times stronger than those used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki "De Gaulle's megalomania led him to detonate a nuclear bomb with three times the destructive power of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, and what's more dangerous is that it remains active for twenty-four thousand years." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 75) Furthermore, his officer "Allery" was fully aware of the weapon's harm to humans, flora, and fauna, especially if bomb detonations coincided with certain weather conditions like high wind speeds, yet he preferred to expedite the detonation, "I didn't realize that the ominous day, which had poor weather conditions that didn't prevent 'Allery' from executing his plan, would mark my memory as ominously as an owl. That day 'Allery' relished as he saw the Earth as no more than an ant's head...with a control box next to him connected to the firing range, he disdainfully glanced at the world map on his right, then picked up the phone with his right hand to call the presidential palace in Paris,... : (Hello, hello, General 'Allery' from Ground Zero in Reggane, we have successfully conducted the second test under the code name 'White Gerbil,' congratulations), and he laughed a vile laugh." (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 85,86) He exaggeratedly enacted his plan by placing prisoners and animals at ground zero to witness the success of his experiment, thus committing premeditated crimes. "I returned home without 'Grenouille,' whom I missed, and without 'Tziga' who was placed as a test animal at ground zero and was crushed, and the bird 'Srand' was missed by the farmers as it disappeared, allowing small vermin, rodents, and reptiles to overrun

the farms and orchards, adding to their existing woes.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 80)

Therefore, the ethical issue also does not stand on the usual opposing ends, as Derrida would disapprove; giving preference to one over the other does not align with his philosophy. Good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness are all relative and lack absolute truth. The Western center is not entirely evil or ugly or wrong; there are good Westerners forced to perform duties and atone for their mistakes by explaining the plans to the indigenous people to caution them, as Michel did, or by providing medicine and monitoring epidemics, as Dr. Joseph De La Croix did, sharing the damage from the explosions with the locals. Everyone at the 'La Vie' base was exposed to various types of cancers.

On the other hand, the conclusion is just for the margin at the expense of the center through Algeria's independence. However, the self is not entirely coherent; there is a conflict on the religious level (Hassani's pessimism and mysticism, and student Khaloosh's discourse), on the militant level (unable to kill his enemy), and on the cultural level (ignorance, poverty, and prevalence of epidemics).

The hero representing the colonized margin wears some individual traits that formed his narrative identity, as mentioned earlier. He is a margin, yet his identity evolves towards improvement when he steadfastly adheres to a clear and constant reference, repeatedly echoing throughout the rest of the narrative “(God, Grenouille, Sheikh Sadiki)” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 195) despite ongoing attempts to erase his identity.

France's attempt to erase physical identity (genocide): “After hearing the tremendous explosion, people fell like flies.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 74) as the enemy struck at defenseless civilians. They also punished the imprisoned opponents by placing them at ground zero: “The problem was with people who were with us, dressed in red like us. Had it not been for fate and the circumstances, we could have been among them. Today, after hearing the explosion, we miss them. The faces of some of the imprisoned and revolutionary figures have disappeared from the base; ... I do not know how many there were. They wore turbans and Arab trousers. With these eyes, I saw humans in the form of dummies near ground zero. And where are they now?

They were crushed by the atom, forever... Crime... Crime... Crime' Bastian recounted.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 75,76) the physical elimination suffered by the inhabitants of the oases was not limited to mere death. There were severe physical disfigurements, affecting even those who had returned from the Indochina War: “The three returned healthy in body but impoverished in their pockets. Today, they have returned affluent with some money but much fatigue and pain. They came back disabled, missing parts of their bodies or senses; the least affected had a disfigured gait...”. (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 37)

These injuries also resulted from workplace accidents, such as those experienced by Hassani, who lost his sense of hearing in his right ear: “ I lost my hearing in the right ear while blasting rocks to lay the railway network in the wealth-rich areas of western Oran” (ABDELLAH, 2023: 59). Moreover, some were victims of nuclear bombs: “ But the most dangerous - in my view - was that black cloud, which rose and spread in the air... That fungal cloud will devastate everything, penetrating deep into the soil, into human acids, and into the sap of trees”.(ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 76)

Despite this, physical injuries, though painful, are less harrowing than the attempt by the colonizer to erase the personal identity of the desert dweller. When Hassani was conscripted for the second time, the intent was to erase his identity: “With my red card, which they gave me, I still keep it with these letters (S.N.P): meaning I am of unknown surname, which is truly an offensive term, an unknown lineage or close to it. My number is 2077, and I am attached to the Touat Annex (Annexe du Touat), within the Office of Reggane. Strangely, I am a French citizen, while original French citizens have surnames. My fate is large letters with dots between each letter (S.N.P). Michel de Fary, my colleague, explained it as (sans nom patronymique) meaning without surname, hinting that it is a harsh term in their context, suggesting that you are a street child.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 45)

The profound disparagement inflicted by the colonizer, who viewed the colonized as sub-human and unworthy of recognition, manifests as both a strategy to humiliate and a tactic to erode their self-perception. This psychological warfare is underscored by sociological studies and prophetic teachings that emphasize the importance of names in shaping one's self-identity and acceptance. As narrated in a hadith by Abu Darda, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the

significance of names in the context of divine judgment: " You will be called on the Day of Judgment by your names and the names of your fathers, so make good names" (ABO DAWOOD).

The colonizers' denial of the colonized's humanity extended beyond mere neglect to active degradation, treating them as mere subjects to be molded through coercive methods, a concept Michel Foucault described as being "subjected." This subjugation involved severe measures such as torture or forced conscription to break their spirit. Despite this, the colonized, represented by characters like Hassani, persisted in their resilience and patience, guided by their spiritual and cultural anchors (God, Gernoua, Sheikh Sadki). Despite the severe adversities, these ordeals served not to destroy but to forge the colonized into figures of resilience and peace. Enduring extreme pressures, Hassani transformed from a metaphorical piece of coal into a diamond, a symbol of his unyielding strength and purity of character. This transformation enabled him to embrace his role as a peacemaker, expressing his artistry unreservedly, whether in his travels across southern cities or in Oran. His eventual marriage and subsequent takeover of Siravia's café and restaurant in Granada further illustrate his growth and adaptability in commerce. However, the shadow of colonialism lingered, as Hassani continued to navigate the residual darkness that independence could not immediately dispel.

The Western center is contradictory when weighed on the moral scale. It advocates civilization and humanity, taking along doctors and veterinarians, and paving roads. Yet, it destroys everything and shows no mercy to animals, plants, or humans. Thus, the Hassani's abstention from revenge against it does not negate his forgiveness for its crimes. The final message that Hassani sent with his white pigeon (a dove companion of Ghernoua) was a message cursing fanaticism and injustice: " Cursed be you until the Day of Judgment," (**ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 249**) addressed to Allery and his henchmen, and to all those who thought and plotted the crime. As for the margin, it is not all backward. The term 'backward' in the context of scientific and technological progress does not imply backwardness on the moral scale. There are still some shortcomings that the self needs to improve upon. This is the message Hassani sent in the end with Ghernoua: " The droppings of birds, such as the flesh of birds and sparrows, are considered pure according to the majority of scholars, as Sheikh Al-

Kaoui taught me.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 249) This describes the treatment needed in avoiding those ignorant of religion, as no danger is greater than religious discourse. This discourse represents the counter-revolutionary threat referred to in the theoretical part, which hinders the progress of revolutions and the advancement of societies.

While patience during poverty or war is difficult, Hassani succeeded in overcoming both through the innate values preserved by his sound nature, which awaken whenever invoked. When faced with his ability to forgive the other, he received a response from his friend Michel, reminding him of the teachings of his religion, which led him to be convinced: “I clenched my face and shook my head twice: (How can I be a peacemaker? The enemy from among you has occupied my land, violated my honor, killed my mother, destroyed my barn, and poisoned my well). I almost reacted and said something shocking to Michel, but he stood up, embraced me warmly, and I forgot, due to the intensity of the embrace, the topic of discussion: (Peace be upon you, the banner of your religion, peace is the origin, and war is an exception... Farewell, my dear).” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 117)

However, patience becomes significantly harder when the ignorant dons the mantle of a religious scholar and imposes religious limits on those around him. This is another form of injustice that is more severe and painful because it comes from within, such as the student Kalouche who wronged Hassani and invalidated his certificate because he raises pigeons: “My joy vanished and soared to a distant sky when Ghiyani conveyed to me the fatwa of a weak scholar targeting me: (He who plays with pigeons loses his certificate, as it is considered foolishness, baseness, and a lack of nobility, involving harm to neighbors with his birds and his oversight of their houses, and throwing stones at them). Another threat came from student Kalouche, which increased my anger towards him.” (ABDELLAH, 2023, p. 23)

His anger towards Kalouche grew further when Kalouche refused to draft a sale contract for Hassani’s house and garden to his friend Sbaai, which would have enabled him to undertake his journey across the land. Kalouche’s refusal forced Hassani to entrust Sbaai with them instead of selling them. Thus, it seemed logical that the two final letters were directed to the most unjust individuals he had encountered: the French officer, the direct and explicit enemy, and

student Kalouche, the Algerian, the indirect enemy or counter-revolutionary.

Conclusion:

The postcolonial era has redefined the traditional narrative, introducing models of storytelling that resonate with contemporary thought and philosophy. These models have forged a new map of relational dynamics between the Arab self and the Western other, elucidating that comparing two inherently different ideological models, akin to comparing turtles with giraffes simply because both are animals, or cars with trucks solely based on their function as modes of transportation, is not only inappropriate but fundamentally flawed.

In the realm of civilizational discourse, such comparisons falter due to the unique components and cultural references inherent to each civilization, Eastern and Western, which differ markedly from one another. This study asserts that:

- The persisting difference between Eastern and Western thought challenges the notion that the Eastern world has transitioned to a postmodern stage merely through achieving political independence. Such independence does not automatically correlate with traversing the historical phases experienced by the Western world (Middle Ages, Enlightenment, Modernity, Postmodernity, Postcolonialism).
- From a civilizational standpoint, Algeria's independence is relatively recent. Despite its deep-seated traumas, its human and cultural fabric is distinctively different from that of the West, rendering any direct comparisons baseless.
- The differences between Algerian society and its Western counterparts should not be construed as indications of inferiority but rather as unique attributes that enable Algeria to forge ahead despite its historical scars, unlike the vengeful and resentful attitudes observed in some segments of French society.
- Engaging in knowledge-based dialogue with the 'Other' empowers the self to feel equal and capable of analyzing situations and affirming its uniqueness, a significant shift from the dependency that marked the colonial era.

- The primary motivations for colonization were economic, aimed at conducting costly experiments on foreign soil at no expense, utilizing local inhabitants and resources without restraint.
- A distinctive spiritual dimension characterizes Algerian society, which, despite challenges of poverty and limited education, flourishes with its rich traditions of Sufism, art, music, and dance, celebrating life even in the harshest deserts.
- Animals hold significant symbolic value in the narrative of "Gharnoua," exemplified by the dove in its title, which holds sacred importance in desert cultures (notably in the raising of pigeons and camels), contrasting sharply with the French colonizers' view of animals merely as experimental subjects.
- The narrative employs elements of new history or historiography, focusing on the depiction of historical events and their cultural contexts.
- The novel uniquely blends autobiographical fiction, a contemporary alternative to traditional autobiography, with elements of diary and memoir literature, although the fictional hero Hassani Ould Moulay El Cherif dominates the narrative. The true narrator remains concealed behind this fictional persona, distinct from the author Abdellah Kerroum, who is represented by the journalist Hanin Harne.
- The presence of both personal and narrative identities, as discussed by Paul Ricœur, highlights the self's capacity to understand and represent itself to the other, whether as a colonizer or a friend, across diverse settings from the Algerian desert to France and Spain.
- This narrative style effectively addresses current questions of identity grounded in historical realities. Despite the severe consequences (radiation sickness, birth defects), these challenging experiences have ultimately served to advance the self, affirming that no beneficial life experience is devoid of cost.
- Testimonies from both local and sympathetic French figures (like Doctor De La Croix and adversaries like General De Gaulle and Officer Allery, who conducted nuclear tests) have been crucial in exposing colonial crimes.

This study underscores the importance of acknowledging that differences do not inherently lead to conflict. It advocates for a

reevaluation and reconstruction of intellectual frameworks that govern the philosophical organization of societal thoughts, thereby enabling societies to comprehend and respect the unique cultural structures of each community without necessitating assimilation or severance.

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