

FRENCH CRITICS' VIEW OF A FRENCH-SPEAKING ALGERIAN WRITER: REPRESENTATION OF OTHERNESS

Yakhyokulova N.Sh.

Trainee teacher of the Department of the Second Foreign Language of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages. Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract: It is interesting to analyze the evolution of French criticism regarding the author's first cycle of novels, since it allows us to identify modes of thought and their evolution. We can, in particular, consider the historical events that occurred during this period and that led to the devaluation or enhancement of the value of a given work. We can also ask what were the literary criteria for the recognition of a work at that particular time. A French-language writer of Algerian origin, Assia Djébar has been the subject of a significant number of critical articles and publications on her work for over fifty years. In this article, we will look at the opinions of French critics about the French-speaking Algerian writer and his work.

Keywords: first novels, critical articles, Franco-Maghreb literature, colonial novel, modes of writing, discourse, contemporary authors, cultural heritage.

Introduction: Assia Djébar, whose real name is Fatma-Zohra Imalhaen, a contemporary writer who is now internationally renowned, took her first steps in literature at a specific time: the late 1950s. Algeria, which had been under French rule for over a century, witnessed the birth of an early independent literature. This country, previously characterized by colonial-style or exotic works, had rebelled against the metropolis, and its literary production has since borne the scars of this allegiance. Thus, two types of literature coexisted. Assia Djébar's position in the field of Franco-Maghreb literature could only be precarious. How can one define oneself as a writer in a blurred space with undefined boundaries? Stuck in this gap, Assia Djébar chose a completely different approach, choosing not to place her first work in the Algerian reality of the time and, of course, refusing to write a colonial novel.

Every writer writes in spite of and with the works that preceded them. Thus, certain «favorite» authors or certain «fetish» readings are likely to «feed» the writer's imagination and influence his writing. The writer constructs his literary style by rejecting certain authors and certain modes of writing. In the early stages, this style constantly oscillates between these two poles in order to establish what will later become his own aesthetics. While the phenomenon of imitation, a creative process highly valued in the classical era, which consists in drawing inspiration from objects contained in the common cultural heritage and imitating writers considered literary models, was one of the driving forces of literary creation for many centuries, the Romantic writers (although they were a minority in their time) established originality as an absolute value. (Larousse, 2001). This is the birth of the author's style as the sole expression of the subject. Rewriting is replaced by invention. A true writer is one who stands out from his predecessors by his imagination, his style, his genius. (Larousse, 2001).

When it comes to studying the birth of a writer and the evolution of his work, it is useful to analyze the various discourses and literary texts that constitute the intertext of his novels. If we want to know how Assia Djébar acquired the individual style that characterizes his works, we must analyze

his text as closely as possible to highlight the presence of some contemporary authors in his work. The journalistic criticism of the time regularly compared *La Soif* with *Bonjour Tristesse* by Françoise Sagan. Was this comparison justified or, on the contrary, excessive? Very often, it is the critics who draw analogies between two works, and these examples are not claimed by Assia Djébar as such. That is why, in the second part, we will analyze Cesare Pavese's *Le Bel Été*, a collection of three long stories that, according to Assia Djébar, she read a lot in the 1950s.

From this first cycle, two periods of critical reception seem to follow: one, from 1957 to 1962, covering the first two novels, could be considered one of fierce criticism¹, the other, covering from 1962 to 1967, could rather be called a period of recognition and hope, allowing the formation of the image of a recognized writer.

Beginning with *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde*, the hitherto rather negative criticism took a new turn. We witnessed a change in direction. It became much more flattering towards these works. Then the critics returned to the first two novels, emphasizing not the shortcomings, but the merits of these works! Thus, *La Soif* and *Les Impatients* became essential and indisputable milestones in the literary career of the future «great author». Can we now, looking back, consider that it was the criticism of the time that pushed the author to develop her work? Was her political commitment, which really came into its own in her third novel, *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde*, connected to the sometimes harsh criticism of the critics? Was her work a response to the expectations of the French critics?

We would like to show, firstly, how French criticism perceived Assia Djébar's first two novels, then the phenomenon of changes in this same criticism after the publication of *Les Enfants du Nouveau Monde* in 1962, and finally, to analyze the consequences of French journalistic criticism for the entire cycle of Assia Djébar's first novels.

When *La Soif* was published in 1957 and *Les Impatients* in 1958, French journalistic criticism consistently condemned the first two novels. They were obviously more concerned with identifying the shortcomings of the writing than with identifying what made these novels interesting, even if in several articles critics occasionally emphasized the positive aspects of the writing and the themes they touched on. Between rushed readings, «bad» readings, and even expected readings, Assia Djébar's first two novels are by no means immune. Assia Djébar became famous for her first novel, *La Soif*, written in the summer of 1956 and published by Julliard in 1957. «One day I started working, driven by the need to write. I created characters without any specific purpose, and then they came to life and drew me into their lives» (Nejma 1957).

Assia Djébar does not address the themes that are characteristic of Algerian literature of the time. She thus opposes a certain doxa. For the nationalists of a country at war, literature in Algeria must serve the struggle for liberation. This is why Assia Djébar is misunderstood both by her fellow Algerian intellectuals, who reject her for harming the Algerian cause by extolling the virtues of Western education, and by French critics, who attribute no merit to a work that seems to lack «originality» in the very themes it addresses. Assia Djébar therefore faces criticism regarding her own identity. For the Algerians, she is one of the traitors; among the French,¹⁴ they deplore the absence of an Algerian identity.

As if Assia Djébar was not at all concerned about the events taking place in her country! «However, when she wrote *La Soif*, published in 1957, she had already participated, as a student at the *École Normale Supérieure*, in the great Algerian student strike, and her activism naturally found its way into the novels she would publish in 1962 and 1967» (Charles Bonn et Xavier Garnier 1997).

As for *Les Impatients*, Assia Djébar's second novel, written just a year after *La Soif*, critics are beginning to move away from their initial opinion, relying on the space given to the political situation at the end of the work. However, the same criticisms as for *La Soif* remain. Although Assia Djébar

says that she was inspired by famous women in real life to create her female characters, the war still does not make an impact. Assia Djébar is « so perfect in French culture that if it were not for her name, the place and the theme of her book *Les Impatients*, the question of her origin would not arise, and one could, reading her, consider her a young woman from our country, concerned with women's freedom and her confusion in the face of love » (*Le Monde* 1958).

Conclusion: Very often, French-language authors are considered by critics as secondary authors, or at least deliberately placed outside the French literary sphere. These works continue to be frequently used as pretexts for ideological, ethnographic or sociological discourses. The desire to consider literature as a reflection or testimony of social or economic realities is certainly a position supported by some Maghreb authors. However, it ultimately becomes an obstacle for writers who are reduced to goals other than those that increasingly motivate them, namely literary work and creativity. This seems to be what is happening with Assia Djébar, who is asked by French critics to reflect current Franco-Algerian affairs in her work. Journalistic criticism sometimes happily refers to this literature as an expression of social or political phenomena. Critical discourse thus appears as a process of recovery for the purposes of personal perception of current Algerian events. Indeed, it seems that France never stops « canonizing », since even foreign literature in French has its own criteria of « beauty ». Several years later, critics radically changed their view of Assia Djébar's work, and she was finally appreciated as an independent author.

The study of Assia Djébar's first cycle of novels also allowed us to consider the emergence of women's literature in French. The French feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s questioned the possibility of « women's writing », seeking to highlight the literary characteristics inherent to women, since women in literature were, for the most part, depicted only through the male gaze, the gaze of the writer.

Reference:

1. Préface de Cromwell, *Petits classiques*, Larousse, Paris, 2001, p. 57.
2. Victor Hugo, Préface de Cromwell, *Petits classiques*, Larousse, Paris, 2001 p. 71
3. NEJMA, « La Soif d'Assia Djébar », Paris, *Messages d'Algérie*, 15 décembre 1957.
4. « Algérie », *Littérature francophone*. Tome 1 : Le Roman. Ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Charles Bonn et Xavier Garnier, Paris, Hatier, 1997, p. 185.
5. Emile Henriot, « La Vie littéraire », « Trois romancières », *Le Monde*, n° 4299, mercredi 19 novembre 1958.
6. N.Sh.Yakhyokoulova MAGHREB LITERATURE OF FRENCH EXPRESSION *European Journal of Learning on History and Social Sciences* Volume 1, Issue 4| 2024 ISSN:3032-1123; <https://doi.org/10.61796/ejheaa.v1i4.483> <https://journal.silkroadscience.com/index.php/ejheaa>
7. Н.Яхёкулова ВЗГЛЯД НА ЖАНР АВТОБИОГРАФИЧЕСКОГО РОМАНА (на примере романа Асии Джеббар «L'Amour la fantasia») ЛУЧШИЕ ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ISSN:3030-3680 <http://webjournal.ru/> Часть-21_Том-3_Май -2024
8. Н.Яхёкулова МАГРИБСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА ФРАНЦУЗСКОГО ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ "WORLD OF SCIENCE" *REPUBLICAN SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL COLLECTION OF MATERIALS* 25th May 2024 Volume-7, Issue-5