

‘Popular Heritage and the Transmission of the Forbidden in the Algerian Novel’: From Colonialism to the Black Decade

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Abstract:

The Algerian novel has employed popular heritage as a means of transmitting the forbidden through significant historical milestones. In this context, popular heritage has adapted to new developments and socio-cultural transformations that characterise each stage. This study demonstrates that although popular heritage remains a fixed artistic tool in Algerian novels, its function changes as the forbidden changes and its significance varies from one period to another.

During the colonial era, such heritage was utilised to protect and defend identity (as in the novel *Nedjma*). After independence, it shifted to become a means of critiquing the legitimacy of the ruling national authority and the effectiveness of its development projects (as in the novel *Al-Zilzal/The Earthquake*). Finally, during the Black Decade, popular heritage became a refuge for processing the trauma of violence and unveiling religious practices that produced a reactionary conception of religion (as in the novel *Lady of the Station*).

Overall, the study reflects the flexibility and deep integration of popular heritage within the Algerian novel. There, it functions as a vehicle for collective memory and a means of connecting with Algerian national history. It also foregrounds an artistic and aesthetic awareness that enriches the literary field.

Keywords: Popular heritage, the forbidden, the Algerian novel, mechanisms of transmission, collective memory, identity.

Introduction

Popular heritage constitutes a charged national reservoir through which societies have fortified their existence and resisted thoughts that undermine the foundations on which they stand. This popular creativity is transmitted across generations through collective memory, which passes it down orally. The novel then adopts it as narrative material, not to circumvent nostalgia for the past or to provide artistic ornamentation and aesthetic expression, but because it functions as a semantic mechanism through which people express social, political, economic and intellectual resentment and repression. This repression hides behind different forms of censorship, whose shapes vary as conditions change and historical transformations unfold.

By employing heritage in accordance with ‘the dominant patterns of writing’, imbuing writing with an indigenous character and marking ‘a decisive point at which the new Algerian novel

departs from its Western counterpart'¹, the Algerian novel transcends the mere invocation of heritage and the establishment of intertextuality with its elements to revive and record it. Instead, it uses heritage as a means of restoring identity and asserting the distinctiveness of Arab societies that are intensely attached to it, and then turns this into an instrument for interrogating and criticising reality. In this sense, the Arab writer generally feels that heritage contains forms that can be revived to confront contemporary issues, and thus constructs an Arab novel with a distinct identity². On the other hand, heritage becomes a refuge and a means of venturing into the forbidden under the guise of popular heritage elements. These elements possess a high degree of symbolic density, enabling the treatment of issues of identity, power, and manifestations of marginalisation and social oppression to penetrate the taboo and escape censorship.

Accordingly, the Algerian novel opens up to a new horizon, grounding its identity and asserting itself by projecting popular heritage onto reality. This constituted a turning point in approach and meaning. Its tools changed and adapted to each historical transformation experienced by Algerian society, rather than adhering to fixed patterns. What was previously used to defend identity during the colonial era later became an instrument of political and social critique after independence. Then, during the Black Decade, it took on the role of a shield confronting the shock of violence and fragmentation.

Based on this, the present article sets out to address the following issue:

How has popular heritage been used in Algerian novels to convey the forbidden?

What historical transformations have affected this use?

How does popular heritage, as a form of collective memory, adapt when confronted with power, whether that be colonial, national or violent?

How was popular heritage invoked in the three historical stages, and how did Algerian novelists use it in each stage?

1. In the concept of popular heritage:

Folklore is defined as a body of arts, beliefs, and patterns of collective behaviour through which people express themselves, whether by word, movement, gesture, rhythm, drawing, colour, or shaping a material or simple instrument. In this way, the term 'popular heritage' expands to include popular creativity in its various forms, such as folk tales, proverbs, riddles, popular epics, myths and different forms of visual art³. This heritage constitutes the memory of the nation, drawing its materials from the psychological and social reality experienced by the people⁴. Thus, it functions as a reflective and revealing mirror of their imagination, laden with their thoughts and equipped with rules and laws that govern their existence and justify their behaviour patterns.

2. The use of heritage as a critical concept:

¹- Mouna Bichlam, 'The Forms of Employing Popular Heritage in the Algerian Novel', Forum of Teachers Journal, Issue 20, June 2017, Higher School of Teachers, Constantine.

²- Abdelhamid Ibrahim, Articles on Literary Criticism, Dar al-Hidaya, Cairo, Part 4, 1987, p. 4.

³- Ahmad Ali Marsi, An Introduction to Folklore, 'Ayn for Studies and Human Research, Cairo, 2001, p. 12.

⁴- Abdelhamid Buraio, Popular Tales in the Biskra Region (Field Study), National Book Institution, Algeria, 1986, p. 118.

In literary criticism, the term ‘heritage’ refers to ‘a form of intertextuality that takes place intentionally and consciously, in which elements of heritage are used to convey contemporary visions and ideas’⁵. This critical term indicates that employing heritage elements is not merely a literal transfer. Instead, it is ‘a process of blending carried out by the writer between what they take from heritage and lived reality’, revealing the difference between mere copying and appropriation.

It is therefore a process of interrogation, dialogue, renewal and activation of popular heritage, serving the requirements of the narrative text and its modern construction⁶. The old text is therefore invoked to either strengthen meaning, extract wisdom or find solutions to current issues and events. In this sense, employing popular heritage generates significations that enrich the text aesthetically and technically while breathing new life into heritage forms so they can engage with contemporary concerns and developments.

3. Popular heritage in the Algerian novel:

3.1 Popular heritage and the protection of identity during French colonialism:

French colonialism showed interest in popular heritage for colonial purposes. It used it ‘as an instrument suitable for revealing the behaviour of the Algerian individual and their reactions’, while completely disregarding the intrinsic nature of this literature⁷. Colonial research in this field was characterised by contempt and a sense of superiority towards Algerian popular culture. Consequently, the objective of such studies was narrowed down to a single aim: to explore Algerian society and understand the particularities of its thinking, thereby facilitating control over it.

During the colonial period, the Algerian novel developed a use of popular heritage that “calls for awakening national consciousness, for rebellion against foreign administration, and for defending the nation’s distinctiveness”⁸. Accordingly, the national dimension—defending identity and clinging to it—prevailed in the novels published during colonial rule. Popular heritage therefore appeared in these works as a kind of recording and description of identity elements: land, customs and traditions, and the distinctiveness of certain regions such as Kabylia. This is evident in Mouloud Feraoun’s novels, *Rough Paths*, *The Son of the Poor**, and **Land and Blood*. whose narratives are saturated with elements of both material and immaterial heritage that abound in the region.

Similarly, in his trilogy — *L’Incendie* (The Fire), *Le Métier à tisser* (The Loom), and *La Grande Maison* (The Great House) — the novelist Mohamed Dib took on the task of conveying identity and heritage through his writing. He stated that this depiction of people’s temperaments, behaviours, and customs and traditions was “sufficient at that time to portray an Algerian scene and embody the concept of faith, giving Algeria an artistic and literary

⁵- Hasan Ali Moukhleff, 'Employing Heritage in the Theatre of Saadallah Wanous: An Applied Study', Dar al-Awa'il, Damascus, 2000, p. 49.

⁶- Rachid Abu Chaker, *Studies in Arabic Theatre*, Al-Ahali for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Damascus, 1977, p. 45.

⁷- Abdelhamid Buraio, (Algerian Popular Literature): A Study of Forms of Performance in Popular Expressive Arts in Algeria, Dar al-Qissa for Publishing, Algeria, 2006, p. 15.

⁸- Abdelhamid Bousmaha, *Popular Heritage in the Novels of Abdelhamid Ibn Haddouqa*, Dar as-Sabil, Algeria, 2008, p. 9.

existence”⁹. Similarly, Mouloud Mammeri offered a detailed examination of rural society, its customs and traditions, by presenting seasonal rituals and how people adhere to them as expressions of identity and attachment in his novel *The Forgotten Orchard*¹⁰. As Servièrre writes, ‘The rituals of the fields are rituals of passage, mingled with ploughing and harvesting, because man finds his balance by designing his place in the world and by creating a place for the world in his daily thoughts, even in his simplest work.’ Thus, each season in *The Forgotten Orchard* has specific rituals among the inhabitants, reflecting their strong relationship with the land and their commitment to serving it to draw forth its bounty¹¹. The olive harvest season, for instance, is accompanied by practices that resemble a daily routine and unite the villagers, bringing them together in the countryside or the mountains, which are regarded as settings in which identity takes root and revolution springs.

In this way, the writer delves into the details of the harvest, accompanied by women singing, wearing distinctive clothing and silver jewellery, and using traditional agricultural tools. The text also describes the joy felt at a plentiful yield, the rituals of blessing it, and the gathering of people to share food and work together.

All these details serve to reinforce the Algerian character and cultural identity in the face of the “Other” culture, which was represented by colonialism at that time. This occurs amid the coloniser’s attempts to erase and dismantle its constitutive elements. This is precisely the argument of Mohamed Dib in his trilogy, which embodies both material and immaterial heritage in order to foreground Algerian identity in the context of French presence.

In doing so, he depicts the suffering of the Algerian people as a whole by portraying the inhabitants of Dar Sbeitar. He raises numerous questions concerning identity and the definition of the nation, as well as the class differences that caused Algerian families to labour to secure their livelihood while the coloniser continued to enjoy their resources¹². The character of the child Omar also expresses many questions of identity. He is constantly bewildered and questions the concepts that determine his relationship with the coloniser, such as the meaning of ‘the homeland’ and the language of the Other. These questions convey the real apprehensions of marginalised families crushed by poverty and deprivation, thereby reflecting the condition of the Algerian people as a whole.

The precise details that the author portrays thus paint a picture of everyday hardship. Omar’s family’s struggle for survival and their search for a livelihood in Dar Sbeitar. All of this constitutes an expression of the cultural specificity of Algerian society during the colonial era. The author also evokes popular customs and describes the Great House in a way that highlights the civilisational heritage of art and architecture, such as the narrow alleys, the water basin and the dark corridors. This house shelters Algerian families who share poverty, oppression and hunger¹³. The author’s achievement lies in his ability to convey cultural

⁹- Osman Tazghart (2005), ‘The Last Encounter of Mohammed Dib’, available at: <https://elaph.com/web/newspapers/2005/6/6800g>.

¹⁰- Mouloud Mammeri, *La colline oubliée*, Ed. Folio Gallimard, 1992.

¹¹- J. Servièrre, *Les Portes de l’Année*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1962, pp. 58–59. (Our translation).

¹²- Mohammed Dib, *The Great House*, Dar al-Hilal, Algeria, 1970, p. 76.

¹³- See: Mohammed Dib, *The Great House*, same reference, p. 63.

particularities manifested through customs, traditions and rituals, which distinguish this literary work and help to preserve it.

The novel *Nedjma* by Kateb Yasin depicts a return to and attachment to the sacred land. It conveys the particularities of Algerian society with regard to kinship, which is not solely based on blood ties, but is also understood through religious and customary perspectives. The tribe seeks to preserve the unity of its members. In the novel, the author presents an integrated social system rooted in customs such as eating practices, greeting guests, hospitality and receiving passers-by (travellers)¹⁴.

Additionally, *Nedjma* becomes a symbolic representation of the homeland. The author states: 'While writing the novel, I did not merely want to tell the story of this love; rather, I wanted to say everything about Algeria, to create an image of it — and this emerged in the image of a woman'¹⁵. The novel also conveys questions of identity and an awareness of the reality of oppression — an oppression that must inevitably come to an end — through the voices of its characters. For example, Si Ahmed expresses his anxiety about the fate of the country, saying: 'You must think about the fate of this country from which we came — that is not a French department, that has no bey and no authority... because we are not a nation, not yet'¹⁶.

Thus, *Nedjma* reflects an attachment to belonging and identity, as well as unveiling the 'forbidden' that has been imposed on the Algerian people through erasure and marginalisation, to prevent their voice from rising in call for freedom.

In his works, the writer Malek Haddad also expressed his attachment to his origins and the necessity of returning to his homeland: 'Because a tree needs its roots and the roots of its land; because the homeland is our first resting place'¹⁷. He recognised and affirmed the culture carried by language in a statement he made. Nevertheless, writing — even in the language of the coloniser — allows us to 'carry a dream, anger, and a complaint'¹⁸ originating from oppressive historical conditions.

In his debut novel, *The Last Impression* (1958), Malek Haddad describes France's attempts to undermine Algerian identity. Despite being written in French, the novel is filled with elements that establish the identity and sense of belonging of the Algerian individual. Through the protagonist, Saeed, the novel reveals the brutality of colonial practices when he discovers that the bridge he built as an engineer is being used to destroy villages and hamlets. The conflict culminates in Saeed joining the revolutionaries in demolishing the bridge — an unmistakable sign of severing every link that ties him to French culture, including his relationship with Lucie, the French girl¹⁹. The novel ends with the choice of sacrifice and martyrdom for the homeland.

¹⁴- See: Katib Yacine, *Nedjma*, trans. Mohammed Quba'a, Diyoun al-Matbouat al-Jamiyya (University Publications), Algeria, 1987, p. 31.

¹⁵- Malikat Abiz al-Isaa, translator of the novel *Nedjma*, parts 3 to 7, Book published in a newspaper, issue 130, Al-'Arabi Institution for Studies and Publishing, Amman, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁶- Katib Yasin, *Nedjma* (The Novel), translated by Saïd Boutajine, Manshourat al-Ikhtilaf (Publications of Difference), 1st edition, Algeria, 2007, p. 6 (from the translator's preface).

¹⁷- Charef Eddine Shokri, 'A New Year in the Colour of Cherries', Selections from Poems and Texts by Malik Haddad, *Al-Douha Journal*, Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, Qatar, Issue 75, January 2014, p. 108.

¹⁸- The same reference, p. 108.

¹⁹- See Malik Haddad, *The Last Impression*, trans. as-Saïd Boutajin, Manshourat al-Ikhtilaf, Algeria, 2003.

It is also charged with motives of clinging to land and identity, and of rejecting submission to French domination. The setting in which the novel's events unfold — specifically Constantine — is presented by the author as a tangible material heritage. He describes the city's landmarks, urban fabric and bridges in such a way that they become symbols of identity rather than just places. This material heritage signifies the place's authenticity and deep-rooted history.

Algerian novels written during the period of French colonialism took on the task of expressing the customs and traditions of the Algerian people. This gave the literature a distinctive character and marked specificity, acting as a mirror that reflects the identity and socio-cultural particularities of the Algerian people. This led scholars, especially French researchers of that period who lacked the interpretive tools needed to grasp the Algerian spirit that lives within popular language and heritage, to delve deeply into Algerian popular literature in order to understand the connotations and symbols embedded in it.

2. Popular heritage: from the spirit of identity to the critique of national authority (the 1970s and 1980s).

The post-independence period saw notable novels that became foundational works in Algerian literature. Abd al-Hamid Benhadouga's *Region du Sud*, published in 1971, was one of the first of these. This was followed by a series of works in the 1980s by Wasini al-Aaraj: *The Sound of Rough Footsteps* (1981), *The Pains of a Man Adventurous Toward the Sea* (1983), and *Blossom of Almonds* (1981).

Another relevant author is al-Habib Sayih, whose novel *The Age of Nimrod* appeared in 1985. Other notable authors include Jilali Khlaf (the *Scent of the Dog*, 1985) and Marzaq Batkatach (*Saliva**, 1982; *Tons of Spit*, 1989). The most prominent of these were directly related to popular heritage in its various forms. However, their general orientation differed from that of the earlier phase.

As has been noted, 'the methods by which Algerian novelists deal with heritage vary according to the historical period in which they find themselves'²⁰. During this period, the use of heritage ceased to be merely a means of consolidating and defending identity during colonial rule. Instead, a new approach emerged, with popular heritage becoming a powerful starting point for social and political critique. Algerian novelists thus became preoccupied with placing society at the centre rather than with personal, subjective concerns²¹.

Consequently, these works incorporated a variety of heritage elements, including folk tales, myths, popular proverbs, riddles, and folk songs. This reflects the mentality of the Algerian people and their approach to analysing reality and the present situation, as well as their ability to exercise control over their political, social, economic and psychological reality. Furthermore, the use of popular heritage carries a forward-looking perspective that propels us towards renewal and progress. Therefore, it has a political and ideological dimension, which is characteristic of the post-independence novel. This novel questions the new reality in all its

²⁰- Abdelhamid Bousmaha, 'Employing Popular Heritage in the Novels of Abdelhamid Ibn Haddouqa', Master's thesis, University of Algiers, 1992, pp. 36–37.

²¹- Ibrahim Saidi, *Studies and Articles on the Novel*, Manshourat as-Sahm (Arrow Publications), Algeria (no date), 2009, p. 62.

dimensions, including the one-party system, socialist ideology and the project of the agrarian revolution.

Among the writers who have addressed the post-independence condition, we consider the novelist Abdelhamid Benhedouga and his 1970 novel *Rih al-Janoub*, which “provided a form of legitimisation for a political discourse that offered the prospect of lifting the countryside out of isolation, freeing the peasant from oppression, and putting an end to all forms of human exploitation”²². The novel depicts a range of rituals and social customs, such as visiting graves, weekly shopping and marriage traditions, alongside the rural setting in which the plot unfolds, presenting it as a vessel of heritage. However, it did not engage with or interrogate heritage, nor did it revive it for the sake of a profound critical interrogation of reality. Consequently, Benhedouga lost ‘the most distinctive feature that sets him apart from other writers: his role as a herald of values and ideas, and of intellectual and human leadership, rather than his subordination to the regime’s ideas and general plans’²³.

In contrast, the use of heritage in his novel *Al-Jaziya wal-Darawich* (1983) was elevated to the status of both an art form and a goal. He took the novel’s heroine, *Al-Jaziya*²⁴, as a mythical emblem and made her the focal point of rivalry and an elusive dream. This strange, complex ‘imperial’ woman embodies Algeria. The author chose the name *Al-Jaziya*, the heroine of the Hilali epic, so that she would remain within the framework of Arab-Islamic culture surrounding the central Jaziya legend. The many legends spread about her elevated her to the status of the Hilali Jaziya. Similarly, the symbolism of the title alludes to another legendary dimension associated with Sufi heritage, as represented by saints and dervishes. The title therefore constitutes a dual heritage allusion. Added to this are the other heritage elements found throughout the novel, which the author uses to reveal a significant paradox of post-colonial reality: the revolution that brought freedom also introduced new constraints imposed in the name of the law after independence.

The novel presents a series of competing binary oppositions: preservation versus openness; countryside versus city; Bedouinism versus urbanisation; tradition versus renewal; singularity versus plurality; and subordination versus liberation. Together, these create a new reality with new challenges for a society transitioning from colonialism to freedom.

Through his novel, the writer was able to draw out these underlying paradoxes by deploying a set of heritage elements with the aim of exposing the new conflict after independence—“to reap gains rather than contend for principles”²⁵. The same conclusion was reached by the novelist Tahar Ouattar in his novel *Al-Laz*, in which he analysed certain negative behaviours after independence which “ravaged the struggle and brought down the values of the revolution and the hopes of independence”²⁶.

²²- Omar ibn Qayna, *On Modern Algerian Literature*, University Publications, Algeria, 2nd ed., 2009, p. 198.

²³- The same reference, p. 205.

²⁴- Abdelhamid ibn Haddouka, *The Jaza'ira and the Dervishes*, Dar al-Adab, Beirut, 2nd edition, 1991, pp. 23–24.

²⁵- Ahmad Munir, *Studies in the Algerian Novel*, Dar as-Sāhil for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2008, p. 132.

²⁶- Omar ibn Qayna, *On Modern Algerian Literature*, previously cited reference, p. 220.

Set in one of the villages in eastern Algeria, the novel encompasses a rich cultural heritage, including the built environment, crafts, customs and traditions, as well as popular songs and proverbs voiced by the protagonist Al-Laz and other characters. This makes the novel a richly cultural space saturated with particularity that expresses the Algerian way of viewing things.

Prior to this, Tahar Ouattar had written the novel *Al-Zalzal* (1973), the publication of which coincided with the rise of socialism in Algeria. In it, the author turned to religious heritage, describing people who flocked after goods as ‘Yajouj and Maajouj’²⁷. He used this to denounce the economic and social situation into which the country had fallen. The novel thus spelled out the harmful social repercussions after independence, such as the spread of chaos and corruption. It was believed that these effects had to be followed by an earthquake as an inevitable, punitive consequence²⁸. This earthquake, in turn, signalled the end of the feudal era and the beginning of the agrarian revolution.

Meanwhile, popular heritage dominated the novel through customs, beliefs and colloquial language, revealing the reality of the post-independence period.

C. Popular heritage and absorbing the shock of violence in Algerian novels: The ‘Black Decade’

During the ‘Black Decade’, there was a shift in novelists’ use of popular heritage: it became an instrument of resistance and a means of uncovering the reality that generated this mass fear and terrorism. It also served as a driving force for transformation and momentum, based on a new awareness rooted in a new relationship with heritage. As stated, heritage is “one of the channels through which cultural and social identity is consolidated, and through which its elements and components are organised and held in place against transient forces and historical transformations; it may, finally, become a question of inquiry into threatened identity and being”²⁹.

The term “Black Decade” was given to the period from 1990 to 2000, and the literature produced during this time became known as the literature of affliction, writing of urgency and emergency. Literature then existed in a blood-soaked, frightening present; terrorism became its raw material. Algerian writers therefore turned to documenting bloody events and interrogating this reality by revisiting heritage, which is now ‘cultural material that can be transformed, symbolic capital that can be spent or invested, or a knowledge mine suitable for digging into and extracting from’³⁰. This new reality led to the emergence of authors and works of fiction that broadly engaged with popular inheritance.

Most of them challenged the authority of the ‘guardians of intentions’, as defined by Wassini al-Araj. These figures entrench fundamentalism by interpreting the sacred text “with a primitive spirit steeped in excess, obsession, harshness and intolerance”³¹. In these works, the

²⁷- See: Tahar Ouettar, *The Earthquake*, National Company for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 3rd edition, 1973, p. 55.

²⁸- See: Mostafa Fassi, *Studies in the Algerian Novel*, Dar al-Qasba for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria (n.d.), 1999, p. 40.

²⁹- Said Yaqtin, ‘Speech and Good: A Preface to Arabic Narrative*’, *The Arab Cultural Centre*, 1st edition, Dar al-Baydā’ (Casablanca), 1997, p. 40.

³⁰- Ali Harb, *Questions of Truth and the Stakes of Thought*, Dar al-Tabia (Nature), 1st ed., Beirut, 1994, p. 83.

³¹- Abd al-Wahhab Shailan, ‘Sociocultural Ethics for the New Novelistic Discourse in Algeria’, *Communication in Language and Literature Journal*, Issue 37, March 2013, p. 139.

intellectual is tasked with opposing the extremist current. Consequently, he was targeted by Islamist movements, with some factions even going so far as to assassinate and kidnap him at the beginning of the 1990s³². Numerous novels also depict the state of the intellectual poised for death or fleeing it, paying the costly ‘price’ for his awareness and counter-propelling thoughts against violence and fundamentalism. This was ‘a recurring theme of constant presence and highly concentrated significance throughout the entire nineties corpus’³³.

Examples include Wassini al-Araj’s novels: *Balconies of the North Sea*, *Guardian of Shadows*, and *Memory of Water*. Also from Tahar Ouattar: *The Candle and the Cellar* and *The Pure Saint Returns to His Noble Station*. Yasmina Khadra also wrote works such as *What Do the Wolves Dream Of?* and *The Myth of the Lord*, along with many others.

For example, Tahar Ouattar deployed popular heritage in *Ash-Sham’a wa ad-Dahliyz* through its various elements, such as folk proverbs and Sufi heritage, as seen in the *Marwaḥat al-Khayl* dance, which depicts a horse spirit. He also incorporated practices and beliefs associated with magic and sorcery, as well as the accusation of heresy and the religious heritage associated with it. Through his use of religious heritage, Ouattar implicitly suggested a hidden collusion between it and extremism, showing how popular religious symbols can generate violence and radicalisation³⁴.

Similarly, Wassini al-Araj’s works engage with the popular heritage he confronts, invokes and reacts to in several pieces, such as popular songs, proverbs, folk tales and historical figures. In *Sayyidat al-Maqām* (“Lady of the Shrine/Station”), for instance, he employed the spiritual space of the shrine (*maqām*) or the wali (righteous saint). This provides an escape from violence and bloodshed. However, during times of violence, this sanctuary shifts from being a sacred symbol endowed with religious sanctity to becoming a place that loses that sanctity and becomes subject to vandalism and destruction³⁵. The collapse of popular sacredness is therefore one of the symbols of collective memory that has been destroyed by terrorists.

In times of violence, popular heritage shifts from being a critical instrument to a sponge that absorbs destruction and violence — an image reflecting the shock inflicted on popular sacred symbols in Algerian memory.

Conclusions:

Based on our analysis of three historical turning points, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The openness of the Algerian novel to employing popular heritage throughout its various historical phases serves to establish its distinctiveness, and reflects the awareness of its writers of the importance of this deployment as a narrative mechanism. This creates a symbolic density that enables readers to enter the worlds of the ‘forbidden’ with a sense of immunity and safety.

³²- Mohammed Sari, *The Affliction of Writing*, Critical Studies, Manshūrāt al-Burzakh, Algeria, May 2007, p. 43.

³³- Abdullah Shattah, *Paths of Terror: Space of Violence in the Black Tenacious Novel*, Alpha Press, Algeria, 2014, p. 147.

³⁴- See: Tahar Outtar, *The Hallway Candle*, Manshourat al-Jahiziyat, Algeria, 1993.

³⁵- See: Wasini al-Araj (*Lady of the Rank*), Dar Ward, Damascus, 5th edition, 2006.

2. Popular heritage remained a consistent means of conveying the forbidden, accompanying the Algerian novel across different stages. However, its function changed each time: from a means of defending identity, to a means of questioning and criticising national authority, and finally to a means of containing and absorbing the shock of violence and extremism, as well as dissecting them.
3. Popular heritage provided a safe distance for expressing the forbidden indirectly and imaginatively, thus confronting forms of domination and violence (colonial violence, violence perpetrated by the national authorities, and violence during the Black Decade).
4. Popular heritage can be regarded as an especially effective mechanism for transmitting the forbidden, and in this respect it is similar to the heritage sign/feature and the mythic sign.
5. Popular heritage is tied to popular collective memory, and therefore most accurately expresses the sociocultural life of societies, including Algerian society, while permeating the deep structures that shape identity and cultural distinctiveness.
6. Research into popular heritage is a fertile field, especially when linked to the novel as a literary genre, as it opens many doors for scholars regarding the questions raised by this deployment and its various meanings. Each historical period can be the subject of extensive research; likewise, each element of popular literature expressing the forbidden can become the subject of another study. This is all the more pertinent if each form of the forbidden were assigned an element of popular heritage, along with knowledge of how it is used and the mechanism by which it operates, so that many interrelated research questions could be answered with precision.

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