

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF ALGERIAN IDENTITY IN
ABDELHAMID BENHADOUGA'S RIH EL DJANOUB :
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

الهوية الجزائرية بين اللغة والثقافة في "ريح الجنوب" لعبد الحميد بن هدوقة:

دراسة سوسiolinguistic

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ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية "ريح الجنوب" لعبد الحميد بن هدوقة بوصفها علامة فارقة في مسيرة الأدب الجزائري ما بعد الاستعمار. وتسعى إلى تحليل براءة الروائي في توظيف اللهجة العامية ذات البعد الأدبي، والتعبيرات الثقافية الأصيلة، والعناصر الموضوعية العميقة، وذلك بهدف تجسيد ثراء وتداخلات الحياة والهوية في الريف الجزائري. كما يتفحص البحث الغنى اللغوي للرواية، مركزاً على دمجها المتنقن للغة العربية الجزائرية بلهجتها المحلية، والأمثال الشعبية، والكلمات الدخيلة، مما يعكس حيوية المجتمع ويساهم في حفظ التراث الشفهي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تتعمق الدراسة في الأبعاد الثقافية للسرد، مسلطة الضوء على الفولكلور، والعادات والتقاليد المتوارثة، والمعتقدات الشعبية. وعلى صعيد التحليل الموضوعي، تتناول الدراسة تفاعلات الأصالة والمعاصرة، ورمزية "ريح الجنوب" ودلالاتها المتعددة، وكيفية تصوير شخصية المرأة في الرواية. ومن خلال وضع رواية "ريح الجنوب" في سياقات اجتماعية لغوية وثقافية وما بعد استعمارية، تبرز هذه الورقة البحثية أهميتها المستمرة كأبداع أدبي وثقافي ذي قيمة راسخة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الهوية الجزائرية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي، ريح الجنوب، اللهجة الأدبية، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار.

Abstract:

This study explores Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* as a key work in postcolonial Algerian literature. It analyzes the novel's effective use of literary dialect, cultural expressions, and thematic elements to portray the complexities of rural Algerian life and identity. The research investigates the novel's linguistic richness, examining its incorporation of Algerian Arabic, proverbs, and loanwords to reflect societal dynamics and preserve oral traditions. Furthermore, it delves into the cultural dimensions of the narrative, focusing on folklore, traditional practices, and beliefs. Thematic analysis considers the interplay of tradition and modernity, the symbolism of the Southern Wind, and the representation of women. By situating *Rih El Djanoub* within sociolinguistic, cultural, and postcolonial frameworks, this paper demonstrates its lasting significance as a literary and cultural artifact.

Keywords:

Algerian Identity; Sociolinguistics; *Rih El Djanoub* ; Literary Dialect; Postcolonial Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Algerian literature is a multifaceted tradition shaped by centuries of cultural exchange and socio-political upheaval. Formed through Berber, Arab-Islamic, and French colonial heritages, this literature reflects the diversity of Algerian society and its struggle for identity, resistance, and change. A figure who has received singular recognition as a key figure in this is Abdelhamid Benhadouga, known popularly as a pioneer of contemporary Arabic literature in Algeria. His works, in which one discovers deep engagement with the issues of society and patriotism, combine local situations with universal aspirations of society. *Rih El Djanoub* (The Southern Wind, 1970) is a landmark in Algerian literary history and often celebrated as the first decolonization-successful Arabic novel. The rural village-turned-situation has perfectly captured the quintessential socio-cultural dynamism the country imagines in the midst of penetrative tensions between tradition and modernity. This paper's analysis draws some comparative lessons with KatebYacine and Assia Djebar to highlight how Benhadouga's work not only fits within these contemporaries but also diverges from them, enriching the Algerian literary tradition. Placing *Rih El Djanoub* in sociolinguistic, cultural, and postcolonial frameworks, the present research is trying to illustrate its continued operation as a cultural and literary entity that continues to be pertinent to the current Algerian identity and heritage debate.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* is grounded in a multifaceted theoretical framework comprising sociolinguistics, cultural studies, folklore studies, and postcolonial literary theory. This integrated approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the novel's linguistic and cultural significance within broader debates on identity and resistance.

2.1. Sociolinguistics and Literary Dialect

One of the most characteristic features of Benhadouga's style is his well-planned use of literary dialect. While certainly aesthetic, it also constitutes a means to a socio-political end. According to Carter, literary dialect emanates from the purposeful adoption of regional varieties or non-standard forms in writing to achieve authenticity, create realism, and reflect the sociocultural contexts of the characters (Carter, 2015). Drawing on Trudgill, Benhadouga employs Algerian Arabic, widely pervaded by dialect expressions, to disclose dialect as a feature of identity (Trudgill, 2000). Dialectical usages, in most instances, are attendant to a cultural form of resistance to the hegemony of colonial French and its re-emphasized sovereignty of the nation's linguistic legacy. Benhadouga's usage of Arabized borrowings and local vernacular resonates with Fanon's 1961 declaration of redeeming indigenous languages as part of decolonization (Fanon,1961). Also, the code-switching between Arabic, French, and Berber articulates the hybridity that inheres within the Algerian identity. This fluidity attests to the realities of a postcolonial state with associated historical and linguistic legacies.

2.2. Folklore and Popular Culture

The incorporation of the novel's folkloric elements, such as proverbs and songs, traditional games, and beliefs, situates the text within the theoretical discourse associated with popular culture. The prominent cultural theorist Williams posits popular culture as the everyday practices and rituals that issue from the lived experiences of a specific community (Williams, 2014). These aspects, within *Rih El Djanoub*, function as conveyors of Algerian culture, retaining oral traditions that have been made vulnerable to modernization. Proverbs are collective wisdom and give insight into the ethical and social fabric of the rural group. Popular songs and games, as represented by Benhadouga, further illustrate how cultural events engender social bonding while manifesting tensions of tradition and change. With Carey's interpretation of folklore as a method of building national identity (Carey, 1981), the folkloric elements in the novel contribute to the reinvention of the Algerian consciousness within the postcolonial framework.

2.3. Postcolonial Literary Theory

The postcolonial theory offers an insightful approach towards the socio-political and cultural perspectives of *Rih El Djanoub*. The concept of cultural hybridity offered by Bhabha finds relevance here because the novel manifests the cross point of the indigenously historical and the colonially engendered (Bhabha, 2012). In addition, the hybridity is present within the interlanguages of Arabic and French and also within the thematic issues of feudalism, modernity, and gender relations themselves. Benhadouga's account chimes with Fanon's suggestion that cultural production constitutes the epicenter in the struggle against colonial oppression (Fanon, 1961). By inscribing the Algerian realities within his account, Benhadouga turns *Rih El Djanoub* into an act of cultural re-appropriation: a recurring motif, the Southern Wind epitomizes the postcolonial struggle of redressing the historical wrongs and imagining a way forward towards renovation.

2.4. Gender and Narrative

The narrative structure of *Rih El Djanoub* provides a lens through which to examine gender roles in postcolonial Algeria. The novel presents complex female characters who embody the tensions between tradition and change. Rahma, the mother figure, dominates the family, preserving traditional values and exhibiting strength. The narrative voice is inclined to stress her determination and prudence and, at the same time, restrict her impact to the domestic sphere, thereby stressing the restrictions imposed on women in this social milieu. Nafissa's opposition to these restrictions, in turn, symbolizes the potential for social transformation. Her nonconformity is, however, rebuffed by society, and the representation of the repercussions that so impact her in the text serves to highlight the difficulty of transforming deeply ingrained gender relations. Through these counter-representations, Benhadouga utilizes the text in order to analyze the complexity of women's agency and women's roles within a society struggling to come to terms with its colonial history and its desire to modernize.

2.5. Symbolism and Semiotics

Rih El Djanoub uses vibrant symbolism and semiotic devices to convey profound meaning in terms of Algerian identity and socio-political status. The Southern Wind, a reiterative symbol, is a significant metaphor for sufferings and possibility of transformation in postcolonial Algeria. It represents harsh realities of life in the rural areas, retardation due to clinging to traditions, and complication in advancement. Language is a required semiotic system in the novel. Literary dialect, code-switching among Arabic, French, and Berber, and intercalation of proverbs and songs all help towards the construction of Algerian identity. The language choices represent social hierarchies, cultural dicta, and the multifaceted interaction of historical forces that govern the construction of national identity. Furthermore, cultural practices such as traditional games, folk medicine, and beliefs in sorcery function as signifiers of the community's values, beliefs, and struggles. They reveal the ways in which cultural traditions both preserve and challenge social norms and power structures.

2.6. Intersectionality: Language, Culture, and Identity:

The core of *Rih El Djanoub* is a manifestation of articulation of language, culture, and identity. While sociolinguistics introduces just how much a certain linguistic choice introduces character development, cultural studies introduce just the value of folklore in establishing a common identity. By using postcolonial and feminist theories, the embedding of the novel will be done within Algeria's historical and literary context. This framework enables a comprehensive understanding of Benhadouga's work both as a literary and as a cultural artifact by embedding these theoretical positions. *Rih El Djanoub* is not a mirror of Algeria but is intervening within one continuous rethinking of the nation's past, present, and future.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current research adopts a qualitative approach, analyzing Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* to explore the representation of Algerian identity through literary dialect and other cultural elements. This approach is suited to portraying the complex interplay between language, culture, and literature. The methodology includes textual analysis informed by sociolinguistic, cultural, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives. The analysis involves uncovering embedded meanings, cultural nuances, and authorial perspectives within the novel.

Data collection focuses on:

- Usage of literary dialect, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions.
- Usage of loanwords.
- Cultural elements: proverbs, songs, traditional games, beliefs, and practices.
- Themes and symbols: the Southern Wind, gender roles, and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

The analysis is structured in three steps:

- **Linguistic Analysis:** Identification and categorization of dialectal terms, foreign borrowings, and Arabized words, analyzing how dialectal language contributes to characterization and socio-cultural context.
- **Cultural Element Analysis:** Extraction and classification of cultural elements (proverbs, songs, traditional games, and beliefs), interpreting how these elements represent values, customs, and struggles in rural Algerian society.
- **Thematic and Symbolic Analysis:** Analyzing symbolic elements, including the Southern Wind, and their role in developing novel themes such as gender roles, feudalism, and modernization.

To ensure validity and reliability, the research employs triangulation, integrating findings from sociolinguistics, literary theory, and cultural studies. It also relies on research and theoretical models already established on Benhadouga. It is also limited to Rih El Djanoub , with no comparative analysis of the other works of Benhadouga, and cultural themes are placed within Algerian culture, with no generalization to other areas or literary traditions.

4. Linguistic Analysis: The Role of Literary Dialect

Rih El Djanoub intricately incorporates dialectal expressions, Arabized terms, and loanwords, reflecting the multilingual character of Algeria. The following table illustrates the use of dialectal terms and their translation into mainstream language, along with added contextual value:

Dialectal Term	Translation	Cultural/Contextual Significance
/lku:mandu:/	Commando	Military rank. Reflective of Algeria's colonial history, borrowed from French.
/lmi:r/	Mayor	Indicative of political power, administrative French loanwords to the local dialect.
/lfr:r w qsu:l/	Bedouin food	Representative of rural food and traditions; signifies social integration and social solidarity.
/zzami:ta/	A traditional dish	Indicates food as an aspect of bonding community members together, keeping alive the heritage.
/si:/	Sidi (Sir)	Respect and hierarchy, an echo of the old values of respect in Algerian society.
/lmazwd/	Traditional tool	Labor and rural customs, their role in metaphors for hardship and resilience.
/na:klu:/	To eat	Used in proverbs to reflect the villagers' pragmatic approach to life and survival.
/zzarda/	Banquet	Communal celebrations and the social importance of shared meals.
/franƙ/	Franc	The impact of colonial currency systems on local economic practices and language.
/lqahwa:zi/	Café owner	The role of the café as a central hub for socialization and discourse in the village.

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/nna:ba:lm/	Napalm	The intrusion of modern, often violent, technologies into rural life and the symbol of the tension between tradition and modernity.			
/rru:ki:t/	Rocket	The introduction of modern military technology and its integration into everyday language.			
/latimši l-šarj/	"Follow your heart"	A proverb to encourage personal fulfillment and the intersection of traditional wisdom with individual aspirations.			
/tašallamšanša/	"Learn a skill"	The value of self-reliance and preparedness common in rural Algerian proverbs.			

Table 1: Examples of Dialectal Terms and Loanwords in *Rih El Djanoub*

The linguistic choices of *Rih El Djanoub* 's characters effectively reflect their social functions and educational background. Traditionalist characters such as Rahma and Kheira use dialectics more frequently, while educated characters such as Malek use more standard forms of speech, illustrating tensions between modernity and tradition.

Code-switching between Arabic dialect, Modern Standard Arabic, and French is also evident in the novel, reflecting the multilayered nature of Algerians' identities based on historical, cultural, and educational forces. This multiplicity of languages represents Algeria as a meeting point of different linguistic and cultural streams.

5. Cultural Analysis: Proverbs, Songs, and Games in *Rih El Djanoub*

Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* skillfully weaves proverbs, songs, and traditional games into its narrative texture with an eye to portraying Algerian cultural identity and civic values. Rather than offering a comprehensive list, this analysis focuses on some examples that best represent their thematic importance.

5.1. Proverbs

The book's proverbs capture collective wisdom and offer insight into cultural norms and individual struggles.

- Themes of Hardship and Empathy:**

Rahma's proverb, "[ما يدري بالمزود غير اللي انضرب به]" [ma: jadri: bilmazwadye:rilli: n^šid^šrabbih] (Only the one who has been struck by the mazwad understands its pain), highlights the importance of personal experience in determining understanding and captures the villagers' collective resilience.

- Guidance for Relationships:**

Another of Rahma's sayings, "[لا تكن حلوا فتبلع ولا مرًا فتدفع]" [la: takun^hulwanfatubla^šwa la: murr^{an}fatudfa^š] (Don't be so sweet that people swallow you, nor so bitter that they spit you out), advises moderation in interpersonal dynamics, reflecting a cultural emphasis on balance.

- Humor and Practical Wisdom in the Café:**

The proverb "[اضرب عصفورين بحجرة]" [d^šarb^šus^šfu:rajnbihad^šzara] (Get two benefits from one) reflects the villagers' love for humor and resourcefulness in everyday life.

6. Songs:

The songs contained in *Rih El Djanoub* are powerful emotional and cultural assertions, which draw attention to important moments throughout the story.

- **Themes of Mortality:**

El-hadj Quider's song, recorded while learning about Rahma's death, poignantly captures the universality of death and the communal mourning it evokes. Lines such as "[بالموت نموت]" [bilmawt namu:t] (With death, we accomplish our fate) depict resignation and acceptance, which are a part of the villagers' attitudes.

- **Critique of Gender Oppression:**

Nafissa's song critiques the commodification of women in Bedouin society, comparing them to market goods. The line "[ويخسروك في رأس مالك]" [wixassruk fi: ra:smalek] (And they will devalue you like a loss in trade) highlights the emotional and personal cost of this societal norm, resonating with the novel's feminist undertones.

5.1. Games:

The traditional games of *Rih El Djanoub* offer a window into Algerian rural village life, as well as communal and intergenerational relations. The games amuse but, more significantly, forge ties of association that mirror the cultural unity of the village.

- **Card Games and Social Interplay:**

Card games are the favorite village hobby, particularly in the café. Card games are an agent of pleasure and a means of social discourse. Rhetorical insult and jocular banter over playing cards involuntarily reveal underlying social tensions and gossip, such as speculation over Malek's wedding. These are the shots depicting the café as the heart of social engagement and cultural contact.

- **Dice Games and Generational Shifts:**

Dice games both reflect the continuity and transformation of cultural practices. The slang of the younger players, often incomprehensible to the older players, symbolizes the broader generational shifts occurring in postcolonial Algeria, and the tension between tradition and new influences.

6. Beliefs and Practices

Rih El Djanoub portrays a society steeped in beliefs and practices, which dictate their mode of perceiving the reality or their manner of reacting to life's challenges. Some of these beliefs and practices are sorcery, destiny, folk medicine, and folklore, all of which are deeply connected to the rural Algerian lifestyle.

6.1. Sorcery Belief

Belief in sorcery plays an essential cultural function in *Rih El Djanoub*. For them, sorcery is a convenient way of attempting to influence the course of events to achieve good fortune or to avert one's problems. Though the definition of sorcery might vary, the belief in supernatural forces is shared. Benhadouga explains, in the novel, how deep-seated is the belief in the supernatural, which is manifested by the villager's resort to rituals and spiritual practices. One exemplary case is that of

Nafissa's feigned illness. Unable to discern her disease, her parents felt that her symptom was caused by a supernatural agent and thus called Taleb for help. Kheira suggests Sheikh Hamouda as the most successful healer. He diagnosed Nafissa's disease thus: "she is sick because she has passed near water:

- "[إن جنياً من سلالة ابن الأحمر أصابها عندما تخطت مكاناً به ماء]"
- Transcription: /innağinnīyan min sulālatiibni al-ṭaḥmaraṣābahāṣṣindamātaḡaṭṭatmakānanbihimā?/
- Translation: "A demon from the lineage of Ibn al-Aḥmar struck her when she passed by a place with water."

As the cure, Sheikh Hamouda prescribed them El Azima, a spiritual ritual, and ordered them to slaughter a black goat because the demon cannot be expelled without spilling blood. The above situation indicates the intention of the villagers to seek help for their corporal or spiritual illness from supernatural beliefs. Sheikh Hamouda also prepared a hijab (amulet) for Nafissa and ordered her mother to burn a piece of paper every night for seven nights with aloes, and to wrap it in red cloth:

- "تبخر نفيسة بورقة مدى سبعة أيام مع شيء من الجاوي وأما الحجاب فتضعه في جلد أحمر وتعلقه"
- Transcription: tebaḡirnaḡi:sabiwaraqatinkullalaylatinmuddatsabṣatiayāmmaṣaṣayzin min al-jāwī, ammā alḡijābfatadṣuhufiḡildinaḡmarwatuṣalliquhu/
- Translation: "Nafissa should burn a piece of paper every night for seven nights with some aloes; the amulet should be placed in red cloth and hung up."

This ritual shows the reliance of the people on supernatural remedies against conditions that are beyond the capabilities of ordinary medicine.

6.2. Believe in Destiny:

Destiny, *el-maktub*, is a factor that has a very significant influence upon the characters of *Rih El Djanoub*. People get used to resorting to maktub as a scapegoat for their adversities, which explains their passivity. Kheira, commenting on her husband's rudeness and the perverseness of her daughter, says:

- "[ربي قدر هذا ثم حاجي على الخير]"
- Transcription: /rabī qaddar ḡādhā, ṭumma ḡājīalā al-ḡayr/
- Translation: "My God has decreed this, then what remains is the good."

This indicates the pursuance of Kheira about her situation as being dictated by a supernatural power. In the same vein, Rahma attributes the cause of her inability to make coffee to the lack of matches, saying:

- "[لن أشرب القهوة، هذا ما كتبه الله]"
- Transcription: /lanashrabu al-qahwahādhāmākatabaAllāh /
- Translation: "I will not drink the coffee;this is what God has decreed."

Rahma's acceptance of even minor inconveniences as manifestations of divine will points out to a widespread belief in fate.

6.3. Folk Medicine

Folk medicine is an integral part of the cultural practices of the villagers, meshing natural ingredients with religious components. The community looks to traditional remedies produced from herbs, plants, and animal products for cures. When Kheira thinks her daughter is sick, she cooks chicken soup, believing this will cure her. This is used in conjunction with the spiritual treatment by Sheikh Hamouda. Another example is the “bean soup with chicken” which Rabeh’s mother makes for Nafissa to be cured after being bitten by a snake. Rabeh also uses a particular herb on Nafissa’s injury after he makes a slight incision:

- “[عشب يعرفه يستعمل لهذا الغرض وهو أنجع من كل دواء]”
- Transcription: /ʕuʃb yaʕrifuhu yustaʕmal li hādhā al-yaʕraḍ wahuwa anjaʒu min kulli dawāʔ/
- Translation: “A herb he knows is used for this purpose, and it is more effective than any medicine.”

Rahma also uses mallow to treat open wounds and reduce inflammation :

- “[إن الخبز يزيل الانتفاخ ويظهر الجرح بدون أن يحدث أي التهاب]”
- Transcription: /ʔinnal-xubba:zjuzi:lu_l-ʔintifa:xwajutʔahhiru_l-dʒurhbidu:niʔanjaḥduθaʔajju l-ʔiltiha:b/
- Translation: “Mallow removes swelling and cleans the wound without causing any inflammation.”

This reliance upon traditional medicine underlines the attachment of the villagers to ancestral healing practices.

6.4. Legends and Myths

Legends and myths are part of the cultural heritage of *Rih El Djanoub* , explaining natural phenomena and reiterating social values. One of the essential legends is that of El Hadj, who sold his head in order to call for the rain to come down on the village. Rahma narrates:

- “[أما الدنيا فكانت شهباء لهباء مجدبة. لم يسقط المطر]”
- Transcription: /ammā ad-dunyā fakānat šahbāʔa laḥabāʔa meḡdaba lam yasquṭ al-maṭar /
- Translation: “and the world was barren and arid,the rain did not fall....”

These myths hint at the village people's belief in the supernatural intervention of spirits.

7. Thematic and Symbolic Analysis

Rih El Djanoub explores themes and symbols representative of the postcolonial experience of Algeria. These elements address the conflicts between tradition and modernity, gender dynamics, and socio-political change.

• Southern Wind Symbolism:

The Southern Wind functions as a prominent symbol of hardship and adversity, representing the impoverished living conditions, societal stagnation, and natural challenges faced by the villagers.

- **Gender and Society:**

The female characters, Rahma and Nafissa, illustrate the status of gender issues in rural Algeria. Rahma embodies the resilience and traditional wisdom of rural women, while Nafissa represents revolt and rebellion against male domination.

- **Tradition and Modernity:**

The novel highlights the contrast between traditions and progress in the lives of individuals. Malek represents the capacity of progress, whereas Rahma and others represent conformity to tradition.

8. Comparative Perspectives

Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* holds a very unique position in Algerian literature and the postcolonial movement in general. Contrast with contemporaries Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar enhances this view, identifying Benhadouga's specific use of language, culture, and tradition. Benhadouga's use of a dialectical mode of writing in *Rih El Djanoub* distinguishes him from contemporaries such as Kateb Yacine, whose novels, including the novel *Nedjma*, narrate the colonial experience but create distance from the oral traditions that Benhadouga seeks to preserve. This points towards Benhadouga's emphasis on linguistic re-appropriation and authenticity. From a gendered point of view, Benhadouga builds rich profiles of women, like Rahma and Nafissa, that mirror the changing status of women in rural Algeria. While Djebar, in novels like *Fantasia* and *A Sister to Scheherazade*, was interested in women's inner lives, Benhadouga's novel is about the outer social struggle between tradition and modernity—a pervasive theme in much of postcolonial Algerian literature. In contrast to Yacine's cyclical, mirror-like structure in *Nedjma* reflecting Algeria's splintered identity, *Rih El Djanoub* describes a linear narrative based in common village life. Benhadouga's deeper embodiment of proverb, song, and popular culture also distinguishes him. While Djebar and Yacine address primarily historical and symbolic concerns, Benhadouga immerses readers in rural people's lived traditions, preserving Algeria's history of villages. Lastly, in expressing concerns with the postcolonial state, Benhadouga's fastidious attention to Algeria's collective cultural memory verifies the constitutive function that *Rih El Djanoub* has assumed in the country's literary and cultural heritage.

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9. CONCLUSION

Abdelhamid Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* is significant Algerian and postcolonial literature. Argument by comparison to contemporaries Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar is utilized to make this point, drawing attention to the position taken by Benhadouga regarding language, culture, and tradition. Benhadouga's use of a dialectic literary style in *Rih El Djanoub* puts him far from peers such as Kateb Yacine, whose works, including his novel *Nedjma*, follow the history of the colony but not that of the oral culture Benhadouga seeks to preserve. That is contrary to Benhadouga's conformity to re-appropriation of language and authenticity of culture. At the level of gender, Benhadouga has detailed depictions of women, such as Rahma and Nafissa, which capture the changing status of women in rural Algeria. Whereas Djebar, in novels such as *Fantasia* and *A Sister to Scheherazade*, imagined women's interior lives, Benhadouga's novel is built upon the exterior social tension between tradition and modernity—a familiar rope for much postcolonial Algerian fiction. In contrast to the fractured nature of Yacine's *Nedjma*, an imitation of Algeria's fractured identity, *Rih El Djanoub* employs a linear structure in the manner of villagers' daily lives. Benhadouga's excessive use of proverbs, songs, and popular culture is also distinctive. Whereas Djebar and Yacine write about primarily historical and symbolic issues, Benhadouga takes readers into the living culture of rural villages, keeping alive the history of Algeria's small villages. Lastly, while sharing comparable concerns over the postcolonial condition, Benhadouga's meticulous concern with Algeria's collective cultural memory attests to *Rih El Djanoub*'s root-founding position within the country's literary and cultural identity.

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