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The Implicit Structures with in the Theme of Motherhood, Specifically the Framework of Maternity, with in the Narrative Structure of Algerian Literature - Eyelids Under the Guillotine by the Algerian Author Al-Hurra Al-Jazairiya as an Example

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Abstract:

The theme of motherhood is considered one of the most prominent themes in contemporary Algerian novels, as it represents the references of Algerian society and portrays its various psychological, social, economic and political aspects. The mother figure symbolises noble values and high ethics through the pattern of motherhood. This study aims to:

1/ To highlight the underlying patterns of Algerian society as manifested through the pattern of motherhood.

2/ To challenge the imaginary image of the mother as a source of noble values. Algerian novels have made significant progress in shifting the focus from formal linguistic structures, enriched with imagery and artistic embellishments, to texts that reflect the diverse contexts of Algerian society and encapsulate the experiences and social phenomena of individuals. The novel emerges as a literary genre capable of encompassing these contexts and different aspects.

Among the major contexts and themes addressed are the nation and women, which have received considerable attention in contemporary Algerian studies.

In this article, using cultural criticism as a method of study, we will attempt to answer a number of questions:

1/ How does the image of the mother figure emerge in contemporary Algerian novels?

2/ How do cultural patterns emerge through fictional writings on motherhood?

Keywords: patterns, theme, Algerian novel, compositional structure.

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1- Introduction:

Contemporary Algerian novels have, for a considerable period of time, taken significant steps towards embracing the references surrounding the writer and the era. They have liberated themselves from the constraints of traditionalism in literary texts and have merged with the formal structure of language, weaving their threads into the intricate psychological complexities of the writer's own self and the prevailing conditions of the era in which they live.

This expansion goes beyond the psychological complexities of the individual to include the voice of society with its characteristics, encompassing poverty and wealth, and addressing various social, political, economic and even health-related phenomena. This raises a number of questions that this article seeks to address.

1/ What are the stages of development of Algerian novels? What are the underlying patterns and how do these different patterns manifest themselves in the novel "Eyelids Under the Guillotine" by the Algerian writer Al-Hurra?

2- The underlying patterns in the novel "Eyelids Under the Guillotine" by the Algerian author Al-Hurra.

The novel, be it Algerian or Arab, has always been a long-awaited outlet for the Arab creative writer. This is because poetry, with its strict rules represented by narrative and rhyme, limits the writer's freedom to find solace in the novel, where authority lies in words.

And Dr Aisha Abdul-Majeed defined it as: "An artistic work based on certain foundations, represented by characters, events, times, places, and the novelist's own self and perspective on life, mixed with his or her creative abilities, which distinguish him or her from another creator, because the same theme can be approached by each creator in a different way".

The Arab and Algerian novels have nourished a contemporary project with the highest value among the literary genres, thanks to the freedom achieved by the writer. This genre has made significant progress as a human project, because it is in tune with the pace and nature of humanity.

Decades ago, Algerian novels were a festival of linguistic displays and an exhibition of creative skills through the intensification of vivid images, literary embellishments and various eloquent styles that captured hearts. At that time, the text was surrounded by a fence that was only related to its linguistic construction and nothing else. However, as they progressed to the height of artistic maturity, the narrative texts broke free from the restrictive fence of linguistic construction and expanded into multiple contexts, references, circumstances, and factors related to the writer and the times.

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This branching out begins with the psychological complexities and various accumulations experienced by the novelist, including narcissism, masochism, sadism and others, resulting from a lack of reconciliation with different experiences. There is also the crucial role of society, which forms the crucible in which social classes and various phenomena such as poverty, wealth, suffering, unemployment, distinction, excellence and other social paradoxes are fused. These are determined by various factors such as the economy, which is related to various economic activities such as agriculture, industry, trade and others.

The question may arise as to the relationship between the novel and all that has been said. The answer, simply put, is that the creative text is an implicit reflection of these phenomena. For example, a wealthy writer may talk about palaces, luxuries and other expensive things that penetrate his subconscious because they represent his life experiences.

All of these references and contexts fall under the important contemporary term known as 'underlying patterns. Dr Aisha Abdul-Majeed defines them as **"the underlying backgrounds related to the writer and his or her time. The words serve as a gateway, as Dr Abdul-Majeed describes it, through which psychological accumulations and sediments of various experiences emerge. These patterns not only represent the creator, but also encompass his era as a whole. They infiltrate the social situation, prevalent diseases such as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, economic downturns during certain periods, and other factors that provide an official document of what is happening in the era and the state at a given time"**.

One of the themes that can shed light on Algerian society is that of motherhood, and we have chosen the novel *"Eyelids Under the Guillotine"* by Brouz. There are three mothers in the story: the mother of the protagonist, Hayat; the mother of the protagonist, Mounib; and the third is the mother of Habiba, Adel's sister. Each of them takes us into an underlying pattern and contexts that deserve attention in Algerian society. However, we will focus on the character of Hayat's mother because there is much to discuss about her.

We begin this approach with the quote, **"Work hard and get your baccalaureate, because they belittle me and judge me for my illiteracy"**.

This seemingly simple sentence in the novel has profound implications that reflect various aspects of Algerian society at the time. This is because Hayat's mother is a rural woman who was brought up and educated in this environment.

At the time, it was well known that rural people, especially women, tended not to educate their daughters. Such behaviour was not encouraged as women were seen as only suitable for cooking, cleaning and organising, regardless of their level of education.

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In fact, this pattern was applied to many women at the time, resulting in a significant level of illiteracy in Algerian society, especially among rural girls, as we have already mentioned. This campaign embodies two intertwined patterns: a psychological pattern represented by the struggle to come to terms with the experience that her parents did not provide her with an education, leaving her illiterate and unable to cope with life.

On the one hand, this situation reflects the personal journey of individuals like Hayat's mother who were not given the opportunity for education by their parents. It highlights the lasting psychological impact of being denied access to education and the challenges they face in their daily lives as a result.

On the other hand, it represents a broader social pattern that permeates the whole of society and leads to a more dangerous phenomenon than illiteracy itself, namely gender inequality, or what is referred to as "masculinity" in Algerian society¹.

This phenomenon is based on the idea that men have all the privileges and choices, while women are considered subordinate and nothing more than servants. This is rooted in the social structure that considered women's education a shame not only for the family but for the whole village. At that time, girls in rural areas were deprived of education, not only in their own households but in the whole village, because education was not valued.

The dialogue also points to another phenomenon, which is the stark difference between rural and urban areas. The speaker addresses the sisters of Rabah's wife, who are educated and employed. This distinction, given to them by the divine, distinguishes them from their sister-in-law².

The underlying patterns multiply, transforming from one phenomenon to multiple phenomena, such as the exclusion and injustice inflicted by Rabah's wife's sisters through verbal attacks on her emotions. This made her feel inferior to them because they were educated while she was illiterate.

This leads us to another surprising aspect, which is the silence of Algerian husbands regarding the rights of their wives and their reluctance to defend them, lest they be labelled with derogatory terms such as "passive" or "spineless". The patterns continue to multiply and intertwine, manifested in the way Algerian husbands treated their wives during this period, some forty years ago. Wives were treated as servants to their husbands and their families, and their rights, even the most basic, were undermined. As Rabah says, "Even in my stomach I don't feel full. She is only a cook and cannot even meet her own food needs, let alone feed the whole family, lest she be labelled "not a 'famille' girl", to use the French term.

The underlying patterns lead us to another classification in Algerian society, known as the "bent family" (a French term), which reflects the influence of the colonial language and of France, which has not completely left. In Algerian society, it refers to the obedient and submissive servant

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who remains silent in all circumstances without objecting. If she does object, she is not considered a well-bred woman and her case is brought to the attention of the "hajj" (an elderly person respected in the community), even if it doesn't violate the religious duty of the hajj. This is another pattern that points to the sanctification of Algerian society, where the duty of Hajj and respect for the elderly are highly valued. They cleverly persuade her to return to her home so as not to get divorced. Divorce is also a social taboo, as divorced women are considered taboo and not easily accepted³.

All of this is the result of a misunderstanding of how women should be treated. If a woman is submissive, it is accompanied by the idea of weakness, which is a distortion of the concepts in Algerian society that associates masculinity with violence, humiliation, imprisonment and subjugation.

On the other hand, if the treatment is different, doubts arise and persist. This leads to another social reference: witchcraft. This phenomenon, which was widespread at the time as an underlying social pattern, is revealed through various dialogues that may seem like individual words or phrases, but they serve as a gateway to a widespread social phenomenon⁴.

According to Dr Aisha Abdel Majid, **"Witchcraft is a sign of weak faith in Allah, a loss of spiritual connection, and a lack of awareness and misunderstanding of the nature of things. The one who seeks a sorcerer is the one who is incapable. The proof is that when a man is unable to marry a woman, he resorts to sorcery. This is because his natural energy does not allow him to attract and obtain things"**⁵.

In fact, most mothers-in-law in Algerian society use this term whenever there is any form of rebellion or deviation from expected behaviour, such as a man being kind to his wife or defending her. The immediate association that comes to mind is witchcraft, because it was a widespread phenomenon at the time, characterised by opportunists who took advantage of people's circumstances and needs, such as a woman's desire for independence. However, she can only achieve this when she is on her way to the grave, held responsible alone.

This phenomenon, as a hidden psychological social pattern in Algerian society, indicates the prevalence of this phenomenon at the time and the term "makhedh deba" (jackal's brain). The latter hunts, devours and takes, while the jackal remains in the forest with its mouth open, unable to act. The similarity here, or the point of resemblance, is the husband's lack of action or achievement of rights. It represents leniency in treatment or freedom, but unfortunately in an illegitimate way⁶.

This relates to the treatment of the husband's sisters, which also points to another social pattern, that of social class. The husband's "winning" wife did not own her own home, and even if she did, she could not enjoy it. This is due to a prevailing social issue of ownership, expressed in the

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phrase "Ma tzelish ibni" (Do not degrade my son). It is as if the father of her children is not considered the son of the woman who raised him, nurtured him and made him a responsible man. Why else would she marry him, knowing that she complained about her mother-in-law's behaviour, which manifested itself as soon as her son got married

Broadcaster Aisha Abdel Majid addressed this social problem in her programme "Safinat Nuh" (Noah's Ark), calling it the "Fouli Tayyab Complex". The title of the programme was "Fouli Tayyab", which refers to an unhealthy attachment to individuals that is reflected in people's behaviour. It involves a mother's excessive attachment to her son, which leads mothers to reject their sons' relationships with people they love for fear that they will be taken away from them. As a result, they seem content to arrange marriages for their sons, looking for the ideal bride who embodies the seven virtues. However, when a son declares his love for a particular woman, such as Saadah, Saeedah or Sanaa, she is suddenly burdened with the seven faults⁷.

And this is due to the fact that a woman's life merges with that of her husband and children, to whom she gives her youth, life, beauty and health, in order to preserve the family unit in which she lacks independence. She cooks the meal in her own home in order to maintain this unity, which is not easy to maintain in the midst of the challenges that deprive her of all her freedoms. As already mentioned, even if the husband is wealthy and owns a house, he has to respect the Algerian family system, otherwise he is called by different names that bring tears to her eyes⁸.

3-Social taboos in Algerian society:

The Algerian norms are cascading and pouring down to cover an important aspect that should not be underestimated, to document those Algerian customs and the various values that this people believes in, in a faint voice that only the contemplative researcher can understand. Among these psychological and social patterns is the dominance of the mother figure, as portrayed in the novel "Under the Guillotine of the Algerian Hourri", and this pattern emerges subtly in the early stages of the novel through the dialogue that takes place between Rabah and his daughters. Rabah was upset and angry at the actions of her husband's sisters, who did not hesitate to insult her with her hereditary blindness, for which she was not responsible⁹.

Using the Third Eye approach or analysis, Rabah, a fifty year old woman who still lives with her husband's family, is caught up in a web of interrelated patterns within the fabric of Algerian culture. The family household itself represents a series of seemingly endless patterns that serve as a starting point for unravelling the complexities within the cultural framework at various points. These taboos and customs related to a woman living with her husband's family are deeply rooted ideas and inherited programming within Algerian society. Criticism and analysis in this context is not limited to a single family or individual, but takes a broad and overarching perspective that encompasses society as a whole:

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A-The intense jealousy experienced by both men and women is often linked to notions of honour, reputation and the underlying mental, psychological and emotional underpinnings. For men, it is linked to notions of family honour, lineage and the desire to preserve the man's reputation and family. It is not uncommon to hear Algerian mothers refer to their young sons as "my little girl" (meaning a small child) and say "don't trust women" - referring to the wife or daughter-in-law - until she has given birth. In addition, the suspicions and doubts of the mother-in-law and others towards their son's wife are evident in all behaviours.

These behaviours, emotions and feelings are deeply rooted in the minds of the entire extended family, as they attach great importance to the stability of the family unit. They believe that if the woman is righteous, the whole household will be in order, but if she goes astray, the whole household will be corrupted. It is noteworthy that these references are often religious and tend to emphasise sanctity and fear.

B-Although not explicitly stated, the Algerian woman is often seen as the obedient servant of her husband's father and mother. Because of her deep respect for her own family, she is compelled to serve the extended family in order to earn the prestigious title of "Bint Al-Famillia" (the daughter of the family). She works tirelessly and continuously, even when she is exhausted, adhering to the established system known as "Zawi" or "Zwaya". This means that the women serve not only dozens of residents, but also visitors and travellers who come to the household. The residents are considered part of the family, while the visitors are individuals who are travelling for various purposes and are obliged to go to the "zawi" to fulfil their food needs¹⁰.

C-It is indeed perceived as obligatory to serve one's husband's family, especially one's mother and father, because of the social belief in their esteemed status. However, from a religious perspective, it is not an obligation for a woman to serve her husband's family; it is considered a virtue and an act of kindness. The level of service usually depends on the relationship and kindness of the husband's family towards the wife. Nevertheless, Algerian taboos and accumulated customs have led to a collective consciousness that regards this service as an obligatory duty. These behaviours are often considered necessary for a woman to attain the coveted title of "Bint Al-Famillia" (the daughter of the family).

A husband's treatment of his wife is also an important issue to consider. It is unfortunate that in some cases husbands resort to mistreating and physically abusing their wives. This is contrary to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who advised to treat women with kindness and gentleness. Good treatment in Islam is the foundation of a harmonious society and serves as the basis for maintaining strong family bonds and upholding the covenant prescribed by the Almighty.

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In any society, it is important to overcome taboos and sacred beliefs that have no valid basis, even if they exist. Such beliefs can be divided into three groups: those that must be abandoned, those that must be modified, and those that must be preserved. It is therefore essential for Algerian society to strive towards a civilisation that embodies the principles of Islam.

The Algerian cultural lexicon is still rich in deep-rooted customs that require in-depth study. It is not enough to observe the customs themselves; one must also delve into the psychological reasons and beliefs associated with these widespread customs. For example, the tradition of "Jumaa" or community gatherings and other customs. We can explain a particular custom related to the biological aspect of childbirth among Algerians. At the end of the forty-day postpartum period, the woman, accompanied by her close maternal relatives, such as her sisters or aunts, who are allowed to see her undressed according to custom (as the religious perspective is very different). The woman undresses in one of the communal baths, preferably one associated with righteous people in the province. This is a cultural aspect that deserves further study, as it represents another facet of the culture. To return to our current discussion, the woman prostrates herself naked, albeit covered with a simple sheet to preserve her modesty, in accordance with the customs of Algerian society at that time and by those generations. "Rabah" goes on to advise his daughter "Hayat": "You have nothing to be ashamed of. They will examine you to ensure your well-being while you are still young". The novel describes how the invited aunt "Elajia", with "Elajji" and "Hayat", entered the bath of the righteous, a bath renowned for its blessings and the divine influence and authority of its owners. Algerians from all walks of life flock to this bath to seek the blessings of its waters. The two women begin by assisting the woman in childbirth until the process is complete. This custom remains within the realm of Algerian customs specific to childbirth, and each society retains its own rituals and peculiarities.

Cultural patterns are interwoven in the novel "Under the Guillotine", which is pregnant with situations and references that accurately reflect the image of Algerian society. Despite the damage done to her daughter and the subsequent injury and humiliation, Rabah does not incite Hayat against her mother-in-law and her pregnancy. One might wonder about the social framework here. The framework seems to lie in the values Rabah has instilled in her children, that the elderly must be respected regardless of their behaviour because they deserve respect.

Another of Algeria's taboos is the idea that the elderly cannot be held accountable for their actions. This social perspective seems to suggest that they are exempt from any form of reprimand. However, I would like to emphasise that respect, assistance and the provision of various services that take into account their vulnerability are indeed the right of the elderly from everyone. We will all grow old and need someone to help us. However, this does not mean that they should think in a negative way that they are not responsible. They are undoubtedly

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responsible, unless there is a mental illness that affects their judgement, or they suffer from senility or similar conditions. The idea that they are beyond reproach is totally rejected.

The questioner wonders why it is rejected, and the answer is that accepting such a perspective promotes a sense of inferiority that contradicts social and religious beliefs. There is a well-known saying that "the pen is lifted for three: the lunatic until he regains his senses, the sleeper until he wakes up, and the child until he reaches puberty". In other cases, however, we do not make excessive excuses until the elderly person becomes like a semi-insane person who indulges in forbidden acts. Isn't there evidence from Western society that they also grow old? Yes, but they look at life from a more positive perspective. They play, have fun, play chess, do sports and even climb mountains. Someone might argue that these are their circumstances. Yes, but the Arab mindset is also different and tends to be negative. We, as an Islamic nation, should be more eager and deserving to adopt positive ideas and behaviours. We must continue to move away from these stereotypes.

Here we encounter another biological pattern, slightly different and significant, because it tells of Algerian customs related to childbirth. For example, the practice of "ghrane", which consists of massaging the newborn baby with oils, especially olive oil, to cover its entire body and massage its throat, hands and feet. The baby's intense crying often causes many mothers to cry too, and they usually leave the place. This Algerian tradition, known as "tagrir", ensures that the baby grows up healthy and strong. Similarly, there are illnesses that affect women after childbirth, such as postpartum depression, which can be psychologically linked to the change in their status from being unmarried and unaccountable to being accountable. On the other hand, it can also be attributed to the presence of certain evil spirits that threaten the mother and her child. She must therefore seek protection. Since popular matters tend to dominate religious matters in society, the community pays more attention to them than to religious matters. There is also another tradition among Algerian women after childbirth, which is the preparation of "zarira". Zarira is an Algerian dish made from various ground pulses cooked with butter and honey and served to guests. Algerian cuisine is also rich in various traditional sweets such as "makroud" and "baklava", which serve as the foundation of Algerian society¹¹.

Algerian postpartum practices have their own rituals and uniqueness. It is certain that all mothers around the world experience illnesses, go through stages and climb the ladder of motherhood. However, Algerian women have their own peculiarities in this regard. Traditionally, they receive support and assistance from their families or in-laws for at least forty days, as they may not be able to take care of themselves during this period. These practices may be influenced by cultural and social norms specific to the Algerian context.

In Algerian society, the environment in which we live tends to influence the mentality and behaviour of women, including mothers.

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Mothers, sisters and those around them often emphasise the importance of getting out of bed, even though this behaviour is not healthy. The intention here is to emphasise that women in general, and postnatal mothers in particular, should engage in physical exercise that is appropriate for them. These exercises should aid digestion, facilitate breastfeeding and provide the necessary activities for their postpartum life. Examples of such exercises include back exercises, abdominal exercises and others. Nutrition also plays a crucial role in the lives of everyone, including postpartum mothers. Nutritional needs vary according to age groups and individual activities within society. Postpartum mothers need special care, including healthy foods and beverages that promote their well-being. In addition, maintaining a strong spiritual foundation through religious practices is beneficial. These practices strengthen individuals and enable them to fulfil their daily responsibilities. As evidence of this, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised his daughter Fatima, when she complained of fatigue from housework, to "glorify Allah 33 times, proclaim His greatness 33 times, and praise Him 33 times". This is because the act of remembrance (dhikr) strengthens the various organs in the human body, enabling individuals to carry out their responsibilities in life. This is also true for Algerian and Arab women.

The behaviours practised by the protagonist and her mother in the novel are nothing more than Algerian rituals, practised by every Algerian, except those who have gone beyond these taboos. Even if this segment of society is educated or knowledgeable, it still clings to these inherited and accumulated ideas. Like other segments of society, they are closely tied to them. The relationship between intellectuals and taboos is a strong one, as most intellectuals are also closely associated with these customs.

It should be noted that these prevalent social behaviours and customs are not exclusive to a particular group, but are general behaviours. Only a few have deviated from these traditions. Let's delve a little deeper into the discussion of postpartum practices. The bride, after giving birth, engages in what is known as "Al-Qahwa". Al-Qahwa is an event that lasts one or more days, during which she gathers her family and her husband's family separately. The Algerian mother dresses her newborn in her best clothes and presents him to her guests, who rejoice at his arrival. The invited guests then present the newborn with a monetary gift called "Al-Awn" as a gesture of honour.

In Algerian customs, it is customary for women to gather together with joy and happiness. Each woman displays her best clothes, jewellery and other adornments as part of the festivities. In the context of the novel, the postpartum mother is the bride of the celebration. However, the novel does not extensively portray the different Algerian customs, behaviours or psychological states, such as placing the newborn on the lap of a childless person as a sign of celebrating the birth¹².

4-Conclusion:

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it can be said that the narrative of this novel, with its overt and covert aspects, draws its threads from the references and backgrounds of Algerian society from two perspectives: the moral aspect, which includes the values of motherhood and high moral standards, and the aspects related to customs and traditions. As a result, it provides a clear picture of Algerian society.

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