

Manifestations of Textual Thresholds in the Collection Nofathat Jarrah by the Algerian Poet and Painter Amer Chaabani: From Sensory Reception to the Reader's Hermeneutic Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This study moves away from closed structural and semiotic approaches to textual thresholds in order to examine the concept of 'thresholds' in the collection Nafathat Jarrah by the Algerian poet and painter Amer Châabani, adopting a phenomenological-hermeneutic perspective. The research examines how paratextual thresholds (title, cover, dedication) evolve from mere linguistic or visual signs into 'phenomenological stimuli' that influence the reader's sensory and aesthetic perception, shaping their preconceptions before they engage with the main text. Drawing on phenomenological reception theory, especially that of Roman Ingarden and Paul Ricoeur, the study investigates the experience of reading the threshold as the initial gateway to consciousness. It stretches between what is narrated and what remains unsaid, where the visual and linguistic dimensions converge to evoke and interpret human suffering.

Keywords: phenomenology; hermeneutic reading; textual thresholds; reception-consciousness; Nofathat Jarrah; Amer Chaabani.

1. Introduction: The Horizon of Reception and the Parallel Textual Phenomenon

Over the past few decades, literary and philosophical criticism has been profoundly preoccupied with the influences and phenomena surrounding creative writing and shaping the way it is read. While previous critical approaches — psychological, historical and sociological — stopped at viewing literary works as tools for imitating things outside the domain of literature, and structuralism confined itself to internal text components as a closed system, these studies still faced perplexing questions about 'lived reception experience' and how aesthetic consciousness of literary works is formed.

These preoccupations have helped develop a new perspective on creative works, whether prose or poetry. As a text produced from diverse and changing ideas, it embodies particular visions

and divergent intellectual and emotional stances, shaped by an objective and artistic outlook with multiple ramifications. This is reflected in the creator's insistence on presenting these ideas in the most splendid form and in the best possible light, within the parameters of the creative process and the artistic techniques and mechanisms that shape the text aesthetically. This occurs according to a philosophy that gives it a distinctive way of phrasing things and of using language, by charging ideas with various forms of fusion, intermingling and clear identification within their folds and details.

This is supported by a network of procedures, some belonging to the core of the creative text and others playing the role of a protective enclosure around it, standing at its boundaries and accompanying it according to essential formal requirements for constructing the structure and architecture of the literary work.

From this point onward, contemporary phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy brought about a radical shift by relocating the center of gravity from the isolated text to the "act of reading" and to the experience of consciousness. The creative text—whether in prose or in poetry—is the product of diverse intellectual and emotional stances that the writer charges with manifold forms of fusion and intermingling. However, this text possesses a distinctive identity that prevents anyone from passing into its linguistic space and grasping its essence unless the recipient has the cognitive tools that enable them to embark on the adventure of consciousness. One of the most prominent manifestations of this identity is what are known as 'textual thresholds' or 'textual parallels' (paratexts). These are the textual and iconic elements surrounding the text's external boundaries that provide the fundamental keys to exploring and interpreting the depths of the experience. Paratexts — titles, footnotes, marginal notes, the cover, the preface, the dedication, and so forth — constitute a signifying and cognitive system that is no less important than the main text itself. Rather, they play a decisive role in guiding the type of reading along deliberate paths. Paratexts act as an introduction, shifting the centre of reception from the text to the horizon of expectation and proposing a text that engages with the reader while revealing the hidden realms of the main text.

Due to their introductory and parallel position, textual thresholds are governed by stylistic structures and functions that differ from those of the main text, yet they remain interpretively interactive with it. They hint at meaning without fully disclosing it. They serve as the principal gateway to the text through reading because they 'fence the text, name it, protect it and determine its position'. From a phenomenological perspective, the creative text cannot be presented without these enclosing borders, since its value is determined by how it prepares the reader and draws them into its worlds by provoking their mind through assumptions and questions. These thresholds appear to the reader from the moment they begin reading, opening up interpretative possibilities and working to convey the author's intention through organised communication between writer, text and reader.

This study confronts us with the work of the poet and painter Amer Châabani, author of the collection *Nafathat Jarrah*, whose philosophical vision branches out and places us within its shifting horizon. Châabani has a profound and subjective approach to viewing things. His texts appear to emerge from a spirit of revolt and revolution, constructing an imagined reality in a dreamlike manner that mirrors life's contradictions. In this spirit of rejection, Châabani presents several propositions concerning textual thresholds in his collection, employing a

method that defies the reader's expectations.

This study seeks to shed light on these thresholds and dismantle the underlying structures of awareness. The study focuses on the most significant paratextual elements: the title, the cover design, the author's name and the dedication.

Studying textual thresholds within the philosophical framework of phenomenology transcends procedural questions of 'decoding' or 'classifying linguistic functions'. Instead, it raises the deeper question of how these thresholds appear as a lived experience within the reader's consciousness. Based on the nature of the Nofathat Jarrah collection — in which the creator combines the painter's brushstroke with the writing of the revolutionary poet — the research problem takes shape through the following philosophical questions:

1. How do textual thresholds, particularly the iconic front cover, the title and the dedication, shape the reader's initial sensory perception and break their horizon of expectation?
2. To what extent do these thresholds contribute to the construction of an 'interpretive bridge' linking the reader and poet, both immersed in an experience of pain, tragedy and refusal?
3. How does the 'parallel text' (the paratext) shift from being an external protective enclosure around the collection to becoming a critical horizon that expands the reader's awareness and motivates them to contribute to the production of the text's central meaning?

Seeking to move beyond purely procedural descriptions of signs, this research pursues a set of cognitive and philosophical objectives summarised as follows:

- To reveal how textual thresholds (the title, the stylistic panel on the cover, and the dedication) transform from being merely external typographical attachments into 'cognitive phenomena' capable of shaping the reader's prior consciousness and guiding their reception of the collection.
- To trace the mechanisms of integration and cognitive interplay between the visual artist's brushstroke and the revolutionary poet's writing in Amer Chaabani's work, clarifying how the cover image and title contribute to summarising the tragic significations embedded within the main text.
- Bringing to light the symbolic dimensions underlying the 'structure of implication and indefiniteness' in the central title, 'decoding' the political and militant codes of the general dedication threshold and linking these to the background references and intellectual stances of the poetic self.

This study gains its scholarly validity and academic importance through the following considerations:

The importance of this research lies in going beyond traditional semiotic and structural approaches that confine themselves to the role of a mere "enclosure," and in offering a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach that studies paratexts as a "lived experience" and as an ontological bridge that links the reader's self to the text's central core of meaning.

The study's scientific value derives from the nature of the examined corpus: the Nafathat Jarrah collection represents a unique human model in which creator Amer Chaabani brings together the consciousness of the combatant, the brushstrokes of the visual artist, and the pen of the revolutionary poet. This makes the collection's thresholds — especially its pictorial cover — an abundant source of visual and psychological material, rich in shifts (displacements) worthy of philosophical inquiry.

This study opens up new horizons in the field of paratextual criticism in Algeria, demonstrating that the value of creative texts is not only determined by their main text and internal dimensions, but also by their borders and ‘outside’, preventing readings of the main text from becoming confused or superficial.

To address this issue, the research employs a phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology, integrating it with the processes of describing and analysing the aesthetic aspects of the reception experience along the following lines:

2. Theoretical Framework: The phenomenology of thresholds and the textuality of reception

For a long time, literary works were confined to inadequate critical approaches. Contextual procedures reduced it to a mere historical, psychological or sociological document, while linguistic structuralism isolated it entirely within a sealed discursive space, treating the text as a static structure whose linguistic ‘codes’ could be deciphered independently of its author or intended reader.

However, phenomenological philosophy — especially the work of Roman Ingarden and Mikel Dufrenne — restored value to the ‘act of reading’, understanding it as an ontological actualisation of the creative work¹.

From a phenomenological perspective, particularly as expounded by Roman Ingarden and Mikel Dufrenne, the text is not a complete, finished structure. Rather, it is a ‘diagram of semantic possibilities’, a space filled with ‘zones of indeterminacy’ (spaces of indeterminacy). A text cannot acquire ontological existence or aesthetic identity unless it intersects with the reader’s consciousness. It is the reader who fills these gaps and actualises meanings through attentive, lived experience of reading. Reading is not passive consumption here; it is an act of ‘concretisation’, whereby the reader’s consciousness fills the indeterminate spaces, drawing on aesthetic experience and existential lived reality. According to the phenomenological concept, reading is therefore a dialogue in which the horizons of the text and the horizons of the reader merge².

If entry into the main text is dependent on reading, then reading itself depends on the sensory and experiential journey through what modern criticism terms ‘textual thresholds’ or ‘textual parallels’ (paratexts), in line with the ideas of Gérard Genette, as well as the work of Lejeune and John Cohn.

A creative text has its own identity and distinctive stylistics. No one can enter its unique linguistic space and grasp its self-enclosed identity unless they possess the cognitive tools necessary to engage with its specificity and uniqueness. These tools provide access to the creative text’s possibilities, opening up a broad horizon. Perhaps the first feature of this identity is what are known as ‘textual thresholds’: ‘textual attachments surrounding the text’, which function as essential procedural keys used by the researcher to explore the text’s depths, question it, and interpret it — that is, entry points that interweave with the main text, complete

¹- Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, translated by: Dr Al-Tawfiq Ben Ammar. Dar Bin Nadim for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 1st edition, 2017, pp. 84–89.

²- Same reference, pp. 142–145.

it, and render it whole³.

The textual thresholds are defined as follows: 'The totality of texts that surround the main body of the book on all sides, including marginal notes, footnotes, principal and secondary headings, indexes, introductions, conclusions and other publication data. This system is indicative and classifying, and plays a significant role in the quality and direction of reading.' The creator typically seeks to highlight and activate these thresholds, the form of which varies according to their awareness of their importance, necessity and strength of presence, in relation to the context of the main text and the needs of the creator-blogger (authorial mediator)⁴.

Just as every construction has an entry and each entry has a threshold with a form or structure, thresholds are the opening whispers. Modern semiotics has therefore been concerned with studying the frame surrounding the text, such as the title, dedication, illustrative diagrams and chapter openings, among other texts. These are termed 'paratexts'. Paratexts are the structures upon which textual edifices rest. Threshold analysis directly shifts the centre of reception from the text itself to the paratext. Modern critical studies regard this shift as an important key to investigating closed texts. Indeed, these thresholds produce a striking discourse for the reader, providing a sense of identification with the hidden aspects of the text⁵.

Since textual thresholds—such as the title and cover, the dedication, quotations, the introduction, footnotes, appendices and notes, prologues, and the words of thanks... and others—constitute linguistic and iconic structures that both precede and follow the main body, they are designed to generate discourses that describe them, introduce their contents and genres, clarify their forms, and work to persuade readers to acquire them. Due to their position (preliminary/paratextual in relation to the main text) and their connection to the main body, thresholds are governed by stylistic and syntactic structures that differ from those of the main text; yet these structures interact with the main text semantically and suggestively. They therefore evoke its meaning without explicitly stating it. Despite the apparent distance that sometimes seems to exist between them, their connection remains close⁶.

Thus, the thresholds of creative works cannot merely be decorative elements enclosing the text in formal aestheticism. Rather, they also form the basis on which novelists construct the structure of their work, striving to endow it with opportunities for visual, aesthetic and semiotic formulation within a general framework of poeticity. These thresholds can be considered the main gate through which readers enter the text, discover its labyrinths and perceive the locations of its aesthetic power. As thresholds 'enclose the text, name it, protect it, defend it, distinguish it from others, determine its position within its genre, and prompt the reader to acquire it'⁷, they surround the text, preparing it and stimulating the reader to draw them into its worlds. This begins with the cover, which contains the title that marks and labels the text.

³- Mohammad Sabir Obayd, Sawsan al-Bayati: *The Aesthetics of Narrative Formation: A Study of the Narrative Epic 'Madaroum al-Sharq'* by Nabil Souleiman, Dar al-Hiwar for Publishing and Distribution, Latakia, Syria, 1st edition, 2008, p. 38.

⁴- Abd al-Razzaq Bilal: *An Introduction to Textual Thresholds: A Study of the Introductions of Ancient Arabic Criticism*, Casablanca/Beirut: Dar al-Hiwar, 2000, p. 16.

⁵- Abd al-Rahman Munif: *The Open Door*, Dar al-Saqi, Beirut, p. 22.

⁶- Youcef al-Idrisi: *Thresholds of the Text in the Arab Heritage*, Arab Scientific Publishers, 1st ed., 2015, p. 21.

⁷- Gérard Genette: *Narrative Discourse (An Essay on Method)*, translated by Muhammad Mu'tasim et al., Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, Egypt, 1997, p. 15.

It opens a set of assumptions and questions in the reader's mind regarding the contents of the main body, as well as the author's name. This increases the reader's desire to acquire and read the work, and motivates them to do so. Other components of the textual threshold include the wording of literary categorisation that specifies its genre (novel or poetry), and so on.

Textual thresholds, understood as internal or external annexes that accompany the text in order to perform a set of functions—semantic, aesthetic, pragmatic, and others—cannot be absent from creative writing. For the value of the work is not determined solely by its main body and internal content, but also by the enclosures around it and outside it. It appears, therefore, that reading the text is contingent upon reading these accompanying texts. Just as we do not enter a courtyard before passing through a house's thresholds — since they fulfil the roles of 'informing' and 'revealing' — this function helps ensure an accurate interpretation of the creative work. In its absence, reading the main body may lead to confusion.

If the textual body requires an act of reading to be realised, this act is conditioned by a tangible, embodied passage through the work's external boundaries — what are termed 'textual thresholds' or 'textual paratexts' (Paratexts). The theory of these paratexts was developed by Gérard Genette, Leo Hoek and Jean Cohen.

In the phenomenological space, these thresholds (title, cover, visual artwork, dedication) transcend the structuralist classification that reduces them to mere instruments of naming or protection. Instead, they attain the status of a 'preliminary cognitive trigger' (the phenomenological antecedent). They represent the first phenomenological appearance to meet the reader's eye and senses before the main body is encountered directly. These thresholds operate according to three philosophical mechanisms:⁸

1. Guiding intentional consciousness: shaping the first interpretive hypotheses within the recipient's awareness and determining the orientation of aesthetic reception;
2. Destroying the epistemic distance of safety (breaking the horizon of expectation): displacing the reader from their habitual reassurance by shocking their perceptual awareness through the use of ironic, shifting and tragic elements.
3. Dialectic of the inner and the outer: transforming the 'external enclosure' surrounding the text into a descriptive lantern that illuminates angles of meaning within the 'textual interior', while protecting it from confusion and superficiality.

These thresholds appear on the cover and throughout the book. They become visible to the reader from the moment they start reading, i.e. before they start engaging with the creative material. Footnotes and notes are excluded from this, as the writer sees them as providing the reader with an elucidatory window into a particular event, character or idea. In such cases, some of this information is dispersed within the main text. This is not done at random, but rather to support, deepen and direct the reader towards meanings that might otherwise escape them during reception.

In other cases, the author may add a supplement to highlight the importance of the creative work, along with the dedication threshold, which is usually subjective. Similarly, the manner in which the author begins the text, within a horizon and perspective that generate visions,

⁸- Morris Miróponi: *The Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Fouad Shahin, Arabic adaptation and revision by Nadim Tawfiq, 1st ed., Arab Development Institute, Beirut, Lebanon, 1989, pp. 265-269.

values and indications, contributes to directing the effectiveness of reading along specific paths. These paths later intersect with the layers of the textual body. Moreover, the thresholds guide us towards certain literary rules of the creative text and towards its primary key: language. They offer a fleeting glimpse into the author's language and their orientation within the text. Ambition even enables the thresholds to take the reader to the work's reference points and background — the contextual frame that envisages and 'houses' the text.

Therefore, the role of textual thresholds such as the title and cover is not confined to framing the text from the outside. Rather, they penetrate inward to illuminate angles and disclose depths through their semantic functions, approach the focal point of meaning and summarise contents. Some of these thresholds even encourage critical thinking, while others create a level beyond the text itself, such as prefaces. Others work to encode the author's intention to provoke the reader, as with quotations, dedications and epigraphs. For this reason, it is worthwhile studying these thresholds and dissecting them as systems of construction and descriptive discourses that aim to unify the production and horizons of meaning, shaping an organised state of communication between author, text and reader⁹.

We are faced with an experience that branches out through narrow corridors. Within this framework, we present the poet Amir chaabani, author of the collection *Nofathat Jarrah*, whose profound and personal perspective necessitates examination through study and methodical analysis to understand the poetic process and its continuous evolution. This is particularly pertinent after he has invited us into his poetic world and the textual abysses he has 'played with' while breathing life into them. This is a poetic environment that cannot be contained within a single place or time because it seeks to give the word freedom to soar and break the reader's horizon of expectation.

The poet is distinguished by his poetic experience in presenting a human model surrounded by multiple images whose symbolic, imaginative spirit deepens. This is achieved through texts that sometimes write themselves in the spirit of rebellion and revolution and sometimes in accordance with the construction of an imagined reality — an idyllic, dreamlike vision reflecting the life of the poet and painter with all its vast contradictions. The angle of poetic vision has thus multiplied without immersing itself in life; rather, it refuses it. Consequently, multiple textual thresholds are established within the collection *Nafathat Jurūh* — propositions that reject every form of surrender and humiliation, however varied. Here, we catch a glimpse of the qualitative quantity that the poet has prepared for us in terms of textual thresholds within his collection. It is therefore necessary to unveil the inner workings of these thresholds, which compress many deliberately designed ideas intended to provoke the reader and disassemble the codes of his textual thresholds. These thresholds are saturated with symbols, refusal, imagination and revolution.

These textual thresholds exist within a philosophical space between 'disclosure and informing' and 'ambiguity and evasiveness'. They convey meaning without fully disclosing it. It is here that their interpretive philosophy (hermeneutics) becomes evident: Paul Ricoeur argues that interpretation begins wherever semantic plurality and implicational structures exist that require

⁹- Muhammad Hamza Al-Shaibani: *The Very Short Story in Contemporary Arabic Narrative*, Nipur House for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Diwaniyah, Iraq, 1st Edition, 2016, p. 16.

mental effort to extract the intended meaning¹⁰.

The thresholds — whether the single title or the implicit dedication — exert a kind of ‘cunning intentionality’ (Sly Intentionality). They present language or iconic formulas that are concentrated and laden with symbols and tragedy, compelling the recipient to look beyond the dictionary’s explicit, superficial meanings. Here, reception becomes an ‘interpretive adventure’, in which the recipient seeks out zones of tension and points of contact between the threshold, positioned outside the text, and the textual body, positioned within it. In this process, the threshold is interpreted as an ontological key that gives voice to the unspoken and transforms the reader from a passive observer into an active participant in the production and reinterpretation of the work’s central meaning¹¹.

Based on this philosophical foundation, the painter’s brush and the poet’s pen are inseparable in the creative process of these authors. The painting on the cover and the introductory title are not mere typographical decorations; they embody a lived cognitive experience that shapes the reader’s awareness and directs their interpretive expectations. Similarly, the dedication occupies an important space within the paratextual framing of the collection because it shifts the reader’s focus from pure subjectivity to committed collective consciousness.

3. The Creative Self in a Phenomenological Context: Amir Chaabani in Lines

Amir Chaabani, the poet, was born in 1936 in the coastal town of Deles Boumardes. He fought as a militant illustrator within the ranks of the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army until independence. He then taught, before devoting himself to artistic and literary creation. He enriched the library with seven collections of poetry: Ruba‘iyyat, ‘Asir Fitna, Ghosn Anab, Wijdaniyyat, Ḥanin, Anin al-Diyajir and Zafir Kabt¹².

This historical and psychological background provides the poet with an ‘experiential informing horizon’ reflected in the thresholds of his subsequent collections. The revolutionary act and struggle with brush and pen constitute a coherent structure of consciousness that refuses surrender and humiliation — this is precisely what the textual thresholds draw upon to obtain their reference value and the background framework that brings the text to life.

4. The Normative Horizon of the Poetic Collection: (Nofathat Jarrah)

Nofat Jarrah¹³ is one of the most remarkable poetic collections by the poet, painter and combatant Amir Sha‘bani. In this collection, the poetic force of textual thresholds is embedded within an interconnected fabric of meanings, coloured by sorrow, pain and the Algerian experience. These thresholds form the connecting thread and essential access point between all the texts. They reflect the poet’s inner conflicts and sense of deprivation, and the immense poetic form in which they are expressed turns the text into an autobiography of human life, according to a comprehensive vision of the surrounding world. Thus, the text becomes a record of personal anguish, and the discourses and thresholds within it embody pain and heartbreak from a life of suffering — an autobiography of the poet blended with surrounding images

¹⁰- Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Hermeneutical Studies*, translated by Dr. Munther Ayashi, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Jadeed Al-Muttahida, Beirut, 1st edition, 2005, pp. 62-68.

¹¹- Same reference, pp. 33–39.

¹²- Amir Chaabani: *Diwan Nofhat al-Jarrah (Sighs/Sprays of Wounds)*, Dar al-Wa‘y for Publishing and Distribution, Algeria, 2007.

¹³- Same reference.

conveyed with linguistic precision and deployed within a framework of disfiguration and defamiliarisation.

The thresholds that the poet selected are no less poetic than his texts; indeed, they are the key to entering the world of the text because they contain a semantic and semiotic structure that all the texts embody. The thresholds reveal the poet's narratives, conveying his intentions to the reader through coded messages surrounded by tragedy and linguistic deviation.

Accordingly, when the recipient engages with the text, it transforms into an autobiography of human pain and suffering. The thresholds selected by the poet are no less poetic than his poems; rather, they function as ontological keys to the text's world in that they bear an embedded semantic and semiotic structure. This structure helps to unfold the poet's stories and convey encrypted messages to the reader, shrouded in tragedy and deviation.

5. Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Reading of the Thresholds of Nafathat Jurūh

This research uses phenomenological and hermeneutic methods to analyse Amir Sha'bani's (the poet, painter and combatant) collection Nafathat Jurūh, in order to examine the mechanisms through which consciousness operates across three pivotal thresholds.

1.5. The Title Threshold: From Implicit Meaning to the Experience of Interpretation

In phenomenological philosophy, the title is one of the "preferred phenomena" that lead towards the truth of the textual experience owing to its condensed energy and effective iconic position. It is a brief discourse that reveals meanings encapsulating the entire text, forming an intellectual bridge through which the reader gains access to its meaning. For the text, the title is like the head of the body: it regulates awareness and clarifies what was previously unclear in the main body.

In reception theories (such as those of Umberto Eco, Gérard Genette and Leo Hoek), the title transcends its role as an interpretive factor that presents meaning to the reader ready-made. Instead, it becomes a 'project of interpretation' and a key that forms questions and creates expectations and paradoxes in the reader's mind, compelling them to enter the world of the text in search of answers.

The title's naming and interpretive functions are realised by linking it to the subheadings of the poems in the collection (Anin al-Diyajir, Hanin, Shararat Ghayz, Asir Fitna, Zafarat, and so on). These subheadings lead towards the main title phenomenologically and reveal the bleeding wounds of the poetic self — wounds of a self that refuses to heal. They are psychological and realistic injuries through which the poet remains anchored at the boundaries of pain. Thus, a dialectical relationship is established between the title and the main body, whereby the title gains a deep figurative meaning that draws in the reader and thrusts them into processes of discovery and interpretation.

Studying textual thresholds, especially the main title alongside subheadings, cover elements, prefaces, dedications, footnotes and notices, has therefore been a key concern of contemporary semiological study. This is because these thresholds are among the most important ways of penetrating the inner depths of a text and unravelling its complexities. For this reason, scholars and critics have focused on studying these textual thresholds, particularly the title, treating it as the primary threshold obliging examination and 'uttering' (interrogation) before entering the world of the text.

Consequently, the science of titling (titrologie, or 'the study of titles') was developed by

European critics, resulting in numerous publications, including Leo Hoek's *La marque du titre* ('The Mark of the Title'), which is a comprehensive book on all aspects of titling jurisprudence, and Gérard Genette's work, which provides an extensive study of paratexts, treating the thresholds within a distinct theoretical framework. Genette devoted an entire volume to them in 1987 — *Seuils* ('Thresholds') — which marked a turning point for textual thresholds. Instead of being marginalised or forgotten, they received full attention. Works such as Robert Scholes's *Language and the Novel* and John Cohen's *The Structure of Poetic Language* also played an important role in shaping and consolidating this new discipline in the West¹⁴.

The title is the foremost textual threshold leading to a world of textual truth. This is due to the semantic reserves and energetic capacity it possesses, as well as its various functions and effective, iconic position. Although the title appears to be a brief discourse on the surface, it is, in fact, brimming with a constellation of meanings capable of encapsulating the entire creative text. It may even allude to what the text does not say directly or answer questions that arise within the text to reveal the meaning hidden between the lines, waiting for a discerning reader to discover it. Thus, the title reveals the text's identity by establishing a bridge between the addressee (recipient) and the addresser (producer), enabling the recipient to access the intended meaning.

The title is therefore among the most important elements of textual thresholds. It is to the text what the head is to the body because it helps to regulate and comprehend what is obscure within it. Prior to the postmodern era, the title was neither a hermeneutic key capable of unlocking the text's hidden meanings nor successful in building interpretive bridges with the text's internal content. Previously, it did not provide guidance to the reader on the main text, nor was it capable of summarising or reducing the text's meaning¹⁵.

If the title is the creator's final work, then it is the reader's first point of contact. This implies that the title presupposes the existence of both an addresser and an addressee, because it is impossible for a work intended by an addresser for an addressee to be confined to the text alone. Instead, the title and the text complement and reinforce each other. One of the functions of the title is to serve as a sign of the work, indicating its subject matter. It also attracts the recipient's attention, assists the reader in understanding the text and acts as an effective visual icon. The interpretive possibilities and aesthetic impact of the title are realised through techniques such as ellipsis, condensation and linguistic economy — features that make the title a linguistic discourse open to interpretation¹⁶. As Umberto Eco puts it, the title is an interpretive key. The title constitutes a question, generating expectation and a paradox produced by the reader's act of questioning. 'In this way, the reader is compelled to enter the world of the text, searching for answers to those questions with the aim of finding them and projecting them onto the title.'¹⁷

Therefore, the title should never simply approve or endorse ideas, but rather guide them from

¹⁴- Abdelkader Rahim: 'The Title in Creative Text: Its Importance and Types', *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Mohamed Kheddache University, Biskra, Issue 32, 2008, pp. 314–315.

¹⁵- Mohamad Miftah: *Text Dynamics*, Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-Arabi, n.d., 2001, p. 72.

¹⁶- Izzouz Ali Ismail: *Textual Thresholds in the Arabic Novel*, The Egyptian Authority for Books, n.d., 2013, p. 79.

¹⁷- Jamil Hamdawi: 'Semiotics and Titling', *Journal Alam al-Fikr*, Kuwait, Vol. 25, Issue 3, 1997, p. 97.

the outset towards a specific meaning. This elevates the title from a mere interpretive factor whose task is to present meaning to the reader, to a project of interpretation in its own right¹⁸. The reader's role is then to reveal the zones of contact, tension and harmony between the text and its title. Therefore, identifying and dismantling the title is likely to reveal the discourse's connotations and secrets¹⁹.

In *Diwan Nafathāt Jarāḥ* (Breaths of Surgery), the title is linked to the front-facing aspect of the novel because it is the first thing the audience sees and the most suitable way to communicate with them. The title thereby takes on its authority and foregrounds its distinctiveness: 'Nafathāt Jarāḥ' is written on the front of the cover. This is because the title distinguishes the poetic text and stands at its head, if not as its defining feature then as an attribute of it. It is also a condensed summary of the subject matter that the reader is meant to encounter. Furthermore, it creates a bridge through which the reader can access the text's depths and reveal its meanings and connotations.

Therefore, the more successfully the author crafts an appropriate title for the artistic work, making it rich in multiple meanings and aesthetic dimensions, the closer the work will come to readers and the more widely it will circulate and gain fame. Without a title, books would remain stacked on library shelves. How many titles have caused readers to avoid certain books? And how many books owe their renown and widespread fame to their titles?

This is evident in the title of the poetry collection *Nofathat Jarrah* (Breaths of Surgery), which refers to its content. Likewise, the collection itself points back to the title. One way in which the title achieves this is by breaking the reader's horizon of expectations and provoking questions in the reader's mind — precisely what the title *Nofathat Jarrah* accomplishes. From the moment the reader's eye falls upon the title, questions begin to crowd in: What kind of wounds or injuries does the title refer to? Are the injuries bodily or emotional? What are the causes? When did they occur? Why did they happen? Are they real wounds or merely illusions? And so on.

Thus, the title is an enticing gateway that encourages the reader to explore the text and recognise its content. Although the title functions as a revealing light that discloses the text's angles, its meaning is not complete until the main text has been read. Through reading, we discover the depth of the relationship between the title and the collection, since the title is indirectly mentioned in the middle of the collection — an implication clarified by some poems and their titles. In this way, the title casts its shadow over the entire poetic collection.

From the standpoint of its initial construction, the title will present only the dictionary definition. However, it adds to the lexical meaning by providing context, usage and the relationship it establishes with the main text. This is what we will uncover in the title of this poetry collection under study.

Looking at *Nofathat Jarrah*, we see that the poet, Amir Chaabani, formed his title according to the pattern of a complete nominal sentence, conveying a fully intelligible meaning to the reader: a sentence composed of two lexical units (*Nofathat Jarrah*).

¹⁸- Umberto Eco: *A Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, translated by Ahmad al-Wuwayzi, Dar al-Takwin for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Damascus, Syria, 1st edition, 2010, p. 21.

¹⁹- Mohamad Fikri al-Jazzar: *The Title and the Semiotics of Literary Communication*, The Egyptian General Authority for Books, Egypt, 1998, p. 31.

As for the lexical unit ‘nofathat’, it is said to be less than ‘tafl’, which involves saliva together with something else. ‘Nafth’ is similar to blowing (*nafkh*); it has also been said that it is the same as tafl. It is used in the expression: ‘The diviner practitioner’ (al-raqi) ‘nafatha’ — that is, he performs nafth. In al-muḥkam it is stated: ‘Nafatha yanfuthu wa yanfuthu nafatha wa nafathan’. In the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the Holy Spirit breathed into his mind (nafatha fi ru‘i). He also said: ‘A soul will not die until it has completed its allotted provision, so fear God and make your request beautiful (i.e. do not be excessive or improper in seeking).’

Abu Obayd said that it is like breathing or spitting from the mouth, resembling blowing, and meaning Gabriel, i.e. he revealed and cast it. The serpent ‘nafathu’ poison when it strikes. A wound “nafathu” blood when it discloses it. ‘Nafith’ is also a term for poison or something that ‘nafatha’, and ‘nafith blood’ is blood that the wound ‘nafatha’. Sakhar al-Ghayy said: ‘When you deny them, you will recognise them by their traces — some hanging clot is nafith.’ In the hadith: Zaynab bint the Messenger (peace be upon him) was driven by the polytheists until she fell and “nafatha” blood from her place, expelling what was in her womb — i.e. her blood flowed. As for the hadith about beginning the prayer: “O God, I seek refuge from the accursed Satan — from his ‘hamz’, ‘nafth’, and ‘nafkh’.”

As for ‘hamz’ and ‘nafkh’, they are mentioned in their proper place; however, ‘nafth’ in the hadith is explained as poetry. Abu ‘Obayd said: ‘It was called “nafth” because it is poetry.’

That is, it is named “nafth” because it is similar to something that is emitted from a person’s mouth, like a ruqya or incantation²⁰.

As for jarrah, it comes from the verb jaraha (jarh): jaraha (jarh) means: ‘to affect/strike with a weapon’; and ‘ :means ’جرحه’to wound it more severely’. Al-hutay’a said: ‘They grew weary of his hospitality, their dogs harassed him and they wounded him with their fangs and molars.²¹ The noun **جرح** (with a damma on the first letter) means ‘the wound’. Its plural forms include **ajrah, juruh, and jihah. It is also said that they did not use ‘ajrah’ except in poetry. ‘The strike or the thrust’ is called ‘ (al-jiraha).

The selected title is poetic, full of emotional and existential/affective intensity, yet remains clear and unobscured. However, I find it enticing — it attracts and holds the reader’s attention, encouraging them to delve into the text to discover: What wounds is the poet referring to, and why do they ‘nafathu’ blood?

Although the title is clear, it is distinguished by its ability to generate meaning in the reader’s mind and by the way it establishes lines of interaction and influence. This is reflected in the fact that the title serves as “a banner with packed potential and an initial doorway that reading the text is indispensable for”²².

The onomastic function of the title, Nafathat Jarrah (Breaths of Surgery), achieves textual cohesion through a shared semantic reference, both within the title itself and in the titles of the chapters and subheadings of the poems included in the poetry collection.

Having carefully studied the subheadings of the poems in Nafathat Jarrah, I concluded that the

²⁰- Lisan al-Arab, p. 438

²¹- Same reference, p. 443.

²²- Al-Alaq Ali Jaafar: Poetry and Reception, Critical Studies, Dar Al-Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 1997, p. 173

poet had made an intentional and discerning selection. It accurately conveys the meaning and content that the poet seeks to communicate through his texts. Some of these subheadings have a strong, direct link to the main title, *Nafathat Jarrah*, such as: *The Moan of the Suffering/Desolate Ones*, *Longing*, *Sparks of Wrath*, *Elixir of Enchantment/Fascination*, *Sighs/Drawn Breaths* — and others. All of these subheadings carry meanings of anger, collapse, breaking down, injustice, pain and waiting.

Thus, the poetic self is found while bandaging a bleeding wound that ‘breathes forth’ blood, as if the wound refuses to heal. In this sense, fighter Amir Chaabani becomes inflamed with wrath at the coloniser who refuses to release him, insisting on binding his hands with the shackles of the past and the chains of plots and intrigues of the present. This leads to sorrow and suffering, culminating in feelings of anxiety and turmoil.

All the subheadings mentioned above ultimately converge on the principal title of the collection, expressing its content. Together, they convey the themes of revolution, the nation (homeland), and social suffering, including death and human suffering. These meanings shape bleeding wounds, whether real, as occurred during the revolution, or psychological: delicate wounds to the feelings and emotions of this painter, a finely attuned spirit that senses others’ suffering.

Or perhaps the fighter ‘Amir intentionally leaves his wounds untreated so that they remain as a constant reminder of what has gone before. His eyes therefore remain vigilant and his rifle poised and ready for action. He stands at the borders of pain, ready to sacrifice himself at any moment. His ink still flows like his pen still streams, and through these he expresses what stirs within his chest: symbols and letters of remarkable sweetness, tenderness and pain.

In this way, I understand that the main title has an effect on certain poems, which together become bleeding wounds that the poet writes in moments of anguish, war and revolution — and the projections of his self submerged in a sea of tension and longing.

From this, we can see that the poet Amir chaabani has, without doubt, grasped the mechanisms that generate the title at its different levels: the principal (main) level, the subsidiary level, and the secondary level²³. He made the main title (*Nafathat Jarrah*) a semantic common denominator shared by most of his poems. This title therefore represents the central entity—serving as an essential basis and a scientific cornerstone within the very process of titling²⁴.

In every case, the title raises a series of questions. For example, it is not possible to provide hypothetical answers in isolation because there cannot be an empty page before a text that bears the same title. The title is therefore an ‘external internal threshold’. Its repetition indicates the insistence of its semiotic pressure on the poetic self, the poetic text and the fact that it functions as a central semiotic unit that cannot be ignored or bypassed without careful re-examination. This further attests to its importance and centrality, and to the fact that the entire collection rests upon it.

It also indicates that *Nafathāt al-Jarāh*, as a material and immaterial effect stemming from revolution, wrath, pain, suffering, breaking and condemnation, is articulated throughout the entire poetic discourse. It is the point of reference — what everything turns around, begins

²³- Hocine Khalid: *The Title Theory: An Interpretive Adventure in the Affairs of the Textual Threshold*, Dar al-Takwīn, Damascus, 2007, p. 35.

²⁴- Same reference, p. 79.

from and returns to. It is the past and the present simultaneously²⁵.

The text is grounded in establishing the condition of pain and suffering as a consequence of injustice, affliction, and revolt. These “surgical exhalations” are, in turn, refuted by the image of wounds that have healed, while “surgical exhalations” are nothing more than a means of concealing emotions and inner reactions—what is stirred within the self’s psyche

. Instead, they serve as a gateway to rejecting anything that suggests a bleeding wound and anything within its scope. In this sense, they violate pain, suffering, injustice and anger, seeking to prove their exact opposite. This concept is evident in the wording itself and in what it signifies in terms of textual contexts and dense signs within the poetic collection.

Therefore, it can be said that “surgical exhalations” carries two significations: the first is literal, as found in the dictionary, while the second is figurative: Revolt, pain and human suffering, introduced by the title in its textual context. The title as a whole is able to distort, attract and guide the reader, drawing them into a process of discovery and interpretation.

Indeed, the main title visibly overlaps with the collection’s subordinate thresholds (subtitles/paratextual headings), such as: *The Groaning of the Burning Wells*, *Longing*, *Sparks of Wrath*, *Juice of Sedition*, *Sighs of Exasperation*, etc. These subordinate titles share a semantic commonality that leads the reader to infer that the poet’s wound will never heal or close; it is permanent. The title’s placement in a nominal sentence also implies continuity, steadiness and renewal. Here, the title is not merely a cold lexical indication, but a central semiotic unit that remains in the background of the reader’s consciousness. It points to the idea that ‘surgical exhalations’ are the arena, the point of departure, and the recurrent source — the immaterial imprint of injustice, suffering, and revolt.

By analysing the title’s syntactic structure from a phenomenological perspective, we find that it is a nominal sentence in which the subject has been omitted. The two lexical elements, ‘surgical exhalations’ and ‘wounds’, appear as indefinite nouns. This indefiniteness vividly embodies “zones of indeterminacy”. As the opposite of definiteness, indefiniteness indicates breadth and extension, leaving meaning suspended and not precisely defined.

Here, perceptual awareness is compelled to estimate the omitted element based on the structure of implicitness, for example: ‘This collection is surgical exhalations,’ or ‘These are surgical exhalations of the self and the homeland.’

The linguistic threshold bursts with lexical and figurative energy, saturated with tragedy. Linguistically, “(nafth) signifies a breath or exhalation accompanied by a little saliva, like the exhalation of a refined person (‘nafth al-raqi’, the exhalation of the healer), the exhalation of a living creature for poison (‘nafth al-say’r’, the exhalation of a snake for venom) or the exhalation of a wound for blood when it appears and pours out. Poetry is called ‘nafath’ because it is a whisper, a confession or a disclosure that issues from the human mouth as if it were a kind of incantation. As for ” (jarrah), it denotes a material trace — an effect resulting from being struck with a weapon.

5.2 The cover experience: Visual Perception and Aesthetic Composition

The cover is a striking non-textual threshold that immediately captures the reader’s attention

²⁵- Al-Mufariḥ Ḥiṣṣa Bint Zayd: *Textual Thresholds in Models of the Novel in the Arabian Peninsula 1990–2009*, Dar al-Intishar al-Arabi, Beirut, 1st edition, 2017, p. 71.

as it is the first thing their gaze encounters, thereby turning it into a space for contemplation. This helps the reader to understand the literary work and form a clear picture of the relationship between the cover's colours, designs and images, and the text's content.

Genette divided the cover into four sections. The first page includes the author's name (whether real or pseudonymous), the book's title, the generic indicator, the translator(s)' name(s), the publishing institution's officials' name(s), as well as the dedication and epigraph. The second and third cover pages are usually blank, except in the case of journals. The fourth cover page usually contains a reminder of the author's name and the book's title, the publisher's name and some of the author's other works, as well as books published by the same publishing house²⁶. As well as containing the title, the cover acts as a threshold, attracting the recipient and opening up the text to interpretation. Accordingly, some publishers or authors have sought to activate the reverse of the cover by inscribing a statement of some kind on it, such as an overall vision, or by presenting a fragment selected from the main body of the text. This reveals the general direction of the content and strengthens what is usually emphasised on the front cover. In this way, the two sides of the cover work together to convey the text's message to the reader.

One of the most important elements that draws the reader's attention is the cover image. Through it, the author or publisher attempts to accelerate the semantic reading and decoding of the title or main text. The cover image is essentially a scenic snapshot that the reader perceives before entering the world of the poetic text, so they can then contemplate the other scenes written in words and the significance of sentences. Therefore, the image's primary function is scenic condensation and performative summarisation; it is designed to inspire admiration in the reader.

The cover stands at the forefront of the entire creative work. It represents the first physical and mental visual encounter with the recipient, and it determines its outward appearance. It also performs the "function of initiating the process of opening the paper-space," preparing the reader for entry into it by offering an initial signification and a prospect of the textual discourse. The cover usually consists of two main patterns: the first is the classic pattern, which includes the author's portrait; the second is the pictorial/graphic design pattern. These appear on two parts: the front page (the face) and the back cover. Both pages contain a set of complementary elements: on the first page, the image, the title, the generic indicator, and the author's name are found; whereas the back cover contains the author's or publisher's name, a presentation of the book, endorsements/testimonials about the author, the author's biography and portrait, or a selected excerpt taken from the creative work chosen by the author or publisher.

Thus, the cover is considered "the first threshold that greets the recipient's gaze." For this reason, it has become an object of care and attention for poets, who have transformed it from a mere technical device intended to preserve printed carriers into a space of external stimuli and artistic guidance that facilitates the reception of the poetic texts.

The first thing the reader encounters when opening *Nofathat Jarrah (Surgical Exhalations)* by the poet Amir Chaabani is the cover, with its colours and shapes. These minor components

²⁶- Abd al-Haqq Bilaabida: *Genette's Textual Thresholds: From the Text to the In-Between/Paratexts*, Al-Dar al-Arabiyya li-l-Ulum, 1st edition, 2008, pp. 46–47.

were certainly not employed arbitrarily or by chance²⁷. Rather, they are intentionally and consciously employed in a manner closely linked to the creator's social²⁸, intellectual and aesthetic background, as well as their psychological state. For this reason, the aforementioned components are interrelated to form a visual structure that helps convey meaning from the outside in²⁹. This structure gives the subject its shape and dimensions because it contains signifying, suggestive and semiotic energy. This is further intensified by the absent texts that the poet used as a source of creative material, drawing from them when necessity requires, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The cover is therefore the protective container that preserves and safeguards what lies within. It is also a spatial entity constituted by the book's layout and dimensions. If we trace the main title ('Nofathat Jarrah) and the places where it appears, we find it in three locations, namely:

...

The title appears in the middle of the top of the back cover (the front-facing side). Written in bold type, it occupies a broad space, which increases its presence on the front cover; thus, it provokes and draws in the recipient.

The title also appears on the side of the book, where it is positioned for placement on shelves and to make the title easy to locate when searching. The book's design seems to draw a plan for the title's presence in all directions, with the aim of attracting, facilitating and organising. The title is also included on the inner cover page, centred at the top in thick black lettering. This, in addition to the cover's influential quality, contributes to its cultural and economic significance³⁰.

As for the cover threshold, it functions as 'an informational icon and textual force' that sheds light on its contents, much as the background in theatrical drama highlights the performance. It is the first thing the eye falls upon and the last thing to remain in the reader's memory after they have finished looking at it³¹. Since the cover is so significant in the creative process, poets pay deliberate attention to it. It is an important factor that helps recipients infer the content of the collection; in turn, it assists them in engaging with it. To intensify engagement, the focus extends to the image selected for the cover, which has semiotically meaningful visual influence and reveals the concept of the main title and some of the poems within the collection. The same applies to the colours chosen for the image.

Thus, the cover becomes a non-textual threshold and a space for the 'first visual contemplation'³², providing the recipient with a tangible understanding of how colours and designs relate to the content within. The dimensions of advertising, aesthetics and

²⁷- Ali al-Samhi: 'Poetics of Thresholds in the Collection (The Extinction of Colours) of the Iraqi Poet Ra'd al-Sayyifi', *Al-Qalam Journal*, Al-Qalam University, Yemen, Issue 4, 2015, p. 263.

²⁸- Al-Safrani, Muhammad: *Visual Formation in Modern Arabic Poetry 1950-2004*, Jeddah: Literary and Cultural Club, 1st ed., Beirut: Cultural Center, 2008, p. 134

²⁹- Al-Safarani: See the same reference, p. 135.

³⁰- See: Ahmad Marchad: 'The Aesthetics of Dedication in Nabil Souleiman's Novel Qays Weeps', *Sardiyyāt al-Dawḥa*, Issue 2, 2021, pp. 11–12.

³¹- Noura Ali Al-Qahtani: *Thresholds in the Poetry of Jassim Al-Sahih*, Riyadh Literary Club, Arab Cultural Center for Publishing, 2017, p. 191

³²- Ismail Azzouz: *Textual Thresholds in the Arabic Novel: A Narrative Semiotic Study*, Egyptian General Book Organization, Cairo, 2013, p. 221

interpretation intersect on the cover to intensify meaning. As Genette observes, the cover represents the initial material and mental encounter with the reader, opening up the ‘paper space’ and anticipating the discourse. In *Nafthāt Jarāḥ* (Surgical Exhalations), the cover’s identity is formed through two interwoven patterns:

5.2.1 The front cover (visual façade)

The front cover functions as the book’s front threshold. It performs the operation of ‘opening the paper space’ — the first thing that the recipient’s eyes encounter and the first thing that meets their gaze. Indeed, some readers may acquire the collection solely because of the front cover. For this reason, modern poets pay significant attention to it, along with the accompanying image, which serves as a visual reference for the reader. Moreover, one factor that often helps contemporary poetry collections achieve their appeal is the involvement of visual artists, who draw inspiration from the titles and texts to support the imaginative worlds of their paintings, thereby bridging the gap between poetry and the visual arts.

Since the front cover carries out the function of opening the textual space, the front cover of *Nafathat Jarrah* uses a pictorial/graphic design pattern. This naturally aligns with the poet ‘Amir Chaabani’s background as an autodidact visual artist whose symbolic paintings express human suffering and sorrow.

The pictorial/graphic design pattern involves placing a carefully selected piece of artwork on the outside of the front cover. This pattern has become particularly widespread in individual poetry collections, aiming to stimulate the reader and encourage engagement with the poetic text³³.

There is no doubt that literature has a relationship with both science and the arts, and that the relationship between poetry and painting is particularly strong. After all, poetry is a form of drawing and colouring with words, tropes, metaphors and embellishments, while visual art is writing executed with a brush and colours. Both are artistic expressions of the creator’s and the subject’s selves, whether the creator is a poet or a painter. In the case studied here, the poet and painter is both: Amir chaabani, author of the collection *Nofathat al-Jarrah* which is the subject of this research³⁴.

While there are aesthetic and artistic interpretations of poetic texts, there are also artistic interpretations of visual works. Just as a good poet is able to depict the inner self and its emotions in a text that dazzles the reader, a good painter can also captivate viewers of their paintings through their drawings, forms and colours. From this standpoint, it becomes possible to combine a poetic text with a visual artwork. If the two works of art speak to one another in terms of their interpretation, travelling between the poem and the painting becomes a journey between two languages — the language of writing and the language of images — through the integration achieved between the two.

Regarding the front cover of the corpus under study, we find a set of textual thresholds: the generic indicator (‘a poetry collection’), the title of the collection (*Nafthāt Jarāḥ* / ‘Surgical Exhalations’), and the poet’s name (‘Āmir Sha‘bānī). These thresholds establish the collection’s attribution to the poet and ensure his literary ownership. There is also the

³³- Mohamed Lasfrani: *Visual Formation in Modern Arabic Poetry 1950-2004*, p. 120

³⁴- Same reference, p. 135.

publishing house (Dar al-Wa'y — Algeria). All of these elements are written in black, except for the title of the collection, which is written in yellow.

The generic indicator appears at the top of the cover and the publishing house at the bottom. Both are surrounded by a green frame, within which lies a yellow frame. The title is written in large lettering. Beneath this is the poet's name, Amir Chaabani, and under this is the pictorial/graphic image. All these elements appear on a white background.

Green symbolises life, giving and goodness, whereas yellow usually indicates withering and fatigue — the state the poet reached due to his bleeding wounds and endless pain.

As for the pictorial artwork, it is the work of the writer Amir chaabani himself. It provides a wider space for the poet to intervene and choose what is most suitable and best for his poetic collection. The artwork depicts a drawing of a bird trying to pull a fish out of the water during the dead of night.

The image presented before us in *Nofathat Jarrah*—the collection by the poet-artist 'Āmir Sha'bānī—occupies the center of the front cover. It is a visual scene showing a bird on the bank of a river, holding the tail of a large fish, half of which remains submerged in the midst of a dark, enveloping night. The dominant color in this image is black. This is what makes it convey a great deal of sorrow and pain, as well as the poet's pessimistic outlook—an outlook mirrored in the eyes of that sorrowful bird. Consequently, the reader stands amazed before it, which heightens their excitement and stimulates their curiosity to decipher its codes and interpret its meanings. They can achieve this only by probing the depths of the main text and delving into it.

Moreover, while water usually appears blue and trees appear green, the most prominent colour in this image is black, signalling that it is sunset — that transitional time when day gives way to night. During this time, colours fade and black becomes dominant. Black commonly conveys suggestions of human suffering and gives an impression of the pains and afflictions one experiences.

Similarly, the image of running water, whose blue has been overtaken by black, shows some waves and disturbance. Through this, the poet conveys what is happening within his troubled and wounded psyche. Thus, the disturbance of the water becomes a sign of the disturbance of the homeland, a place of sedition and enemies.

For the poet, the river is therefore a refuge for dreams and truth. Although it symbolises the burdensome worries weighing upon him, it also represents life, love and generosity.

As for the bird, I assume it is a flamingo, given its colours (white and orange). Flamingos live on the banks of rivers and around bodies of water; they are characterised by calmness, contemplation, wisdom, reclusiveness and loyalty. Indeed, when a female flamingo dies, the male does not remarry, but lives out the rest of his life withdrawn, sad and wounded.

We can say that the poet Amir chaabani, in his drawing and design of the cover-page and in his choice of colors, employed various signs that complemented one another, so that they appeared unified. This unification serves to convey the poet's suffering and his wars that persist against injustice and darkness, along with his unwavering loyalty to Algeria's beloved and his lifelong defense of her. His revolution remains ongoing; as in the past, when it was carried out with bullets and weapons against colonialism, today it is carried out with the pen and the brush against anyone who dares to target Algeria—whether from outside or from within. The cover,

through its lines, colors, and forms, thus stands as evidence of that. It also indicates the poet's awareness of the importance of the cover and the attached artwork in reaching the recipient's mind.

5.2.2 The Back Cover (Awareness of Spatial Closure):

'The back threshold of the book performs the practical function of closing the paper space, and the back cover is the complementary part of the cover's overall icon.'³⁵ It is the final page and its significance is equal to that of the front cover. Rather, it constitutes a natural extension of the front cover and its contents. In general, three patterns of the back cover prevailed in poets³⁶ diwans, which we summarise as follows:

- 1) The definition pattern: This refers to presenting the poet in terms of their name and place of birth, as well as their academic and professional qualifications, or presenting the diwan, its content and its poetic text.
- 2) The testimonial pattern: This involves the poet selecting meaningful excerpts from critical studies of their own work.
- 3) The text pattern: In this pattern, the poet places a significant portion from one of the group's texts on the outer page of the back cover. The purpose of this is to stimulate the recipient and provide a comprehensive image of what the diwan as a whole contains.

The poet Amir chaabani chose, on the back cover of his diwan, a study topic belonging to the definition pattern. It included a brief introduction to the poet, covering his practical, academic, and literary life. In addition, it featured a photographic image of Amir chaabani—placed at the top of the page on the left. The positioning of the poet's image, dressed in white with a white head covering, in this exact area may indicate rejection, refusal, opposition, and non-submission.

The image of the author is directly linked to the creative text. A text that does not reveal its author (or creator) does not help the reader to approach it; rather, it becomes an identifying marker of the book. Its importance lies in reinforcing the cultural connection between the structure of knowledge and its constructed framework. Moreover, while the author's name on the cover front appears after the title and the generic indicator, here it appears as the first component of the text—indicating that it is the last element the recipient will actually encounter. This may further strengthen the idea that the author's name remains present in the reader's mind, especially since it is here paired with the author's portrait.

5.3 Dedication threshold: Dedication Threshold: Intentionality and Interpretive Communication

As a circumambient text and meaningful threshold, the dedication is a significant presence within textual thresholds. It occupies an important space in the field of modern criticism, alongside other parallel texts such as the title, footnotes and endnotes. Previously, the dedication threshold was marginalised, while the text itself was considered the main focus of critical studies, especially among formalist and structuralist critics. However, as critical studies have developed, the dedication has gained significant importance as a social practice within

³⁵- Same reference, p. 137.

³⁶- Abu Al-Maati Khairi Al-Ramadi: Textual Thresholds and Their Significance in the Contemporary Arabic Novel: Under the Sky of Copenhagen as a Model, Maqalid Journal, University of Kasdi Merbah Ouargla, Algeria, No. 7, 2014, p. 193

literary life. Through it, the writer addresses a particular audience (or groups of audiences) and emphasises their role in producing the literary work, both before and after publication. Accordingly, the dedication is never devoid of intentionality, whether in choosing the addressee or in selecting and elaborating on dedication expressions.

The dedication reflects the author's appreciation and recognition of certain individuals or groups, whether real or conceptual. It is worth noting that dedications used to be placed within the main body of the text, but today they have become an independent utterance. As such, they constitute a textual threshold located outside the main body of the text. They may be brief and simple, or more developed, appearing as a message directed to the addressee — known as a dedication message — or as both³⁷.

In general, the dedication has two main functions—these will be reflected in greater detail in the dedication to the book's copy "..."—namely: ****semantic**** and ****pragmatic**** functions. The semantic function concerns the meaning of this dedication and what it conveys to the addressee, as well as the relationship that will be formed through it. As for the pragmatic function, it is an important one because it activates the communicative movement between the writer and his private and public audience, thereby realizing its social value and its practical intentionality in the interaction between the giver and the recipient³⁸.

The public dedication in a poetry collection falls within the external thresholds surrounding the poetic text, because it is a dedication to the diwan as a whole rather than to separate, independent texts. Thus, the dedication is a textual threshold with its own significance, or it constitutes another parallel text. Moreover, the dedication threshold determines the specificity and type of the addressee, exceeding the merely decorative and economic function, and moving toward being integrated into the poet's vision. It also reflects an example of the kind of relationship between the giver and the addressee³⁹.

As Gérard Genette defines it:

'Dedication is the writer's appreciation and acknowledgement extended to others, whether they are real people or real or conceptual groups.' This appreciation is expressed in two general forms: the first is an official printed discourse on a page of the text, and the second is a situational handwritten discourse placed in the novelist's hand and attached to a single copy of the printed diwan.⁴⁰ The dedication plays a role that is no less significant than that of the title threshold; it is 'a textual threshold whose significance is inseparable from that of the title, the author's name, or the other thresholds of the text'. Therefore, it is a set of semantic indications with a property that is parallel to that of the title, the text, or the author.⁴¹

A dedication may be addressed to the work as a whole or to a specific text. It may take the following forms:⁴²

³⁷- Abdelhaq Belabed: Gérard Genette's Thresholds: From Text to, pp. 93-95

³⁸- Abdelhak Belabed: Gérard Genette's Thresholds: From Text to Paratext, p. 127.

³⁹- Al-Safrani: The same reference, p. 135.

⁴⁰- Ahmed Murshed: The Aesthetics of Dedication in Nabil Suleiman's Novel Qais Weeps, Doha Narratives Journal, Issue 2, 2021, pp. 11-12.

⁴¹- Al-Dardisi, Yasmine Fayeze: Textual Thresholds in the Poetry of Ibrahim Nasrallah: A Semiotic Study, Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, 2015, p. 76.

⁴²- Al-Mufarih: Textual Thresholds, p. 130.

- Private (family or friend)
- Public (explicit—implicit)
- Dual (private—public)
- Self-directed
- Internal

As for the dedication that the poet Amir chaabani included in his diwan **Nofathat Jarrah Had Hadr*,” it appears in the form of a dedication to the souls of the one and a half million martyrs. The poet allocated an entire page to this dedication; however, it is a public, non-explicit dedication, since the addressee is not named. Through it, he focuses on conveying a message to the enemies when he states:

Dedication

“To the souls of one and a half million martyrs, I dedicate this collection so that our enemies know the thread of the revolution against colonisation is ongoing and the banner of the Arabic language will never be extinguished. The watchful eyes remain open, and neither has the darkness of night been able to close them as long as our Atlas (map/flag) of November remains standing.”

There is an implicit reference to the addressee’s name in this dedication. This expansion of significance allows for multiple interpretations because specifying it would restrict the semantic field. However, the dedication swiftly transitions from this broad non-explicitness to explicitness directed towards a specific audience, as the poet dedicates his work to the souls of one and a half million martyrs — those who had previously been his companions on his journey (may God have mercy on them all). Essentially, the dedication of this poetry collection is a message of warning to anyone who would dare to threaten beloved Algeria or its proud people. Thus, Amir Chaabani — the mujahid and activist within the ranks of the National Liberation Front and the Liberation Army — is using this dedication to send a cautionary message to all enemies: the revolution against the coloniser is still ongoing, and there is no place for them in a land of free people. The rifles are still loaded and carried by men. He also informs them that the torch of the Arabic language and the light of Islam will continue to shine, no matter how intense the darkening power of their enemies grows — so long as the Atlas of November remains standing.

This dedication is organically connected to the entire poetic text, as well as to the threshold of the title, the cover, what lies within them, and the interpretations drawn from them. Yet Amir chaabani makes the matter deliberately subtle and evasive, so that it cannot easily be inferred—thereby satisfying the eager reader’s understanding. A dedication of this kind provokes the recipient to discover it, to reach what it signifies; and this will only occur through examining the text itself, attempting excavation, and connecting the signs to the meanings they generate.. The discourse addressed to the enemies in the dedication extends to the texts within the diwan, becoming a pivotal axis around which the signs circulate. This is evident in certain signs that appear in both the dedication and the body of the work. These signs include: threat, conflict, warning, crisis, distrust, suspicion, panic, oppression, vigilance, ‘we’, guilt/suppression, gift to the mujahid, rebellion, challenge, agent, pledge of men, French administration, rebellion, true servant, executioner, ‘Bobi France’, ‘Kham Fava’, woe, woe, woe. These signs are grounded in the dedication and based in the text.

Thus, this dedication is phenomenologically established upon 'general implicitness (non-explicit implication)' since it does not name specific individuals. This non-naming gives the meaning greater scope and allows for wider interpretive extension. However, it quickly shifts into a clear discourse of warning, oath and explicit threat directed at the enemies through speech acts.

Accordingly, the dedication produces a pragmatic shock within the reader's awareness, redirecting the course of reception itself. It informs the reader that this diwan is not mere aesthetic luxury, but rather a warning that the revolution is ongoing, now carried out with pen and brush after having been fought with rifle and bayonet, and that watchful eyes see through the darkness of night.

The dedication then fuses organically with the poetic body, with the reader finding its philosophical and psychological echoes embedded within the poems through decisive signs (warnings to agents and oppressors, pledges of men and the refrain 'woe, then woe'). Consequently, it becomes a focal point for understanding the creative work's overall intention.

6. Conclusion and results of the study

Textual thresholds provide rich material for modern philosophical and critical studies because they reveal the hidden workings of a text, explore its depths and activate the reader's role as a secondary producer of meaning. This phenomenological approach to parallel framing in the diwan Nafathat Jurah has produced the following results:

1. Textual thresholds represent an objective, phenomenological counterpart to the poetic body, moving alongside it to generate meaning.
2. The title Nafathat Jarrah appeared as an implied, ongoing nominal structure, linking the diwan's external horizon to its internal essence, which is grounded in dimensions of suffering, pain, sacrifice and continuous psychological and physical bleeding.
3. The cover (front and back) constituted a sensory focal point of perception. Through this, the poet succeeded in simulating the contradiction between the darkness of sedition and the light of loyalty and revolution by his visual composition and colour choices (black, yellow, and white).

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