

The female, between the plight of existence and proving identity, a reading of the cultural patterns in the novel "Ramada Nights" by Wasini Al-Araj

الأنثى بين محنة الوجود وإثبات الهوية قراءة في الأنساق الثقافية في رواية

ليليات رمادة لواسيني الأعرج

Benattou houria¹ *

1 Djilali BOUNAAMA University - Khamis Miliana, h.ben-attou@univ-dbk.m.dz

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Abstract: Every fictional text is based on a set of linguistic and cultural structures and patterns, which link it to the rest of the fictional texts on the one hand, and to the culture that contains it on the other hand, and this culture seeps into the text in the form of implicit patterns, thus forming a rich cultural dimension for the text studied. In the novel "Ramada Nights" by Wasini Al-Araj, several implicit cultural patterns are present in the text, such as the pattern of the center and the margins, the pattern of resistance and rejection of control, the pattern of defeat and fear, the pattern of rebellion, violence, and other opposing patterns that investigate the causes of conflict in The plot on the one hand, and a cultural conflict implicit in the background of the text on the other hand, and we cannot understand the system except in its relationship with the second system, which is opposite and opposite to it, therefore, the cultural patterns in Wasini al-Araj's text were linguistic in their structure, and cultural in their connotation and meaning.

Keywords: linguistic structures ,cultural, resistance and rejection, opposing patterns that investigate

ملخص: يقوم كل نص روائي على جملة من البنى و الأنساق اللغوية و الثقافية التي تربطه ببقية النصوص الروائية من جهة ، و تربطه كذلك مع الثقافة التي تحويه من جهة أخرى ، لتتسرب هذه الثقافة في النص على شكل أنساق مضمرة مشكلة بذلك بعدا ثقافيا غنيا بالنسبة للنص المدروس ، و في رواية " ليليات رمادة " لواسيني الأعرج تحضر في النص جملة من الأنساق الثقافية المضمرة كنسق : المركز ، الهامش ، نسق المقاومة و رفض السيطرة ، نسق الانحزام و الخوف ، نسق التمرد ، العنف ، وغيرها من الأنساق المتقابلة المتضادة التي تحقق أسباب الصراع في الحبكة من جهة ، و صراعا ثقافيا مضمرا في خلفية النص. ولا نستطيع فهم النسق إلا في علاقته مع النسق الثاني المتقابل و المتضاد له ، لذا كانت الأنساق الثقافية في نص واسيني الأعرج أنساقا لغوية في بنيتها و ثقافيا في دلالتها و معناها

الكلمات المتاحة: الأنساق اللغوية، الثقافية ، المركز والهامش ، المتقابلة والمتضادة

1.Introduction:

* Benattou houria

The Algerian novel raised questions about the female self and world view, to overcome the stereotypical image rooted in the system of inherited social values. Some novel writings have broken the silence barrier, to express women's pains, worries, groans, and rebellion against the norms that make the other - that is, the man the center, while the female is the margin. These writings conveyed to us all forms of oppression, suffering, and violence directed at her.

2. Center pattern

The masculine style has taken its share in many texts and literary productions, due to its great importance, which is covered under implicit, hidden styles, and male authority has had hegemony within human societies, due to its influence on women. The man continued to hear nothing but his voice in his dealings with the woman, by obliterating her presence and excluding her, which made her a powerless being, who had no choice but to implement the man's orders and whims without discussion because of this authoritarian view.

The novelistic text was distinguished by the presence of male characters with different cultural connotations, especially in their dealings with women (Ramada), as the image of the man (the male) differed in the novelistic text in the way of dealing with women, and this interaction's significance varied according to the social status of the male, between being a father (Father of Ramada), or a husband (Karim), or a friend and lover (Chadi), so the stylistic significance varies according to these differences.

2.2 The father and the symbols of the center's pattern:

Ramada presents herself in this novel in her own words through her shaky and tense relationship with her father, as she says: “The names of my father and grandfather do not matter, the first killed me with the knife of ignorance and strict certainty, and the second imprisoned me in a history that did nothing for me”ⁱ, and this phrase highlights the tension and crisis in the relationship between the father and his daughter, as she lived under the care of a cruel father who lacked mercy, because the coming of Remada to life is considered one of his losses, which is similar to the political loss of his Islamic party.

Ramada paints a picture of a domineering man in the person of her father, who eliminates the existence of women by marginalizing them and making himself the center. How could he not, when he considered her existence a disgrace! He had hoped to have a girl, and her presence in this life was a disappointment to his hopes, and if physical infanticide is forbidden, then the psychological distortions that this father left behind in his daughter are deeper, because these males are among the fathers who do not rejoice in females while they receive males gladly, and God mentioned them in the Qur'an, when He says: “And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief”ⁱⁱ. Surah An-Nahl - Verse 58

When Ramada reached the spring of her life, the social oppression did not stop there, as her father forced her to marry a man who differed from him only in name, because he wanted to gain the admiration of society and avoid the stigma that he believed might befall him one day and desecrate the family's honor, and this witch what Wasini Al-Araj drew through some passages of the novel, as Ramada states that when a woman reaches a certain age, she needs to bond and form a family, as studying is of no use. If she does not understand this lesson, she will lose the opportunity to bondⁱⁱⁱ, it is a marriage that resembles a buying and selling deal, with an unhappy ending, which will be bitterly bitter with her husband, Karim.

Karim is another example of the center system that dominates the female, but the father is considered the first male to throw her into this dark tunnel, as she believes that the cause of her suffering and illness is her father, who pushed her into this marriage and did not take into account its consequences^{iv}. This depicts the image of a father who is dominant and arrogant,

who refuses to ask for an apology or acknowledge his mistakes, as he insists on his daughter returning to her house, the hell into which he threw her, despite his knowledge of her suffering, and her request for help from him, he continued to be arrogant and did not show any interest in what she was suffering, rather, he sided with the other male, her husband.

Karim, male, has all the faults of the world, except that the man is not to be blamed in the eyes of the father. The father remained biased towards the husband because he is a man^v, and he continued to marginalize and exclude his daughter because she is a worthless female, as he considered her to be just a body that quenches the thirst of the man's desires under the cover of Sharia law, for justify his evasion of his responsibilities as a father in front of his persecuted and helpless daughter, who suffers in silence.

3.2. The husband, and the symbols of the center's pattern:

Karim is another image of the center system, a psychologically distressed, domineering, violent, and controlling personality. Ramada has suffered with him since her first days with him^{vi}, which justifies the extent of the psychological distress and violence that Ramada is exposed to from Karim, because he seeks to impose his logic on his female, even through severe beatings. Karim used violence against Ramada, even in a physical relationship, which was a rape of her feelings and being, before it was a rape of her body^{vii}.

The novel depicts a cruel, dominant pattern that practices all kinds of violence, embodied by Karim, and the exaggerated jealousy over Ramada stripped him of his humanity and turned him into a monster, especially as he watched her on stage greeting the musician Chadi^{viii} (the first slap on my face sounded like a piece of iron She fell on my head, then the second time I avoided her bitter hatred... I muttered as if I was drunk, what a manly woman you are, Karim... You haven't seen anything yet! You will see, you will know who Karim is... A woman who disobeys my orders has no place except... Hell, I wanted to save you from the misery of your family, and here you are returning to your animal origin..) ^{ix}. The image of the male Karim appears to the woman, who considers her merely a body to satisfy his sexual desires, and that any behavior that comes from her is considered a departure from his obedience and authority, and it is her duty as a female to obey and carry out orders, because she was created for that only. When Ramada decided to divorce, Karim began to manipulate words to deceive her and He deceived her^x, as everything Karim said was a lie to lure her to him and play on her emotions. He was seeking to exploit her and steal her right to the clinic and the house, and after he was certain of his wife's final decision to divorce him^{xi}, he did not intend to give up half of what he owned, but rather greed pushed him to do so, and as soon as his matter was revealed, he returned to his masculine tone and his tyranny that he would not give up, so he took He threatens Ramada^{xii}, and it becomes clear that he was giving her a choice between property and her freedom. When she responded to him, he approached her and practiced all kinds of physical violence on her^{xiii}, because people like him are only good at intimidation and threats, and that is his view of women, a look of contempt and abhorrent superiority^{xiv}.

3. Margin pattern:

1.3Pattern margin symbols: Ramada embodies the ideal pattern in the novel, as she lives in a state of self-alienation and social oppression with the dominant pattern embodied in the person of the father and husband, in addition to the period of the epidemic (Covid-19), which disrupted everything in the world economically, socially, and culturally, and spread a kind of lost and fear in the heart of Ramada. Therefore, we notice a change in her dealings with the strict father, the cruel husband, and the affectionate lover, and thus the writer presents to us a picture that carries multiple

images, as many situations and crises that Ramada faces in her life in her relationship with her cruel, arrogant, and strict father. Ramada appears as a helpless victim, the female who is considered a sign of disgrace to her father. How not! He was the one who was not happy about her coming to this life!^{xv} This appears when Ramada presents herself in it, which is the connection of her primary identity to the grandfather and father, as a symbol of paternity and origin, and that her image is determined by her relationship to the history of her grandfather and her father's belief, so she represents a female to a man from the beginning. It is also clear from what was mentioned previously that this relationship is based on patience with suffering, suffering that will drag her into other tragedies with another domineering central pattern, which is the husband. Ramada has a contradiction in her personality, due to the contradiction in her relationship with others. she combines submission and rebellion between calm and anger, Pain and hope, Sadness and joy^{xvi}, and we also find another feminine pattern in her relationship with a negative masculine pattern, which is her husband, Karim, who took his life, all the psychological crises and types of torment that she experienced with him, pushed her to release the anger and hatred inside her, so she described the moment of her attack on him and pushing him towards the empty space of the seventh floor^{xvii}, when Ramada did that act, she was not that compassionate female, but rather another female who combined all the contradictions, between a man who breathed life into her and pulled her out of her dark life, and a man who took away life from her and extinguished the candle of light in her heart. This pattern appears in the novel: “Whenever he draws the face of a beautiful woman, he says to her: This is you, my beloved, at one point in time, to avoid her questions: Who? And where did you know her? Is she still alive, working with you? But she contemplates the painting for a long time, placing it in front of her and behind her, and when Confronting the woman in the end, hitting her on the ground and kicking her hard, I am more beautiful than this monster you painted, her scream resounds in the salon...”^{xviii} It is clear from the clip that there is a kind of dominance that the wife imposes on her husband, because she considers herself the most beautiful and that there is no room for comparison with others, despite the harsh conditions that women lived through, which prevented them from practicing their studies, they were able to impose themselves despite marginalization^{xix}.

Here, the woman's determination and desire to succeed to prove her existence, as well as her struggle for the family, is clearly evident. The mother is all beauty, tenderness, and kindness: “The landline phone rang for the third time, and I was giving medicine to my mother, and scratching her beautiful hair, which had not lost any shine with age, how beautiful my mother is, and how calming she is, like a little doll”^{xx} Here, the beauty of the mother's hair and appearance is evident, in addition to the calmness that characterizes her, as Ramada's father considered her the only one who would be accepted as an accompaniment to his daughter^{xxi}. It is clear from the above that the woman in the Arab's subconscious is limited to protecting herself, but rather always needs support, whether it is a father or a brother, or a son^{xxii}.

We also notice the woman's (female) dominance over Bakr's father to take revenge on him, as after their separation, she entered into deep sadness, and as soon as she found the opportunity, she took revenge^{xxiii}. Here we are faced with a wife abandoned by her husband, marginalized, trying to control him, and threatening to kill his second wife if he brings her home. Her son Bakr also describes her with her tender touch and sweet scent that gives them safety and peace, she also gives them a sense of comfort and reassurance, because it is a symbol of giving without return^{xxiv}, and it is clearly shown

through the clip of the value of the mother, as she is the symbol of security, peace, and giving without return, and Bakr explains to his mother her great status as the medicine for all their problems and concerns.

The narration also shows the stepmother's dominance and tyranny, as she described her with an arrogant appearance. She also robbed the shop in which her stepdaughter put all her efforts, working hard until she reached the top, only for her father to take it by force, in addition to appointing researcher Ramada Avin Harir to the position of head of the laboratory analysis department in Pasteur Institute^{xxv}...” Here it becomes clear that a woman is not only successful at home, because her success in her work, which led her to the position of head of the laboratory analysis department, depends on the extent of her effort and desire to achieve success.

2.3 Pattern of resistance and rejection of control:

The ability to dominate in all its forms, and to control and exclude others, appears through authority created by individuals - and confronting this authority and its intransigence is a struggle to change these systems that have become entrenched in the thoughts of many individuals, it also works to marginalize all vulnerable groups in its view, which do not rise to be one of the units forming this pattern. Therefore, everyone who has authority and power tries to marginalize the party that he sees as weaker than him, because rebellion is the individual's attempt to deviate from what is familiar and common, and feel distant from reality, not obeying the prevailing customs and traditions, and rejection and hatred, and hostility to all the values and standards surrounding the individual²⁶.

In the novel “Ramada Nights,” Ramada is considered an example of a pattern of resistance and rejection of control, which confirms her steadfastness and strength in the face of a centralized, authoritarian pattern that exercises all kinds of domination over women. Despite everything she suffered in a society that led her according to her whims and suppressed her will, she did not surrender and rejected all forms of control exercised over her. The husband, Karim, turned Ash from a woman full of life into an extinguished woman, and despite all the tragedies, she remained resistant, rejecting the control that carries so much injustice. She decided to change her life herself^{xxvi}. Here, the strength of the will is clearly visible to face the challenges of life, which was harsh with Ramada and was never fair to her, she did not stand idly by, but rather strove hard to change her bitter reality. Ramada talked to us about Karim's cruelty to her, saying: “I pulled my arm from his violent grip and looked at him violently, and I was ready to defend myself if he raised his hand on me^{xxvii}”.

We note that “Ramada” would have responded violently to “Karim.” Despite her weak body, she was strong on the inside, rejecting all kinds of injustice practiced on her by her husband, who described her as an animal, she responded to him with blood on her face with the same description he described her with^{xxviii}, as she says it forcefully, waiting for his reaction. The pattern of resistance and refusal to control is evident through Ramada's intelligent dealings with her husband, Karim, who gave her the choice between her right to life and housing in exchange for her divorce and freedom, and all of this was through trickery and sometimes violence.

Here we see the strong presence of “Ramada”, a resistant voice rejecting a deceitful husband who wants to rob her of everything she owns in exchange for her freedom, she faced him with all strength and courage, and the way she faced her husband was similar to the way she faced her father when she decided to divorce without accepting his response. The awareness she achieved made her no longer need a guardian, as happened on the day of the decision to force her to marry^{xxix}.

We also notice the pattern of resistance and refusal to control in this achievement, through Ramada’s mother and the strength of the character of the resistant woman, who fought for her family, cared for her children, and defended her husband when he was imprisoned^{xxx}. Here, a confident, defiant woman appears by talking about her relationship with her father, who abused her to please his wife^{xxxi}, because the father’s treatment of his daughter with all violence to please his wife distorted his daughter’s psyche and affected her, because he believed his wife and did not believe his daughter, with whom he lived for years, and this was out of revenge against her^{xxxii}. Proper upbringing makes brothers helpful to each other in facing the vicissitudes and cruelty of life, and this is what we see in Ramada’s relationship with her sister Bahar, as she did not want to see her image in her sister, that image that she always sought to change for the better by avoiding and Resisting all kinds of injustice imposed on her. Accordingly, it is clear from their conversation that they exchanged roles, where the dominant became submissive and the submissive became dominant. In the beginning, the father married his daughter forcibly and without her consent by silencing her voice, excluding her, and only informing her, while in the event of divorce, the daughter contents herself with informing her father of her decision without taking his opinion or position on it.

3.3The pattern of fear and defeat between a futile life and the obsession with death:

Man is distinguished by his mind and perception as a human being, and if the controls of reason and perception were loosened, he would fall into a labyrinth from which there is no way out, as the law of the jungle prevails in society and the strong devour the weak, accordingly, controls were created to enact laws for this society that may make an individual feel satisfied or uncomfortable^{xxxiii}. This pattern is an image that is contrary to the first pattern, the pattern of resistance and refusal to control, where “Ramada” appears to us in the image of the victimized woman who combines the duality of defeat and fear, she is defeated between strict fatherhood and a cruel husband with whom she experienced all kinds of injustice and tyranny, and she is afraid in the midst of a world threatened by the (Covid 19) epidemic, which has claimed the lives of many people, and life has become absurd for “Ramada,” a meaningless life.

We see the image of defeat and fear in every letter that Ramada writes to her beloved Chadi, defeat and fear of a new epidemic (Covid-19), which came to prove to the world that it is stronger than its tyranny, to bring down the curtain on the fragility of institutions that could not withstand it. The novel leads us to a pattern of defeat and weakness, because no matter how strong a person is during the stages of his life, there come periods when he is unable to face the vicissitudes of life. “Ramada” says: “Fear and the cries of the dead will wake up because of Covid, here and there you will know that someone has died^{xxxiv}. Once again, she sees that her memory is freed from all its burdens, and she does not know why, during this suffocating isolation that carries with it the smells of death, and the person suddenly becomes light, like a feather played by the wind, or a yellow leaf in an old book, weightless, like a soft cloud, the smell of death has become fact^{xxxv}! “This is how the pattern of defeat and fear is depicted to us, the failure of man to resist the powerful nature.

Thus, Covid-19 exposed institutions, revealed their flaws, and responded to various speeches that claimed power, while thousands of people die every day due to this new epidemic. Ramada says: “The whole world is on alert imposed by the pandemic to

learn that it is small in front of nature, as it is nothing in front of its power and greatness, but it does not learn! It will return to its small nature as soon as Covid withdraws, even if just a little^{xxxvi}”.

Through the above, we realize the fragility of man in the face of the power of nature, as a virus that cannot be seen with the eye was able to upend his life and make him live in a spiral of fear and panic. Ramada had a bitter experience with COVID, because every day she saw it stealing thousands of patients and neighbors, and even her lover, “Chadi”, was not spared from it, his distance from her put her into a spiral of fear for him and longing for him, as she could not check on him due to the quarantine procedures imposed globally. She says: “I felt the ground shifting under my feet, while my throat suddenly dried up and I became dizzy. Why did you do this, God? You gave us love and we lived it as you commanded, so why “Chadi” specifically? I wished to scream to wake up the fifty million residents of Koviland, but I could not, my tongue stopped^{xxxvii}..” In this clip, we see the depth of the psychological crisis and loss that Ramada feels due to her lover Chadi’s infection with Covid.

There is another image of defeat and submission, embodied by “Ramada”, as she accepts to marry “Karim”, who was forced upon her under the coercive authority of her father, without considering her opinion^{xxxviii}.. “This “Karim” was not a dentist, but rather a simple administrator in the dentist’s clinic.. “, when the father learned of this, he did not feel embarrassed as he handed over his weak daughter to the future man without knowing his profession^{xxxix}”. The pattern of defeat and fear is also embodied in what “Ramada” and her husband suffered from beatings, insults, and rape under the guise of marital authority, which lacked respect and understanding between any normal couple^{xl}.

She also says: “Karim killed me, and beat me until it became difficult for me to bear anymore, so I would never get up^{xli}”. Because of this beating, Ramada speaks of her collapse and psychological crisis, saying: “In that exact second, the second of the insult... everything in me that I had maintained under compulsion was killed from the damage..., even my spontaneity and childhood.. It scared me of myself...something deep was broken in me, and I was not able to recover it^{xlii}..”

The clip depicted for us the extent of orphanhood and the psychological fragility and defeatism that Ramada experiences due to her husband’s treatment, as he turned her into a lifeless corpse without a soul and stole her life^{xliii}. Her life became hell, with constant beatings and humiliation, which made her refuse to return to her marital home. How can she come back when she raped herself and her body! He turned her into a ferocious monster that eventually claimed his life. This pattern appears in the narrator’s statement: “He told her, ‘You have Covid and you must separate, she did not discuss it with him, she was convinced by what he said, my sister and me tried to do something, but to no avail’^{xliv}..”

The women suffer from defeatism and submission in the Arab world due to the fragility of socialization within the family^{xlv}. Here we see the weakness and fragility of a woman without a man, as he abandoned her due to an illness that did not afflict her, left her despite her chronic illnesses, and did not care about her. He says: “I do not know what to say, how I wish I could only sleep for a long time, and not wake up until after this dark cloud has cleared, which covers all possible joy and happiness... I wish I could fall asleep, and when I wake up, I find Zahra with her graceful smile, and she extends her hand to me so that I place it on my head, which is about to explode, and on my tired heart^{xlvi}”.

The clip depicts for us the daughter's tragedy after her mother's death, as her passing made her lose the meaning of life and stole everything from her. Her body became weak and her psyche suffered^{xlvii}. We see this through the father's defeat in the face of his illness. He was exhausted and could no longer hide his pain because of the symptoms, and even the results of the tests were negative. He says: “Bakr was crying, and his tears preceded him even though he made an effort to hide them... I began breathing with difficulty, and he continued his miserable calls: No, mother - please, not now^{xlviii}...” The death made Aziz lose the meaning of life, even though death is the fate of all human beings in the end, as the loss of the mother put the son into a severe psychological crisis, because she was his safe haven, containing him with her love and compassion. She died because of his father's injustice and cruelty to her. He also says: “I was hoping that everything would be silent quickly, even the silence is heavy, so I could run towards my house as quickly as possible and cry without stopping because sleep is my only way to avoid hearing something that would burn my heart^{xlix}...” The death of Professor Hebrej destroyed what remained of hope for Ramada, as he supported her with his guidance when he saw life failing her day after day.

4 Conclusion:

The novel *Ramada Nights* was based on many hidden cultural patterns, under the guise of artistic beauty, and contained a group of opposing dualities such as center and margin, resistance and defeat, and this is due to the burden of the theme. This work also showed feminine patterns that seek to escape the superiority of the male personality, which works to establish the authority to rule and influence women, as it exposes the truth in change and openness towards them, as well as an attempt by them to prove their influence in society, rejecting male authority based on breaking the barrier of customs and traditions.

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^{vii} *Ibid.*, p. .14

^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. .55

^{ix} *Ibid.*, p. .24

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^{xiii} Ibid., p. 13.

^{xiv} Ibid., p. 15.

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