

# Rahmani Mokhtaria: Algerian French Literature between Praise and Blame of Cultural Phenomena

## Algerian French Literature between Praise and Blame of Cultural Phenomena

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### **Abstract**

*Literature and society cannot be dissociated from each other as one nurtures the other, molding, thereby, patterns of expression. Through its different genres, it helps to unveil the existing currents of thought which it either praises the merits or denounces the anomalies. The present paper addresses the exploration of the binary role of Algerian literature, precisely novels, in picturing acclaim and castigation vis-à-vis cultural modes and dogma. To carry out this investigation, a descriptive-analytical method canvasses three elements, namely the meaning of literature and its place in society, secondly the different uses of praise by novels and the parameters grounding it, and finally the cases of blame and the actors generating it. The findings concede that acclaim occurs in situations where the author feels the need to paint the virtues of a cultural trait of his society, whether it is related to customs, traditions, language, or its heritage of folk stories. The results indicate also that blame occurs generally when the author feels aversion towards certain forms of his culture which he strongly needs to denounce and suppress.*

**Key-words:** blame, , ideology, literature, praise, , welfare

### **I.Introduction**

Literature and society are highly inter-twined as one nurtures the other, bringing to the fore verities pertaining both to the writer and the milieu s/he is painting. By dint of its myriad genres (poems, plays, prose, novels), literature gorgeously channelizes, therefore, the voices of the author and the pictured society towards unveiling the existing patterns of socio-political organizations, alongside the corresponding currents of thought and ideology. This unfolds eloquent representations of the cultural forms and virtues, which are consequently undertaken either for praise or denunciation purposes. Novels prove by far ponderous tools for this mission as they portray magnificently dreams, visions, aspirations, desires, frustration, strains, and anxiety. To disclose how this binary role of picturing acclaim and castigation vis-à-vis cultural modes and dogma is achieved, there is a need to address the following questions:

- What is the connotation of literature?
- What does culture allude to?
- What is the culture-literature nexus?
- How are praise and blame represented in Algerian French literature?

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## **II. Definition of literature**

There is no definite consensus as to what literature means. The term literature is derived from Latin *literatura/ litteratura* which originally meant writing formed with letters. In the fourteenth century, it came to be associated with creative works that uncovered spiritual, emotional, or intellectual matters. In the eighteenth century, it was used to mean high-quality written works that displayed both imagination and creation. Subsequently, other definitions were formulated. For Mathew Arnold (1914), literature represented merely knowledge acquired through books. Yet, not all knowledge could be considered as literature. De Quincey provided more illustration by differentiating between the attributes of literary and non-literary works. According to him, the former transmitted power to the readers; while the latter offered simply knowledge (qtd.in Arnold). Winchester, considered a literary work as one that, on one hand, revealed the author's emotions, and on the other hand, stirred the reader's emotions (qtd.in Arnold). The latter were for Winchester the most important criteria that gave birth to a valuable piece of writing because they impressed the character of the audience. One should note, however, that emotions don't guarantee an objective quality of writing. It was no doubt this hindrance in defining the term that made Stopford Brooke provided some additions to the word, 'literature is the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women, arranged in such a way as to give pleasure to the reader'(qtd.in Ranney 22). Yet, again, here there is a glaring weakness. It is true that literature unleashes pleasure, but it is not uniquely geared for that purpose. This heralded, then, the arena for more definitions. Wellek defined literature as every writing of quality (qtd.in Meyer). McFadden viewed it as artistic writing which aesthetic value was secondary (qtd.in Meyer).

Subsequently, the concept was used to convey two different meanings: informative literature, and imaginative literature. The former provided knowledge in the form of history, facts, and explanations. The latter conveyed thoughts, and feelings. Generally, it is this type of literature that is targeted when reference is made to literature. Merriam-Webster dictionary refers literature to artistic works as stories, poems, and plays that are not simply destined for entertainment. According to Patel, it is any writing which expresses and communicates thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards life.

The definitions enumerated above show clearly the difficulty in agreeing on the common features that make literature. For the sake of the present study, the researcher uses Habbar's definition, according to which literature alludes to artistic works that are capable of offering different views, unleashing debate through questioning established forms and meanings, and widening the reader's spiritual horizon. As to the different purposes served by literature, one can mention the fact of entertaining or giving aesthetic pleasure, securing a miraculous solace to one's inner feelings, desires, and dreams, and developing one's sense of empathy towards the others. Yet, more significant are the acts of enlightening the readers as to the virtues and qualities that ought to be either embraced or rejected (Duhan), and the impressing of their views as to particular aspects of life with a view to effectuating social change. Evidently, the power of epitomizing those images is possessed solely by the writer who ascribes s/himself the right of acclaiming, and voicing what s/he deems significant. In doing so, he is ostensibly impressed by his philosophy which unconsciously

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impresses his/her objectivity or subjectivity. In this vein, Ranney asserts, 'what our philosophy is, our literature will be' (3).

### **III. Definition of Culture**

The term culture displays also disparities in definitions which use either the anthropological or sociological approaches. With regard to the first, scholars (Raymond, Bosworth, Eliot) consider culture as the whole way of life of a particular group (social system, customs, beliefs, arts...etc). As to the second approach, its tenants (Brislin, Kramsh, Peron) hold that culture stands for anything that holds a society together such as the values, norms, and assumptions. Other distinctions are also made such as the "little c culture" or the BBV (beliefs, behaviors, values), and the "big C culture" or the MLA (music, literature, art) denoting those activities performed by the elite class.

Culture is passed down from one generation to another, yet it is constantly evolving. The individual members of a given society are supposed to imbibe the peculiarities of their culture which form obviously their identity. However, some might question the beliefs, the values, and the customs of their society, exposing them, thereby, to rejection on the part of those who cherish those values. Those individuals have been manifestly impressed by the values and beliefs inherent in other societies which they perceive as more rational and temperate as those current in Western cultures. The age of globalization and fast communication technology are actually intensifying this process of questioning, and re-thinking.

### **IV. The Culture-Literature Nexus**

Literary works cannot evidently depart from absolute imagination. In fact, artistic creation requires a certain reliance on reality. This is clearly revealed by Abdelkader Djeghloul: 'l'aspect création est une chose fondamentale, on ne craint pas à partir de zéro bien sur, on craint à partir de la réalité qui existe.' Reality, however, means necessarily the reproduction of certain cultural aspects of the target society. In fact, no fiction can do without anthropology as both are necessarily intertwined. According to Byler and Iverson, 'there is no way to easily demarcate where fiction ends and anthropology begins' (qtd.in Abdelkader Djeghloul n.p). Both meet at one point which is the clarification and magnifying of 'different forms of truth'. Literature impacts culture by providing life and beauty; whereas culture serves literature by amplifying the descriptive terrain through the equipment of literary texts with images, exotic colors, themes, and theories on history, evolution, and progress' (qtd.in Lebkowska).

### **V. Culture-praising Algerian literature**

Throughout his four novels, notably *La Colline Oubliée*, (1952), *Le Sommeil du Juste* (1955), *L'Opium et le Bâton* (1965), and *La Traversée* (1982), Mouloud Mammeri impresses the reader with his massive use of cultural traits such as language, customs, and religion. Before unveiling how these themes were conveyed, it is interesting first to consider the plot of the novels. *La Colline Oubliée* portrays the story of four friends who return from France to their homeland in Haute Kabylie. The events which take place during the Second World War are told by Mokrane, the narrator. The War is a source of great desolation for the inhabitants of the village and adds

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substantially to their impoverishment and to the malaise of the four friends. The second novel comprises four parts that picture the impossibility of assimilation for the Algerian colonial territory. The first part hinges on family issues, with two characters the unnamed father and his cousin, Toudert. It reveals the problems associated with power and poverty, as well as the French injustice. The second part deals with Slimane, the nationalist. The third focuses on Arezki, and hinges on the redress of the national Algerian identity. The fourth part tackles the murder of Toudert by Mohand, bringing thereby justice to the family, but at the same time, plenty of harassment as the French court afflicts twenty years prison to Arezki. *L'Opium et le Bâton*, tells the story of a bourgeois doctor, Bachir, who decides to embrace the cause of the Algerian liberation war, and participates in this war in the Kabyle area. *La Traversée* portrays Algeria in the post-independence era where the author tries to depict the state of disillusionment through the protagonist, Mourad. Tired by the constant state of harassment and censorship of his articles, the journalist decides to resign from *l'Algérie Révolution*, and seek refuge in France. But his boss incites him to change his mind and undertake a mission in the desert.

Cultural manifestations were apparent in the reference to the Berber language where the writer shows an earnest desire to 'glorify' it. Thus, when the French officer asks him something in Arabic, he does not reply stirring his anger. When another soldier enters into the room he tells him that he does not know Arabic, and when he enquires about his knowledge of French, here again, he replies negatively claiming that there were no schools in Ighzer. Yet, the most revealing scene of the natives' pride in their language is when the father says that he speaks only Berber, the language of his ancestors.

Another praising of the Berber language is illustrated in the extracts below:

- 'C'est en berbère que j'aurai voulu t'écrire' (*La Traversée* qtd.in Berrichi 132)
- 'Inscriptions en caractères berbères dans le carnet secret de Mokrane' (*La Colline Oubliée*, qtd.in Roche 101)
- 'C' est en berbère que j' eusse aimé lui dire cela et d' autres choses encore'
- 'Quand il eut fini la sourate, Ouali l' entendit adresser sa prière à Dieu en kabyle : - N' attise pas le feu qui brûle, mon Dieu...'
- Vous parlez arabe, monsieur ? dit le chasseur.
- C' est du berbère.
- C' est la même chose. Vous le parlez bien.
- C'est ma langue.

Again, this conversation is a conspicuous illustration of the interest paid to one's language. Mammeri endorses also another variant of Berber, which is the Touareg language, Tifinagh :  
« Amayas s'éloigna de quelques pas dans la direction de la lune, se tourna vers Amalia puis, baissant obliquement l'épée devant elle, dit en touareg des mots que personne ne comprit. » (*La Traversée* qtd.in Sparks)

Pourtant, Mourad, lui, comprend le Tifinagh :

« [...] il répétait comme une litanie la phrase qu'il avait vue, écrite en Tifinagh, sur un rocher de la route : " Moi, Berkezou, je fais paître mes chèvres et je suis sans personne." »

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Those examples indicate clearly an attachment to the Berber language and pride in speaking it because it stands for identity. Another aspect of expressing exaltation in the Berber language is the use of Berber terms and expressions such as: Amin, Aroumi, Taasast, Ammm aggou deg genni, Lemmer d nek . It should be mentioned that Mammeri does not provide an appendix for those words as he considers the context an ample terrain for an explanation. Yet, one might also see a desire to make this language precious as to invite the other (the reader) to make efforts to comprehend it. This goes hand in hand with the use of Berber names such as: Mokrane, Mohand, Farroudja, Tasadit, Ramdane, Ighzer.

Through the use of the Berber language, or reference to it, the author wants to sensibilise his brethren as to the danger of language disappearance as the following extract unveils:

Les vieillards remarquèrent que pour ses adieux Mohand employait le berbère recherché qu' il gardait d' habitude pour les grands jours et ils étaient inquiets, car était-ce seulement pour ses adieux ? Les jeunes ne comprenaient pas très bien ; vaguement, ils sentaient que, parce que les événements étaient graves, Mohand cherchait à mettre les mots sur la hauteur des choses. (qtd.in Berrichi 130)

Through the character of Mohand, he sends a clear message: that of the urgency of preserving and promoting the Berber language:

C'est bien ce que je disais, vous ne comprenez même plus la langue de vos pères. Ce village s'est fait lentement. Les ans et les générations, les soleils et les pluies, les guerres et la paix, les larmes, les retours du printemps, les rires, les douleurs secrètes, les ambitions folles, les folles joies, les rêves enfouis, le cal des mains, la sueur du fronts et les pieds raclant nus les pierres ont modelé ce village qui ne ressemble à nul autre. Ce que des siècles ont fait il suffit f f f f f f (il souffla sur ses doigts) du vent d'une nuit pour les détruire, que ce soit la nuit du soleil ou celle de vos esprits. Veillez, enfants, sur ce village que les ans ont mûri. (qtd.in Berrichi 130)

As far as customs and traditions are concerned, Mammeri describes eloquently the pilgrimage of the villagers to the grave of the village Saint in order to seek his benediction and blessings. The following passage in *La Colline Oubliée* depicts glaringly this custom:

Une atmosphère lourde, rendue opaque par la fumée des pipes de haschisch, dont les petits feux rouges piquetaient l' ombre partout, noyait des groupes d'hommes et de femmes accroupis en rond. (...) La musique (...) était sauvage, monotone, martelante, déchaînée ou au contraire caressante et douce comme un baiser. Dans chaque coin, des hommes, des femmes étaient secoués de frissons, ils gloussaient de partout, remuaient convulsivement les épaules au rythme du violon. Un second coup d'archet prolongé et plusieurs à la fois, rejetant leurs burnous, poussèrent un cri de bête fauve et sautèrent au milieu de la pièce, ils se tenaient par les bras et dansaient. On entendait par intervalle les craquements de leurs os. Des femmes, des hommes enivrés, des jeunes gens fougueux, des vieillards, dont le délire orgiaque décuplait les forces, sautèrent à leur tour et, se tenant aussi par les bras, formèrent autour du tas immobile des jeunes femmes stériles un cercle délirant. Pelotonnée sur elle-

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même, la tête sur les genoux de Davda et couverte d' un foulard noir, Aazi laissait déferler sur elle ce déchaînement de rythmes démoniaques et de râles extatiques dans l'espoir qu' un pareil déploiement de force bestiale allait éveiller dans son sein un souffle de vie. (qtd.in Hadj Naceur 45)

Mammeri paints another facet of customs when he describes how people behave in the snow. All members of the family sat around the fire (kanoun) because it was extremely cold. They got closer to each other as this brought heat, making great preparations to face the cold season. They put their animals in safe shelters and hid food (wheat, oil) and wood. As to children, they would observe the sky for the first drops of snow to which they would burst into joyful songs (qtd.in Bennacer, 2011).

In the same novel, Mokrane, the narrator, lends an insight into the kind of games the youth were used to:

ils ne jouaient pas, comme nous jadis, aux chacals, aux sangliers, aux jeux aventureux qui nous menaient jusqu'à Aourir et plus loin; il n'était jamais question parmi eux de batailles à coups de pierres; et les vieux qui nous les interdisaient à cause des blessures et des ravages que les deux camps faisaient dans les champs, finirent par regretter que nulle troupe jamais ne couchât les moissons dans sa course rapide. (qtd.in Sparks 32)

In terms of beliefs, the author hinges on myths, precisely the spirits of the deceased as in *Le Sommeil du Juste*. The author speaks about the stereotypical beliefs of the people when some villagers are assassinated, précisant that the latter do not find peace till they are revenged. He adds that their spirits appear during the night, shouting and crying in such a terrifying voice that the villagers called 'anza'.

The thematic elements mentioned earlier are tacitly tied to the socio-cultural description of the Berber society. The use of anthropology here is clearly an expedient to furnish a complete image, set in reality, about the Amazigh culture. Commenting his writing, Mammeri states that the use of two registers, i.e anthropology and novel writing is for the sake of complementing each other (qtd.in *Awal*, Entretien Djeghloul...). He goes further to assert that writing is a form of liberation. On the other hand, the great focalization on anthropology in his novels is a medium of re-asserting pride in an identity that had been buttressed by colonial rule, and worse still relegated to the background:

A notre époque, c'est une action absolument essentielle car les techniques d'aliénation sont tellement efficaces qu'on peut imposer aux gens n'importe quoi sur le plan physique mais aussi mental. Il faut que quelques personnes amènent un contrepoids à cette entreprise qui est tellement démente. Dans ces conditions, les deux modes qui sont la littérature et les sciences humaines (la linguistique et l'anthropologie en l'occurrence) vont à mon avis dans le même sens.

Hence, the combination both of literature and anthropology were to be geared for one mission and deliver a message to the readership: reveal the deepness of the Berbers' lives both in their joys and misery (Mikesková), re-dress the Berber culture and identity, and suppress colonial cultural

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alienation that tended to express the grandeur of the French culture, and instill a form of linguistic amnesia. As a writer, he felt the need to clinch and internalize the Berber culture as a medium for safeguarding one's identity as he put it:

[... ] ma culture, ma langue sont en effet le berbère et j' y tiens particulièrement, parce que je considère qu'elles servent à me définir. Elles sont moi-même en quelque sorte. Mon opinion est qu' une culture n' est vraie que quand elle est intériorisée. Vous pouvez acquérir n' importe quelle culture vous venant de l' extérieur. Je dirais que c'est très bien d' acquérir le plus grand nombre de cultures que l' on peut. Mais il leur manquera toujours un paramètre. C' est justement le paramètre de l' intimité, de la profondeur. (qtd.in Berrichi 141)

### **VI. Culture-Blaming Literature**

The blaming of cultural traits represents another role of the author. At this junction, one should ask the following question: where does the author produce such criticism: while he is amid his countrymen or outside (in relatively forced exile). In democratic countries, such as Europe and America, novel writers enjoy a great degree of freedom, and hence, risk practically nothing when denouncing the cultural features of their societies (political, economic, social, and cultural aspects). In undemocratic countries, by contrast, where rulers and their small group clients monopolize power, repress liberty of expression, charge authors and journalists of sedition, and drug them into prison, authors operate from exile or the diaspora. It should be mentioned here that such authors have been heavily impressed by Western culture, a culture where there is no restriction on females' actions, where the very few customs associated with family life don't play a prominent role in the individual's life as each one is expected to have his own life. There is also another aspect that should not be forgotten. This has to do with readership reception: this means that the author should espouse the interests of his readers (not belonging to his same culture), and therefore denunciate all cultural traits of his society that do not comply with the host culture. In this vein, Mouloud Mammeri says:

...les auteurs ne pouvaient être publiés que s'ils reproduisaient très fidèlement les canons, les valeurs, les modes, les voies et les voix de la littérature occidentale, et plus précisément de la littérature française du temps avec l'obligation supplémentaire de se faire pardonner d'être des algériens. L'épreuve était pour eux plus cruelle qu'elle ne paraît à un observateur extérieur. [...] Ils devaient d'un côté faire oublier qu'ils étaient des "indigènes" [ ... ], mais de l'autre et contradictoirement donner d'eux l'image rassurante que les autres, c'est à dire le public colon (à l'époque le seul public existant), s'en faisaient. (qtd.in Mortimer 13-14)

Mammeri also adds that artistic creation is a matter of choice that authors operate in order to earn a great readership, especially if their books are edited in the host country. He explains that they are obliged to hide certain aspects of society that might be extremely important for some people, and evoke, instead, topics that would be fancied by the audience. In that junction, many Algerian authors, writing in French in the contemporary era, trod the path destined to blame their native culture.

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Contemporary Algerian French literature witnessed the booming writing of Yasmina Khadra (*Les Hirondelles de Kaboul* 2002 ; *L'attentat* 2005; *L'Automne des Chimères* ; *Les Agneaux du Seigneur*, *L'Equation Africaine* 2011), Aziz Chouaki (*Avoir 20 ans à Alger* 2001, *L'Etoile d'Alger* 2001; *Arobase* 2004 ; *Une Virée* 2005), Amine Zaoui (*Haras de femmes* 2001 ; *Les Gens du Parfum* 2003 ; *Festin de Mensonges* 2007 ; *La Chambre de la Vierge Impure* 2009 ; *Le Miel de la Sieste* 2014 ; *Incendie au Paradis* 2016), Assia Djébar (*La Femme sans Sépulture* 2002 ; *La Disparition* 2003 ; *Nulle Part dans la Maison de mon Père* 2007), and Malika Mokeddem (*La Transe des Insoumis* 2003; *Mes Hommes* 2005 ; *Je Dois tout à ton Oubli* 2008) .

In *L'Automne des Chimères* of Yasmina Khadra, the writer hinges on the wave of Islamism and terrorism in the 1990's that have immensely affected the Algerian society. The title is clearly significant of an Algerian setting where happiness, serenity, and wellbeing have become but a chimera. In the extract below, he describes ably a joyful period of childhood and innocence which paradoxically belongs to colonial Algeria, as if the latter provided certain mirth which the post-independent state was far to sustain:

Je suis né ici, il y a très longtemps. On appelait cette époque le temps des colonies. Les champs d'alors étaient si immenses qu'au-delà de la montagne, me semblait-il, commençait le néant. Le blé atteignait mes épaules, pourtant j'avais faim tous les jours et j'avais faim toutes les nuits. Je ne comprenais déjà pas, mais je m'en moquais : j'avais la chance d'être un enfant. Lorsque le vol d'une libellule me faisait pousser des ailes et que mes éclats de rire s'égouttaient dans le clapotis des fontaines, lorsque je courais comme un fou parmi les fougères, quand bien même chaque foulée frondait mes pas, je savais que j'étais né poète comme l'oiseau naît musicien, et à l'instar de l'oiseau, il me manquait juste les mots pour le dire. (*L'Automne des Chimères*)

Yasmina Khadra speaks also about the chimera of independence when alluding to the makers of independence. He termed them as genius people whose dramatic suffering had evidently failed as they are the greatly offended people by the actual state of things in Algeria:

De tous les génies de la terre, les nôtres sont les plus offensés. Parents pauvres de la société, persécutés par les uns, incompris par les autres, leur existence n'aura été qu'une dramatique cavale à travers les vicissitudes de l'arbitraire et de l'absurdité. Ceux qui ne périront pas par le fer, mourront d'ostracisme et de dépit. Ils échoueront soit à l'asile, soit sur un terrain vague, la tête dans une couronne d'épines et les veines ravagées par l'alcool. (*L'Automne des Chimères* Booknode)

In *Les Agneaux du Seigneur*, Yasmina Khadra uses a vehement language and satire to blow the whistle on those who have plunged Algeria into decadence:

Quel est ce Houbel qui surgit des ténèbres ? ils m'ont regardé avec dédain et m'ont répondu: «c'est le mausolée du Martyre. »J'ai dit: «il y a des cimetières pour les morts». Ils m'ont Crié horrifiés : «la gloire a ses monuments aussi . Nos Enfants se doivent de s'abreuver aux sources de leur histoire » j'ai dit: «où est donc cette gloire, à Riad El Feth? Dans ces magasins interlopes où les caleçons sont exhibés comme des



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trophées ? dans ces bars où l'on s'enivre sans vergogne ? Dans ces cinémas obscurs où l'on enseigne le voyeurisme béat ?...où est donc ce martyr au milieu de cette tourbe?»...non ; mes frères, il n'y a jamais eu de place pour les morts, encore moins pour les démunis comme vous, à Riad El Fesq .... Là -bas règnent seulement la cupidité des traîtres, les spéculations et la Clochardisation d'un peuple séduit et abandonné..... (qtd.in Dris 72-73)

Yasmina Khadra castigates overtly the government for its failure to give due value and memory to the martyrs, and perdure the martyrs' teachings for future generations. The Martyrs' monument has been designed in a way that creates a severe breach between past and young generations. The amenities adjoined to the monument (cinema, bar, clothes' shops) comprise no institutions that neither keep in memory the honorable deeds of the Algerian combatants nor ingrain tangible war lessons. The monument's site rather institutes a class- system whereby poor people are deprived of the right to entertain themselves in those places. We notice clearly irony and satire in the terms of 'Houbel', 'Riad EL Fesq', and also the fact that the underwear's shop is located next to the Martyrs' monument. Besides, Yasmina Khadra clearly expresses his rancor towards the decision makers whom he qualifies as 'traitors and speculators' as they have dragged the people, above all the youth, to become tramps. The result of this bad policy has only hastened the feebleness of the country: « Le pays est aussi fragile qu'un hymen .C'est juste un slogan tapageur sur les façades, un mensonge zélé. (...) Regarde un peu ton douar, tends l'oreille et essaye d'écouter ce que taisent les murs, ce qu'occulte sa fausse léthargie. La haine est en train d'éclore, la rancœur gagne du terrain ». (qtd.in Dris 76)

Contemporary Algerian literature is a literature of pain, terror, exile, and despair (Demane Debbih). It is in reaction to what Algeria endured during the reign of terrorism and its aftermath that Algerian novelists embarked on the tacit portrayal of all the dark sides of the Algerian society (violence, corruption, malaise ) with a view to denouncing this turmoil, alongside the mobilization both of national and international opinion. This literature is pictured as 'emergency literature' as it tackles the dramatic situation of the Algerians (Benayoun).

For Aziz Chouaki, the same dark image is painted. In his novel *L'Etoile d'Alger* published in 2002, the writer tackles the frustrating situation of Algeria during the 90's:

Le taxi ressemble à une mosquée ambulante, effluves de musc, autocollants du FIS, Allah, versets du Coran, une cassette de prêches virulents d'Ali Benhadj explose les baffles. Lunettes noires, chewing-gum, bedaine replète, le chauffeur peste contre les femmes sans hidjab, toutes des putes, ah bientôt tout va changer, le FIS va te nettoyer tout ça vite fait, tu vas voir. Moussa fait mine d'acquiescer, changer les cordes du mandole, débrouiller la pompe à eau, le taxi prend la bretelle pour Ben Aknoun. ( qtd.in Babelio 56)

This desolating image of Algeria is further reiterated in: "Il se retrouve à Bab el Oued. Incroyable, ce que ça a changé. Poubelles, gosses, barbes, kamis, comme toute l'Algérie, format national standard " (qtd.in Babelio 56). Chouaki also delineates the dangers of the Muslim

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extremists who have created a schism between the Western and Oriental worlds, and swept people into a tragedy: "Cependant un drame de fond se joue. Le Nord et le Sud se déchirent. Le monde global des clips, des pubs et du scotch se heurte à l'Absolu hirsute d'un islam confisqué par de nouveaux fauves. " (qtd.in Babelio 57).

Amine Zaoui's writing makes ample room for the theme of liberation that extends to every aspect of human life. It denounces Islam, above its radical interpretations. It rebels against the social order, mainly the patriarchal order that maintains women in subordination to males. It also condemns the political order that perpetuates malaise and frustration. Commenting on the theme of liberation, Zaoui says: « Je crois que la littérature est la sœur jumelle de la liberté. Les auteurs qui ont des commissariats ou des mosquées Dans leurs têtes, ne peuvent produire un texte libre où le lecteur se retrouve ». (qtd.in Levy)

His novel, *Festin de Mensonges*, displays a great liberty in the use of erotic scenes, but as the French critic Max Véga-Ritter comments, his type of writing is basically designed as a medium of criticism of the social and political order. Some scenes in the novel might be interpreted as a great assault to Islam, yet Zaoui's intent is rather to overthrow the radical interpretation on Islam which prohibits the invocation of love (in writing):

J'aime faire l'amour avec des femmes mûres. Cela doit me venir de ma tante, la sœur jumelle de ma mère, qui m'a dépuclé. Dans la grange où nous nous retrouvions, elle criait fort le nom d'Allah au moment de jouir. Ensuite j'ai connu d'autres femmes. Toutes m'ont apporté des choses. L'alcool, le tabac, les livres des roumis. En plus du sexe. Je crois que je les aimais autant qu'il est possible d'aimer Allah lui-même. Mais ce n'était pas du goût de tous L'Algérie venait d'obtenir l'indépendance et, arrivé d'Egypte ou de Palestine, les Frères musulmans devenaient de plus en plus influents. Un jour il faudrait que je m'amende'. (qtd.in Conil & Marcandier para.1)

In *Incendie au Paradis*, Zaoui reproaches political Islam which preaches hatred and stands as a bar against democracy, individual liberties, and modernism. It urges the intelligentsia to expound their views and to find fault with this 'bad Islam'. He also endorsed the separation of politics and religion for the sake of boosting a peaceful society, where union and love are held as the basis for development. Condemning such organizations as El Qaida, Jabhet Enosra, and Daesh he says:

Elles sont contre toutes cultures de lumières, ennemies de la raison et de la culture de la vie et du bonheur. Elles sont du côté de la mort". Il démystifie ensuite, sans ambages, l'un des personnages les plus marquants de la culture musulmane: Ibn Khaldoun, historien, sociologue et écrivain dont "les écrits ont été célébrés par les Arabes comme par les Berbères. Par les musulmans, par les chrétiens comme par les juifs.( qtd.in. Conil & Marcandier)

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For Assia Djebbar, writing is a means of a quest and construction of a 'proportional' identity. In *Nulle Part dans la Maison de mon Père*, she invokes the dilemma of identity for the immigrants who are torn between two cultures, being considered as strangers in both:

Pourquoi ne pas te dire, dans un semblant de sérénité, une douce ou indifférente acceptation : ne serait-ce pas enfin le moment de tuer, même à petit feu, ces menues braises jamais éteintes? Interrogation qui ne serait pas seulement la tienne, mais celle de toutes les femmes de là-bas, sur la rive sud de la Méditerranée... Pourquoi, mais pourquoi, je me retrouve, moi et toutes les autres : "nulle part dans la maison de mon père?(Conil & Marcandier)

Malika Mokeddem explores the same theme in her writings. Her characters, most of the time within the frame of an autobiography, depict the burst of a female voice seeking liberation from oppression and domination amidst a male society. This constant search for selfhood, existence, and integrity is a source of hope, cohesion, and personality affirmation. Justifying the reasons behind writing, the author claims:

Écrire c'est gagner une page de vie, c'est reprendre un empan de souffle à l'angoisse, c'est retrouver, au-dessus du trouble et du désarroi, un pointillé d'espoir. L'écriture est le nomadisme de mon esprit, dans le désert de ses manques, sur les pistes sans autre issue de la nostalgie, sur les traces de l'enfance que je n'ai jamais eue.(Mokeddem. " De la lecture à l'écriture, des livres..... " 55)

In her novel *La Transe des Insoumis*, she clearly criticizes the Algerian social order that gives a prime importance to males over females, and portrays how the former provide pride and satisfaction ; whereas the latter entail impatience and anger: « T'adressant à ma mère, tu disais « Mes fils » quand tu parlais de mes frères. « Tes filles » lorsque la conversation nous concernait, mes sœurs et moi. Tu prononçais toujours « Mes fils » avec orgueil. Tu avais une pointe d'impatience, d'ironie, de ressentiment, de colère parfois, en formulant « Tes filles » ( 200)

Carrying on her criticism, she rebels against the role of mothers in the Algerian setting, blaming them for this gender segregation, and female debasement:

Ce sont les perfidies des mères, leur misogynie, leur masochisme qui forment les hommes à ce rôle de fils cruels. Quand les filles n'ont pas de père, c'est que les mères n'ont que des fils. C'est qu'elles- mêmes n'ont jamais été enfants. Qu'ont- elles fait de la rébellion ? Les hommes font des guerres. C'est contre elles- mêmes que les femmes tournent leurs armes. (qtd.in Mokeddem, *Mes Hommes* 6)

Hence, rebellion against the social order, customs, and traditions represents for Mokeddem a strong weapon for redressing the balance and re-establishing dignity and self-love of female identity:

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Personne ne verra la tache de mon sang, sur un drap ou sur une chemise. Personne ne l'exhibera comme le sceau de la dignité de toute une tribu. Je laverai mon sang toute seule. Je veux laver mon sang de tout ce qui entache la vie d'une femme. Je sens monter en moi un grand rire. Voilà. Je les emmerde ! (qtd.in Mokeddem, *Mes Hommes*, 6)

Commenting on her sense of rebellion, Mokeddem asserts : "Je suis un être de transgression. Un être qui a toujours été du côté de la rébellion et jamais du côté de la soumission. Je pense que c'est dû à mes origines nomades et à cette grande mère nomade" (qtd.in). Croisy adds here 'the effect of a traumatic past upon an individual, has to be dealt with in order for survival to happen, for life to continue' (90).

Such writings depict clearly a state of malaise, suffering, and frustration with the social order that maintains females in a low position, denigrating thereby their value and rights. It is therefore in rebelling against this marginalization that female writers fight for the redress of their plot, and the affirmation of their denigrated identity. It is to a certain extent a kind of self construction. In this respect, Lakoff and Johnson state that such kind of autobiographical writing targets 'the constant construction of new coherences in our life, coherences that give new meaning to old experiences' (qtd.in Fernandes 148)

### **VII.Conclusion**

The oft-mentioned notes reveal blatantly the purposes served by contemporary Algerian French literature. It was, conspicuously geared either for exalting the beauty of the native culture, or condemning all the bad clichés inherent in the Algerian society that obstructed both individual and collective well-being and welfare. Mammeri's writings, for instance, fell within the first type of literature. In his four novels (*La Colline Oubliée*, *Le Sommeil du Juste*, *L'Opium et le Bâton*, and *La Traversée*), he plainly glorified the Berber culture, providing a profound description of the Berber social life during colonialism in such a magnificent way that glaringly indicated his yearning, i.e the apotheosis of the Berber culture. It was a peaceable life adorned with joyful practices and simple people. Through the portrayal of the linguistic, social, and cultural traits of the Amazigh culture, Mammeri aspired to its internalization, and its preservation against 'drowning' in the vast ocean epitomized by changes brought about by colonialism. Indeed, the author's able portrayal of the Berber way of life divulged his attachment, love, and pridefulness in the Amazigh culture.

Conversely, other authors (Yasmina Khadra, Aziz Chouaki, Amine Zaoui, Assia Djebar, and Malika Mokeddem) vowed themselves to castigate aspects of violence, liberty usurpation, poverty, denigration, loss, and trauma. Algerian writers acclaimed their voices highly to condemn those who have contributed to the political, economic, social, and cultural decadence of the country. Henceforth, they strove in order to redefine themselves or define their society. Arguably, this rebelling literature is a form of liberation and therapy that aspires to heal suffering and trauma and instills both internal and external appeasements.

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