

The Algerian feminist novel: origins, development, and distinctiveness

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Abstract

The present study investigates the literary distinctiveness developed by Algerian women writers within the framework of the feminist novel, setting it apart from male-authored narratives in both form and content. It aims to examine how these women writers have unified their creative visions to articulate a uniquely feminine perspective on Algerian society, identity, and history. The feminist novel is approached here not only as a literary form but also as a socio-political instrument that critiques dominant narratives and reclaims the representation of women's experiences. Unlike their male counterparts, Algerian women novelists draw upon a different set of historical, cultural, and emotional references to shape their narratives. These references reflect specific female experiences shaped by colonization, war, patriarchy, and cultural marginalization. The study also considers the feminist novel as a relatively recent narrative achievement within Algerian literature, tracing its development through the interplay of literary innovation and sociocultural transformation. The writers under study employ the novel to contest established norms and disrupt traditional gender roles, thereby giving voice to silenced experiences and marginalized identities. Importantly, the Algerian feminist novel employs a dual linguistic strategy, using both Arabic and French as vehicles of expression. This bilingual approach enriches the narrative while challenging linguistic hierarchies and colonial legacies. Through their works, these women novelists advocate for justice, equality, and liberation from patriarchal oppression. Ultimately, the Algerian feminist novel emerges as both a literary and political act, aimed at reshaping reality and redefining the role of women in literature and society.

Keywords: the novel; feminism; Algerian; Feminist narrative; Feminist novel development; Algerian feminist novel distinctiveness.

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Introduction

The woman has succeeded in narrative writing by transcending her position of dependence on patriarchal power. Through her texts, she exposes the suffering caused by masculine abuse within specific contexts and demonstrates signs of rebellion against cultural norms that suppress feminine existence and creativity. The feminist novel thus provides Algerian women with an opportunity to compete in literary creation against male novelists, offering a distinct perspective on Algerian identity and the struggle for change within various feminine contexts.

The Algerian feminist novelist employs a dual approach in her writing style. She navigates between narratives that depict the struggle for freedom and the homeland, particularly focusing on women's roles in resisting French colonialism. Post-independence, she continues to defend the feminine self against male dominance in her narratives, advocating for women's rights and challenging arbitrary exclusion. These themes intersect in the feminist novel, highlighting the marginalized status women have often endured in society.

Therefore, the Algerian feminist novel has piqued our interest, prompting us to delve deeper into its exploration. We aim to uncover the key elements that Algerian women have employed in crafting their feminist orientations within the novel genre, distinguishing their contributions from other literary traditions. In addition to this, our motivation stems from the desire to present readers with a fresh perspective on Algerian feminist novels, addressing literary themes that have not received adequate attention in previous studies. Specifically, we seek to establish a foundational understanding and trace the evolution of the Algerian feminist novel, highlighting its unique literary qualities.

1. The Concept of the Feminist Novel

Discussing feminist literature continues to present a significant challenge in the Arab critical discourse, particularly concerning the legitimacy and categorization of terms such as feminist literature, women's literature, harem literature, or female literature. Despite many women writers rejecting these classifications due to the marginalization they imply, such categorizations persist and reflect broader societal perceptions of women's literary contributions. This classification adds to a historical pattern of attributing inferior characteristics to women, perpetuated by male-dominated narratives.

The multitude of labels used to denote literature authored by women reflects ongoing debates within Arab literary criticism. Some critics argue against terms like "*feminist literature*" derived from Western thought, preferring terms such as "*women's literature*" or "*female literature*" to classify works based on the author's gender. However, amidst these varied labels, one significant term emerges: "*feminist literature*." This category encapsulates writings that reflect global feminist movements of the past century, advocating for women's rights and addressing fundamental social and cultural issues (Khalil, 2007). "

The woman writer has actively sought to showcase her creative prowess, aiming to transcend labels of inferiority and move from the margins to the literary center, akin to male writers. Her approach to the novel represents both a challenge and an embrace of the genre's freedom, liberating her from the constraints of meter and rhyme. This highlights how the feminist novel serves as an ideological orientation, a medium through which women assert their identities and resist masculine dominance. Within these narratives, women storytellers articulate their life experiences, advocating for equality and recognition of their differences.

The feminist novel harnesses narrative to articulate women's issues and defend their rights, advocating for equality and embracing differences that transcend categorical norms. Its significance lies in its ideological underpinnings rather than adhering to traditional gender standards associated with the concept of feminist literature. Through expressive styles that

highlight gender conflicts and challenge cultural stereotypes imposed on women, these narratives aim not to exclude either sex but to foster cooperation based on respect for differences and the recognition of diverse creative expressions between genders. The feminist novel, as a narrative written about women, engages deeply with the struggles and multifaceted issues of the feminine self, demanding recognition of rights and equality within its storytelling.

2. The Algerian Feminist Novel: Emergence and Development

Talking about the feminist creative experience in Algeria requires examining the author of this creativity—the woman—and her situation, which is directly reflected in her literature. Algerian women lived far removed from social, political, and cultural life. The conditions within the family and society were marked by an inferior view of women, subjecting them to siege or complete isolation under oppressive customs and traditions. This situation was exacerbated by French colonialism, which enveloped Algeria in a cycle of ignorance and backwardness that affected all segments of the Algerian people, not just women.

The emergence of the Algerian women's novel dates back to the 1950s. It is considered a distinctive addition to Arab literature in general and Maghreb literature in particular, due to its unique literary characteristics. The beginnings were primarily in French, which was the official language at the time and mandatory in government schools, while Arabic was largely confined to the writings of reformists in clubs, societies, and newspapers issued by the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars. This was primarily due to the colonial suppression of Arabic, aiming to restrict its spread. The Algerian novel written in Arabic waited until the post-independence period to appear, championed by female writers and men of letters who had the opportunity to receive education in the Arabic language.

The leadership is attributed to the novelist *TawesAmiroush*.² with her novel *"The Black Lily"*, which was published in 1947 and is considered the first Maghreb feminist novel in the French language. (Laaritt, 2013) We also mention other prominent female writers, including *Fatima Amiroush*, *Jamila Dabash*, *AssiaDjebar*, *YaminaMechakra*, *LeïlaSebbar*, *SalimaGhezali*, *BayaKasmi*, and *MalikaMkeddem*.

The Algerian feminist novel excelled with a dual uniqueness, combining both the *"linguistic style"* used in writing and the *"context"* it addresses. Regarding linguistic style, some Algerian female novelists wrote their works in French, while others wrote in Arabic. Regarding context, some writers focused on the colonial period in Algeria, using the novel as a weapon to oppose the colonial enemy and highlight the atrocious crimes committed against the Algerian people. They wrote about the Algerian revolution, the heroism of the revolutionaries, and the role of women in the liberation struggle, intending to achieve independence. This struggle-oriented uniqueness lends the Algerian feminist novel an epic quality.

As for the second situation, it involves writing about the post-colonial context. Algerian writers dedicated their narrative works to defending women against the authority of masculinity within the homeland. For instance, feminist novels written about the 1990s in Algeria depict the struggle of Algerian women against their suffering at the hands of extremist groups during the *"Black Decade."* These works highlight the challenges and resilience of women in a period marked by violence and social upheaval.

²Al-Tawes Amiroush is her penname. Her real name is (*Margaret Taous Amirouche*). She is considered the most important Algerian novelist who emerged at the end of the 40s of the last century. She writes in French. She left many works in literary creativity and in the oral expressions that the Kabylie region abounds in. Among her literary writings (*Black Ruby*), (*Memories are unforgettable, for the wound is deep*), (*Loneliness is my mother*), (*Running after the impossible*), (*Self-searching*), (*The Magic Beard*), (*Streets of Drums*), (*The Imaginary Lover*), saving Amazigh oral literature).

Within these two contexts, we find some Algerian women writers who composed their stories while residing in their homeland, while others wrote their novels from the diaspora, having been compelled to leave their country due to livelihood circumstances. Despite their physical departure, these writers maintained a deep affiliation with their homeland, using their narrative works to express their general crises and to highlight the specific suffering of Algerian women across different historical eras.

2.1. The Algerian feminist novel- written in French

John Diego asserts that Algerian literature written in French has undergone several phases:

The Phase of Imitation and Acculturation (1900–1950): In 1947, Jamila Debèche published the novel *Lila, an Algerian Girl*, which reinforces the notion that attaining a favorable social status during the colonial period was contingent upon assimilation into French society without entirely renouncing Islamic culture. The protagonist, Lila, is a young girl from the Algerian Sahara. Her father, a wealthy member of the OuledNaïl tribe, enrolls her in a Catholic girls' school in Algiers. Following her father's death, she is raised by a European family and receives a quality education, eventually securing a position as a governess in southern Algeria.

The Ethnographic Novel Phase (1950–1955): In 1947, Taos Amrouche wrote *The Black Pearl*, a novel that closely resembles an autobiography. Her writing was influenced by foreign authors such as Thomas, Joseph Conrad, and Emily Brontë. This influence is evident in the novel's dramatic atmosphere and overarching pessimistic tone. Additionally, her narrative technique transforms a complex story into a clear and engaging account. Amrouche's work is also enriched by her Kabyle heritage, which is deeply rooted in a rich tradition of oral literature and folklore.

The Phase of Resistance Literature (1955–1962): Revolutionary and resistance literature was not exclusively male-dominated. AssiaDjebar challenged this norm and stood alongside her male counterparts through her novel *Children of the New World*, published in 1962. Written during her stay in Morocco, the novel addresses the Algerian Revolution and is set in 1956. It features a diverse cast of male and female protagonists, highlighting both the positive and negative roles of women, including patriots, collaborators, informants, and traitors. The novel also explores the colonial settlers' exploitation of Algeria's resources, the international diplomatic efforts supporting the revolution, and France's brutal military repression, which led to widespread destruction, massacres, and displacement in villages and cities.

Post-Independence Literature (1962–1990): Notable female writers of this period include ZoulekhaSaoudi, who published only one work, *The Deluge*, in 1973. However, the novel was never fully released; only excerpts were published in *Liberté* newspaper in Constantine, under the supervision of the writer and novelist TaharOuetar. Another significant work from this phase is *From the Diary of a Free Schoolteacher* by ZhorOunissi, published in 1979.

Contemporary Literature (1990–2014): This period saw the emergence of various Algerian female writers whose works tackled national issues as well as women's concerns. Among them are Fatima Al-Aqoun with *A Man and Three Women* (1997), RachidaKhawzam with *The Foot of Wisdom* (2003), AhlemMosteghanemi with *Memory in the Flesh* (1993), and others such as Fadila Al-Farouq, SheherazadeZaghar, Zahra Dek, Yasmine Saleh, and RabiaJalliti.

Hélène Cixous, in her 1993 article *The Laugh of the Medusa*, argues that women's literature possesses a distinct linguistic style that is shaped by their early life experiences. She asserts that a woman cannot truly explore her identity, narrate her personal journey, or develop an expressive style reflective of her hidden aesthetic sensibilities without disrupting conventional language structures. To achieve such an innovative literary expression, she must liberate herself entirely from fear and modesty.

The Algerian feminist novel written in French represents the earliest experiments in Algerian narrative writing, thanks to the presence of Algerian women writers who mastered the French language. This language was imposed by the colonial rule in Algeria. Despite using this style of

writing, these women novelists remained steadfast in their patriotism and rejection of colonialism. Their novels excelled in conveying a spirit of nationalism and realism, demonstrating a deep connection to the land and an unwavering attachment to their homeland. The Algerian novel written in French stood alongside their oppressed Algerian compatriots, keeping pace with them in the liberation struggle. Moreover, when these writers expressed themselves in French, they contributed a distinct Algerian perspective (BaaliHafnawi, 2015)."

The Algerian feminist novel written in French is an integral part of Algerian literature, providing a narratively conscious voice addressing the issues of Algerian women in various contexts. This form of narrative writing reflects a spirit of belonging and attachment to the homeland and identity. Algerian women novelists successfully adapted the French language to express the crises faced by their homeland and the Algerian women, both during and after colonization. This orientation is exemplified by several Algerian women novelists who have made significant contributions in this field.

2.2. *The Algerian Feminist Novel Written in Arabic*

Feminist literature emerged relatively late in Algeria compared to other parts of the Arab world. It began to take shape in the 1960s, specifically gaining momentum in the 1970s. **Zoulikha Al-Saudi**, a prominent figure in Algerian literature, had initiated a significant project in this realm. However, her untimely passing tragically interrupted its progress (Ahmed Doghan, *The Female Voice in Contemporary Algerian Literature*, 1982). **Zoulikha** was not just a normal storyteller; she was also known for her authenticity and originality in storytelling. Her narratives were not characterized by pretentiousness or imitation. Despite her talent, her stories have unfortunately received limited attention and discussion, with only a few remarks acknowledging their existence.

ZhourOunissi's novel *"The Diaries of a Free School,"* published in 1979, stands as a significant milestone in Algerian feminist literature written in Arabic. Critics have acknowledged it as the first novel of its kind in Algeria, emerging fifteen years after independence, marking a pivotal moment in the development of post-colonial Algerian literature (Laaritt, 2013).

ZhourOunissi and her contemporaries broke through the barriers of isolation to engage actively in cultural life, contributing significantly to its revitalization. Through their novels, they addressed issues concerning Algeria and Algerian women with a distinct voice. They portrayed the role of narrative writing as a defense of Algerian women during and after colonialism. Many Algerian women novelists emerged, particularly in feminist literature written in Arabic, each developing their unique style to express diverse themes and perspectives distinct from male-authored narratives.

Discussing the creative experience of women in Algeria is complex, and closely tied to societal realities. Creativity, as an art form, hinges on talent and freedom. However, in Algeria, clarity around freedom, particularly for women, remains uncertain. Historically, writing has been a tool for linguistic expression and revelation. Yet, when writing aims to liberate from societal constraints and assert individuality, complexities arise. It becomes a journey of self-discovery and affirming one's identity against imposed social norms and expectations.

Algerian women turn to writing as a path to self-discovery and to assert their autonomy of thought and existence. In Algeria, a patriarchal society, female writers are often regarded with suspicion, especially if they address topics deemed unconventional. Consequently, these writers are acutely aware of the challenges and barriers they face. They strive to fill gaps in intellectual and literary history, a task that demands not only challenging societal norms but also confronting personal and cultural obstacles. This journey necessitates a woman's inner struggle before she can address external challenges posed by her environment and prevailing cultural norms.

The Algerian feminist novel gained prominence in the 1990s amidst a backdrop of profound societal turmoil. This period, known as the **Black Decade**, was marked by widespread violence and terrorism that inflicted deep scars on Algeria. The violence targeted various segments of

Algerian society, including villagers, urban residents, security forces, and intellectuals. It was a tumultuous time when Algeria was grappling with internal restructuring and defining its position both domestically and internationally, merely a quarter-century after gaining independence.

In response to this crisis, the novel emerged as a powerful vehicle for gathering fragmented experiences, expressing the harsh realities, and depicting the dark and frightening picture of the ordeal Algeria faced. This tumultuous period provided rich material for many creative women who refused to remain passive observers. They delved deep into the crisis, condemning acts of murder, abuse, rape, and the profound psychological suffering inflicted upon Algerian citizens.

This crisis ignited the voices of young novelists who emerged critically vocal about the tragic state their country had descended into. Their names became prominent in newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses as they produced numerous literary works. They became a phenomenon that captured attention, raised questions, and prompted contemplation. Women began writing about self-identity, homeland, societal issues, intellect, justice, and humanity. Their inquiries were diverse and varied, persistently attempting to assert their perspectives and advocate for their choices, drawing on a range of fictional texts to express their experiences.

The novel *"Memory of the Flesh"* by *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* emerged during the peak of the national crisis in 1993, followed by Zohour Ounissi's *"Longa w el Ghoul"* in the same year. These Algerian feminist novels, marked by themes of death and turmoil, continued with *"A Man and Three Women"* by *Fatima Al-Agoun* in 1997, and *"Chaos of the Senses"* by *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* in 1998. *Scheherazade Zagher* contributed *"A House of Skulls"* in 2000, alongside *Zahra Dik's* novels *"Between the Jaws of a Homeland"* and *"In the Jubbah There Was No One"* in the same year. These works, along with those by *Fadila Al-Farouk*, *Rachida Khwarazm*, *Rabiaa Merah*, *Hasiba Moussaoui*, *Sarah Haidar*, *Yasmina Saleh*, and *Scheherazade Zagher*, among others, reflected the Algerian struggle. Despite their scarcity, these authors embraced the nation's wounds through their art, going beyond personal concerns as women to voice the concerns of their country.

3. Reasons for the Delayed Emergence of the Algerian Feminist Novel

The delayed emergence of the Algerian feminist novel can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, entrenched customs, traditions, and inherited values have historically marginalized women, limiting their visibility and roles primarily to childbearing and household tasks. This societal framework often viewed women as inferior and restricted their opportunities for creative expression. Additionally, some female writers hesitated to write due to fears of criticism and societal judgment. Many chose to write under pseudonyms to shield themselves from accusations that women's creativity was less significant than men's. Their literary focus often revolved around personal themes such as marriage, love, childbearing, and divorce, rather than broader national or societal issues. Moreover, the general backwardness and lack of education among Algerian women played a crucial role in hindering the development of feminist literature. Illiteracy was prevalent among women, preventing them from actively participating in literary pursuits. Even in the late 20th century, these obstacles persisted, as evidenced by a writer's response in 1978 highlighting the barriers of tradition, ignorance, and societal norms like the veil (Saleh Missoufia). The marginalization of women's literature, juxtaposed with the central and dominant position of male creativity, despite its scarcity, has contributed to hindering the emergence of feminist writing. Women's writing has often been constrained by societal norms and customs, prioritizing conformity over creative expression. These factors collectively undermine the development and recognition of feminist voices in literature.

Most of the writers who addressed the issue of Algerian women lacked extensive opportunities to fully realize their goals. They struggled to control their intellectual and artistic material, depicting the full spectrum of psychological, social, and political dimensions. They aimed to

transform negative realities into more positive ones, portraying Algerian women as stronger and more resilient in confronting societal challenges, and presenting a brighter image of them. Books on modern Algerian literature have tended to emphasize feminist literature in French, often praising writers like *AssiaDjebar*, *SafiaKhati*, and *Nadia Kounda* more than their counterparts who write in Arabic. This focus has overlooked many Algerian feminist writers who work in Arabic, such as *ZahourOunissi* and *AhlamMosteghanemi*. This imbalance highlights a significant injustice in the representation of Algerian feminist literature.

4. Distinctiveness in the Novel: Feminism in Algerian Literature

The Algerian feminist novel is distinguished by its unique departure from the themes typically explored in novels centered on masculinity. One notable aspect is that, like other feminist novels in Arabic literature, the Algerian feminist novel grants the central role to female characters within the narrative, thereby marginalizing male characters. This narrative strategy serves as a form of literary revenge, where the novelist undermines male dominance over females. This is embodied in the text as follows:

- The focus is on the female character, empathizing with her and justifying any perceived deviations in her behavior due to social, cultural, civilizational, or psychological reasons. This approach attributes the role of the protagonist to the woman.
- The style of expression in Algerian feminist novels differs significantly in its portrayal of mental and emotional aspects. When a woman writes about herself, her sensitivity and perspective vary greatly from a man's depiction of her. This difference is due to the availability of subjective experience. Certain themes tend to dominate these works, such as immigration to large cities, the experience of being a second wife, sexual assault or rape, and the life of a working woman (Laarit, *The narrative of space in the Maghreb women's novel*,).
- Algerian feminist novels are characterized by their inclusion of topics traditionally silenced, particularly those related to sex. Through this focus, novelists critique the instinctive thinking that masculinity has imposed on women. This drives the novelist to uncover and address these silenced topics, breaking the barriers of silence and fear that have restricted female existence in various contexts. Consequently, the Algerian feminist novel attempts to "use the body as a form of speech, breaking taboos around sex and the forbidden. This approach strives to establish a new presence for women through a redefined identity" (Taqbayt).
- Some female Algerian novelists disguise themselves with pseudonyms in their works, despite their prestigious educational and social status. This practice can be attributed to various objective and subjective reasons. For instance, the novelist His Eminence Al Farouk uses an alias, even though her real name is FazilaMalakmi. One reason for this might be the external societal pressures and the personal alienation women feel from their bodies. As John Dojo points out, there is often a necessity to avoid putting family or a husband in a critical position. A husband might not accept his wife's writing under her real name unless it falls within socially acceptable limits and doesn't cause him public discomfort. Furthermore, using a pseudonym can affirm a new identity that the writer acquires through the act of writing, representing a new birth and a unique adventure without involving the family (Laarit, , *The narrative of space in the Maghreb women's novel*,).
- The Algerian feminist novel is characterized by its unique portrayal of the relationship between women and men, often creatively embodying the deep abyss that exists due to the unequal power dynamics. These novels explore the profound conflict between patriarchal authority, symbolizing strength and dominance, and women, who are often portrayed as dependent and perceived as weak. This unequal situation fuels a crisis of rebellion among women, manifested in acts of defiance against masculine dominance.

In some Algerian feminist novels, there is a deliberate effort to present a repugnant image of certain types of men who are undesirable — those who do not care about personal hygiene or manners. This serves as a symbolic mechanism to counterbalance the traditional image of masculinity. In this context, the opposite image emerges a repulsive portrayal of men as outcasts in feminist literature. Women, on the other hand, are depicted as victims subjected to various forms of tyranny and barbarism at the hands of men. This portrayal aims to highlight the injustices women face and the struggles they endure within patriarchal structures (Al-Sheikh).”

- The Algerian feminist novel is characterized by its focused exploration of crises, anchoring its events within the context of the colonial period and the subsequent post-colonial era. Female novelists in Algeria deliberately choose to narrate stories set during the colonial era or in post-independence Algeria, particularly in the tumultuous 1990s. This deliberate choice allows these novelists to hold the political timeline in Algeria accountable. They use their narratives to critique political realities, highlighting fundamental issues and examining their profound impacts on individuals and society.

Algerian women novelists engage with the political landscape of their country, expressing their emotions and perspectives on political phenomena. Historically, political activity in Algeria has been predominantly male-dominated, prompting these novelists to reclaim political discourse in their works. They approach political themes from dual perspectives: reflecting on the Algerian revolution and scrutinizing current political authority. This dual exploration allows them to present diverse viewpoints and critique both historical and contemporary political dynamics in Algeria (HafnawiBaali, 2015). ”

- In Algerian feminist novels, a distinctive narrative style emerges where the novelist adopts a first-person feminine perspective, crafting a narrative that mirrors the lived experiences of women. Through their novels, these writers aim to challenge masculine dominance by resurrecting the status of women and reclaiming their feminine selves. This pursuit signifies achieving absolute individual freedom for women, liberating them from social, religious, and economic constraints, as well as double standards.

The novels often delve into psychological conflicts faced by women, stemming from persecution or internal struggles between desire and self-examination. Women protagonists confront and attempt to dismantle internalized concepts that confine them, while simultaneously battling external societal pressures that uphold traditional roles of femininity, such as those of a mother, wife, or merely a vessel for reproduction (womb) (Wael Ali Faleh Al-Sammadi, 2010,)”.

In Algerian feminist novels, there is a deliberate effort to portray a transformed and more equitable coexistence between genders. These novels depict a shift from women's historical subordination to a quest for dominance over masculinity in societal structures. The underlying goal is to reflect and envision a reality where women can achieve what they hope for genuine freedom.

5. The Most Prominent Topics of the Algerian Feminist Novel

In Algerian feminist novels, the narrative often presents a multitude of questions that span from the deeply personal to the broadly societal. These narratives navigate between subjective reflections and collective concerns, touching upon both private experiences and overarching themes. The topics explored are diverse and the issues discussed are manifold, creating a mosaic of perspectives within the Algerian women's narrative.

5.1. The issue of the “Woman”

The liberation movements in the Arab world, along with increased interaction with Western societies and exposure to international women's liberation movements, played a significant role in improving women's lives. Arab women noted the stark contrast between their

societal status and the advancements achieved by Western women. Women novelists endeavored to portray Arab women beyond mere physicality, educating men about the artistic dimensions of women's lives and dispelling misconceptions. Their efforts aimed to create a world where gender equality and parity positively influenced everyone involved. Women sought not power or superiority over men, but rather a space where they could live fully and contribute positively to all aspects of life. (Shaaban.p69). The Arab writer has approached the topic of women from various dimensions, employing artistic methods that transcend the ordinary. Their approach often blends forms of revelation and silent confessions, where the boundaries between reality and imagination intersect, merging "the real with the dreamlike (Jomaa, , 2005,)"

The Arab novelist employs direct statements and subtle hints, utilizing rhetorical devices like metaphor and symbolism, to navigate the taboos entrenched in conservative Arab society, particularly when breached by women. These narratives delve into the intricacies of femininity, exploring both its private and public dimensions. Love, marriage, and divorce, alongside the social conditions of women, are central themes. The novels contrast the submissive woman with the cultured, liberated woman who challenges societal norms. The woman's interactions with men, whether through marriage or familial ties, are pivotal, often symbolized by her relationship with her father, who represents the strict patriarchal authority in society.

5.2. *Women and love*

Love is a central theme in Algerian women's novels, evident in the depiction of emotional relationships across these texts. This exploration signifies a notable shift in women's status, as they engage with topics previously considered taboo. The narratives skillfully alternate between "modest expressions and bold assertions, reflecting a nuanced approach to portraying love and its complexities". (Jomaa, , 2005,p75) Many fictional texts by Algerian women writers delve into emotional narratives and love situations. When exploring this sensitive topic, often taboo in Algerian society, writers frequently employ metaphor, insinuation, and occasionally boldness. Discussing love openly is considered morally scandalous in Algerian culture, yet writers have tackled it unabashedly in their texts. They view love as synonymous with freedom, which drives their interest in portraying it extensively, often framing it as a distinctly feminine concern.

5.3. *Women and Politics/Homeland*

Politics and homeland occupy a significant place in Algerian women's novels, whether as central themes or as references dispersed throughout their narratives. Women's engagement with politics stems from the understanding that their social conditions are intertwined with the broader political landscape. Politics shapes and dictates the frameworks of social, cultural, and economic systems, exerting implicit control despite not always being overtly authoritative in practice.

The narrative imagination of Algerian feminist novels is predominantly centered around the theme of homeland, which serves as the primary focus in many of these works. The women's novel, largely shaped by the events following Algeria's October 1988 demonstrations, was profoundly influenced by this tumultuous period. The nineties marked a crisis-era that significantly impacted novelistic production, leaving a lasting imprint. Patriotism forms the foundational backdrop against which the Algerian women's novel emerged, resonating deeply with the tragedies and challenges of the time. This emergence imbued the novels with a distinctive character, reflecting the societal and political upheavals that defined Algeria during this period.

The Algerian women's novel emerged intertwined with the tumultuous events that Algeria faced, with narrative scenes often reflecting the challenging days of the crisis. This connection is evident in the works of female novelists who explored themes of tragedy to varying degrees. Examples include Yasmina Saleh's *"A Homeland of Glass,"* Zahra Dik's *"In the Jaws of a Homeland,"* Samira Hawara's *"The Sun in a Box,"* Aida Khaldoun's *"Only He Knows,"* Fadila Al-

Farouk "Ta' Al-Khajal," ShahrzadZagher's "A House of Skulls," and Samira Qebli's "After the Bullets Were Silent." These novels encapsulate the profound impact of historical events on Algerian society and the individual experiences within it.

5.4. Women and Revolution:

The Algerian revolution has consistently served as the central theme and reference point in narrative writing, shaping the narrative structures through acts of imaginative memory that establish the novel's times and spaces. Whether celebrating its heroism or critiquing various perspectives and positions, the theme of the revolution remains dominant in Algerian literature.

The Algerian revolution, with its multifaceted themes, provided abundant material for Algerian novelists and storytellers to draw from and present ideas that both derive from and reflect upon it. These writers endeavored to reclaim the history of struggle, prominently led by the Algerian revolution, which became a significant focal point in novelistic production starting from the early nineties.

The revolution remained the foundational ideological and artistic reference for many Algerian novelists, spanning generations from *TaharOuettar's "Laz, Al-Zalzal"* to *Abdelhamid Ben Hadouka's "The South Wind"*, *"Jaziawadarawish,"* and further to novelists like *Lahbib Al-Sayeh, ZahourOunissi,* and *Wassini Al-Araj.* A new generation of writers, including Fadila Al-Farouk, Bashir Mufti, and Yasmina Saleh, also explored the revolution from fresh perspectives that had not been previously addressed. This ongoing engagement with the revolutionary theme reflects its enduring significance and impact on Algerian literary discourse.

The Arab-Algerian novel often grappled with a tendency towards directness and realism in its presentation, sometimes criticized for a perceived lack of stylistic and artistic sophistication, and deficiencies in literary and poetic qualities. Algerian writers faced challenges in finding established models to emulate. In contrast, literature written in French enjoyed more recognition, as Algerian novels in French gained popularity and were widely translated into Arabic. This exposure led to greater familiarity with French-language Algerian writers among readers, while awareness of contemporary Algerian prose writers remained comparatively limited (Abdullah Al-Rakibi, *The Development of Modern Algerian Prose*, 1983)."

6. Conclusion

The Algerian feminist novel emerged amidst a national crisis, gaining significant traction in the 1990s with the arrival of new female novelists. Many of these texts did not initially center on women's issues exclusively but rather addressed broader national concerns during a critical and tumultuous period. Algerian society, largely conservative at the time, imposed constraints that discouraged women from openly discussing sensitive and taboo topics in their writing.

These works have carved out a significant place within the Algerian and broader Arab cultural landscape. The authors of these novels continue to assert their presence prominently in narrative discourse. Women are no longer merely subjects to be observed but have transcended from being enclosed, silenced, and consumed to become active and productive participants in society. Their novelistic voices have empowered creative women to assert their genuine and impactful selves.

In conclusion, the women's creative experience in Algeria has been characterized by laborious efforts that have borne fruit in the form of literary achievements. The journey was challenging, yet it has yielded pens and voices that Algeria can proudly celebrate. These writers have produced mature and rich literary models that warrant thoughtful recognition and discussion.

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