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Worlds of feminism in the contemporary Algerian feminist novel - selected models-

djouider amel*

Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center - Mila Laboratory of the official and marginal Algerian literary heritage (University of August 20, 1955 Skikda, (Algeria)

a.djouider@centre-univ-mila.dz

kerrad moussa

Larbi Ben M'hidi University Oum El Bouaghi, , (Algeria)

kerradmoussa@gmail.com

Abstract ;

This research paper examines the topic of contemporary Algerian feminist novels as one of the most significant subjects in the landscape of Algerian literary creativity. These novels construct a new world filled with artistic and ideological issues, distinguished by their boldness and challenge to reality, while also reflecting the concerns and preoccupations of female writers. Through this study, the researcher attempt to explore contemporary Algerian feminist narrative models to understand the feminist worlds within them, as well as to examine how they transcend the realms of entertainment and pleasure, emerging as testimonies to their era through innovative techniques and objectives.

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* Corresponding author

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1. *Introduction*

Traditional Algerian novels were deeply concerned with reality, to the extent that they became almost indistinguishable from it. This genre of literature reflected social issues as they were, portraying them with meticulous detail. The realism of these novels was measured by their fidelity to their referential origins and the degree to which they mirrored reality. A scholar of traditional Algerian novels would notice their preoccupation with the intricacies of Algerian society, its most pressing issues, and its finest details. Thus, the Algerian narrative tradition sought to construct a world that provided logic and meaning to the experiences of Algerian society.

However, the literary landscape shifted, and this change was driven by the realization that traditional writing could no longer adequately express the concerns and worlds of the new era. This gave rise to a new form of writing, informed by a fresh consciousness shaped by socio-cultural transformations. This new writing drew its artistic and intellectual frameworks from narrative worlds that evoked astonishment, confusion, and shock. It focused on diagnosing cultural and social issues with a keen sensitivity to the rapid pace of life, relying on artistic, philosophical, fantastical, and ideological dimensions within the novel to present its worlds.

Furthermore, contemporary Algerian feminist novels diverged from the traditional novel's goal of altering reality and restoring balance to life.

Research Problem

The study revolves around a central problem articulated through the following key questions and hypotheses:

Main Research Question:

What are the primary concerns of contemporary Algerian feminist novels? What are their thematic trajectories? And how are their narrative worlds constituted?

From this central question, the following sub-questions emerge:

- How did contemporary Algerian feminist novels create a new framework capable of accommodating and aligning with the new reality?

- What were the most prominent, recurring, and dominant themes in the narrative trajectories of contemporary Algerian feminist novels?

This research is organized into two principal components, alongside an introductory section and a concluding chapter

The First Element: Writing Trajectories in Contemporary Algerian Feminist Novels

This section examines the trajectories and orbits of feminist writing within contemporary Algerian women's fiction. It explores the feminist and feminine concerns addressed by Algerian female novelists through their creative literary works.

The Second Element: The Worlds of Contemporary Algerian Feminist Novels

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This part is divided into three sub-themes:

1. The Worlds of Revolution

2. The Worlds of Liberation

3. The Worlds of Family

Reasons for Choosing the Topic

In brief, the motivations for selecting this research topic are as follows:

1. Our deep passion for Algerian literature in general and Algerian feminist literature in particular, as well as our attempt to explore the worlds of contemporary Algerian feminist novels across multiple texts, aiming to enrich the Algerian literary corpus.

2. The prominent presence of feminist themes in contemporary Algerian women's fiction.

3. An interest in the intricate realities of Algerian patriarchal society and its most pressing issues.

4. Highlighting the manifestations and nuances of innovation in contemporary Algerian feminist novels.

Key Sources and References

Below are some of the primary and secondary sources utilized in this study (non-exhaustive list):

Primary Sources (Novels):

- Hajar Qwaidri: Nouris Pasha

- Fadila Al-Faruq: The Letter of Shame (Tā' al-Khajal)

- Zhour Ounissi: The Evening Tweet (Taghridat al-Masā')

- In'am Bayouh: The Fish Doesn't Care (Al-Samak Lā Yubāli)

- Rabia Djelti: Pine Club (Nādī al-Sanawbar)

Secondary Sources (Critical Works):

- Shukri Aziz Al-Madi: Patterns of the New Arabic Novel

- Zhour Karam: Arab Feminist Narratives: A Conceptual and Discursive Approach

- Bouchoucha Ben Djamaa: Narratives of Experimentation and Narrative Modernity in Algerian Arabic Fiction

2.Writing Trajectories in Contemporary Algerian Feminist Novels:

The feminist critique movement in France emerged from the events of 1968 the student uprising which served as a reaction and rebellion against patriarchal political authority, posing a stark protest that nearly dismantled the institutions of the patriarchal system.

By the 1970s, feminist critical readings began to take shape, analyzing male-authored depictions of women from a feminist perspective. These studies focused on examining texts written by women, assessing how these novels were influenced by patriarchal values and how female characters were dramatically constructed within them.

Prominent French feminist theorists such as "Hélène Cixous", "Luce Irigaray", and "Julia Kristeva", along with British feminists like "Toril Moi", "Elaine Showalter", and "Kate Millett", explored

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the question of whether women's writing possesses a distinctiveness that sets it apart from men's writing. They were committed to advancing the political awareness of male oppression of women.

Furthermore, during the 1980s and 1990s, many feminist writers developed critical methodologies aimed at deconstructing the boundaries of masculinist theories that had crystallized during the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modernist eras. (Hafnaoui , 2011, p. 176)

As “Elaine Showalter” examines in her 1977 book “A Literature of Their Own”, British women novelists from the Brontë sisters onward are analyzed from the perspective of women’s experiences. She concludes that while there is no fixed feminine essence or innate female imagination, there remains a profound difference between women's and men's writing.

Contemporary Algerian women novelists engaged with the novel as a conscious expression of their identity and the world around them. They transformed the novel into an artistic tool to articulate their liberation and the liberation of their marginalized existence. Through their writing, they addressed feminist and, more specifically, feminine concerns, which granted their work a unique quality and distinguished it from male-authored literature. This distinction arises from the fact that women's creativity encompasses the sexual differentiation of women, including functions unique to them, such as pregnancy and childbirth, which influence their psychological makeup, thought patterns, and behavioral tendencies. Additionally, their historically precarious position within patriarchal societies has shaped their literary expression. As Shukri Aziz Madi notes: "The Algerian woman novelist turned to the novel as a conscious expression of her identity and the world around her, employing it as an artistic tool to liberate her marginalized existence. Through her writing, she expressed her feminist and feminine concerns, which endowed her work with a unique quality and set it apart from male-authored literature.This distinction stems from the sexual differentiation of women and the unique functions that distinguish them from men, such as pregnancy and childbirth, which affect their psychological fabric, thought patterns, and behavioral tendencies, as well as their historically precarious position within patriarchal societies." (Shukri , 2008, p. 90)

When examining contemporary Algerian feminist novels, we find that they translate into writing about the self. We also observe two types of narrative visions: the first is artistically limited, still operating within the confines of traditional writing techniques, while the second has managed to transcend and liberate itself from classical writing constraints, moving toward a form of writing that surpasses the old to engage with new worlds, reflecting a

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heightened consciousness of the self and the world.

The theme of self-writing has dominated the contemporary Algerian feminist novel and has manifested itself on multiple levels, including the intertwining of narrative texts with the autobiographical dimensions of the Algerian female writer and novelist. At times, these elements are so interwoven that they appear indistinguishable. In some instances, the Algerian female novelist does not explicitly declare the autobiographical references in her texts, yet she does not deny their existence. For example, this can be observed in Ahdāb al-Khashya (The Fringes of Fear) by *Mouna Bechlem*, which she designed as a fantastical narrative game for the reader, while still partially reflecting her own autobiography. Similarly, this is evident in Jīnatuhum Janūb (Their Southern Genes) by *Safaa Asila*. (Meliki, 2020, p. 18)

Conversely, there are works in which Algerian female novelists openly acknowledge in literary conferences and interviews that parts of their novels represent their personal autobiographies. This is evident in the trilogy of *Ahlam Mosteghanemi*. Indeed, the Algerian feminist novel as a whole can be seen as a form of autobiography. A clear example of this is the work of *Fadila Farouk*, particularly her novels *Mazāj Murāhiqa (A Teenager's Mood) and Tā' al-Khajal* (The Shameful Feminine). Farouk herself, after years of using a pseudonym, now freely admits that her writings are autobiographical. In an interview with *Nawara Lahrech*, she stated:

"This pseudonym has its advantages in the world, but it also has its disadvantages. That is why, whenever I meet a young female writer hiding behind a pseudonym, I advise her against it. You should not fear anything." (Meliki, 2020, p. 18)

This candidness has amplified the prominence of the "self" in her writing, further emphasizing its autobiographical nature.

In her novel *Tā' al-Khajal,* Farouk employs the first-person pronoun "I" in two chapters, namely (The Devil and I) and (I and the Men of the Family). This deliberate use of the first-person pronoun underscores the author's ability to embrace full disclosure and achieve an authentic presence. For Algerian female writers, this reliance on "I" represents an essential starting point for women in general, and for Algerian women writers and narrators in particular, serving as a foundational step in establishing the principle of feminine identity.

The narrative, or more precisely the act of storytelling, is frequently expressed in the voice of the female protagonist, as seen in Chaos of the Senses by Ahlam Mosteghanemi, where the character Hayat assumes the role of narrator. Similarly, in Safaa Asila's Jīnatuhum Janūb, the

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narration is carried out by Thouraya Badi, while in Ahdāb al-Khashya, it is Mouna Bouchlem's character who narrates. Likewise, Louiza narrates Mazāj Murāhiqa, and Khalida narrates Tā' al-Khajal. Across these examples, the textual evidence in each of these novels strongly suggests their autobiographical nature.

Algerian female novelists have surpassed traditional stages of concealment and no longer rely on pseudonyms. On the contrary, they now boldly express their views and unveil their life stories without masks or subterfuge. Within their narrative texts, Algerian female writers delve into a wide array of themes closely connected to women's concerns, thoughts, and interests. These themes include fears of aging, societal taboos such as witchcraft and superstition, as well as expressions of music, dance, the female body, love, and women's economic independence, among other issues central to women's lives.

The topic of polygamy has particularly received significant attention in Algerian feminist novels. For instance, in Nawras Pasha by the Algerian novelist Hajar Gouidri, the character of Pasha Hamdan marries a second wife, Zineb, who is portrayed as modern, wealthy, and of noble lineage, hailing from the city of Algiers ("Dzair," as referenced in the novel). In contrast, his first wife, Dhouia, is depicted as a naïve rural child. Her voice emerges in one of the novel's narrative passages, where she says:

"Upon our arrival, he will order the preparation of a private room for me. This room will be our world overlooking hills of joy. What does the opinion of the first wife matter? My mother says that the second wife receives all the tenderness, while the first wife bears all the responsibilities." (Qwaidri, n.d, p. 110)

Through such portrayals, Algerian female novelists have skillfully illuminated the complexities of women's lives, their struggles, and their aspirations, while offering a nuanced critique of societal norms and gendered power dynamics

As with any woman or wife who always desires to be the sole woman in her husband's life, so was "Zainab," the wife of "Pasha" Hamdan. The moment he brought home his second wife, "Dhayaa," all hell broke loose. Zainab began screaming, and we can cite "Hajar Qouidri" on behalf of Dhayaa: "The world turned upside down when I entered that house. I could never have imagined it. She went mad, throwing everything she could find onto the floor, screaming in frustration... Pasha Hamdan tried to calm her anger, but to no avail... Her screams echoed throughout the entire house, and she stood over me, saying, 'He married someone else over me, a lowly Bedouin woman." (Qwaidri, n.d, p. 110)

Through the narrative, the conflicts between the first and second wives intensified. The first wife, Zainab, sought revenge on the second wife, Dhayaa,

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forcing her to live with the servants. However, upon the death of Pasha Hamdan, the two women transformed into intimate friends, as if they had never been enemies.

We then move to the novel Al-Dawra by Rabia Jelti, where we find that she, too, addresses the issue of polygamy, as do the novels Memory in the Flesh by Ahlam Mosteghanemi and The Evening's Twitter by Zahoua Ounissi. In all these novels, the reasons for a man's remarriage are varied.

In the novel *The Shame of Taa by Fadhila Farouk,* the reason for remarriage was the first wife's inability to bear male children. This drove Khalida's father to marry again. Farouk writes through Khalida's voice: "From that day on, we only saw our father once or twice a week. Later, I learned that he had married a woman who could bear him male children, since my mother was unable to do so." (Al-Faruq, The Letter of Shame, 2015, p. 19)

In addition to the issue of polygamy and its consequences in the novel, Farouk raises another issue: the preference of a man or husband for a male child over a female one. Similarly, in the novel *Nourous Pasha, Hajar Qouidri* writes through the voice of Dhayaa, the second wife: "Zainab was resentful of my male child. She realized she had lost her high status. A woman's lineage and prestige are of no use when all she bears are females. A man favors a woman who bears sons, and he only feels his existence when he is blessed with a male child. Pasha Hamdan's joy was indescribable as he held his first son after two daughters." (Qwaidri, n.d, p. 143)

Moreover, the Algerian writer *Zahoua Ounissi* observes that men prefer male children because they see them as a continuation of their youth and life. "Even women prefer sons over daughters for many reasons, including pleasing the man and the family. In a woman's imagination, a son will be her support and helper, especially in her later years, in this patriarchal world." (Ounisi, The Evening Tweet, 2015, p. 103)

n the novel *"The Fish Don't Care" by Inaam Biyoud*, the protagonist "Ruba" visits her aunt, who has been hospitalized for months and will later die from the oppression inflicted by her husband. There, in fragmented sentences interspersed with bouts of crying, her aunt recounts her tragic story, still addressing Ruba as "Mary." She speaks of her life with her husband, which initially seemed like a picture of happiness, unparalleled except in the fairy-tale endings one imagines at will. This illusion persisted until she discovered his involvement in arms and drug trafficking, dealing with both Somoza's supporters and the Sandinistas alike. She also tells Ruba how he had her admitted to psychiatric hospitals multiple times to discredit her as insane, rendering her testimony invalid. She had no intention of betraying him, but he sought to rid himself of her by any

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means necessary—there was another woman in his life. Ruba realizes how justified her intuition about this man had been. (Bayoudh, 2004, p. 115)

In this novel, the man triumphs, and the woman dies, unlike in previous narratives. If this signifies anything, it is that the Algerian novelist, in her literary framework, has adopted an artistic strategy that oscillates between the woman's subordination to the man and, at times, her transcendence of him, crafting a distinct feminine identity.

Subsequent texts and narratives have overturned earlier writings on polygamy and the conflicts between co-wives, as well as the wife's loss of life upon being abandoned by her husband. For instance, in *Ahlam Mosteghanemi's novel "Chaos of the Senses,"* the protagonist does not waste her life competing with a co-wife to monopolize her husband's affection. Instead, she transcends both her husband and the co-wife entirely. The emotional turmoil she experiences with her husband leads her to form a passionate relationship with the journalist, "The Bed Hopper." Here, we witness one of the most powerful depictions of liberation and empowerment in Mosteghanemi's work.

Similarly, in *Fadila Farouk's novel "Realms of Fear*," Maggie reflects: "During the years of my naivety, I believed that the heart cannot settle in love until it finds its true twin. But each time, I found myself lost, like all humans—loving and hating, loving and leaving, loving and extinguishing, loving and despairing. Gradually, I reached a stage of numbness, only to discover that I was equipped, by some higher power, to endure this very state!" (Al-Faruq, 2010, p. 62)

The themes of liberation and innovation are not confined to "Realms of Fear" by Fadila Farouk but extend to *Rabia Djelti's novel "The Pine Club."* Here, the woman seeks emancipation and asserts her agency in rejecting the male "other"—the husband—by demanding a divorce, only to bind herself to another man. In "The Pine Club," the narrator states:

"The Sahrawi woman throws a celebratory dance party for her divorce, then marries 'Abdu,' a Gulf man, only to demand a divorce again for a trivial reason: she feels alienated in his country. She repeatedly asks him to restore her freedom and return her to her homeland... The feeling of alienation outweighs everything else, surpassing any other emotion." (Djelti, 2012, p. 96)

In this passage, *Rabia Djelti* highlights the esteemed status of the Tuareg woman, portraying her as holding a sacred position: "She is born with a protective veil shielding her from the evils of falsehood." (Djelti, 2012, p. 110) This stands in stark contrast to traditional texts, where women were often depicted as oppressed and subordinate to men. Within this novel, the

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narrator also illustrates the antithesis of orphanhood, as the psychological state of the lawyer deteriorates into depression due to the harsh conditions faced by her female clients fighting for their rights. Thus, she asks me, “Excuse me, to guide her to a Tuareg man who might marry her among his people. Should any of them act harshly toward her, or raise a hand in threat or violence, it is as if he has sentenced himself to the severest punishment. He has no one to blame but himself, for he will become the laughingstock of the tribe. Everyone will disown him, avoiding even greeting him, turning their faces away wherever he passes, as if he were a leper. He is ostracized and expelled, and even his friends, acquaintances, and family will shun meeting him. His psyche remains gaping wide. There are no laws, courts, or trials as you describe in your daily accounts... These are our customs, unchanged for thousands of years.” (Djelti, 2012, p. 111)

If we turn to the novels of the Algerian narrator *Mona Bashlam*, we find in her novel *"Tawashih al-Ward"* (Hymns of Roses) that the character "Shahd", whom the narrator assigned the role of a wife, refused to marry another man to bear children, even though her husband "Yahya" had urged her to do so. He wanted to release her, allowing her to leave and marry someone else who could offer her the chance to experience the emotions of motherhood, which she had been deprived of with him. The narrator, *Mona Bashlam*, states in one of the narrative passages: "He tells me I am free to be with whomever I wish." (Bashlam, 2013, p. 55) In this narrative segment, the narrator portrays Shahd's husband as feeling defeated, as she renders him a sterile man in the novel. However, Shahd, the wife, returns to him carrying his child in her womb. She explains to him that a hidden hand had manipulated the medical tests, altering their results. Thus, the narrator, *Mona Bashlam,* revives the man/husband, Yahya. Additionally, she presents a new and different image, contrary to what we are accustomed to in various novels, where there is often no relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. In this novel, however, Yahya's mother rejoices at the return of her daughter-in-law, Shahd. The narrator writes: "She expresses her longing and eagerness to see me, and my pregnancy does not surprise her at all. She asks about it, about my health, and tells me that she deeply regrets allowing me to leave the house that day. She thought I would go to my brother's house and that it wouldn’t be difficult to find me." (Bayoudh, 2004, p. 153)

In this novel, the novelist *Mona Bashlam* constructs her narrative on the principle of the woman's decision over the man's. Shahd's initial escape from her husband, Yahya, and her subsequent return to him later, exemplify this idea. The best evidence for this notion is the view of *Al-Ghadami*, who "sees the return to the man as a regression of the female writer from

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her liberation and an inability to write, as she no longer enjoys independence but rather falls into male dependency." (Meliki, 2020, p. 25)

This opinion held by earlier critics sparked the interest of *Zuhur Karam*, who responded by saying: "Independence does not mean getting rid of the man and living a life of isolation, but rather achieving self-efficacy through the man's recognition of her, so that the prevailing perspective can be transcended." (Ounisi, 2004, p. 76)

Through the critic *Zuhur Karam's* statement, her response does not imply that the Algerian writer was unable to address the theme of male infertility as a new subject or motif. She portrays the man feeling pain at the thought that his wife might abandon him. This idea is supported by a narrative passage from the novel "Confessions of a Woman" by the Algerian narrator *Aisha Bathour*, where the man says: "I forget that I have no extension to my future life... I want to forget those medical examinations and laboratory tests... I forget the faces of the doctors and the white coats... I forget that I am a man without a man. (Benour, n.d, p. 79)

The narrator continues to grapple with those questions that cause a man to suffer, as she says: "Would you agree to stay with a man incapable of fathering children, depriving yourself of motherhood?" (Benour, n.d, p. 25)The emotion of motherhood is strongly present in contemporary Algerian feminist novels as a defining characteristic of womanhood, expressing her essence and granting continuity. "Every mother sees her child as the most beautiful, my dear son, the lord of men!" (Djelti, 2012, p. 57) This is what the contemporary Algerian narrator Rabia Jelti emphasized in her novel The Peak.

Moreover, there are themes that reflect the details of women's world and femininity, expressing the uniqueness of the latter. We find that contemporary Algerian feminist novels have drawn from these themes the traits of difference and distinction, as they express the essence of the female (feminine) gender. These themes are embodied in women's gatherings and the conversations that take place within them—"discussions that address women's concerns, struggles, heartbreaks, aspirations, the hidden and the revealed aspects of her life, the real and the possible, the realistic and the dreamlike." (Bouchoucha, 2005, p. 98)

The various subjective themes addressed in the narrative texts of Algerian women novelists have not marginalized men but have instead made them an integral element of their literary achievements. We find that the female entity draws its strength and vitality from the "other"—the man.

Additionally, the pains, fragmentations, and alienations of the female self-have significantly contributed to the subjective nature of feminist writing. Algerian women

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novelists have relied on the use of emotion in their works. However, when writing objectively, we find that their concerns intersect with those of men in contemporary Algerian feminist narratives. Algerian women novelists have also focused on themes that male novelists have written about, such as history, wars, cafés, wealth, inheritance, economics, and the issue of women being confined to their homes, among others.

3.The Worlds of Contemporary Algerian Feminist Novels:

We will attempt to explore the most dominant themes in the contemporary narrative texts of Algerian women novelists, which sometimes intersect with male creativity. The first thing that catches our attention is that it is no longer possible to assume that "all texts in the narrative corpus of Algerian women's literature do not carry the traits of scandalous literature, synonymous with promiscuity and explicit sexuality." (Bouchoucha, 2005, p. 104)

Instead, we find ourselves confronted with bold new feminist narrative texts where the novelist speaks and writes freely, without constraints, about taboos and topics related to sexuality, just as men write, without fear of being questioned.

If this indicates anything, it signifies the Algerian female novelist's departure from societal prohibitions and her lack of fear toward the patriarchal and traditional gaze of society.

Moreover, the contemporary Algerian female novelist has transitioned from the taboo of sexuality to the taboo of politics, moving beyond the former to engage with the burning realities of political life. She writes about it "in forms that oscillate between allusion and explicit disclosure, between implication and frankness." (Bouchoucha, 2005, p. 175) Some novelists address politics within the broader themes of their fictional worlds, while others make it the central subject of their narratives. A prime example of this is the novel *Haneen bil Na'na* (Longing with Mint) by the Algerian novelist *Rabia Djelti*, who employs "the technique of allusion to depict the consequences of state policies and the approaching storm of bloodshed, using the fantastical as a veil to prophesy the imminent Algerian Arab Spring." (Ounisi, 2015, p. 57)

When we turn to novels that adopt a more forthright approach, breaking through societal taboos, we find works such as *Al-Khadr (The Green) by Yasmina Salih* and *Silence of the Bullets by Samira Qabli.* The first novel exposes the Algerian government's role in the extermination of its people, often attributing blame to terrorism or terrorist groups. The second novel, on the other hand, delves into the violation of political taboos, making them the core of its narrative, influenced by the National Reconciliation in Algeria, which left deep spiritual scars on the Algerian intelligentsia.

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It is worth noting that the Algerian feminist literary corpus has extensively addressed the period of the Black Decade and the bloody massacres endured by the Algerian people. This is evident in novels such as *Fi al-Jubba La Ahad (In the Robe, No One)* by *Zahra Dakho*, *Ta' al-Khajal (The Shame of T) by Yasmina Salih*, and *A'id ila Qabri (Returning to My Grave) by Zakya Allal*. In contrast, there are fewer feminist novels that address the Algerian Revolution, with the exception of works by *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* in her thirties and the novels *Longa wal Ghoul (Longa and the Ghoul)* and *Taghridat al-Masa' (The Evening Tweet) by Zhour Ounissi*.

The contemporary Algerian feminist novel has also managed to address global issues, such as the Palestinian cause. This is exemplified in the novel Amal... *Hub Yabhath 'an Watan (Amal... Love Searching for a Homeland*), followed by *Khulud al-Yasmin (The Eternity of Jasmine) by Houda Darwish*, which tells the story of a Palestinian girl whose family was killed by Zionists, leaving her to endure the dual tragedies of war and politics.

Similarly, the novel *Ouzlem wa Rahat al-Dhakira (Ouzlem and the Mill of Memory)* by *Fettouma Rakhmon* recounts the story of a Palestinian refugee haunted by his memories. Another notable work is *Sakarat Najma (The Agonies of a Star) by Amel Bouchareb*, which belongs to the detective genre. The novel investigates the murder of the Algerian artist Elias Madi, showcasing the Algerian novelist's remarkable ability to navigate the realms of the fantastical and the detective genre with exceptional skill.

4.The Worlds of Revolution:

We know that traditional Algerian feminist novels were beneficial, primarily because Algerian women writers lacked the freedom of expression. They were unable to delve into bold realms unlike contemporary Algerian women writers who have explored the worlds of revolution. However, these earlier works did not deeply engage with the essence of revolution, nor did they fully evoke characters by name or reveal their truths. With the emergence of contemporary Algerian feminist novels, Algerian women writers have become more conscious and responsible.

The true entry of contemporary Algerian women writers into the worlds of revolution coincided with the birth of several Algerian feminist literary works that highlight transformative and critical tendencies toward reality. These works approached the subject through both artistic and philosophical lenses, with each writer crafting her narrative based on the impact these revolutions had on her intellectual consciousness. Thus, each writer produced a unique literary achievement, distinct from previous works, addressing cultural themes linked to political backgrounds and social

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awareness. Through these narratives, they unveiled political practices, whether through internal conflicts such as terrorism and the Black Decade, or external struggles like the Algerian Revolution against French colonialism.

The Algerian woman writer drew inspiration from the world of the Algerian Revolution, as it provided fertile ground for enriching the content of her artistic work. Consequently, ideological writing dominated for a long time, especially during the early years of Algerian independence. Algerian women writers wrote from the depths of suffering, and among the best examples is *"Zhour Ounissi,"* who vividly transferred her revolutionary ideology into her novel *Longing and the Ogre.* However, with the new generation of novelists in the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a partial or complete abandonment of these perspectives, or at least a diminished emphasis compared to earlier times. (Salah Kharfi, 2013, p. 143)

As for the novels of *Ahlam Mosteghanemi*, her work Memory in the Flesh relies on revolutionary ideology, as it is written about the Algerian Revolution. She drew from historical documents, popular memory, and the accounts of eyewitnesses who lived through and contributed to the revolution. However, these individuals were more affected by the revolution than active participants in it. (Bouchoucha, 2005, p. 121) This highlights the difference in how *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* approached her novel Memory in the Flesh compared to other works.

In contrast, *Longing and the Ogre by Zhour Ounissi* is a descriptive novel that portrays an important aspect of the Algerian liberation struggle against brutal French colonialism, as well as her national and intellectual belonging. This novel is a nationalistic ideology, reflecting the writer's belief in the necessity of mirroring reality in the text to the point of identification. The novelist, whether male or female, must be capable of depicting truth with integrity.

We also find that the content of *the novel Lounga and the Ghoul* transports us to traditional worlds that highlight the concerns of the Algerian people and the state of extreme poverty during the colonial era. The novelist *Zhour Ounisi* portrays the daily lives of the populace and the freedom fighters who struggled to achieve national sovereignty, as "this popular aspect of the resistance is what ensured its survival for over seventeen years, allowing it to challenge the equations of colonial existence.". (Laredj, n.d, p. 57)

Moreover, *Zhour Ounisi* focused her narrative on emphasizing the role of Algerian women in spreading revolutionary awareness within the popular milieu. This was a novel theme in Algerian literature at the time, or, in other words, her treatment of it was innovative and departed

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from the conventional norms of Algerian literary discourse. The issue of women leaving their homes to stand alongside men in the struggle for liberation and democracy was one of the most significant new themes that underscored the distinctiveness of Algerian feminist writing in *Zhour Ounisi's* work. Her focus on women's issues and their active societal role reflects her commitment to these causes.

Through *Zhour Ounisi's* writings, we observe how her ideology and political activism during the National Liberation Revolution significantly influenced the thematic direction of her narrative discourse. Her perspectives on life and her social affiliations are vividly reflected in her literary achievements. The fictional worlds evoked in *Lounga and the Ghoul* address the sacrifices and struggles of women, as well as their popular resistance against the French occupying forces. The novel endows all its characters with strength and motivation to express their individual stances, while also rallying popular forces to support the national cause. Through her literary work, *Ounisi* successfully conveyed her revolutionary aspirations and gave voice to marginalized calls for resistance.

Her approach aligns with the concept of the novel as ideology, which refers to "the author's specific and habitual stance, rather than the individual stances of the characters." (Lahmidani, 1990, p. 35) *Lounga and the Ghoul* is classified within the literature of struggle, a tool used by colonized nations to dismantle the chains of occupation and transcend their harsh realities. Consequently, *Zhour Ounisi's* novel carries the discourse of resistance, with her narrative emerging primarily as propagandistic. She integrates her ideology into the text, expressing her personal stance against the French colonizer, often at the expense of the artistic elements of the fictional narrative. In her imaginative narrative of resistance, *Ounisi* relies on "a troubled memory, charged with creative energy that emerges at the artistic level to define the relationship between the self and the other, a relationship framed within a tense and critical context." (Allouch, 1981, p. 52)

The novel vividly portrays the conflicts and contradictions of reality between the two ideologies (the colonizer and the colonized). The novelist, *Zahia Ounissi*, reveals the poverty of the Algerian family under the shadow of the colonizer. The narrator, speaking about the family of Mohammed, the porter, and his neighbors, states:

"The gathering would convene every evening around a meal that life's harshness compelled us to call a 'dinner,' even if it was, more often than not, merely a gathering around a plate of lentils. Their husks floated atop the blackened pot, swaying as if defying the small group adrift on the surface of life...

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'Even this cheap plate of lentils—perhaps tomorrow you won't find it on your table, and you'll have to make do with dry bread, praising God in any case.'

While Malika's gaze was devoid of any overt meaning, her limbs carried much pain, and even more so the suppression of that pain. It was as if she alone, before anyone else in her family, had grasped the wretched condition in which she, her siblings, her parents, and even their neighbors lived." (Ounisi, n.d, p. 13)

In contrast, the novelist highlights the wealth of the colonizer, the "Other," and his exploitation of Algeria's resources:

"The ships docked at the pier were new, and the port's structures were newly equipped—vessels of vast commercial scale. The owner of this company was a French settler. He not only owned this fishing company but also vast stretches of the finest agricultural land in the plains of Mitidja.

Thus, the working men, including Mohammed, knew him only as 'the Great Boss.' They had heard about him, his life, his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather, all buried in the foreigners' cemetery. They heard about the palaces he owned, the cars, the luxury, the servants, and the entourage. They heard that he conducted his business only with his cousins across the sea and that he had influential connections with rulers here and there. They also heard that one of his daughters had fallen in love with an Arab youth who worked as a driver for her father's horses. Her father orchestrated a car accident to eliminate him, then sent his daughter to recuperate in Lourdes to forget this sinful whim." (Ounisi, n.d, p. 31)

In this narrative passage, the novelist masterfully employs a counterpoint to juxtapose the poverty of the colonized with the affluence of the colonizer, presenting an image of the "Other" characterized by dominance. This reflects a spontaneous perspective that every "self" holds toward the "Other," from which the conflict takes its sharpest form. It is a clash between the national "self," embodying the ideology of Zahia Ounissi, and the colonizing "Other." Thus, the tragedies endured by the Algerian family became a driving force for rejecting the occupier, as seen in the characters of Rachid and Ahmed.

The novelist recounts the departure of Ahmed, Malika's husband, to join the mujahideen in the mountains:

"The anticipated day arrives, but in the best of circumstances, Malika learns from a stranger who comes to them at dusk, a man whose face she barely sees, obscured by a thick mustache covering half of it—that her beloved husband has joined the mujahideen. She is told not to expect his return until the war ends and the country gains independence."

The novelist also portrays the revolutionary, militant woman, embodied

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in the character of Aunt Bahja, the female mujahid who disseminates everything that serves the Algerian liberation revolution. She says what the resistance wants her to say, according to the occasion. The novelist also presents other models of female mujahideen in the mountains and fighters in the cities, unrecognizable to anyone, such as the woman wrapped in the haik (traditional veil) who chose jihad to avenge her husband, sentenced to death by the French colonizer as a child. She addresses Malika:

"If the purpose of my work is revenge, as you say, then it began a very long time ago. My father and uncle were martyred in the events of 1945 in Kherrata, and long before that, my maternal grandfather was martyred in the Zaatcha revolution in the south. But I don't believe it's revenge or hatred as much as it is a struggle for rights—our right to our homeland and our freedom. It will undoubtedly end once our victory is achieved, and we reclaim our freedom on our land. We are a people who love peace and hate war. War has been imposed on us. Do you understand me?" (Ounisi, n.d, pp. 64-65)

In this narrative passage, both Malika and the veiled woman share a single ideology, one that confronts the French colonizer. The ideology underlying this passage is one of resistance against the colonizer.

As for *Ahlam Mosteghanemi's* novel "Bed Hopper" (عابر سرير), it spans two historical periods of Algeria. The reader encounters two types of ideologies: the first is the national revolutionary ideology, and in contrast, the Western ideology of the colonizer.

The second phase represents the post-independence era, during which the novelist *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* focused on highlighting the competing national ideologies, particularly the Islamic trend (or what is referred to as terrorist groups). She "incorporated ideology as both a structural and aesthetic element within the narrative discourse, as it encompasses ideology without being confined by it, with both serving as expressions of reality." (Ounisi, n.d, pp. 81-82)

The ideological dimension in the novel emerges through the fusion of the imaginary and the real. *Ahlam Mosteghanemi* drew her primary material from reality, which she skillfully wove into the fabric of her narrative. Thus, she transformed revolutionary political ideology into a narrative (novelistic) imaginary. For instance, she evokes the names of political figures such as Houari Boumediene, *Abdelhafid Boussouf,* and others. In crafting her portrayal of the armed liberation revolution, *Mosteghanemi* derived her narrative elements from the political-ideological field.

This ideological reflection is evident in the narrative output and its texts, where ideology is intertwined with the conflicts

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between characters and the antagonistic/occupying forces. *Mosteghanemi* states: "Algeria has a tradition of killing its intellectuals... I was among the mujahideen, fighting for it in a ruse aimed at psychologically damaging the information. France instructed *Colonel Amirouche* that there were informants among his men working for the French army, leading to his execution in July 1956 after a swift trial... Immediately, fingers were pointed at the intellectuals, those educated individuals who abandoned their studies to join the front." (Al-Alim, El-Eid, & Suleima, 1981, p. 50)

Mosteghanemi employed this incident within her narrative to expose political intentions and motives, as well as to address the issue of the persecution of intellectuals in Algeria. She demonstrated that this was not merely a phenomenon of the Black Decade but a recurring tradition since the Algerian Revolution. The "eliminations carried out by terrorist groups against the intellectual elite, including writers, judges, doctors, filmmakers, poets, lawyers, and theater artists," (Mosteghanemi, 2013, p. 140) were part of this inherited practice. *Mosteghanemi* used ideology as an artistic tool to construct her self-style, when we shift our focus to the content of the Algerian novelist *Zahra Dick's work "*In Paradise, *There Is No One*", we observe a profound philosophical dimension that serves as a cornerstone for the development of events expressing the psychological fears stemming from the ordeal Algeria endured during its dark period. This inclination toward philosophizing reflects the nature of the thinking self, the presence of reason, and its intrusion into the realm of imagination or the emotional states experienced by the characters. (Mosteghanemi, 2013)

The novel's content evokes the value of fear through a philosophy of emotions, underscoring the novelist's acute awareness of the magnitude of fear generated by the physical and psychological massacres—particularly those perpetrated by terrorist groups. These events, though brief in duration, left a profound sense of terror within the social fabric. We are well aware that terrorism is not a trivial event in the life of Algerian society; its impact cannot be measured by its duration but rather by the severity and brutality of its acts. In a short span of time, these groups committed barbaric massacres that reached horrifying levels, leaving a deep psychological scar on every Algerian individual. This trauma resulted in a fractured sense of self and a fragmented relationship with a reality surrounded by prohibitions and bloodshed

5.Liberating Worlds:

When we delve into the concept of liberating worlds, we find ourselves confronting what critics have termed the "forbidden triad" (sex, religion, and politics). These themes are often referred to

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as the "unspeakable," "taboos," or the "unspoken." In other words, they represent the "unspoken narrative." (Al-Saadawi, 2010, p. 240)

As for the discourse of the unspeakable, it transcends what is permissible, morally acceptable, or legally sanctioned. It breaks away from various value systems, ethical norms, and even deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions ingrained in the collective consciousness of society. This rupture creates a shift that redefines ready-made stereotypes about many commonly held concepts, presenting them in more exotic and transformative ways that deviate from their established frameworks in people's minds.

Thus, the unspeakable is considered one of the forbidden territories, a subject that is strictly off-limits. With the emergence of the "new novel," the idealistic and fantastical values represented by traditional novels were transcended. Algerian female novelists, in particular, sought to write in the style of the new novel, addressing taboos through mechanisms of dialogic openness. They wrote with boldness, directness, and depth, driven by a commitment to truth-telling. They unveiled bodily desires, exposed political practices, and expressed religious beliefs with seriousness.

Among the taboos in contemporary Algerian feminist literature is the taboo of sex. We will attempt to highlight how Algerian female novelists employ the theme of sex in their works. A notable example is *the novel "The Mare's Sigh"* by *Sarah Haidar*, particularly in the narrative passages where sexual scenes are depicted. These scenes appear to the reader as intentional and explicit, marked by a level of directness that was previously forbidden in traditional novels. In *"The Mare's Sigh,"* the theme of sex represents forbidden worlds within our beliefs and our Islamic religion. One such example is the issue of "incest," where the novelist allows her protagonist to transcend the boundaries of Islamic human relationships into forbidden sexual practices. This transgression is portrayed as natural, devoid of guilt or a sense of sin, thereby challenging the teachings of Islamique novelistic world

The patriarchal society depicted by "Sarah Haidar" in her fictional world does not resemble the patriarchal society of real life, where a man is typically portrayed as protective and jealous of his wife, unwilling to tolerate the behaviors described by the novelist in her work *Shahqat al-Faras (The Mare's Sigh)*. In one narrative passage, she writes:

"I don't know where he gets this ability to guess all the crimes, I commit against him and against myself... I don't know where he finds this calm and this sinful pleasure." (Haidar, 2007, p. 24)

Later, in another narrative passage, the novelist speaks through the protagonist:

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"He never scolded me, even as he engaged in adultery from an early age. He didn't object when my first companion came to the house and spent the night in my room. He wasn't as disapproving as my mother when I told him of my desire to leave home and live with my friends..." (Haidar, 2007, p. 87)

Through the protagonist's voice, the novelist paints a picture of her father's behavior that contradicts the expected norms of the patriarchal society in Algeria, challenging traditional Algerian customs. By emphasizing the protagonist's deviance at an early age, the novelist aims to highlight the shared behavior of Algerian women in their youth, as well as to illustrate the patriarchal society's abandonment of its role and responsibilities toward the family, despite being the primary authority figure. In this narrative passage, the novelist presents an inverted image of paternal and masculine behavior, portraying the father as complicit in his underage daughter's deviance. She brings to light the unspoken through the deviant presence of the woman and the absent presence of the man, while also invoking societal values.

In our study of *Shahqat al-Faras,* we observe that the novel's professional orphanhood lies in its exploration of the "*taboo of sex*" and its unflinching engagement with the unspoken, discussing it in explicit detail and with bold explicitness. The novel transcends the narrow confines of traditional realist fiction, venturing into broader realms in its interrogation of the value of sex. It delves deeply into the intricacies of the forbidden triad, suggesting that entry into these realms is no longer exclusive to male novelists. Liberation has expanded to include the characters themselves, where the protagonist is no longer the active male figure endowed with all competencies for sexual expression, as in traditional narratives. Instead, the woman emerges as the active character, granted the agency to engage in sexual expression and articulate her desires and emotions, while sidelining the opinions of other men.

As for the taboo of religion, it can be said that religion within the forbidden triad represents a "sacred, elevated level that is simultaneously desecrated and breached within the narrative universe." (El-Amine Bahiri, 2014, p. 7)This desecration and distortion dominate the thematic content of *Fadila Farouk's* novel *Aqalim al-Khawf (Realms of Fear),* which also ventures into the realm of taboos by transgressing the sanctity of Islam, desecrating and distorting its issues, and exposing them with bold audacity. *Farouk* discusses Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and even includes anecdotes about Buddhism. Through her novel *Aqalim al-Khawf,* we discern her rebellion against Islam.

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6.In one narrative passage, Farouk writes:

"Shaykh Abdullah and the Afghan mujahideen who smoke hashish, the perfumes of extremist Islamists mixed with various drugs, and the religious discourse that transforms killing into a message of forgiveness carried by the killer to his Lord to enter the eternal paradise." (Al-Faruq, 2010, p. 60)

Here, the novelist portrays Islam as the cause of all wars in the world. As for the taboo of politics, contemporary Algerian novelists have moved beyond traditional, ready-made themes, adopting a renewed perspective on reality that uncovers the unspoken and exposes the authority they see as the root cause of social problems.

Through these liberated worlds, we observe that Algerian novelists like *"Sarah Haidar" and "Fadila Farouk"* have employed artistic techniques to craft their narrative universes, offering a deeper and more artistic narrative style to boldly break taboos within a new, innovative storytelling framework

7.The worlds of Family:

The Algerian novelist has devoted significant attention to the theme of family, its structural foundations, and the fabric of its relationships within Algerian society. This thematic focus also raises issues related to women and their relationships with others (father/husband/son). Women are primarily responsible for the affairs of their families and are keen on preserving their values. However, the external changes and factors in the new, often degraded reality have made the Algerian novelist wary of this reality, which could threaten family relationships and their cohesion. This has driven her to search for a new world and for values that regulate family life, behavior, and ensure its stability, leading her to achieve intellectual and creative distinction.

Regarding the portrayal of the father, we find in contemporary Algerian women's literature images associated with authoritarianism—a domineering, oppressive father who imposes his authority and guardianship over his family members, as has been prevalent in Algerian society since ancient times. Algerian society is inherently patriarchal, and thus, the Algerian novelist in traditional literature often depicted her suffering under patriarchal practices that suppressed her personality, hindered her liberation, and shattered her inner world.

However, in a later period, Algerian women writers transcended this long-standing cultural background that granted patriarchal authority—or, in other words, male-dominated authority—the right to dominate and exert violence. They argued that "masculinity is not authority, even if it belongs to the father; rather, authority has long been cloaked in masculinity, like a mask in which authority and masculinity

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merge in a prevailing consciousness." (Al-Eid, 2011, p. 222) The Algerian novelist also sought to imbue the image of the father with profound symbolic meanings, presenting it in its most splendid form. She projected the traits of intimacy, safety, and tenderness that we traditionally associate with mothers onto the father. This is evident in *Zakia Allal's* novel Returning *to My Grave,* where she paints the image of a tender father who embodies all the qualities of a mother—compassion, tenderness, safety, and protection. The novelist portrays "Youssef's father" as possessing all these qualities, while excluding the role of the mother, who is not mentioned here. Upon his death, Youssef loses his sense of belonging, existence, and hope in life. We find that the protagonist, Youssef, strives in his studies to obtain his baccalaureate solely because it was his father's dream. The narrator, speaking through Youssef, says: "It was as if my father—despite his illiteracy—never let me down when I asked him for money to buy a book... He never failed me, even when I asked him to buy me The Book of Animals by Al-Jahiz. He smiled, reached into the pocket of his gray jacket, and said jokingly, 'Even animals have books?' (Allal, 2015, p. 37)

In this narrative passage, the spiritual and emotional depth of the relationship between Youssef and his father captures our attention. Each loves the other, fulfills their needs, strives to realize their aspirations, and trusts one another. We see Youssef's father, "Haj Ismail," preparing to host a feast in celebration of his son's success in the baccalaureate exam. The novelist, Zakia Allal, narrates through the father's voice in one passage: "Don't forget that the baccalaureate results will be out in a few days, and I am certain of your success. I want to throw a feast for you..." (Allal, 2015, p. 43) However, fate intervenes in this novel, and Youssef is shocked to find his father's severed head in a bag in front of his shop four days before the results are announced. The narrator, speaking through Youssef, says: "I couldn't scream... I couldn't cry, nor could I move a single step. I sat beside my father's head, placing my head between my knees, and sank into the depths of a world whose color I do not know. (Ounisi, 2015, p. 57)

Here, the world, the world revolves in Yusuf's eyes as he enters realms unfamiliar to him. He cannot imagine life without his father, for the novelist has equated the image of fatherhood or masculinity with that of motherhood. Upon Yusuf's tragic loss of his father, "Hajj Ismail," to assassination, he found himself unable to cope. He left his village, abandoning his mother and sister, and did not even attend his sister's wedding. Similarly, in some contemporary Algerian feminist novels, we encounter depictions of husbands and wives. For instance, we see the rebellious wife challenging the opportunistic authority of her husband, as observed in Safaa Asila's novel "Their Genes Are Southern." Here, the wife is highly educated, yet her husband views her with

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condescension, as though she has made no progress or change in her life. From the very dedication of the aforementioned novel, Safaa Asila explicitly expresses this sentiment: "To all those who buried their ambitions within their homes, I salute you..." The active agent in the text is the husband, Abu Hilal, from the city of *Mostaganemi,* who prevents his wife, Thariya Badi, from realizing her dream of building an Islamic hotel based on a three-dimensional blueprint she designed. Despite her persistence and efforts, the idea of the hotel faded, and her dream vanished. This compelled Thariya to transfer her dream to another destination, hoping her children would inherit the genes of their mother from the South, "not those of their oppressive father." (Assila, 2012, p. 45)

The novelist portrays the husband with negative traits such as selfishness, bigotry, and a possessive attitude toward his wife. He uses the pretext of guardianship to suppress her and prevent her from achieving her dream. Consequently, the wife bequeaths her dreams to her son, who later fulfills them.

In contrast, in the novel "Hymns of Roses" by Algerian novelist *Mona Bashlam*, the wife is depicted as religious and conservative, striving to maintain the stability of her marital home—a stark contrast to what we saw in Safaa Asila's "Their Genes Are Southern."

***8.To conclude this research paper, we highlight the following points**:*

- Contemporary Algerian feminist novels have significantly enriched the Arabic literary library in general and the Algerian one in particular. They have added a distinctive feminine aesthetic touch and introduced new themes previously unfamiliar. The aforementioned novels express the inner worlds of Algerian female novelists, reflecting their psychological and life experiences.

- The reliance on and deployment of ideology in contemporary Algerian feminist novels is evident.

- There is innovation in the narrative structure adopted by Algerian female novelists, as they articulate the era of terrorism—the Black Decade—and incorporate philosophical and fantastical dimensions.

- Additionally, there is a renewal in contemporary Algerian feminist novels, as observed in some works where the novelists explore silenced worlds, such as the artistic and aesthetic use of taboos.

- The Algerian woman's concern for her family is reflected in her novelistic writings, expressing her relationship with the "Other" (the father/husband).

- Furthermore, it is evident that the narrative content in contemporary Algerian feminist novels carries a perspective that

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views Islam as a fundamental foundation for building a sound family identity. Deviating from Islamic teachings is seen as a loss of belonging and a desecration of Islamic beliefs.

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