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THE COLONIAL LEGACY: A READING OF LEILA SEBBAR'S *LA ROBE INTERDITE*

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Abstract: This article explores the colonial legacies as seen in Leïla Sebbar's short story "La robe interdite". The story is set against the backdrop of colonial Algeria and it showcases the intricate dynamics of identity and cultural conflict as seen with most colonised countries. The narrative examines the complexities of life of people living in a country that passed under the colonial rule and its profound impact on their identity. By analysing the story "La robe interdite", the study highlights themes of cultural identity, gender, memory, resistance, hybridity and multiculturalism. These themes form the colonial legacies left by the colonisers in all the countries they have been. The protagonist navigates dual pressures from colonial and patriarchal influences. She struggles with dislocation and the quest for self-definition. By the use of qualitative textual analysis alongside post-colonial theory, this article showcases how Sebbar articulates the ongoing struggles for cultural reclamation amid historical trauma. Ultimately, "La robe interdite" emerges as a critical lens for understanding the enduring implications of colonial legacies and underscores the necessity of confronting these histories to navigate contemporary identities in post-colonial societies.

Keywords: Cultural identity, contemporary identity. hybridity, multiculturalism, post-colonial study

L'HERITAGE COLONIAL : UNE LECTURE DE *LA ROBE INTERDITE* DE LEILA SEBBAR

Résumé : Cet article explore les héritages coloniaux tels qu'ils se manifestent dans la nouvelle de Leïla Sebbar, "La robe interdite". L'histoire se déroule dans le contexte de l'Algérie coloniale et met en lumière les dynamiques complexes de l'identité et du conflit culturel, comme on le voit dans la plupart des pays colonisés. Le récit examine les complexités de la vie des personnes vivant dans un pays qui a été soumis au régime colonial et son impact profond sur leur identité. En analysant la nouvelle "La robe interdite", l'étude met en avant des thèmes tels que l'identité culturelle, le genre, la mémoire, la résistance, l'hybridité et le multiculturalisme. Ces thèmes forment les héritages coloniaux laissés par les colonisateurs dans tous les pays où ils ont été. L'héroïne est confrontée à une double pression, celle de l'influence coloniale et celle du patriarcat. Elle lutte contre le déracinement et la quête d'identité. En combinant l'analyse textuelle qualitative et la théorie postcoloniale, cet article montre comment Sebbar articule les luttes persistantes pour la réappropriation culturelle dans un contexte de traumatisme historique. En définitive, "La robe interdite" apparaît comme un outil essentiel pour comprendre les implications durables de l'héritages colonial et souligne la nécessité de se confronter à ces histoires afin de construire les identités contemporaines dans les sociétés postcoloniales.

Mots-clés : Etude post-coloniale, hybridité, identité contemporaine, identité culturelle, multiculturalisme

Introduction

Sadiqi (2008) states that the Maghreb consists of the three north African countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Sadiq's statement is confirmed by the Colombian Encyclopaedia (2001-5) which explains that the Maghreb "actually pertains only to the area of the three countries between the high ranges of the Atlas Mts. and the Mediterranean Sea". These three countries have many things in common which Ennaji (2005) agrees with by asserting that the main similarities found among them is inherent in their history and geo-political characteristics. Being that they were colonised by France, they share more or less the same experiences which includes their literatures. According to Schöpfel (2000), francophone literature of the Maghreb dates back to the French invasion of Algeria in 1930 and this literature is also a constituent part of African literature. However, Déjeux and Mitsch (1992) argue that this literature is neither indigenous nor national because of the use of French language which remains the language of the colonisers. They go ahead to assert that for this reason, the francophone literature of the Maghreb poses a serious problem for Arabic language critics as well as foreign observers.

This study focuses on Leïla Sebbar, a francophone African writer and her post-colonial writings. She is an author of Algerian origin who grew under a French mother. She also studied in a school where the French language was the only language allowed. She has written many novels such as *La Jeune fille au balcon* (1996), *La Seine était rouge* (1999), *Fatima ou les Algériennes au square* (2010), just to mention but a few. Many literary critics have examined Leïla Sebbar's works. These critics explore different aspects of Leïla Sebbar's works especially the French and Algerian connection and how she puts side by side the background of the two countries to show the disparity in their cultures. However, it is observed that not much has been done concerning the legacies left by France in Algeria especially using her short story "La robe interdite". Therefore, the focal point of this survey will be based on "La robe interdite" which is one of the short stories written in *La Jeune fille au balcon*.

As rich as post-colonial literature is, few works encapsulate the intricate dynamics of identity and cultural conflict as vividly as Leila Sebbar's "La robe interdite". The short story which depicts the colonial rule in Algeria, explores the struggles of individuals who live in a country facing the legacies of colonisation. The story also illuminates the profound effects of historical trauma on individual and collective identity. The title itself, "Forbidden Dress", serves as a prevailing symbol of the tensions between tradition and modernity as well as cultural heritage and external imposition. It unravels the complexities of personal and social identity, framed within the context of a colonial legacy as it continues to resonate in contemporary societies. The story, through the eyes of its protagonists, discloses how the scars of colonisation shape perceptions, behaviours, and aspirations. These protagonists being mainly women, navigate the dual pressures of patriarchy and colonial domination. This article will explore the complex representations of colonial legacy within "La robe interdite" by examining how Sebbar articulates the ongoing struggles for self-definition and cultural reclamation in a world marked by historical oppression. The questions that come to mind are; firstly, does the motif of clothing in the story serve as a symbol of colonial oppression and cultural resistance? Secondly, does "La Robe Interdite" illustrate how the colonial legacy shapes contemporary identities? Having asked the above questions, our first hypothesis is that the motif of clothing in "La Robe Interdite" serves as a symbol of colonial oppression and cultural resistance, proposing that the protagonist's relationship with her dress reflects

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broader themes of control and autonomy in post-colonial contexts. While the second hypothesis will be that Leila Sebbar's "La Robe Interdite" illustrates how the colonial legacy shapes contemporary identities, suggesting that the female characters' struggles with cultural and personal identity reflect the ongoing marginalisation of post-colonial societies in France. Furthermore, we will analyse themes of identity, trauma, and resistance seen throughout the narrative. This will help us to understand the lasting implications of colonialism, not just for Algerians, but for post-colonial societies globally. This article will showcase "La Robe Interdite" not simply as a literary work but as a lens through which the complexities of colonial legacy can be critically understood and engaged. We will engage in a qualitative textual analysis of "La robe interdite" using the post-colonial theory to ensure an in-depth understanding of the work and its socio-political implications. Additionally, this paper will appeal to scholars of post-colonial literature and students studying cultural studies. Drawing on post-colonial theory, we will examine how Sebbar uses the dress to expose the psychological scars of cultural dislocation, the gendered objectification inherent in colonial policies and the paradoxical power of tailored resistance. Post-Colonial Theory focuses on the effects and aftermath of colonialism on cultures and societies. It will provide a framework for understanding the psychological and cultural ramifications experienced by characters in "La robe interdite".

1. Colonial Context and Its Impact

Colonisation in Africa has been a recurring topic for discussion by literary critics. According to Weber (2015), the Europeans came to Africa around the 14th century with the help of Christopher Columbus and his men; they initiated the triangular slave trade because they needed people to work in their sugarcane plantation in India. By the end of 18th century, there was an industrial revolution in Europe and slaves where no longer needed because of the emergence of machines. This industrial revolution led to the abolition of triangular slave trade. In the words of Davidson (2002), towards the beginning of 19th century arose the need to source for raw materials for the emerging industries. Africa, with its rich natural endowment was the destination of Europeans in search of raw materials. The Berlin conference of 18 November, 1884 to 30 January, 1885 was dedicated to partitioning of Africa by European countries in the name of "Regenerating Africa". France, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Portugal and Italy were among the European countries that colonised Africa.

France colonised about 28 African countries such as Togo, Mali, Niger, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Tchad and many others. Many writers of the Maghrebian origin such as Schöpfel, Begag and Sebbar have written about the Franco-Maghrebian relationship. Schöpfel (2000) states that the French penetration of the Maghreb started from 1830 where Algeria became a political department of France while Tunisia and Morocco were put into protectorates. France-Maghrebian relationship is seen by most Maghrebian literary critics as filled with injustice, war, oppression and above all, killings. Saïd (1978) buttresses this when he talks about bossy executive approach of European colonialism. Homi K. Bhabha in the Foreword he wrote for Fanon (2004), confirms that being confronted with a world configured, the colonised subject is always presumed guilty.

Francophone Maghrebian literature dates back to the French invasion of the Maghreb in 1930. According to Sellin and Abel-Jaouad (1998), Maghrebian writers are products of extreme colonisation. Schöpfel (2000 :8) demands: "La littérature maghrébine de la langue française existe-t-elle alors vraiment ? L'Algérie, le Maroc et la Tunisie peuvent-ils

regrouper sous un thème commun, les littératures si différentes de leurs pays au nom de la langue française ?" (Does French maghrebian literature exist? Can Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia come together under a mutual theme in the name of French language, being that their literatures are different?). Schöpfel here questions the influence of French language in Maghrebian literature and the readiness of the three counties of the Maghreb to bring together their literatures, which of course are different, in the name of the French language. She further states that ignoring this particular question would be absurd. Furthermore, Schöpfel wonders why the Maghrebian writers write in French, how long they will continue using the colonial master's language, the people the literature is addressing and the Maghreb it is representing. She goes ahead to imagine if it is the Maghreb before colonisation or the one that lost its identity due to colonisation. She continues to ask whether it is the one that fought the war of independence; the one whose people have been exiled or the one whose people are presently being tormented, linked to social, political and religious problems. According to her, these three countries have been traumatised and this makes their writers to make narratives of their experiences. These writers are "écrivains observateurs et très attachés au réel" (writers who observe and are very much attached to reality) (2000:40). This literarily shows that these writers write about the history of their countries especially as it concerns colonisation and its aftermath.

Some of the key aspects of colonial legacies include but not limited to economic distortion, political instability, socio-cultural impacts, infrastructure and dependency. Colonial powers focused on raw materials extraction and cash crops that benefit them. They hinder local industrialisation, thereby creating dependency. They as well imposed centralised governance, "divide and rule" tactics and arbitrary borders that create ethnic tensions. This contributes to post-colonial conflicts and challenges nation-building. They also introduced their languages, religion and social structures. They blend them with indigenous cultures to create identity crisis while also imposing patriarchal system that effect gender roles. These patriarchal norms influenced political structures and women's roles in post-colonial countries. Former colonies often remain economically reliant on former colonisers for trade and investment. They are thereby trapped in an unequal global system. The foregoing therefore serves as motivation to engage in colonial legacies as seen in Sebbar's "La robe interdite".

2. Legacy of Colonisation as seen in "La robe interdite"

Colonial legacies in this context refers to the social, political, economic and cultural effects of colonialism that lingers even after the end of the colonial era. These legacies shape the contemporary societies through economic, cultural and political dependency which often leads to instability by prioritising the colonisers interests. This section examines the lingering effects of colonisation as expressed in the short story which profoundly impacts contemporary identities, particularly in post-colonial literature. Leila Sebbar's "La robe interdite" explores these effects, intertwining personal and collective histories to highlight the ongoing struggles and complexities faced by persons from colonised backgrounds. These effects could be viewed in themes such as Cultural identity and displacement, gender and colonialism, memory and history, resistance, hybridity and multiculturalism.

2.1. Cultural Identity and Displacement

Leila Sebbar in the short story "La robe interdite" explores themes of cultural identity and displacement. She emphasises on how the legacy of colonisation shapes the characters'

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lives and experiences. The characters in the short story struggle with their cultural identities in a post-colonial world. The story reflects the tension between traditional values and Western influences, illustrating a sense of fragmentation in identity. The protagonist, a young lady is torn between the culture and ethics imposed on her by her employer whom she sees as her saviour and benefactor and the culture/ethics of her home country. The narrator says: "Il lui a imposé un agent, une secrétaire, un diététicien, une esthéticienne, un coiffeur, une masseuse, un professeur de danse… Elle a dit oui à tout" (He imposed an agent on her, a secretary, a nutritionist, an aesthetician, a hairdresser, a masseuse, a dance teacher... She said yes to everything.") (p. 89). The foregoing illustrates how the protagonist's employer, imposes on her what to do and how she says yes to all. Here, Sebber showcases how the colonisers imposed on the colonised everything they wanted and by so doing, the colonised loses its identity or navigate a hybridised identity. This hybrid identity is portrayed when the main character asks: "Oui, moi c'est toi. C'est vrai. Mais est-ce que tu m'aimes ?" (Yes, I am you. That is true. But do you love me?) (p. 89). This illustrates an act of confusion; the protagonist is not sure if the person promising her so many good things really do love her. The narrator confirms that "il ne lui a jamais dit : je t'aime. Seulement: Tu es la plus belle" (he never told her: I love you. Only: You are the most beautiful) (pp. 89-90). The story portrays characters who navigate a hybrid identity, caught between traditional values and colonial influences. This duality creates a complex self-perception, leading to feelings of fragmentation. The protagonist becomes rich; "elle a gagné beaucoup d'argent" (she made a lot of money) (p. 90); however, she loses the most important aspect of life which is family; "Sa mére n'a plus habité le F5 de l'HLM de son enfance. Ses frères se sont tués.." (Her mother no longer lived in the F5 of her childhood housing estate. Her brothers killed themselves.) (p. 90). This is one of the realities of colonisation, especially in Algeria, where during the Algerian war of independence with France, many Algerians fought against their home country and killed many of their brothers and sisters. These people are known in Algeria as the "Harkis" and they were chased out of Algeria after independence. Here, we see the protagonist and her family all being displaced as part of the colonial legacies. Her mother no longer lives where she used to, her brothers killed themselves and she, herself, came back confused.

The protagonist represents many Africans, even though not still under the colonial rule, but still look up to the colonisers as masters. She decides to abandon her home and culture to follow a stranger from "Sydney to Los Angeles" just because he is white. She also allows him change her image which is her identity by following to the later all he asks of her. As the colonised confront colonial legacies, they often grapple with reclaiming their cultural heritage just like the protagonist who decides to put on the dress which reminds her of "l'or des arabesques" (Arabic gold) (p. 92). She ponders on the gold letters printed on a giant poster placed in her mother's dining room as she wears the dress. This recovery of cultural heritage becomes a vital aspect of the colonised identity. They can henceforth draw strength from their traditions while negotiating modernity. The supposed "Forbidden Dress" represents cultural identity and it embodies both their tradition and the connection they have to their heritage. Choosing to wear or reject it embodies their ongoing struggle for self-definition. The protagonist experiences both physical and emotional displacements, as she is situated in contexts that alienate her from her cultural roots, and as she also grapples with feelings of not fully belonging to either her heritage or the coloniser's culture. The protagonist is not sure the person who tells her "toi c'est moi" (you are me) really means it because it seems like what he truly wants is the money he makes out of her. The narrator confirms this

by calling the man a "chercheur d'or" (gold digger) (p. 87). The sense of not belonging is pervasive. Characters often feel disconnected from their homeland, struggling to reconcile their past with their present realities in a foreign context. This alienation fosters a longing for a home that may no longer exist in its original form just like the protagonist who comes back to meet a shattered family. First is her mother who no longer lives where she used to live, then her brothers who died while she was away and lastly her sisters whose characters have changed a lot (p. 90). Leila Sebbar's "La robe interdite" carefully addresses the complexities of cultural identity and displacement. It also illustrates how colonial legacies continue to shape individuals as they recognise and comprehend their character, emotions, motives and actions. With the narrative's rich character development and symbolism, Sebbar captures the ongoing struggle for identity, belonging, and the reclamation of cultural heritage in a post-colonial world.

2.2. Gender and Colonialism

Sebbar critiques the colonial gaze and its gendered implications, showcasing how women's identities are shaped by both colonial history and patriarchal structures. The women's experiences often reflect broader societal conflicts, emphasizing the intersectionality of gender and colonial legacies. Here we are going to address the intricate relationship between gender and colonialism as presented in the story, revealing how these interconnected themes shape the identities and experiences of the characters. The key aspects are as follows:

a). Dual Oppression: This has to do with the colonial and patriarchal structures which forces the female characters in the story to face a dual burden of oppression. This dual burden comes from both the colonial forces and patriarchal norms. The colonial gaze does not only devalue their cultural heritage but also reinforces gender hierarchies that confine women to traditional roles. In "La robe interdite", the stranger, who represents the coloniser, is a man, "il est etranger" (he is a stranger) (p. 86), while the person who represents the colonised is a woman, "Elle l'a obéi. Il l'a choisie" (She obeyed him. He chose her) (p. 89). The African tradition sees women as lesser beings who must obey the men and live for them. The colonisers also encouraged a patriarchal society where men govern the society and women stay home to take care of the home front. We know that up until 1944, women did not have the right to vote or to be voted for in France. This signifies that women have two masters, the colons and the men. Sebbar uses her story to showcase how women's struggle is duplicated as they face the colonial legacies and also the traditional norms.

b). The Female Body as a Site of Struggle: The forbidden dress symbolises both cultural identity and the constraints placed on women by colonialism and patriarchy. It represents the societal expectations placed on women to conform to traditional norms while also reflecting their struggles against oppression. We see the protagonist as she follows the stranger all over the world promoting his craft and modelling the dresses he gives her. This Stranger promises her that they are one and because of this promise, she loses herself in him as he becomes her everything. Similarly, France assimilated all the countries they colonised, making sure they leave their culture to follow that of France. The female body is often controlled and objectified, reflecting both colonial (control) and sexual (objectify) exploitation. The act of accepting or refusing to wear the dress signifies a pursuit for action which allows women to redefine themselves outside these constraints. In "La robe interdite", Sebbar effectively intertwines gender and colonialism to highlight the complex realities faced by women in a post-colonial context. By exploring themes of identity, oppression, and

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resistance, the narrative sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of women navigating the legacies of colonialism, offering a nuanced perspective on the intersections of gender and power.

2.3. Memory and History

The narrative delves into the concept of memory as a means of reclaiming identities. Characters' recollections of their past serve to challenge historical narratives imposed by colonisers, emphasising the importance of personal and collective histories in forging contemporary identities. The protagonist recalls how her father had a cardiac arrest while she sings in the bathroom. Her father dies poor not knowing that his daughter is famous and rich (p. 90). She also reminisces on how the stranger took her all over the world and how she worked for him without asking questions. All she does is to obey his instructions, nonetheless, he abandons her and moves to the next available model. The post-colonial writers will always discuss the colonial history and will make sure no memory is lost. Postcolonialism itself as defined by Ashcroft (1998) is used in wide and divers ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquest and most importantly the differing responses to such incursion and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations (p.187). This shows that post-colonialism delves into memory and history in order to arrive at the present

2.4. Resistance and Agency

The act of wearing or rejecting the forbidden dress symbolises resistance against colonial and patriarchal oppression. The protagonist's journey reflects a quest for agency, questioning societal norms and reclaiming personal identity. At the end of the story, the protagonist is seen naked on stage, which signifies her resistance in wearing the dress. She views this dress as a symbol of control and oppression, therefore prefers to be naked on a lighted stage instead of wearing a dress which reminds her of her oppressors. There are other female characters such as the older women who adhere strictly to traditional roles which reflect internalized oppression. The way these older women accept societal norms demonstrates how colonial ideals have shaped their self-perception and limited their pursuit for self-understanding. Secondary characters who express feelings of shame about their cultural practices, dress, or heritage also exemplify internalized oppression. Their discomfort with their identity highlights how colonial narratives have seeped into everyday life, influencing how individuals perceive themselves.

2.5. Hybridity and Multiculturalism

Hybridity and multiculturalism form part of the colonial legacies as examined by Sebbar in “La robe interdite”. Having followed the Stranger to many countries, obeying his instructions and allowing him to shape her into his own image, the protagonist becomes conflicted with her identity. This is one of the major legacies of colonialism where people from colonised countries have hybrid identities and operate a multicultural society.

3. Identity and Duality in “La robe interdite”

“La robe interdite" presents a compelling exploration of identity and duality, particularly in the context of colonial pressures. This part analyses the characters and their struggles with identity amidst colonial pressures, emphasising the role of the forbidden dress.

3.1. The Protagonist

The protagonist grapples with the conflicting demands of traditional norms and modern identity. She meets a stranger who arrives her hometown for business and who decides to do business with a locally made dress. He says: "Cette robe, je veux qu'on en parle. Je veux qu'on la voie, de Sydney à Los Angeles" (This dress, i want people to talk about it. I want people to see it, from Sydney to Los Angeles) (p. 85). He hires her to model the dress and promises to take her around the world and make her famous; "Elle l'a suivi sur les cinq continents" (She followed him around the five continents) (p. 89). She forgets her home, her family and herself while following doing everything the stranger wants; "elle a dit oui à tout" (she said yes to all) (p. 89). Influenced by colonial values, she feels the tension between her indigenous identity and the Western ideals imposed upon her. This internal struggle manifests as she navigates different social spaces. The robe symbolises both a connection to cultural heritage produced at home and a tool of oppression used by the stranger to take her all over the world and dump her at the end; "et puis, celui qui lui disait toujours: toi c'est moi est parti" (and then the one who was always telling her: you are me left) (p. 90). Towards the end, she looks confused: "Elle est debout, au milieu de la scène. Seule. Divine." (She is standing in the middle of the scene. Alone. Divine) (p. 93).

3.2. Supporting Characters

These supporting characters such as the protagonist's family members often embody traditional values, advocating for the preservation of cultural practices while simultaneously confronting the realities of colonialism. Her mother, an illiterate who can neither read nor write yet she has a giant poster with some verses of the Coran written on them (p. 92). This portrays the family as a traditional Muslim family. Their views push the protagonist to reassess her identity. She recognises the letters written on the dress as the same one written on the poster in her family house, the verses from the Coran. However, the dress maker tries to convince her that writings on the dress are from "les vers anciens d'un Poème… dans un pays lointain " (verses of an old poem in a faraway country) (p. 92).

The Colonial Figures in the story, represented by the Stranger (p. 86), who came to do business with the dress and by using the protagonist as a model. His character represents external pressures that challenge the protagonist's sense of self. He is the one who plans her life for her; "Son emploi du temps, c'est lui qui le decidait chaque jour" (Her time table, he was the one deciding it every day) (p. 89). His expectations and judgments create a backdrop against which her internal conflict intensifies. The colonial powers often present Western culture as superior, promoting ideals that prioritize individualism, modernity, and consumerism. This creates pressure on the protagonist to conform to new societal norms, often at the expense of her indigenous identity. By taking her outside her comfort zone, her home country, and by imposing on her how to behave thereby trying to change her to conform to his style (western style), he messed with her identity. The themes of identity and duality in "La robe interdite" are showcased in the story through its characters. The forbidden dress acts as a focal point around which their struggles revolve. It illustrates the complexity of trying to find or maintain one's identity in the face of colonialism. Through this view, the work underscores the tension between personal pursuit and societal norms.

4. The Role of the forbidden dress

The dress could be seen as a symbol of oppression as well as a symbol of heritage. As a symbol of heritage, it is produced at home. The protagonist recognises the writing on it

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as that of a verse from the Coran (p. 92). The dress also serves as a symbol of oppression because the Stranger uses the dress to subjugate the protagonist. He takes her outside her comfort zone, away from her family, changes her mentality by imposing things on her (p. 89) Besides, the dress connotes the weight of tradition as well as the restrictive nature of public expectations. Same way it marks her identity, it also impedes her freedom. Furthermore, the dress embodies duality; it can be seen as both beautiful and suffocating. It reflects her heritage but also becomes a symbol of the constraints imposed by a coloniser. As the story unfolds, the robe leads to moments of transformation for the protagonist. Yet within this carceral system, Sebbar reveals how the dress paradoxically became an instrument of defiance: "sur l'estrade illumine, la fille est nue" (On the illuminated stage, the girl is naked) (p.93). The model decides to not wear the dress which to her is a symbol of constraint imposed by the Stranger. She prefers to be free and remain in her natural state which signifies her heritage. Her relationship with the dress evolves, highlighting her journey toward self-acceptance and empowerment.

Conclusion

Leïla Sebbar's "La robe interdite" provides a profound exploration of the enduring legacies of colonisation, intricately weaving themes of cultural identity, gender dynamics, and historical memory. Through the experiences of her protagonist, Sebbar captures the complexities faced by those navigating the dual pressures of colonial influence and traditional expectations. The titular dress serves as a powerful symbol of both cultural heritage and oppression, embodying the tension between personal agency and societal constraints. While characters confront the consequences of their colonial past, which includes the struggle for identity and belonging, they also reveal the fragmented realities of life in a post-colonial world. This work highlights the psychological scars left by colonialism as well as emphasizes the resilience and resistance of the colonised, particularly women, as they seek to reclaim their narratives. Moreover, by examining these themes, we compel readers to reflect on the broader implications of colonial legacies, urging a deeper understanding of the ongoing struggles for self-definition and cultural reclamation. Thus, "La robe interdite" stands as a significant contribution to post-colonial literature, illuminating the continuing impact of history on contemporary identities in the Maghreb and beyond.

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