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Option: Literature

Violence and Trauma in Hafid Gafaiti's

The Slit Throat of the Sun and The Return of the Damned

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Dedication

I dedicate this modest work:

To my homeland Algeria, the warmest womb

To those whose lives have been forever altered by war.

To the dearest persons in my life:

My parents;

My sisters: Naima, Basma, and Samia

To all those who supported me and to whom i owe a debt of gratitude.

Gouadria Ouarda.

I dedicate this humble research:

To my parents: mother Habiba and father Messaoud

To my brothers: Amine, Hama, and Billel

To my sisters: Reem and Wafa.

To all my respected teachers and classmates

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Abstract

The present dissertation examines the depiction of violence and trauma in Hafid Gafaiti's *The Slit Throat of the Sun* (2006) and *The Return of the Damned* (2007). The two collections deal with the most violent events of 1990s in post-colonial Algeria; a period commonly labeled the black decade. This period was highly characterized by the rise of the tension between the rebel Islamist groups and the government. The dissertation offers a definition of violence and trauma and especially in relation to literature, with a special attention to Algerian literary works. It also attempts to provide a historical overview of the black decade and its influence on Algerian literature before it focuses on the Gafaiti's works. The study contends that poet succeeds in inscribing violence and trauma through the use of paratextual and textual elements.

Key terms: Violence, trauma, exile, black decade, Hafid Gafaiti, *The Slit Throat of the Sun*, *The Return of the Damned*.

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Introduction

During the 1990s, Algeria witnessed a period that was characterized by blood, violence and terror; a period marked by the rise of an armed conflict between the government and the Islamist groups. It was mainly referred to as the Black decade. Consequently, this has changed Algerian literary sphere in a number of ways. Several writers, intellectuals and journalists found themselves challenged by the conflict and accordingly tackled this issue in their writings. Regarding the context, they were put in a situation that forced them to choose between whether to remain silent, to write and die, or to be exiled. Despite risks, Algerian writers kept publishing mainly in French or in Arabic, the two dominant languages when it comes to literary production.

Among these writers who felt the need to write about the horror of the black decade is Hafid Gafaiti who, in a way or another, saw the urgency to address it as a major concern. Among his noteworthy contributions are the two bilingual collections of poetry: *The Slit Throat of the Sun* (2006) and *The Return of the Damned* (2007). The collections denounce forms of violence, power struggles, exile, despair, trauma, and loss. It is worth mentioning that Algerian anglophone literary productions received little critical reception. So, it remained minor in contrast to arabophone and francophone texts. Simultaneously, while critical attention was mainly on prose, with novels and short stories taking the lion's share little was written about poetry. In this respect, there was a huge lack of scholarship on Hafid Gafaiti's two collections that the current study attempts to analyze. Thus, the research comes then as a small contribution to the field.

The current study relies on trauma theory and stylistics. It aims at analyzing violence and trauma in the two collections of poetry. The two notions are widely

discussed in the academic and literary field. Particularly, in Algerian literature as they reflect on the Algerian socio-political reality in its most violent decade that inflicted deep psychological trauma on those who survived. As well as, it portrays the notion of violence as a primary cause for exile. In doing so, it examines how the paratextual and textual elements used by Gafaiti in his two collections reinforce the themes.

The present dissertation will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will provide a theoretical framework and overview of the main notions that will be discussed in this research. First, it will highlight the different definitions of violence and trauma. Hence, violence can be defined as the use of physical force to hurt others that lead to serious psychological problems. While trauma is seen as the dreadful events that cause harmful effects on the individual's psyche. It is worth noting that this chapter will pay attention to theme of exile as one of the prominent results of the traumatic violent events. In addition, it will deal with the application of these two notions in the literary field with special focus on Algerian literature.

The second chapter will focus on the black decade from context to text. It will be divided into three sections; the first will deal with a brief historical overview on the reasons and results of the black decade in attempt to understand its nature and ambiguity. The second section will be directed to la littérature de l'urgence, it will discuss the major literary works written during and about the dark decade. The third chapter will be devoted to post black decade literature; it will shed light on Algerian literary works that depicted the violence of the civil war in attempt to speak the unspeakable and as a way to heal their wounds.

The third chapter will analyze Hafid Gafaiti's *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned*. It will be divided into two parts. The first will deal with

analyzing the paratextual elements such as the title, the intertitles, dedication; epigraphs and the cover in relation to the theme of violence, trauma and exile. The second part will focus on analyzing the textual elements and how they contribute in developing the mentioned themes.

Chapter One: Writing Violence and Trauma in Literature

This chapter is a theoretical overview of violence and trauma in literature. It is divided into two sections. The first one examines the different definitions of violence and trauma. It attempts to tackle them from political, psychological and philosophical perspectives. The second section explores the implication of violence and trauma in literature. It highlights the major literary works that addressed these two notions.

I. 1. Defining Violence

It is argued that violence has no clear meaning and cannot be limited to only one definition as it conveys several interpretations. However, the most frequent understanding of violence is to see it from the point of using power and physical force to hurt people. Therefore, much focus was put upon this notion.

In “The Idea of Violence”, C. A. J. Coady argues that one of its most usual definitions is to consider it as an act that leads to physical damage. It refers to the use of force in order to harm, humiliate and destroy others (195). Also, Miller Ronald B points out “Relating violence to an intentional act of excessive force is intuitively appealing, but on further reflection there appears to be an underlying problem with any attempt to define violence in terms of force” (qtd. in Buffacchi 196). At this stage in its particular usage violence means force, and it has direct relationship to aggression.

Meanwhile, violence can not only be defined in terms of force but also in the sense of violation. In “Two Concepts of Violence”, Vittorio Buffacchi claims “apart from its affinity with the notion of force. Violence can also be conceptualized in terms of the verb ‘to violate’, meaning to infringe, or to transgress, or to exceed some limit or norm” (197), accordingly seeing violence as a frightful exercise leads to what is known

as ‘minimalist conceptions’ of violence. Whereas, seeing it as violation, is considered ‘comprehensive conceptions’ of violence (198).

In “Violence as Essentially Contested Concept”, Willem De Haan examines how violence can be a serious problem in the sense that most of people don’t realize the fact that they should take it into account since all humans may encounter this issue during their life. However there is always a sort of misunderstanding in finding an appropriate definition (27). Furthermore, he explains two different connotations of violence depending on several contributions of researchers and their studies. In this regard, the first connotation of violence is tied up to its common meaning; to abuse others using power. However, the second definition which is tends to broaden the notion of violence to physical and psychological hurt (30).

In addition, Willem argues that violence can be understood in a different way when it comes to see it from a philosophical perspective (34). Also, he believes that violence has several kinds and forms such as political violence and each one appears in a different context, he states “violence can be physical (‘aggression’, ‘abuse’ or ‘assault’), but it can also be verbal (‘bullying’, ‘humiliation’, or ‘intimidation’)”(28).

In “Thinking Clearly about Violence”, Allan Back argues “an action is violent in this basic sense when it is aggressive” (224). He attempts to reveal the concept of violence and relating it to “aggression”, he states “aggression is forcefulness plus intention” (223). The author tries to clarify that not every aggressive act should be considered as ethically wrong, because there are some situations that demand to act violently such as in the case of self-defense. Back claims:

Aggression has the connotation of seeking to do something for the sake of the aggressor at the expense of the one being attacked. I suggest that we exclude

this connotation from the definition of aggression in order to avoid making every act of aggression be morally wrong by the fiat of definition. It might be that aggression is generally wrong. For an aggressive act, when successful, typically causes its recipient harm. Yet, this should require argument and may have exceptions (221)

As a result, among the many conceptions of violence one cannot find an agreeable definition of this notion. Accordingly, The World Health Organization suggests that violence is not restricted to a specific base but to one's own opinion and cultural perspectives (4). Also, it defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation"(4). Thus this connotation covers what was mentioned in each one of the previous definitions. It's worth mentioning that one of the main profound negative results of violence is trauma.

I. 2. Defining Trauma

Trauma is a concept that cannot be defined easily. Hence, it usually occurs due to the stressful events that took place during people's daily life. Accordingly, a special attention has been paid upon this notion in order to clarify its meaning.

The Center for Post Traumatic Mental Health defined trauma as experiencing a serious accident, a physical assault, war, a natural disaster, sexual assault or abuse (1). In this sense, trauma refers to physical hurt. However, this damage will lead to psychological wound. As a consequence, trauma is not only a physical harm but also a psychological one. Also, in *The Fifth Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, D' ell Osso and A Rossi point out "trauma is when the person experienced,

witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others”(86). In general, people who experience traumatic events will likely be overwhelmed. In this way, The Center for Post Traumatic Mental Health states:

Traumatic events are often overwhelming. This can make it hard for people who have been through a traumatic event to think through and come to terms with what has happened. The experience is likely to be very different from anything they have gone through before. It can be hard to make sense of what happened, and sometimes it makes people doubt things that they have always believed. For instance, after a traumatic event a person might no longer believe that the world is safe place, that people are generally good, or that they are in control of what happens to them (1).

Moreover, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) argues “an individual trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well being”(6). In this sense, the individual who experiences traumatic situations will likely being disabled to cope with the world, he will have a severe negative impacts on his psyche.

Further, in “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning”, Hirschberger points out “collective trauma can be experienced by a whole society and it mirrors itself through psychological responses that impact people on a broader range” (1). In this regard, a group of community may witness traumatic events such as war, terrorism, natural disasters, etc. they will often be overwhelmed by this incident. Also,

Bulman states that collective trauma is devastating for individuals and for groups; it constitutes a cataclysmic event that affects not only direct victims, but society as a whole (qtd. in Hirshberger 3). Thus, collective trauma represents in the negative psychological change that affects a group of people who have been exposed to the same traumatic events.

Moreover, in “The Time of Trauma: Rereading Unclaimed Experience and Testimony”, Petar Ramadanovic argues “trauma connotes a disruption of the continuity between the present and the past” (2). In this sense, the process of rehabilitation requires the traumatized person to take a pause so that he can realize what he has been going through. Additionally, James Berger in *Trauma and Literary Theory* explains the importance of trauma as a notion that can help in the forming of a new literary theory; it has a pivotal role in the historical field (573). He states “...trauma also allows for an interpretation of cultural symptoms of the growths, wounds, scars on a social body, and its compulsive, repeated actions” (574).

To conclude, all the above mentioned definitions see trauma as a dreadful events that manifests itself in people’s life and it has severe negative effects on them. Yet, it should be noted that due its harmful impacts some traumatized people may not recover in a short period of time. Hence, they will be disabling to cope with this issue. So, violence and trauma are among the prominent notions that were highly discussed by many researchers and were mostly implicated in the literary works.

I. 3. Violence in literature

Violence has always been portrayed in literary works, and each writer depicts it in a different way. Generally, war is the common element that comprises violent scenes and was depicted powerfully by authors. Hence, literature proved to be the suitable tool

that strongly records the human tragic experiences and demonstrates such issues, thus much emphasis was put upon the notion of violence.

In “Violence in Literature: an Evolutionary Perspective”, Joseph Carroll argues that many writers tackle the notion of violence in order to understand more about the human nature. However, since people do not share the same concerns, this will make it difficult to absorb the motives behind using violence. As a matter of fact, writing violence will show the way people behave and demonstrate their real human self (1). Additionally, the author states:

Violence in literature has no inherent valence or significance. Violence can be heroic, triumphant, cruel, vicious, or fertile and ineffectual. The value attached to any particular instance of violence derives from occasions and circumstances, the motives of characters, the author’s attitude toward the depicted characters, the author’s general outlook on life, and the responses of readers (3).

Given that sense, Carroll attempts to reveal the truth about the referentiality of violence because it has no specific permanent reason and it could be for good or bad intentions. Violence in literary works depends on the writer’s principles and experiences that are clearly reflected in the characters.

Moreover, In “The Extremes Conflict in Literature: Violence, Homicide and War”, Carroll emphasizes on the pivotal role played by literature in depicting real life events in a particular way and constitutes an important part in understanding violence (413). Also, he writes “Much of the violence outside the family circle, in literature as in life, is largely instrumental in character. People harm or kill others to defend themselves or their family and friends, to obtain money or other resources, or to remove an obstacle to social ambitions” (424).

Generally, war is presented as a form of collective violence and ultimately it has been portrayed in literature for several times as it has devastated results on humanity. Authors were influenced by wars; as a result the literary production has evolved. Among the events that motivated them to write about it is the civil war. For instance, in the case of Algeria, Yasmina Khadra is considered as one of the major figures who strongly portrayed the violence of the civil war. In “Quelques Aspects de L’écriture de la Violence dans Le Roman *L’Attentat*”, Radulescu states:

Très ancrés dans l’actualité, les romans de Yasmina Khadra (pseudonyme de Mohammed Moulessehoul) n’y font pas exception: *Les Agneaux du Seigneur* (1998) et *A quoi rêvent les loups* (1995) sont inspirés par “l’explosion de la violence qui dépasse l’entendement” (Bonn 1999, 5, cité par Daoud 2012, 96), due aux intégristes islamistes, qui a marqué l’Algérie au début de la décennie (31).

In addition, writing violence follows certain aspects. As Radulescu states “écrire la violence n’est ni une fin en soi, ni un exercice de style gratuit. Cela exige une implication affective et intellectuelle particulière de celui qui s’attache à la décrire, fut il historien ou auteur de fiction” (34). In this regard, depiction of violence in literature is not an easy task. It demands exceptional efforts to spot the causes and motives behind the violent acts.

Further, in her essay “*A Quoi Rêvent Les Loups* de l’animal et de l’humain selon Khadra”, Michèle Chossat points out that Khadra was not the first writer who examined the notion of violence but he attempted to exhibit it in the context of the civil war (150). Therefore, among these writers who dealt with the theme of violence is

Assia Djebar. As in her essay *Le blanc de L'Algérie*, she mainly depicts the bloody conflict of the civil war.

In “Homeland beyond Homelands: Reinventing Algeria through a Transnational Literary Community”, Alexandra Gueydan-Turek claims “Published in 1995, Djebar’s seminal work on Algeria’s civil war, *Le blanc de L'Algérie*, seemingly assumes the same project of witnessing the sufferings of the Algerian people, yet it does so in a drastically different manner”. Simultaneously, Djebar’s depictions of the series of assassinations against the Algerian intellectuals in her essay exhibit the political violence that creates the complex situation lived by Algerian (86).

Generally, crime is considered as a form of violent act and it has been even portrayed in literature, the characters play as detectives to investigate about criminals and to solve crimes. This genre of literature is called “crime fiction”. In his article “crime fiction: a global phenomena”, Bill Philips states “...Crime narratives seem to have existed around the world for a long time. In Arabic cultures they can be traced back to the twelfth century (ibid, 146)”. The universality of this genre can be justified in trying to find facts about the reasons behind murdering, also to extract the possible ways to achieve equity and stability in the world (6).

Moreover, in “The Heroine’s Violent Compromise: Two Fairy Tales by Madame d’Aulnoy”, Marcy Farrell asserts that the depiction of violence took place in the literature of fairy tales where the authors invented characters that plays as perpetrators of violent acts, these fairy tales gained much popularity. She mentions a notable work of fairy tales that employed violence. Accordingly, she states “most of the authors of these tales were aristocratic women, although Charles Perrault was a notable exception. Marie Catherine d’Aulnoy, the best known and most prolific of the

Conteuses, weaves various kinds of violence in her tales” (27), also Farrel states “Fairy tales typically revolve around a protagonist who suffers unjustly at the hands of others. As a number of scholars have pointed out, even fairy tales that purport to be simple children’s stories frequently involve remarkable acts of viciousness and cruelty” (28)

To sum up, many conflicts happen in the world and ultimately literature works as a mirror to reflect them. It has an influential part in portraying the events experienced by authors. From which, they attempted to reveal the truth and nature of conflicts. In addition, their remarkable works were mainly focused on giving full image on violence. They felt the need to reflect on the violent events in order to change the socio-political stance.

I.4. Trauma in Literature

Trauma was nearly discussed in many works of literature; it is represented as a social dilemma that concerned writers all over the world. Since, they had encountered traumatic experiences. They saw the need to reflect upon it so that their wounds may be healed.

In “Art as Narrative: Recounting Trauma through Literature”, Sadiya Abubakar argues that after trauma had much interest in the scientific sphere, it shortly took place in the literary field. In this respect, she states “Trauma has as well being one way or another, prevalent in all forms of literature. It surfaces as the shady part of all narratives that tell of a history, memoir, agonies and sorrows of the writers” (120), also she confirms that the purpose behind trauma narratives is to show how traumatic experiences affect the social relationships. Accordingly, Abubakar explains this disruption by stating “Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the

opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience" (120).

In many respect, in "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered", Michelle Balaev highlights that a new field of study has emerged called "trauma studies". It concerns itself on the notion of trauma and to reveal the traumatic experiences (1). Additionally, Caruth states "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (qtd. in Craps and Buelens 2). This explains that depiction of the traumatic events will likely generate a new cultural consistency. In addition, in "decolonizing trauma studies", Sonya Andermahr states:

The field of trauma studies emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation. Born out of the confluence between deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism and the study of holocaust literature, from its outset trauma theory's mission was to bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to attend to the suffering of the other (1)

Collective trauma is the result of some tragic events that happened in the world. It was dramatically reflected in literary works since authors were deeply affected by these events. Among these horrific experiences is the civil war. In this respect, the reaction towards this incident was and is still manifested in literature. Accordingly, Erin Peters states "traumatic events and experiences, such as the civil wars, become incorporated on a collective scale into narrative and memories of the nations past, influencing the manner in which they are represented in the present, and consequently the effect they have on the collective's conceptions of their present identities". ("Trauma Narratives of the English Civil War"86)

Further, Stracy L. Strauss states “the portrayal of trauma’s human wounds drenches particular works of civil war literature and film, in which traumatic acts taking place upon nature’s land reverberate to the core of human nature causing characters both close to and distant from such events to display the behavioral dialect of trauma” (“Trauma’s Dialectic in Civil War Literature and Film” 206), also she mentions a number of works that dealt with trauma as a central theme among them are “Ambrose Bierce’s mid-to-late 1880s *Civil War Stories*, Herman Melville’s *Battle Pieces* and *Aspects of the War* (1866), and Louisa May Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches* (1863)”(206-207).

In the same context, one can see the extent to which terror has damaged the Algerian’s psyche in some of Algerian literary works. As in “writing beyond trauma: Assia Djebar, Maïssa Bey, and new national identities after Algeria’s civil war”, Meriem Belkaid comments “Literary text published by Algerians through the ‘dark years’ have been characterized by scholars like Christine Achour or Benjamin Stora as produced ‘in a state of urgency’, as reactive responses to a chaotic reality” (128). In this regard, Algerian writers attempted to exhibit the traumatic experience in terms of speaking the unspeakable and to expose the readers to the profound impact of this incident. Among these writers is Maïssa Bey (130), also Belkaid states “ In bey’s fiction, words and literature become a tool for working through the effects of trauma by showing how ineffable it is , both as silence and an unarticulated screams”(130).

In “Literature and Traumas: the Narrative of Algerian War in *Un regard blessé* of Rabah Belamri and *La Malédiction* of Rachid Mimouni”, Françoise Sule and Christophe Permat argue that another very important literary works that dealt with the issue of trauma in relation to the Algerian war are Rabah Belamri’s *Un Regard*

Blessé and Rachid Mimouni's *La Malédiction*. These two main novels examine the notion of trauma. The two authors tried to expose the readers to ("re-members history"). Also, it should be noted that in one hand, Belamri's novel depicts the Algerian war before the independence in a few months. In the other hand, Mimouni's work tackles the Algerian civil war (66). Accordingly, in both novels "The past and the future are linked together: the injuries of the war and the post war reconstruction partly determine the way the country can rebuild a collective project literature re-members culture as it points out the dark side of the Algerian history, it makes the readers understand the current situation and the heritage of the past" (77).

To conclude, the particularity in portraying the notion of violence and trauma in literature reveals the fact that the writers inscribe them in a different manner. In the sense that both of the concepts are depicted through the violent events and the miserable conditions that endure the characters in their lives. Also, these two notions are depicted through the sense of disillusionment felt by authors and deeply reflected in their works.

Chapter two: The Black Decade from Context to Text

The second chapter focuses on the black decade in its relation with the literary production. It is divided into three sections. The first one will attempt to introduce the black decade, its historical background and political development. The second one will be devoted to what is labeled 'La littérature de l'urgence', hence it will shed light on this newly different literature that contributed largely in the diversity of the literary production in Algeria. It will also focus on the term urgency and how it was rejected by most of the Algerian intellectuals and writers. Then, this second section will tackle the major literary works that were written during and about the Algerian civil war. The third and last section will focus on the examination of Algerian literature written after and about the black decade.

II.1. The black decade

The black decade, which refers to the 1990s, remains one of the most tragic crises that Algeria experienced. Due to the fact that it took place in recent time and there were no definite answers for the responsible ones for this tragic period, so it remains ambiguous and difficult to understand. As Olga Yoldi states "the civil war in Algeria shows no sign of imminent resolution. Yet, little has been written about one of the modern history's most savage and incomprehensible civil wars, its brutality remains undiminished" ("Algeria and the Making of the Civil War" 1). Thus, a special attention needs to be put upon this period both in the historical field and in literature.

As a matter of fact, the conflict took place between the Algerian government and the Islamist rebel groups. The conflict that lasted ten years was characterized by

blood and violence; decade of terror and religious fanaticism. The French historian Benjamin Stora described the Algerian civil war as “La guerre invisible”. He states “ Tout au long des années 1990, la situation algérienne a donc souvent été évoquée comme une “ tragédie à huis clos” en l’absence d’images”(9). This explains that it is hard to identify the responsible ones for the violent attacks, and what is really apparent is that many people were killed. Accordingly, he writes:

L'invisibilité de cette guerre vient aussi de son impossible identification à l'un ou à l'autre des acteurs qui s'affrontent féroce. Et comment trouver la « majorité silencieuse» qui résiste au monde truqué qui l'entoure? Lorsque le voile se lève parfois, apparaissent les récits et les images d'une incroyable violence, donnant de ce conflit de l'extrême fin du XXe siècle l'aspect d'un cloaque se transformant en tableau non figuratif (9).

However, the invisibility of the Algerian civil war is not solely related to the difficulty of identifying the responsible ones for the attacks, but also to naming this tragedy. In a way that some Algerian political figures refused to label this event as civil war (14). Nevertheless, Stora sees that the suitable name is “la guerre civile” because of the fact that many civilians died. He states:

Le fait est que ce conflit a causé la mort de plus de 100 000 personnes. En cela, il s’agit bien d’une “ guerre contre les civils”. Cette querelle sémantique est révélatrice des difficultés à cerner les origines, la nature et les buts de cette guerre. Le caractère invisible de la guerre vient aussi de ce trouble à lui donner un nom précis(15).

Moreover, in “The Sustainability of Post Colonial Development: The Case of Algeria” Mourad and Avery assert “The real violence began in March 1992, when

armed groups started to attack police officers. By June 1993, FIS could control some areas and launched further attacks, which resulted in further targeting of civilians, especially journalists and intellectuals” (2). The influence of the socio-economic trends on Algeria has been marked variedly through what Collier and Hoeffler has stated “civil wars have been more likely to occur in low-income countries experiencing demographic pressures, an argument that could be applied to the case of Algeria” (qtd. in Mourad and Avery 4)

However, many researchers and studies have provided other several factors that helped in the rise of the conflict and cost the country many damages. One of these reasons is the nature of the Algerian political system. As Anissa Daoudi explains that the other major factor that overwhelmed the situation is related to the fact that “the educational system was supposedly being arabized, but in reality, the administrative sectors remained largely francophone, which meant that as far as jobs were concerned, the priority was given to those who could communicate with the external world” (“Algerian Women and the Traumatic Decade” 43).

Additionally, understanding the black decade requires knowing its profound results that inflicted deep wounds in the memories of the Algerian people and this is due to the huge number of massacres committed by the attackers during that time. In her report “the Massacres in Algeria, 1992 -2004”, Salima Mellah stresses the idea that the series of attacks started from 1992 and increased sharply to 1997, “hundreds of people died, but many of those responsible for their assassination remained unknown. For instance, the murder of the renowned journalist and writer Tahar Djaout on 26 May 1993 was attributed to no less than five armed groups, and the truth was never

determined”(8). In addition, testimonies of the survivors provide very important insights and divergent accounts of the massacres. Yoldi states:

While the body count continues to rise, the war remains shrouded in a haze of uncertainty and lack of information. The violence, which has often targeted intellectuals and foreigners, has also driven the international press out of the country. But the massacres of civilians during the summer of 1997 focused the world community’s attention for the first time on the secret tragedy going on in Algeria between the islamists and the military regime (1).

Along with this and in the same way, it was very difficult to get the testimonies of the witnesses who survived from the attacks. Mellah writes:

Those who in the wake of the massacres tried to gather survivor’s testimonies were repressed. For instance, the author of an article published in the Algerian daily *EL Watan* was interrogated at length by the police... The surviving witnesses for their parts were put under tremendous pressure: they were threatened while at the same time being offered material benefits (20).

Furthermore, in “Algeria Twenty Years on: Words Do not Die”, Karima Bennoune argues that during the 1990’s there were a wave of assassinations and attacks committed by the extremist terrorists against the writers, journalists, and intellectuals among them is Tahar Djaout “On May 26, 1993, one of Algeria’s greatest writers, Tahar Djaout, was gunned down leaving his apartment (...) and been an eloquent critic of both the country’s government and its vicious fundamentalists”(Bennoune). In addition, she adds that the reason behind this series of assassination is “to quash their resistance, and silence its expression. Yet, others continued to stand up”, the struggle against fundamentalism was based on the idea that whether the intellectuals criticize the

situation or they remain silent the extremists will surely kill them (Bennoune).

Commenting on this situation, Stora writes:

L'année 1993 apparaît vraiment comme celle de l'embrasement. Elle restera dans les mémoires comme l'année des assassinats perpétrés par les nouveaux mouvements islamistes, les GIA, le FIDA ou le MEL. Ils revendiquent les assassinats, par balles ou égorgement (et même décapitation), contre des intellectuels et des personnalités politiques et syndicales. Périront ainsi l'universitaire Djilali Liabès le 16 mars, l'écrivain Tahar Djaout le 26 mai, le psychiatre Mahfoud Boucebcı le 15 juin, l'universitaire M'Hamed Boukhobza égorgé chez lui devant sa famille le 21 juin, le poète Youcef Sebti retrouvé assassiné dans sa chambre le 28 décembre (20-21).

Henceforth, this series of assassinations that particularly targeted the intellectuals were claimed by the terrorist groups. Despite these terrible circumstances, the intelligentsia continued the struggle. Their only purpose was to reject injustice and to raise awareness among Algerians. It is true that their circumstances were different from each other, in a way that some of them were forced to leave the country and others remained.

To sum up, the ambiguity of the Algerian civil war needed much critical attention; that is why it becomes one of the controversial topics discussed in the historical field. Its cruelty and brutality lie in the inexplicable acts of violence experienced by Algerian people. It is considered as a main theme examined and portrayed in Algerian literary works. Thus, it contributed in the diversity of the literary production in Algeria as it will be discussed in the next part.

II.2. La Littérature de L'Urgence

In light of the political changes in Algeria throughout the 1990s, the Algerian literary stream witnessed a different path that was especially marked by the rise of works of literature that carried images of violence and terrorism. Algerian writers felt the urgency to tackle what was happening. The literary works produced at that period are usually referred to as “la littérature de l’Urgence”. Thus, out of this wind of change in Algeria a large emphasis was put upon these issues in the literary field.

The Algerian civil conflict has been the defining context of a large number of literary works that have been published successively since the 1990s in an attempt to analyze its political trends and to reveal its results. In an article entitled “Algiers, Paris, New York: Migrating Terror”, Joseph Ford states:

A range of testimonial literature, more widely known as an ‘écriture de l’urgence’ was published throughout this period by Algerians in Paris, in what Charles Bonn and Naget Khadda have called the ‘retour du référent’... In a highly referential and realist style, this literature sought to document the daily lived horrors of the conflict which claimed the lives of up to 200,000 people (10).

In another paper entitled “Rethinking Urgence: Algerian francophone Literature after the ‘décennie noire’”, Ford demonstrates the idea that the literature written during and about the black decade was classified in the emergency literature; these writings highly described the terror of the civil war. Additionally, describing this body of writing Ford states that these works were “framed by publishers and the press as fictional writing, novels, or testimony (and sometimes as all three), writings depicting the horrors and atrocities of Algeria’s ‘décennie noire’ or civil war” (41). Writings of the 1990’s were highly criticized due to the fact that they were considered as

testimonies for the purpose of recording the events of the black decade, Stora comments:

Around one hundred books of ‘*temoignage*’ were published during the 1990’s. While some have argued this testimonial writing of the 1990s constitutes a kind of ‘hiatus’ in Algerian literary production, it seems possible that the 1990s became a period of intensifying thematic readings of the post colonial novel where literature had come to act as an affirmative statement (qtd. in Joseph Ford 42).

It is worth noting that putting Algerian literary works within the so called “*littérature de l’urgence*” was considered as an oppressive act because it was claimed that the works lacked the aesthetic quality. Henceforth, Ford points out “urgency often did an injustice to works of varying literary quality, but, pervasively, that the way in which *urgence* was evoked by the press” (47).

Moreover, throughout the dark decade a large number of literary works were published in order to denounce the violence and cruelty committed by the brutal terrorists and despite of the horrible circumstances lived by the Algerians, this did not deprive the writers to depict what was happening at that period; these writings were meant to be a reflection to the social realities of the Algerian people.

In her Article entitled “Writing beyond Trauma Djébar and Bey”, Meriam Belkaid points out that the terror and the silence imposed by the fundamentalists is rejected by some Algerian authors who decided to face the situation and to speak the unspeakable through their writings. Accordingly, the motives that encouraged them to write as Belkaid states “To confront this, some Algerian authors wrote as a means to address this catatonic silence inwardly (...) their works reflect an intuition that facing

rather than succumbing to this silence was the best way to reckon with the violence shaking the country”(128). Hence, the situation confronted Algeria in the 1990s imposed on the emergence of new writings concerned with the subject of terrorism and violence and it has been labeled as emergency literature. In this regard, Charles Bonn in “Paysages Littéraire Algériens des Années90”states:

Les années 90 sont pour l’Algérie, chacun le sait, celles d’une guerre civile particulièrement cruelle, peut-être parce que plus elle s’éternise, apportant chaque semaine son cortège de morts souvent assassinés (...) Dans ces conditions, la littérature peut sembler à certains un luxe inutile, réservé aux pays prospères installés dans leur quiétude et leur certitude(7).

Further, Bonn argues that besides the series of assassinations that targeted some Algerian intellectuals, the literary stream continued on a large scale and consequently the terrible atmosphere allowed and developed new writings “Malgré cet environnement parfois terrifiant, et peut-être en relation directe avec lui, la production littéraire cependant continue et se renouvelle... Cette horreur quotidienne va nécessairement développer une écriture différente”(8).

Yet, in the midst of this Algerian literary works the novel gained much importance in depicting the situation, in a way that novels proved to be the suitable genre to describe the horror of the black decade and more specifically to raise awareness into the mind of Algerians. In this regard, to cite a few of this works, Aida A. Bamia in her article “Literature: Arabic, North African” states:

Writers such as Tahar Djaout(1954-1993), Rachid Mimouni(1945-1995), and the poet Hamid Skif (b.1951) have not minced their words in criticizing the government. In the 1990s the dissent was aimed at the government and the

Muslim fundamentalists, in Boujedra's *FIS de Haine* (1992), Mimouni's *La malediction* (1993; *The malediction*), and Djébar's *Le blanc de L'Algérie* (1995; *The white of Algeria*) and *Oran, langue morte* (1997; *Oran, a dead language*), in which the author mourns the assassinations of Algerian intellectuals including Tahar Djaout (1426).

Additionally, Bamia demonstrates the idea that some writers recorded the events in a form of testimonies that seemingly lacked the aesthetic touch. She namely refers to some of these works "Leila Aslawi's *Survivre comme l'espoire* (1994; *To survive like hope*), Latifa Ben Mansour's *La prière de la peur* (1997; *The prayer of fear*), and Nina Hyayat's *La nuit tombe sur Alger la blanche* (1995; *Night falls on white Algiers*). In Arabic, Laraj Wasini wrote *Sayyidat al-maqam* (*The mistress of the abode*), relating the events in the framework of a love story, while Wattar used his traditional Sufi approach in *al wali altahir ya 'uduila makamihi alzahi* (2000; *The chaste Wali returns to pure his tomb*) (1427).

Along with this, Farida Boualit in "La littérature algérienne des années 90" figures out that Algerian writers see that it is their responsibility to denounce the situations of the 1990s through writing "Nombreux sont encore les exemples qui conçoivent l'acte d'écrire dans le sens de la responsabilité sociale" (27). In addition, they perceive the act of writing the Algerian tragedy as a "témoiner" in terms of "témoiner de ce qui passe" (31).

Furthermore, women writers have contributed powerfully in the Algerian literary scene despite the fact that they were subjected by fundamentalists. The situation has not prevented them from continuing the struggle against terrorists. In this respect, in an article entitled "Post colonial Algerian writers in French: Language as means of

resistance” Lgoudgil states “Algerian women novelists took up the pen not only to testify to the horrors of the “unrest”, but also to condemn the physical violence exerted against women, and particularly, to reclaim the public space in which religious fundamentalism wanted them to be excluded” (79).

Women writers found themselves repressed and the only way to face this issue is through writing, many feminine literary works have been able to monitor the Algerian crisis. As Daoudi states “According to Christian Achour, among the works published between 1990 and 1998, seventy were by women. This large number of writings remains linked to the violent nature of that time and to misunderstandings and falsifications of history. These writings narrate the traumas of the horrific daily life (le quotidien) in Algeria during the Black decade” (45), Douadi also points out that Among these female voices who strongly portrayed the conflict and the daily sufferings of Algerian women are: Djebbar , Malika Mokeddem, Leila Sebbar, Maïssa bey, and Nina Bouraoui (45).

Henceforth, most Algerian literary works depicted the situation that confronted the intellectual who found himself imprisoned between the Algerian authority and the terrorists. Algerian writers were able to denounce the scenes of violence through incorporating it in the characters so that the reader can absorb the violent events.

II.3. Post-Black decade literature:

The black decade marked a significant turning point in Algerian history. Subsequently, it has affected the Algerian literary stream and on account of this the writers played an important role in portraying the civil war. Among the most topics covered by Algerian writers during that period are violence and terrorism, but after the end of the dark decade they found themselves haunted by the memories of this event.

Accordingly, they continued writing about the black decade mostly because through their writings they wanted to voice the silenced pain, to heal their wounds, and most importantly to portray and record the violent events. Thus, the dark decade still inspires the Algerian writers.

In attempt to resolve the conflict two major laws were issued during the 1990s. As George Joffé explains that president Liamine Zeroual suggested the first amnesty law in 1995. Later on, under the presidency of Abdel Aziz Bouteflika who passed the “Concorde civile law” in 1990; in a way that a large number of terrorists benefited from this law (“National Reconciliation and General Amnesty in Algeria”²¹⁶). Hence, they started to retreat and disappear partially. In “Literature and collective trauma in Algeria”, Martina Sabra comments:

Under the one party FLN regime until 1989, and later owing to state-decreed amnesia as a result of the amnesty laws of 1999 and 2005, censorship prevented the onset of any profound social and political debate over the collective experience of violence. Where politics failed, Algerian literature stepped in for example with the work of poet Rachid Boujedra, who from the 1970s consistently fathomed the deep psychological effects of the violence (Sabra).

After the security situation improved in Algeria, the writers continued the depiction of the black decade in their writings. From which, the state of amnesty encouraged them to produce a different literature. As Ford states:

State of amnesty announced at the end of the 1990s, offered a platform to those who would seek to depict another Algeria from within, quite distinct from the picture of urgency painted by critics and by the Algerian State throughout and indeed beyond the period. What is remarkable about this new publishing sector

is that it allowed Algerian writers hitherto unknown to emerge with writings they had been working on throughout the late 1980s and 1990s(48).

It is also important to highlight that some Algerian francophone writers testify and convey the traumatic experiences in their literary productions as a means of writing back and in a particular way to recast urgency of the 1990s. Among them are the distinguished female writer Maïssa Bey and Mustapha Benfodil. Their published contemporary writings is quiet similar to the texts of the ‘*décennie noire*’ (Ford 55). Moreover, Ford emphasizes that Algerian literature is no exception as “engaged literature” and he justifies that “it would risk reducing that literature to a form of historical reference” (56).

This newly literary production written after and about the black decade entails a shared history witnessed by Algerians and it proves that writers found themselves in the midst of this silence imposed by the state and the press that refused to write about the black decade and subsequently made it as literary taboo.

Algerian writers attempted to reveal the traumatic experiences in terms of speaking the unspeakable and to recount what happened exactly. And by doing so, they employed a number of techniques and strategies to reveal the traumatic events in order to guarantee a suitable description of the civil war. In this respect, describing the literature of post civil war, Ford highlights:

Algerian literature of the post civil conflict has tended to move both back publishing houses inside Algeria and beyond the testimonial narratives of the 1990s, beginning to consider the complex origins of the violence of recent years within increasingly layered spaces of fictional representation. Various strategies of representing violence emerge through fictional narratives encompassing not

just allegory and metaphor, but increasingly oneiric (dream-like) and fantastical spaces (10).

On this account, Assia Djebar and Maïssa Bey attempted to articulate the traumatic experiences that resulted from what they encountered during the civil war. The technique used by both of them to represent a better depiction is the color white as metaphor in order to express the state of amnesia, and to “transcend the blankness of that trauma and to articulate their revolt against violence and simplistic paradigms” (Belkaid 128).

Moreover, in “writing violence in Bachir Mufti’s *Ashbah al Madinah al-Maqtula* (*The Ghosts of the Murdered City*)”, Houda Hamdi points out that arabophone Algerian literary texts go beyond the analysis of Joseph Ford on the francophone Algerian works. It is concerned with the multiple techniques used by contemporary Algerian writers in order to testify the brutality of the black decade. One of these Arab literary productions is Bachir Mufti’s *Asbah al Madina al- Maqtuala* (*The Ghosts of the Murdered City*) that was published in 2012. Mufti employed certain strategies to represent violence of the civil war such as “the multiple internal focalizations” and first person narrative in order to detect characters’ unbearable feelings (142-143). Further, Hamdi states “Mufti’s deep concern with violence is reflected by the aesthetic strategies of his text. Among these is its deliberate blurring of the lines between fiction and reality. This opposition generates instability and ambiguity.” (144)

Therefore, the end of the dark decade marks the beginning of new contemporary writings that attempted to provide a better representation of the traumatic violent events

of the 1990s. Among these writers is the Algerian poet and critic Hafid Gafaiti, ¹he has published a number of books and poetry collections, including *The Slit Throat of The Sun* (2006) and *The Return of The Damned* (2007), where he examined the black decade and its aftermath. In addition, he has a long teaching career in Algeria from 1980 to 1993.

To conclude, writing during the black decade gained much interest on a large basis. The literary works conveyed all images of violence experienced by Algerian people. Subsequently, Algerian writers were able to reveal the social realities and challenged all the hard circumstances that confronted them at that period.

¹Upon his exile to France in 1994, he received his doctorate degree in French, Francophone and comparative literature, with honors from the university of Paris, where he wrote his dissertation on “le discours sur les femmes dans le roman algérien: Féminisme, écriture et idéologie”. Following his successful career, he was awarded several times, for instance in 2004 he received Paul Whitfield Horn Professorship, Texas Tech University and Andrew Mellon Visiting Distinguished Professorship at Middelbury College in 2007(GafaitiCV2007).

Chapter Three: Violence and Trauma in Hafid Gafaiti's *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned*

The Slit Throat of the Sun (2006) and *The Return of Damned* (2007) are two of Hafid Gafaiti's notable bilingual collections of poetry. Each one mainly examines several themes such as violence, exile, trauma, power struggle, revolt, etc. This chapter will first analyze the paratextual elements of the two collections. Then, it will focus on the textual elements in order to see if the paratext and text reveal violence and trauma.

III. 1. The paratextual elements

The paratextual elements generally appear as materials that surround the text such as the title, the name of the author, the dedications, the epigraphs, the intertitles, and the cover. These elements are highly used in literary analysis and interpretation. In *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gérard Genette defines the notion of paratext as "what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public" (1). In addition, paratext is generally composed of epitext and peritext. The first is known as the elements that help the reader to get know more about the publications such as the interviews, reviews and recommendations. Meanwhile, the peritext includes the title, the headings, the cover, the notes, and epigraphs (3-5). Further, the importance of paratext for Genette lies in the fact that it

makes the text exist and provides “a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)” (2).

III.1.1. The title

Generally, the title is considered as an important peritextual element that links the author’s work with the readers. Charles Grivel summarizes the functions of the title as “(1) to identify the work, (2) to designate the work’s subject matter, (3) to play up the work” (qtd in Genette 76). Genette clarifies that Grivel’s functions do not necessarily complete each other. However, the first and the third function may be linked together in identifying the significance of the title for the work (76).

The title of our first case study is “*The Slit Throat of the Sun*”. It can be divided into two main parts; the first part is “the slit throat” which means to cut another’s throat. It mainly connotes death. However, the literary interpretations of the sun are multiple. According to Michael Ferber, the figurative meanings of the sun are the light, birth, and life (*A Dictionary of literary Symbols* 209-210). Therefore, we remark that the title mainly carries a violent image, it indicates to the series of assassination and massacres.

The title of our second study, “*The Return of the Damned*”, has an inter-textual reference to Frantz Fanon’s *Les Damnés de la Terre*. It refers to the colonized people, who are still affected by colonial violence (*The Wretched of the Earth* study guide). So, we assume that the title designates the rise of Algerian people against dictatorial regime.

III.1.2. The intertitles

In literature, the intertitle is mainly known as the subtitle of a book such as titles of parts, sections, chapters, etc. Intertitles are important in determining the meaning of a book. Furthermore, as Genette clarifies, “ internal titles are accessible to hardly anyone except readers, or at least the already limited public of browsers and readers of tables of contents; and a good many internal titles make sense only to an addressee who is already involved in reading the text , for these internal titles presume familiarity with everything that has preceded (294).

Based on these considerations, we will examine the intertitles of Gafaiti’s two collections. We would like to point out that *The Slit Throat of the Sun* contains six parts. The first one entitled “poetry and survival” indicates the importance of poetry as a way of resistance and survival in order to denounce all forms of violence and terror. The second part “the door” presumes familiarity with moving to another state. While the third intertitle “the disaster” indicates meaning of destruction and it makes reference to the events of 1990s. As for the fourth part “crossings”, it signifies the need to pass; we assume that it exhibits Gafaiti’s experience of exile. Then, the fifth part entitled “return” designates to the return of Hafid Gafaiti to his country. Finally, the last part “opening” conveys the idea of reborn from ashes and the beginning of new life.

Meanwhile, *The Return of the Damned* consists of eight parts; the first is entitled “poetry, memory and truth”. It has correlation link between the words. We assume that it expresses how poetry reveals the truth. The second part “the circle of hell” has an intertextual reference to Dante Alighier’s book entitled *Circles of Hell*. Dante classified hell into nine circles (limbo, lust, gluttony, greed, anger, heresy, violence, fraud, and treachery (“9 Circles of Hell (Dante’s Inferno)”), we believe that Gafaiti is referring to the seventh hell that concerns with violence. Meanwhile, the third

intertitle “and the doors began to speak” has metaphorical meaning; it is personification i.e. to attribute the characteristic of speaking to the door, though the door is incapable of literally speaking. It indicates the beginning of Algerians’ revolt against their dictatorial regime. As for the fourth part “from the cradle to the state”, we think that it has an intertextual reference to the idiomatic expression of “from the cradle to the grave”. It indicates meaning of sacrifice. The fifth intertitle “the memory of the city” indicates layer of meanings from which the memory of the city is not just what remains from the buildings and stone’s ruins, but rather the history of people who inhabit in it. In the meantime, the sixth part “the kiss of death” mainly is an idiomatic expression that refers to “an action, event, or association that causes inevitable ruin or failure”. (Farlex Dictionary of idioms). Thus, this intertitle indicates to the extent damage caused by the black decade. Our observation is also consolidated in the seventh part which is “the summer’s mourning”. This nominal phrase consists of two words, the summer usually symbolizes youth, and mourning symbolizes for sadness and grief. Finally, the eighth part is entitled “the embers of dawn”, we assume that it makes reference to the aftermath of the black decade that left only great devastation.

III.1.3.The Dedications

For Genette: “The dedication [...] is the proclamation (sincere or not) of a relationship (of one kind or another) between the author and some person, group, or entity” (135).Based on this, the functions of the dedication lie in determining the special relation between the author and the dedicatees. Also, we think that authors want to convey certain message that is related to the text through attributing special attention to someone, whether they are publicly known or not. Accordingly, we will examine the dedications of *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned*.

The dedication of *The Slit Throat of the Sun*:

for keven and sara

may they never experience dignity

for my dead friends and all the victims of the civil war

The dedication of *The Return of the Damned*:

Pour /for keven and sara

Based on these dedications, we see that Gafaiti cites two names “Keven and Sara”. It shows that there is sort of subjectivity because he pays a special attention to his children. He followed it with this expression “may they never experience dignity”, it provides a sense that he is attached to them in a particular way. In addition, Gafaiti in *The Slit Throat of the Sun* dedicates the work to his dead friends and to all the victims of the civil war, suggesting that he wants to keep their memory alive. This dedication gives a glimpse about the content of the collection. Also, Gafaiti wants to express and show for the readers the double sufferings: the civil war and being far away from his children.

It is worth noting that in some selected poems of the two collections, Gafaiti gave a special tribute to some writers and poets such as Abdelkader Alloula, Tahar Djaout, Rachid Mimouni, and Youcef Sebti. Through these dedications, he wants to commemorate their absence.

III.1.4. The epigraphs

The epigraphs are generally well-known short quotations cited by authors at the beginning of the work or at each part of it. Genette indicates four functions of the

epigraphs; the first shows the strong effect of the title on changing the meaning of the epigraph, the second function focuses particularly on the role of epigraphs in making the text more valuable, third significance sheds light on the author of the cited quote. The choice of some particular epigraphers contributes in making the text appear powerful. The final function tends to indicate the genre, the period, or the tenor of certain body work of literature (156-160). Depending on this, we will examine the epigraphs of each collection. Simultaneously, we will see how they can reflect the themes portrayed by Gafaiti.

The Slit throat of the Sun contains five epigraphs. Each one is at the beginning of each part. The first epigraph is taken from the part entitled “the door”. It is an extract from *Four personal addresses* written by Mahmud Darwish: “...And I wrote twenty songs to curse the place where there is no place for us. My freedom: to be the opposite of what they would want me to be. And my freedom: to widen my cell, to carry on the song of the door. A door is a door. There is no door at the door, yet I can access the outside within myself, and so on and so forth...”(Gafaiti n 1).²

Through the integration of this epigraph we think that Gafaiti wants to make a comment on the title of this part because it makes reference to it through the song of door that is mentioned in this quote. Mahmoud Darwish is referring to the prison’s

² Gafaiti, Hafid, translator. *Four Personal Addressess*. By Mahmoud Darwish, L’hamattan, 2006.

محمود درويش اربعة عناوين شخصية
والفأف عشرين أغنية في هجاء المكان الذي لا مكان لنا فيه
حُرَيْتِي: أن أكون كما لا يريدون لي أن أكون
وحريتي: أن أوسع زنرانتني: أن أوصل أغنية الباب
باب هو الباب: لا باب للباب
لكنني أستطيع الخروج إلى داخلي، إلخ.. إلخ.

door. He creates his freedom from it. Also, in “Mahmoud Darwish, a poet who attempted to be”, Abir Najami and Hussain Ahmed Ajjawi argue that despite the harsh events that Darwish has lived in his country, he kept writing poetry in attempt to defend the Palestinian cause. Also, he experienced exile and was imprisoned several times (276). Thus, Gafaiti’s selection of this epigraph explains the common points shared between him and Darwish. The two poets showed their commitment to poetry, and they share the same belief of seeing it as a form a resistance.

Similarly, the second epigraph is a quote from Federico Garcia Lorca’s selected poem “*Romance Sonambulo*”. It is taken from the part “disaster” and it shows that poetry comes as a reaction to socio-political issues. Ultimately, this reveals the sense of commitment: “__ My friend, I want to trade / my horse for her house,/ my saddle for her mirror, / my knife for her blanket. / My friend, I come bleeding from the gates of Cabra. / __if it were possible, my boy, /I’d help you for that trade. / But now I am not I, / nor is my house now my house.”(Gafaiti154n4).³

At first sight, this epigraph presumes familiarity with the title “disaster”, because both are making reference to the civil war that left only destruction. Furthermore, in “the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca”, Edwin Honig states that Lorca’s

³ Gafaiti, Hafid, Translator. *Romance Sonambulo*. By Federico Garcia Lorca, L’harmattan, 2006, p. 154.

Federico Garcia Lorca, *Romance Sonambulo*:

...Compadre, quiero cambiar mi
 Caballo por su casa,
 Mi montura por su espejo,
 Mi cuchillo pe su manta
 Compadre, vengo sangrando,
 Desde los puertos de Cabra.
 ...Si yo pudiera, mocito
 Este trato se cerraba.
 Pero yo ya no soy yo,
 ni mi casa es ya mi casa.

assassination puts forward many questions about this tragic end of such great poet who tackled in his poetry the issue of the civil war (389). Thus, this attracted our attention to the point that Gafaiti chose this epigraph to make reference to the Algerian poet Tahar Djaout who was assassinated during the black decade. We believe that Lorca depicted the civil war in *Romance Sonambulo* in order to protest against violence. In light of this, we see that Gafaiti chose a poet who, despite the war experience, continued the struggle through writing poetry. Therefore, we believe that Gafaiti shares Lorca's same vision; that poetry comes from a necessity.

In addition, Gafaiti makes reference to the theme of exile in the third epigraph which is taken from the fourth part "Crossing". It is an extract from *Enfer V* written by Louis Aragon: "Nothing is precious as living / Nothing as transitory as being / it is like melting for frost / And being light for the wind / I arrived where I am a stranger."(Gafaiti 155n8).⁴

First, we see that the cited epigraph indicates the meaning of the title "crossing", because it entails the same idea of the necessity to pass borders. Second, the line "Nothing is precious as living" shows that the French poet Louis Aragon, who wrote *I Arrive Where I am Stranger*, is aware about the passage of time, and being old makes him feel like a stranger. Thus, the poet is expressing the notion of exile through the sense of alienation that is present in the feeling of being "stranger".

⁴Gafaiti, Hafid, Translator. *Enfer V*. By Louis Aragon, L'harmattan, 2006, p.155.

Louis Aragon (*Enfer V* :

"Rien n'est précaire comme vivre
Rien comme être n'est passager
C'est un peu fondre pour le givre
Et pour le vent être léger
J'arrive ou je suis étranger."

As for the next epigraph which is taken from the fifth part “return”. It indicates the theme of suffering as a superior key to write poetry in order to reveal the truth. It is an extract from Friederich Holderlin’s *Bread and Wine*: “Meanwhile I often think it is/ Better to stay asleep, than to exist without companions, / Just waiting it out, not knowing what to do or say/ In the meantime, what use are poets in times of need? But you will say they’re like holy priests of the wine god, / Moving from land to land in the holy night.”(Gafaiti 163n55).⁵

At first place, in “Holderlin’s atheism”, Daniel whistlers points out that *Bread and wine* expresses the idea that “the present is a time of night, caught between, on the one hand, Classical Greece, when the gods were originally present, and , on the other , a hoped-for return of the gods”(6). Thus, we assume that the citation evokes the same idea of the title “return”. Second, the line “In the meantime, what use are poets in times of need” conveys the same as Gafaiti’s belief of seeing the importance of writing poetry as a form of resistance in times of mourning. Third, Whistlers explains that this poem merely exposes theology. It interrogates the link between humanity and God (8). So, we estimate that Gafaiti chose this epigraph because in some selected poems he talked about the present absence of God.

⁵ Mitchell, James, Translator. *Brod und Wein*. By Friederich Holderlin, San Francisco: Hoddypoll Press, 1978.

Friedrich holderlin, Brod und Wein(erste fassung):

...indessen dunket mir offers
 Besser zu schlafen, wie so ohne Genossen zu sein,
 Su zu harren, und was zu tun indes und zu sagen,
 Weib ich nicht, und wozu Dichter in durftiger Zeit.
 Aber sie sind, sagst du, wie des weingnotts heilige priester,
 Welche von lande zu land zogen in heiliger Nacht.

Finally, the last epigraph is taken from the sixth part entitled “opening”. The story of Issac demonstrates the idea of sacrifice. From which, it paid our attention to the generation who witnessed the black decade. They were victims of the political issues that the country went through; this has exposed them to the most violent event in postcolonial Algeria.

“And may I never learn to scorn

The body out of chaos born

The woman and the man”

Leonard Cohen-Judy Collins(The story of Issac)

First, the song was written by Leonard Cohen and released by Judy Collins. We see that it tells the story of Isaac’s sacrifice and expresses the futility of war. Beatrice Wolfe Watson explains that this extract is added by Collins in order to criticize “man of peace and man of war” (“the strange case of Leonard Cohen” 21). Second, the line “the body out of chaos born” has a direct relation to the last part “opening”. It indicates the idea of opening to a new beginning in Gafaiti’s life.

The Return of the Damned contains eight epigraphs. Each one is at the beginning of each part of this collection. The first part starts with rhetorical reference to the conclusion of Sura “the poets “in the Koran:

“224 And the poets, it is those straying in Evil, who follow them

225 Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley?

226 And that they say what they practice not?

227 Except those who believe , work righteousness, engage much in the

remembrance of Allah , and defend themselves

Only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what Vicissitudes their affairs will take!”The holy Koran. Sura XXVI; The poets” (Gafaiti n1).⁶

First, this intertextual reference is central to the production of meaning in Gafaiti’s poems. The choice of these verses is merely unique, because it has a direct relationship to what Gafaiti wants to express in the first part “poetry, memory, and truth”. From which, he wants to convey that truth can be revealed through poetry.

While the second part “circle of hell” begins with a quote from William Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*: “*The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars. But ourselves, that we are underlings.*” At first place, *Julius Caesar* portrays the tragic end of the Roman ruler Caesar who was assassinated by Cassius and Brutus. The play examines the themes of violence and political corruption and how they certainly affect the society. We assume that the reason behind Gafaiti’s selection of this epigraph is because it alludes to the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, who was betrayed by his bodyguard. It also criticizes the political sphere in Algeria. Second, it emphasizes the idea that the evil does exist in human nature. And one cannot blame the fate, but rather we must take the responsibility of our choice.

⁶ Abdullah, Yusuf Ali, Translator. *The Koran. Dar El Furkun, 1934*

سورة الشعراء (224) أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ

(225) وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ (226) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَ

انْتَصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ (227)

As for the third part entitled “and the doors began to speak”, begins with a quote from Jacques Derrida’s book of *Grammatology*: “The (pure) trace is the difference. It does not depend on any sensitive, audible or visible, phonic or graphic fullness. On the contrary, it is its condition.” (Gafaiti 150 n5).⁷ We see that the title of this part enhances the importance of speech over writing and this is what opposes Derrida’s point of view in making equality between the two processes. However, this quote from Derrida’s book *Of Grammatology* does merely prioritize writing over speech in making difference. As for Jeffery A. Bell clarifies “Difference is therefore the pure difference which allows for the possibility of a self coming into presence and self identity because it harbors a trace of space and otherness that subverts this identity” (*Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos: Gilles Deleuze and the Philosophy of Difference* 29). We therefore believe that Gafaiti, through this epigraph, wanted to highlight the role of writing in seeking the truth and in delineating a trace and in delineating to the world a trace of collective misery and struggle of Algerian people.

Meanwhile, the fourth part entitled “from the cradle to the state” contains an epigraph by Tahar Djaout that examines the theme of violence: “*Dirty laundry is washed in blood*”. Tahar Djaout is a journalist, a poet, and a fiction writer who was assassinated during the 1990s. We see that this epigraph has an indication to the context of both Gafaiti’s collections as it refers to the horror of the black decade. In addition, the word “sang” which means blood has a symbolic meaning. J. E. Cirlot explains that blood symbolizes sacrifice (*Dictionary of Symbols* 29). So, it evokes the same meaning

⁷Derrida, Jacques. *De La Grammatologie*, Les Editions de Minut, 1967, P.92.

Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*:

“*La trace (pure) est la différance. Elle ne dépend d’aucune plénitude sensible, audible ou visible, phonique ou graphique. Elle en est, au contraire, la condition.*”

of the title of this part. Therefore, we believe that Djaout intends to say; the resolve of issues is done through the sacrifice.

In the meantime, the fifth part “memory of the city” begins with an epigraph from Eugenio Montale’s *Mottetto I* that examines violence, loss and search of the self in times of war:

“Scrap metal landscape, forest
 masts in the evening dust
 Along roar comes from the sea
 tearing like the fingernail
 on the windows. I’m
 looking for the sign
 lost. The unique pledge received as a grace from you
 and hell is certain.”(Gafaiti 152n21).⁸

“Hell” is usually associated with punishment. However, we notice that hell means something else in this extract. The poet indeed describes his love as a hell and it makes him feel lost as he is looking for a sign from his lover. In this respect, Montale has experienced the futility of war but this has not prevented him from writing poetry in an attempt to express his love. As in “the poetry of Eugenio Montale”, Laura Wittman states “Yet the poems were highly influential because of their sharp critique of the present as a “barren limbo” in which it was nonetheless urgent for the individual to

⁸Tucker. Alan. Translator, Mottetti. By Eugenio Montale, Flashpointmag, www.Flashpointmag.com.

Eugenio Montale, Mottetto I:

Paese di ferrame e alberature
 a selva nella polvera del vespro.
 Un ronzo lungo viene dall’aperto,
 Strazia com’ungchia ai vetri. Cerco il segno
 Smarrito, il pegno solo ch’ebbi in graziaDa te E l’inferno é certo

experience love and to search for meaning beyond the self'(Wittman). Therefore, we see that Gafaiti chose this epigraph because he shares Montale's belief of commitment to poetry in times of distress.

Moreover, in the epigraph of the sixth part "the kiss of death", the theme of exile is strongly present. It is quote from Saint-John Perse's *Exile*, II:

"exile is not yesterday
 exile is not
 from yesterday o vestiges, o promises,
 from the stranger among the sands
 world is new to me
 and the birth of his song
 is no less foreign to him." (Gafaiti156n39).⁹

In this epigraph, Perse expresses the notion of exile in different terms. In "Exile in language", Peter Baker comments "*Exile* is an exile in language that undermines the distinctions of interiority and exteriority on which traditional notions of the subject are based" (207). In this regard, this alienation in language shapes one's identity and beliefs. Also, Gafaiti here wants to show the negative costs of exile, whereby, he is afraid to lose his identity. So, this poem conveys the same theme that Gafaiti dealt with in order to examine the language of exile.

Further, the next epigraph is taken from the seventh part "the summer's mourning". It depicts death and suffering in silence:

⁹ Perse, Saint John, *Exil*, II, Gallimard, éd, 1960, pp. 169-70.

Saint-John Perse, *Exil*, II:

L'exil n'est point d'hier l'exil n'est point
 D'hier O vestiges, o premises, Du
 L'Etranger parmi les sables. Toute chose au Monde m'est nouvelle ... Et la naissance de son
 chant ne lui est pas mions etrangere.

“The woman is perfected.
 her dead
 body wears the smile of accomplishment,
 the illusion of a Greek necessity.
 Flows in the scrolls of her toga
 her bare
 feet seem to be saying;
 we have come so far, it is over.” Sylvia Plath, *Edge*

First, we assume that this epigraph has an indication to the title of the seventh part “summer’s mourning”, because it conveys the same images of mourning and death at young age. Second, *Edge* is a poem written by Sylvia Plath who committed suicide at early age, the death of her father left her traumatized and lost in great depression (“Sylvia Plath poetry foundation”). So, Gafaiti alludes the theme of trauma, death, suffering and loss through selecting this epigraph.

Finally, the last part “embers of dawn” begins with an epigraph from Vitorina Nemesio’s *Aconchia*. It insists on memory and exile :“(…) “my house... But the story is different: It is me, in the wind and under the rain, barefoot, here, Seated on a stone of memory.” (Gafaiti 158n).¹⁰

In this epigraph, we notice that the poet portrays his house as a shell, where he can feel safe and protected but it gives him sense of loneliness. In this regard, we

¹⁰Picon, Violante, Translator, « A Conchia/in L’animal harmonieux et autre poèmes. By Vitorina Nemesio, Orphée La Différence, 1994, PP. 32-33.

Vitorina Nemesio, A Concha:

“(...) A minha casa... Mas é outra a historia:
 Sou eu ao vento e a chuva, aqui descalco,
 Sentado numa pedra de memoria.”

believe that Gafaiti wanted to express the nostalgic feeling for his country through selecting this quote.

III.1.5. The cover

In “Visual peritext: covers and other visual presentation strategies”, Acquarelli et al argue “the cover has three main functions: to protect, to decorate, to promote, but it is particularly on this third aspect that the world of publishing has focused its attention. Genette, in fact, labeled the cover and editorial peritext “brand positioning”, i.e. an “explicit and well-delimited region”, which present readers with particular information, including the author’s name, the title of the work or an illustration (1).

In this respect, the cover’s function is not only limited to bind the pages of the book, but also to promote it in order to catch the readers’ attention. Generally, the cover is consisted of the front and back cover that needs to be designed well.

For Genette, the front cover usually consists of the name of the author, the title of the book, the publication date, the publishing house, and the price. In the meantime, a consistent front cover supplements for attracting the reader’s attention and gives a glimpse about the content of the work (24). Thus, with an attractive well organized front cover, the author’s purpose to promote the book will be achieved.

Hafid Gafaïti

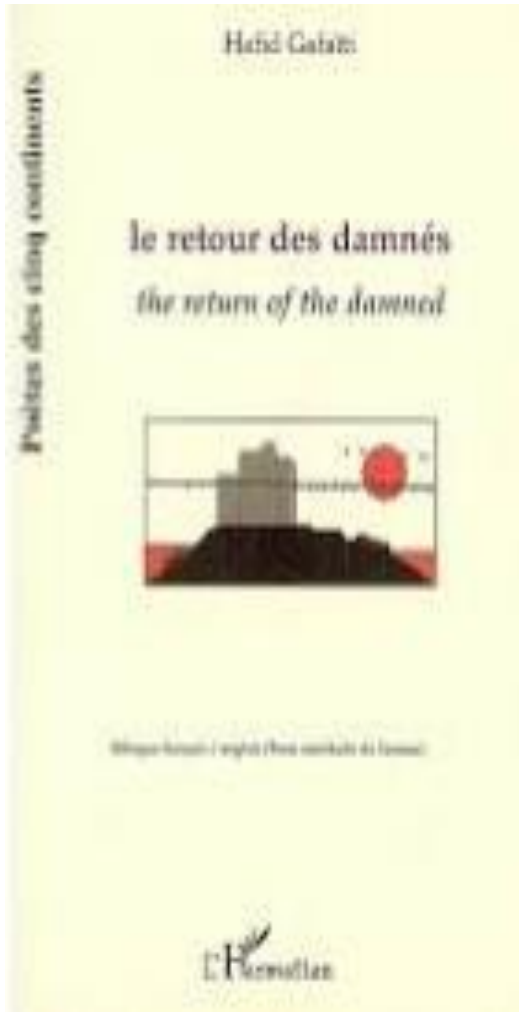
la gorge tranchée du soleil

the slit throat of the sun



Bilingue français / anglais (Texte américain de l'auteur)

L'Harmattan



It's worth noting that the poet's name is written in black color, while the title is written in purple. According to *International Color Symbolism*, these two colors have the same symbolic meanings which are mourning, sorrow, sadness, pain, rebellion, and death (International Color Symbolism Chart). In addition, the two collections are occupied by an image drawn by Gafaïti himself. *The Slit Throat of the Sun's* cover drawing is entitled "Barb Wired Red Sun", while *The Return of the Damned's* cover drawing is entitled "Back to Hell". What draws our attention is the color of the sun; we think that the images are highly symbolic. The first one symbolizes the fall down in bloody years, and the second one represents the rise and revolt of Algerian people. As for the color red of the sun signifies for blood, more apparently, the massacres and the assassinations.

The back cover or cover 4 usually contains these essential elements: biography of the author, press quotation, date of printing, genre of the work, the price, the bar code and ISBN (international Standard book Number) (Genette 26). The cover 4 helps in giving a clearer outlook about the work.

The back cover of *The Slit Throat of the Sun* contains two passages that are taken from the first part entitled “poetry and survival”. The first sentence “poetry proceeds from a need and urgency” reveals the motives and reasons that urged Hafid Gafaiti to write poetry. Among these reasons is the civil war that forced him to leave the country.

The back cover of *The Return of the Damned* contains three passages taken from the first part “poetry, memory, and truth”. It is a general introduction about the content of the collection. It reveals the socio-political reality of Algeria during the 1990s; as it highlights that despite the context, Algerian intellectuals did not keep silent. Some of them died and others were forced to choose exile. We notice that the choice of words to describe the situation is unique. He used short sentences that carried the sufferings of Algerian people, as appears in the following examples “the islamist insurrection is unvanquished, the politico-financial Mafia is still here. Forgiveness is general, responsibilities are eluded: the dead are assassinated second time.”(Gafaiti12). In addition, through this part the poet questions himself and the readers about the possibility to return to the country after being exiled. This raises the issue of exile. He also used the idiomatic expression “slips between one’s fingers?” in order to express the feeling of loss and to show that exile was the only choice.

To conclude, the first part of the third chapter allowed us to analyze five paratextual elements. First, we analyzed the title of each collection. From which we

noted that each title has an indication to the violence of the black decade and its aftermath. Second, we saw how the intertitles reinforce themes of violence, death, exile, sacrifice, and mourning that show the suffering of Algerian during and after the civil war. Third, we examined the dedications and we concluded that Gafaiti saw the responsibility to attribute special attention to the dedicators in order to commemorate them and denounce the violence of the dark decade. Fourth, we analyzed the epigraphs of each collection and we saw how they can reflect the notion of violence, trauma, loss, suffering and exile. Furthermore, some of the epigraphers are poets who experienced the fragility of war. Finally, we analyzed the front and the back cover. We highlighted how each element of the cover conveys a sense of violence and trauma.

III. 2. The textual elements

The second part deals with the textual elements of *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned*. We build up the analysis in terms of examining how the elements and concepts of poetry used by Gafaiti in each collection can reflect and reinforce the theme of violence, trauma and the notion of exile. These elements include: structure, word sound, and figurative language.

The Slit Throat of the Sun and *The Return of the Damned* protest the violence of the Algerian civil war through a rich depiction of the series of assassinations and massacres that impacted Algerian's socio-political reality on a high level. These traumatic experiences left deep wounds on the psyche of those who survived. Further, the notion of exile is shown by Gafaiti in the two collections through the portrayal of his own experience outside the country during the dark decade. Thus, with a unique poetic style, he attempts to reveal a better representation of the 1990s violent events.

Beginning with the poems' structure that plays significant role in developing the themes portrayed by the poet, and through a close reading of the two collections, Gafaiti depends on an open and closed structure of poetry. In *Contemporary poetry: Poets and Poetry since 1990*, Ian Brinton clarifies that closed structure, also known as fixed form, follows a regular pattern of lines, meter, rhyme and rhythm, while open structure does not follow this specific set of rules (26). Referring to the explanation above, in the *ocean's tears* which is written in *the Slit Throat of the Sun*, Gafaiti examines that violence is sought to be the main cause beyond his exile. He says:

I built my house
 by the sea
 made my bed
 listened to my song

I watered the flowers
 purified my body
 elated by the salty wind

I called my friends

I loved my wife
 nourished my child
 greeted my neighbors
 unpacked my books

when the scorpion danced
 close to the fire
 kneeling before the night

I pitied the shooting stars

I locked my house
 when even the birds had to flee
 do your tears know
 who drowned the sea?(32).

At a first glance, “the ocean’s tears” consists of five stanzas, each one has four lines. So, it follows a closed structure. The regular form of this poem written in first person narrative shows the poet’s consistent feeling of repentance and sadness for his country’s security situation. Also, Gafaiti’s melancholic tone pays our attention into the last stanza where he describes his unwillingness to leave the country. He firmly expresses that due to the civil war, he was obliged to choose exile.

Further, in *The Return of the Damned* Gafaiti delves into the theme of violence in the poem “the Bloody years” that is written in an open structure, he writes:

many died

 the stars of history
 wanted us present
 at the stuttering of dawn

 seven years later
 past the doors of hell
 to close the circle
 we mounted our horses(18).

“The bloody years” does not follow a regular pattern. It is divided into three stanzas; with each stanza containing different number of lines. So, we can say that it is an open poem. Interestingly, Gafaiti uses a noticeably inconsistent structure in this poem to create a bitter tone. The first line “Many died” is written in short simple

sentences and sets the poem into a mourning mode and to emphasis on the damaged results of the 1990s violent events. In addition, the use of the pronouns ‘us’, and ‘we’ explains that the poem is told in the first person narrative in order to express the collective suffering and struggle of Algerian people during the dark decade.

Moreover, a second illustration of an open form is the visual poetry. It is defined by Anna B. Smith as “literary verse written on the page with intentional form to add meaning to the poem” (“what is visual poetry?”). It can be classified into three types: altar, pattern, and concrete visual poetry. In this regard, Gafaiti’s poem “that is to live is to learn how to die” that is written in *The Slit Throat of the Sun* has an attracting visual form. He says:

even if I stay on track
 like an avid clown
 a prophet without flock
 a spring bereft of destiny
 I already dwell in death
 free light
 stone
 rolling
 in
 the
 fires
 of
 the
 rapids (94).

Regarding the example mentioned above, the words in this poem are placed so that it takes the shape of stone's rolling; this word placement creates a recognizable visual image of the poem. Taking into account this perspective, this concrete poem told in first person point of view reinforces the theme of violence through creating an attracting shape of stone's rolling in the fire of rapids to make us see the image of the country's fall down into bloody years.

In addition, Gafaiti attributes another visual shape in the next poem taken from *The Return of the Damned* to convey his message. He says:

girded faces

armoured doors

tables

 chaires

furniture

as back up

against the wall

barred windows

light exiled outside

furtive glances

hidden heads

measure

the slightest

 movement

houses concealed ("Sealed country"³²).

“Sealed country” has an interesting line breaks that affect its visual imagery. Hence, we can say that it is a pattern poem because it has no a recognizable shape. Overall, the inconsistent form of the poem explains that Gafaiti uses these visual devices i.e. line breaks in attempt to represent the traumatic memories that haunted him and to depict the horror, darkness and instability of the country’s security situation during the dark decade.

Moving on from the structure of poetry, word sound is another literary instrument used by poets to create meaning and performance. It helps in developing the themes portrayed by them. In this respect, we notice that Gafaiti uses skillfully some word sounds such as alliteration and repetition. At first place, alliteration is defined as “repetition of the same consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are in close proximity to each other. This repetition of sounds brings attention to the lines in which it is used and creates more aural rhythm” (“Literary devices, Terms, and Elements”). The following examples will show the smart use of alliteration made by Gafaiti. In *The Slit Throat of the Sun*, he writes:

seven years of **s**ilence and **s**tones
 like the **l**oves of the one who gave me birth
 and ran off
 when I expected it the least (“attempt at a return”132).

The second example is taken from *The Return of the Damned*, where Gafaiti says:

double **d**oors
 of iron first
 wood at last
 multiple locks

bars **b**ehind
 before limbs
 can breathe again (“Locked twice in iron”²⁸).

Referring to the illustrations above, in “attempt at a return” the alliteration appears in the first and the second line of the second stanza. The repetition of the sounds **s** and **l** creates an emphasis on these words to set Gafaiti’s deep tone of sorrow and nostalgic feeling for his country. In the meantime, it reinforces his persistent desire for return. Similarly, in the first and second stanza of “Locked twice in iron”, Gafaiti repeated the sound **b** and **d** in order to create rhythm and musical effect. In this regard, the emphasis that is put upon the words “double doors” and “bars behind” feature the traumatic mode of the poem whereby he recounts the fear perpetrated by the terrorists.

At second place, repetition is seen as “repeating a word, phrase, or sentence, and is common in both poetry and prose. It is rhetorical technique to add emphasis, unity, and/ or power.” (“Literary devices, Terms, and Elements”). In this respect, Gafaiti makes a skillful use of repetition in “my country is not a country, it is summer” to protest against the extent damage done to his country because of the civil war. He writes:

I come from a country

lit by embers
 from dazzled mountains
 to the golden desert
 from crying stars
 to buried rivers

I come from a country

with a vengeful sea
 from extinct cities
 to stripped villages, streets on fire
 to paths sprinkled with blood (110).

Interestingly, the use of first person narrative and the repeated line “I come from a country” raises our attention on the speaker’s sense of nationalism and shattered identity that is left fragmented due to the traumatic events.

Another textual element used in analyzing poetry is the figurative language. Its significant role is to help the poet achieve his purpose in conveying his intended message through a figurative language. *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned* are rich for the figurative devices such as allusion, imagery, personification, and metaphor that contribute powerfully in reflecting the themes.

At first sight, we notice that Gafaiti uses much allusion in *The Slit Throat of the Sun* to openly abrupt into the reader’s mind his idea. For instance, in “Light of Africa” that examines the notion of exile, allusion appears throughout the whole poem. He says:

o light of Africa
 I do not find you anymore
 except in the Paris neighborhoods
 Montreal streets
 New York subways (100)

Interestingly, Gafaiti makes reference to familiar places “Africa, Paris, Montreal, New York”. They are meant to express the nostalgia that the poet is feeling when he was there. Hence, this technique allowed him to portray his experience of exile and it shows how it is difficult to overcome this state of unfulfilled desire for the past.

Moreover, Gafaiti alludes not only places but also familiar persons in order to connect to the readers the mentioned themes in depth. For instance, in “Algeria, art and death”, he makes reference to Tahar Djaout:

man of steel
 from the core of his multiple sources
 he carried the struggle for modern Algeria
 the poet did not sleep
 with the whores of politics (36).

As it was revealed, this poem alludes to the Algerian poet Tahar Djaout in order to commemorate his death. This strategy recalls the series of assassinations that targeted the intelligentsia, and that forced them to choose: either to remain silent, to write and die, or to choose exile.

Furthermore, a specific illustration of allusion appears in *The Return of the Damned*. Gafaiti’s intention in making reference to Mohamed Boudiaf entails much interpretation in regard to the themes explored by him. He says:

the father slain
 they burnt the house
 diverted the river
 once lovers
 clay and sea
 have grown apart (“Boudiaf”104).

First, it should be noted that the common point between Gafaiti and Boudiaf is that both were forced to choose exile. Second, the poet wants to shed lights on the political corruption that affected Algeria during the 1990s, whereby the assassination of

Boudiaf led to a tragic civil war that lasted for ten years. Hence, this technique reinforces the theme of violence and exile.

A further figurative representation that helped in developing the themes is the use of imagery. Hence, Gafaiti implies this literary strategy in the two collections in similar way. In *The Slit Throat of the Sun*, the use of imagery appears in “Algeria, art and death”, Gafaiti writes:

solitude of the present
 cowardice of the absent
 Zoubida **howled**
 the poet twice assassinated
 she was in **black**
 one must be in **white**
 for the prayer of the missing (36).

Further, another use of imagery appears in *The Return of the Damned*, Gafaiti says:

here birds hardly **sing**
 each evening they **howl**
 at the assassins’ step
 in the morning they **cry**
 at burials (“our birds”110).

In the first example, we notice that the whole stanza carries powerful imagery. Similarly, in the second one we can see that imagery is presented in the words “sing, howl and cry”. It appeals to the sense of hearing through these sounds, so it is an auditory imagery. To conclude, Gafaiti used this figurative technique in order to express the emotions of grief and mourning. From which, he is in state of representing

the traumatic memories. With the use of this imagery, Gafaiti wants to make the traumatic experience more realistic to the readers and try to engage their mind into this horrific experience.

Additionally, another important technique commonly used in poetry is personification. In *The Slit Throat of the Sun*, the implication of this device appears in the poem entitled “El djazair”:

there is no possible humanity
where the streets forsake their sorrow
trees their trunks
the sky its corpses(139).

Also, in *The Return of the Damned*, personification appears in “song of doors”:

I will never be here
 this point of arrival where
 the waves embrace the beach
the city its children
 language signs
 binding History to passer-by (140).

Henceforth, in “El Djazair”, the theme is developed through the personification. Whereby, Gafaiti humanizes the streets to convey to the readers the sense of the country’s destruction due to the violent events. It is explored through the destruction of the humanity. In the second example, personification appears in the fourth line “the city its children”. The poet humanizes the city as a mother who embraces her children in the point of wartime in order to denounce the violence that destroyed the country and its citizens.

Finally, *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned* are typically rich in the use of metaphor. For instance, in “postscript: Algiers, June 2001”, Gafaiti attempts to retrieve the events that happened during the 1990s when the country was falling in state of political corruption. He writes:

as in the old times
 the Generals hide
 the bullets whistle
 stones gather the bodies
 even mothers will not recognize
 as always the politician dogs lie
 believe only the lives (*The Slit Throat of the Sun*142).

This stanza clearly states the metaphor of the poem. It expresses political corruption and destruction of the country. With a great poetic skill, Gafaiti implies metaphor in the fifth line “as always politician dogs lie” where he compares those politicians who betrayed the country with dogs. Through the use of this technique, the poet is intended to represent the cost that civil war’s violence has had on Algerian’s socio-political reality.

Another specific illustration is taken from *The Return of the Damned*. Where the usage of metaphor helps portray his experience of exile in the poem entitled “defector”:

my friend the eagle says
 one cannot inhabit the sky
 when everything in the city
 calls for burning

soon there will be only fire

no one will be able to breathe

I fly over roofs

explore oceans

carve mountains and peaks

skirt streets

always on the traces of

planes

trains

and even boats

in what language be lost

before kissing the bird?(134).

In the previous poem, Gafaiti has remarkably used an extended metaphor by comparing himself to a free bird. Through this technique, he conveys the idea that exile is one of the major costs of violence. He expresses the fear of losing himself in exile though he exhibits into the reader's mind a positive perspective on exile whereby he can feel free.

To conclude, *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned* denounce the theme of violence and trauma inflicted on Algerian people during the 1990s and reveal exile as one of its dreadful results. The paratextual and textual elements purposefully helped in representing and reflecting these themes.

Conclusion

The notion of violence had been defined in several ways. It is not only seen as intentional physical act to hurt others, rather its connotation is related to one's own culture and beliefs. Thus, it cannot be limited to one conception. Also, as discussed in this section, trauma has many connotations but in overall it is seen as dreadful events that has profound impacts on people's life and it is considered as one of the severe results of violence.

Violence and trauma have always been demonstrated differently in literature. Authors indented to reflect upon the violent events that left deep wounds on their psyche. As a result, through their works they tried to understand the nature of these two notions.

In Algeria, the violent events of the 1990s caused profound psychological traumas to Algerian writers. Depicting the 1990s violence becomes one of the crucial topics that were widely discussed in the historical and literary field. In many regards, it contributed in the diversity of the Algerian literary production. The group of works written during and about the black decade comes to be known as 'la littérature de l'urgence'. Yet, other works were written after the end of this era as many writers attempted to heal their wounds through depicting the traumatic memories. They also do so as a part of resisting oblivion. Among them is Hafid Gafaiti.

As shown in third chapter, Hafid Gafaiti's two collections *The Slit Throat of the Sun* and *The Return of the Damned* are among the main contemporary literary works that examined the topic of the black decade. The two collections demonstrated the collective misery and struggle of Algerians during and after the dark years. Also,

through Gafaiti's experience of exile, he attempted to reveal the idea that violence is a main reason for trauma and exile.

Such aspect is demonstrated through the examination of the paratextual elements of the collections. Each element used by the poet contributed in conveying a sense of violence and trauma. In addition, with his unique poetic style and the great choice of words reflected the themes and offered a better description and denunciation of the violence that were directed toward the civilians and the intelligentsia. Also, it shows his commitment to write poetry

Moreover, through his work, Gafaiti aims at demonstrating that poetry comes from a necessity to denounce the violence and to overcome the traumatic events as part of a healing process of resisting oblivion. Thus, the collections can be read as an invitation to Algerians to confront the trauma inflicted on them due to the black decade. Gafaiti's poetry is thus a form of resistance.

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Résumé

La présente thèse examine la représentation de la violence et des traumatismes dans *La Gorge Tranchée de Soleil* (2006) et *Le Retour des Damnés* (2007) de Hafid Gafaiti. Les deux collections traitent des événements les plus violents en Algérie postcoloniale, ceux des années 1990 ; Une période est communément appelée la décennie noire. Cette période a été fortement caractérisée par la montée de la tension entre les groupes islamistes rebelles et le gouvernement. La thèse propose une définition de la violence et du traumatisme et notamment en relation avec la littérature, avec une attention particulière aux œuvres littéraires algériennes. Il tente également de donner un aperçu historique de la décennie noire et de son influence sur la littérature algérienne avant de se concentrer sur les œuvres de Gafaiti. L'étude soutient que le poète réussit à inscrire la violence et le traumatisme grâce à l'utilisation d'éléments paratextuels et textuels.

Mots clés: Violence, traumatisme, exil, la décennie noire, *La Gorge Tranchée de Soleil*, et *Le Retour de Damnés*, Hafid Gafaiti.

ملخص

تدرس الأطروحة الحالية تصوير العنف والصدمة في كتابي الحلق المشقوق للشمس (2006) و عودة الملعونين (2007) لحفيظ قفايطي. تتناول المجموعتان أهم الأحداث العنيفة في الجزائر ما بعد الاستعمار خلال التسعينيات' او ما يعرف بالعيشية السوداء. هذه الفترة تميزت بتصاعد التوتر بين الجماعات الإسلامية المتمردة و الحكومة. تقدم الأطروحة تعريفا للعنف والصدمة' خصوصا فيما يتعلق بالأدب' مع ايلاء اهتمام خاص بالأعمال الأدبية الجزائرية. وتحاول أيضا تقديم لمحة تاريخية عن العيشية السوداء وتأثيرها على الأدب الجزائري قبل التركيز على أعمال قفايطي. تظهر هذه الدراسة بأن الشاعر نجح في تصوير العنف والصدمة من خلال استخدام العناصر شبه النصية والنصية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

العنف' الصدمة' المنفى' العيشية السوداء' الحلق المشقوق للشمس و عودة الملعونين لحفيظ قفايطي.