

RESEARCH  
ARTICLE**From Field to Social Structure: A Sociological Study of  
the Novel "Nedjma" by Kateb Yacine****Chaaf Bagtache Nadia**

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**Abstract**

This article examines Nedjma by Kateb Yacine through studying the relationship between social space and social structure, aiming to shed light on how social structure influences the formation of characters and events in the novel. This article begins by explaining the historical and social background that shaped the novel, particularly the impact of French colonization in Algeria and the resulting social and cultural upheavals. It also discusses the development of characters in Nedjma, focusing on their movement through different spaces and social environments, and how they interact with the political and social changes surrounding them. The novel highlights a broad conflict between Algerian societal traditions and the emergence of a new identity under colonial rule, along with the aspiration for independence.

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**Introduction**

The Algerian writer Kateb Yacine captured the attention of Algerian society through his revolutionary ideas, which are prominently reflected in his writings and literary works. The significance of most of his novels lies in their focus on a pivotal period in modern Algerian history. In this article, we aim to shed light on one of his intellectual productions—his famous novel Nedjma—in order to uncover the social structure embedded in the narrative and to investigate the social space and meanings it contains.

We have sought to connect social structure with social space, as the latter can effectively reveal the entirety of social, economic, and political relationships between the main characters of the novel, whether from the first generation or the second. We will also attempt to describe where these relationships manifest: can they be observed in the streets, in cafés, in workshops, or are they dispersed across all these places?

Furthermore, we aim to describe the social practices carried out by the characters in the novel, through which these relationships can be mapped and the social space defined. Before analyzing social structure and its nature, we categorized and organized the characters according to generation and gender, as well as by the places or spaces they frequent. Later, we compiled and classified these elements because the novel oscillates between symbolism and realism, between the author's imagination and social reality, reflecting a specific historical phase in Algeria—namely, the French colonial period.

It also becomes apparent that the novel is divided into two separate worlds: the world of the indigenous Algerians and that of the Europeans. The relationship between these two worlds is unequal—if not entirely absent—except for a few elements that bring them together, particularly their encounters in shared social spaces. From these meetings emerge various types and forms of relationships. Thus, the novel reveals a

diversity of social spaces: closed, semi-closed, and open spaces, each reflecting different functions and roles, and enabling interaction between the two worlds.

From the very first reading, it becomes apparent that the world of the indigenous characters dominates the social environment. However, the scarcity of the second world (the European world) does not imply its absence; it may, in fact, be present through its very absence. Through this social space, the characters from the indigenous world move to discover the domain of the Europeans. This deep, research-driven discovery helps us analyze social structure and also uncover the nature of the relationship between the characters from both worlds.

## 1. The Problematic

The literary field is considered to be an integral part of social life, as writers draw their initial material from their social environment, albeit in different ways depending on the literary movement to which they belong. If we consider every creative person to be a social being, then every literary work is inherently embedded within broader social production. Writers inevitably describe social reality in their works, striving to highlight the nature and specificities of their society—just like sociologists who reconstruct social reality through objective and precise methods. What writers and sociologists have in common is the act of construction. Sociologists often use literary discourse as a reference to analyze the social reality of particular aspects of a specific society during a defined historical period.

Since literary works possess artistic power in their depictions of social reality, can the novel *Nedjma* be characterized as historically accurate, given that it narrates historical events from Algerian society during the 1940s and early 1950s? The way in which social structure is constructed may reveal the nature of the relationship the writer had with their society during that time, and thus, the degree of their connection to their generation and its people. Here, the writer becomes a spokesperson for their community through writing.

Kateb Yacine explores the social structure of Algerian society by depicting the details of their characters' lives within a specific social context, based on the existence of two distinct worlds and the conflict between them. Each of these worlds constitutes a micro-society in its own right, but at times, they also represent an attempt at coexistence—suggesting a unified society containing two layers of people living in mutual understanding and stability. However, more often than not, the relationship between the world of the Algerians and that of the Europeans is one of conflict and contradiction, reflecting two antagonistic and non-harmonious societies.

As a result, this relationship tends towards separation. The clash between the two worlds gives rise to distinct social spaces through which the nature of relationships within the broader social field can be defined. The two worlds only find alignment in particular social settings, while conflict also manifests itself in specific domains. Hence, the central question of this study is: How does social space influence the construction of social structure in Algerian society during French colonial rule?

To answer this question, we rely on an analysis of the key ideas and meanings in *Nedjma* that allow us to examine the duality of social space and social structure in colonial Algerian society. Our approach is based on a descriptive-analytical method that aims to both depict and interpret the Algerian reality represented in the novel—taking into account the social, political, historical, and cultural conditions that shaped social space and social structure as portrayed by Kateb Yacine.

### 1.1. Definition of Concepts

**Social Structure:** In the context of our study of *Nedjma*, the social structure refers to the internal organization of a specific society, encompassing the set of relationships that exist among its members. Within an organized framework, social structure consists of various units and institutions that govern relationships between individuals and groups in that society. According to Radcliffe-Brown, the social structure is defined as "a network of prevailing social relationships within a society" [1]. As for Tulman's definition, he describes it as a social system composed of social structures or organizations—a system comprising multiple social positions, norms, and legislative frameworks [2].

**Social Space:** After an in-depth reading of the novel, we found that social space plays a central role in the structural design of the narrative. By "social space," we mean the places frequented by characters from the two different worlds: the world of the Algerians (the colonized) and the world of the Europeans (the colonizers). Social space also includes the function or social role associated with each place.

For instance, the function of closed social space is to reflect conflict between the two worlds. A strong example of this is the prison cell where Algerians are incarcerated for disobeying French orders. The sweets shop, whose owner turns the back room into a secret meeting place for political discussions, represents a marginal, clandestine community. The function of open social space is to convey a degree of harmony between the two worlds—it reflects a form of dialogue or compromise. However, in reality, this harmony is

imposed on the Algerians, given that the French represent power and authority. A workshop, in this regard, can be seen as an open social space that attempts to create cohesion among the characters.

Semi-closed social space reflects a minimal or superficial relationship between the two groups, without genuine integration. A good example is the barbershop, which brings the two parties into contact without leading to real fusion.

Condominas defines social space as "a field delineated by a set of distinctive systems characterizing a particular group" [3]. He also indicates that the social relationships of a given group determine the type or nature of the space. From our perspective, we observed that the social relationships between the two worlds led to the classification of social spaces in the novel into three categories.

Other terms used in our analysis of social structure are not strictly "concepts" in the academic sense but rather context-specific terms interpreted within the narrative framework. These include:

**World:** The novel incorporates two worlds or social classes: the world of the Europeans and the world of the Algerians (the colonized). We chose the term "world" to highlight the fact that each group constitutes a distinct and self-contained micro-society.

**Character in the Novel:** The character is the backbone of the narrative and the foundation of any literary work. It ensures the movement of the network of relationships within the text. The character is the soul of the novel and the main axis that drives the plot, carrying the responsibility of convincing the reader of the importance and value of the central theme [4]. Among the different types of characters, the main character serves as the center around which the events revolve. This character drives the action forward and, although not necessarily the protagonist, remains central to the narrative. In *Nedjma*, the titular character does not appear explicitly in all parts of the text but remains present in essence and holds a significant position [5].

The secondary characters, on the other hand, support the main character. They play a less active role but help illuminate the hidden facets of the main figure. A central character cannot exist without the presence of secondary characters. These figures are often livelier and more detailed, and they frequently express the author's perspectives [6].

**Conflict:** Conflict refers to a situation resulting from a real clash of needs, values, or interests. It may be internal (within the individual) or external (between individuals or groups). Conflict helps explain many aspects of social life such as class differences, clashes of

interest, or wars between people, groups, or institutions. Politically, it can indicate war, tensions, or struggles that involve the use of force—as in armed conflict.

A common definition of conflict is: "when two or more parties perceive an opposition of goals and attempt to undermine one another's ability to achieve those goals." In our study, the primary concern is the conflict between the two worlds—as represented by the characters in *Nedjma*. This conflict is more prominent than any other and is made explicit by the presence of French colonialism, which traps and oppresses the world of the colonized, as depicted in the events of the novel.

**Harmony:** The relationship between the two worlds is not always conflictual; on rare occasions, it takes the form of harmony and mutual understanding, particularly between members of the second generation in each group. This justifies our use of the concepts of generation, world, and character, as these notions frame the points of intersection between the characters and allow us to explore the nature of their relationships—whether harmonious or conflicting.

## 2. The Sociology of Literature and the Novel

### 2.1. The Sociology of Literature

The sociology of literature is the study of the relationship between literature and society, and how social, economic, and cultural dimensions influence both the production and reception of literary works. It focuses on analyzing literature's role in shaping collective identity and culture, as well as the impact of prevailing values and beliefs on literary development. The sociology of literature also seeks to understand how social factors—such as social class, gender, race, as well as elements like the state, economy, social institutions, and media—influence literary production.

Among the leading thinkers in this field are Pierre Bourdieu, who examined the relationship between literature and social classes, and Tzvetan Todorov, who explored the link between literature and cultural identity [7]. Many other researchers have investigated the literature-society relationship, a field rich in studies and theoretical perspectives. Key dimensions include [8]:

**Literature and Society:** Literature is not merely an individual expression of the self; it is intimately tied to the society in which it is produced. Scholars in literary sociology argue that literature reflects the dominant social values and ideologies of its time. For instance, during wartime periods, literature often expresses conflict, resistance, grief, and suffering.

**The Writer and Society:** This field is not limited to the study of literary texts alone, but also includes the study of writers themselves. Important questions include: How does the social context or cultural background affect the writer? Can we better understand a work of art by knowing the social circumstances surrounding its creator?

**Literature and Resistance:** Literature can serve as a means of resistance and social change. Through the lens of the sociology of literature, we can see how writers across different periods have used artistic expression as a tool to voice political and social dissent. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, many artistic and literary movements (such as contemporary and revolutionary art) sought to challenge oppressive political systems and envision alternative societal models.

**Gender Identity in Literature:** A more recent focus in the sociology of literature involves the impact of gender on literary works. How does literature portray the image of men and women in specific societies? How do social values related to gender influence literary and artistic expression? And how can writers address gender issues through their creative works?

In conclusion, the sociology of literature seeks to understand the social dynamics that surround this art form—whether through the societal influences on the writer or the role literature plays within society. It provides us with deeper insights into the relationship between culture, literature, and society, helping us analyze and grasp how literature evolves and interacts with its social contexts.

## 2.2. The Sociology of the Novel

The sociology of the novel is a field of study focused on analyzing the novel as a social phenomenon. It explores how novels express social structures, values, and changes within society. The novel is viewed as a mirror that reflects social and cultural realities and contributes to documenting daily life and human interactions. The development of this field is closely tied to the evolution of critical and sociological thought in literature.

Among the most prominent thinkers in this domain are Lucien Goldmann, who analyzed the structure of the novel as a social product that reflects transformations in modern society [9]. Similarly, Hamid Lahmadi added a new dimension by offering ideological analyses of narrative texts, focusing on the novel's role in either expressing or resisting dominant ideologies [10].

Researcher Fadila Drouche, in her book *The Sociology of Literature and the Novel*, notes that the novel, much

like the work of a social researcher, is concerned with social phenomena. She argues that the novel exhibits characteristics typical of social phenomena, such as generality, accessibility, spontaneity, historicity, and objectivity. Drouche also presents examples of protagonists from famous novels—such as Omar in *The Fire* by Mohammed Dib, Cosette in *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, and Kamal Abdel Jawad in *The Cairo Trilogy* by Naguib Mahfouz—to illustrate how these characters embody and reflect social issues like poverty, injustice, and hypocrisy [11].

It is worth noting that the sociology of the novel is not limited to analyzing content alone; it also involves studying narrative form and style, and how these elements interact with the broader social and cultural context. This includes examining characters, plot, time, space, language, and how these components influence both the reader and society.

Thus, the sociology of the novel offers a rich and multidimensional approach that enables a deeper understanding of the relationship between literature and society, and the ways in which they mutually influence one another. Studying the novel as a social phenomenon reveals the challenges and transformations experienced by societies and enhances our understanding of social and cultural history. In this way, ongoing sociological studies of the novel contribute meaningfully to the enrichment of both critical and literary thought.

## 3. Structural Analysis of *Nedjma* by Kateb Yacine

### 3.1. The Social and Historical Context of the Novel

Before presenting the historical and social context of the novel, it is essential to provide a brief summary to give the reader a clearer idea of the plot, which will facilitate understanding of the subject of our study.

#### Summary of the Content of *Nedjma*:

The novel revolves around three relatives from the same tribe, known as the Kéblout tribe: Si Ahmed, Si Mokhtar, and Abu Rachid. A fourth character also joins this tribal lineage—Le Puritain (the Puritan), who abducted a Jewish woman, triggering a direct conflict among the brothers.

We also encounter a group of second-generation characters: Mourad and Lakhdar (sons of Si Ahmed), Ammar, Rachid, and Mustapha, along with the enigmatic character of Professor Gharib.

Si Mokhtar and Abu Rachid abduct the French woman of Jewish origin from Le Puritain and hide her in a cave, where they spend the night with her. By morning, the body of Abu Rachid (or perhaps Professor Gharib)

is discovered, possibly the victim of Si Mokhtar.

Some time later, the French-Jewish woman—Nedjma—emerges, a character who can be seen as the consequence of or response to the transgression committed by her mother during that night in the cave. Nedjma becomes the object of admiration and desire for the four central male characters: Mourad, Lakhdar, Rachid, and Mustapha. Each of them could potentially marry Nedjma, but the narrative hints that she may in fact be their sister—at least in a symbolic sense.

### 3.2. The Historical and Political Context

The character of Nedjma represents Algeria, a nation contested by all. The Europeans seek to possess and exploit her, while the Algerians experience loss and marginalization in their attempts to reclaim her. The Europeans are portrayed in the novel as dominant and powerful, while the indigenous Algerians are shown in a state of internal conflict—torn between resistance on one hand and the need to adapt to an imposed reality on the other.

The symbolism embodied in Nedjma lies in the fact that she becomes the object of desire and competition among all the characters. Each one strives to possess her, which metaphorically reflects their attempts to control Algeria's fate. Nedjma herself mirrors the cultural and ethnic diversity of Algeria, making her a complex symbol of the nation's fragmented identity under colonial rule.

### 3.3. The Sociological Analysis of Social Structure through Character Roles

The characters in the novel can be interpreted as symbols of various political and social currents and factions that existed in Algeria during the period of French colonization. Kateb Yacine emphasizes this dimension by portraying the social and political conflict in symbolic terms.

Through their repeated appearances and functions in the narrative, the characters can be classified as having main and secondary roles. The main character is Nedjma, while the four key male figures—Lakhdar, Mourad, Rachid, and Mustapha—constitute the second generation. These four characters are deeply intertwined with the central symbolic figure of Nedjma and represent different responses to colonization, identity crisis, and societal transformation.

#### 3.3.1. Symbolic Analysis of Characters and Political Movements in the Novel

**Rachid** represents the educated and rebellious young man in search of freedom and independence. Symbolically, he can be associated with liberation movements such as the National Liberation Front (FLN), which led the struggle for Algerian independence. Rachid reflects the inner conflict between national awareness and the confusion brought by French cultural dominance. He is a relative of Nedjma and belongs to the same tribe; his father was one of the lovers of the French woman. His central role in the novel is to search for his father's killer while simultaneously seeking the origin of Nedjma. He dreams of her as both a lover and a sister.

**Lakhdar** is the son of Si Ahmed and a member of the Keblout tribe. Lakhdar is portrayed as a revolutionary character who refuses to accept humiliation by the French. He is also in love with Nedjma.

**Mourad** is also the son of Si Ahmed and Lakhdar's brother, but raised by Lalla Fatma, Nedjma's adoptive mother. Mourad embodies the figure of the Algerian youth fascinated by European culture but psychologically fragmented. He represents a phase of infatuation with European modernity while suffering from a loss of authentic identity, leaving him unable to reconcile the two worlds—the Algerian and the European.

**Mustapha** is the son of the lawyer Si Gharib. Mustapha was expelled from school after participating in the May 1945 demonstrations. He is a member of the Keblout tribe and one of Nedjma's admirers. Her influence dominates his world, as shown in his diary entries between pages 29 and 190 of the novel. Mustapha possesses political and intellectual ambitions but is frustrated by reality. He symbolizes the conscious Algerian intellectual, aware yet powerless to enact change due to colonial oppression and conservative societal norms. Although influenced by French culture, he embodies revolutionary and peaceful political struggle.

#### 3.3.2. Conflict Among Characters and Its Reflection of Algerian Reality

The conflict between the characters also mirrors the contradictions within Algerian society during the colonial period. There was intense competition among different political factions over how to confront French colonialism—some advocated for armed struggle, while others preferred political dialogue or peaceful resistance. The novel highlights the negative impact of colonialism, which led to sharp social and cultural divisions.

Kateb Yacine uses his characters to symbolically portray this complex conflict without directly naming



real-life political parties or figures. Through these symbolic layers, Nedjma offers a deep sociological analysis of Algerian social structure under colonial rule, shedding light on the challenges and contradictions of that era.

### 3.3.3. The Second Generation of Europeans in the Novel

According to the narrative, the second generation of Europeans is relatively new, born in Algeria, and tends to mix with the second generation of Algerians, primarily the youth and children. This generation of colonists includes sympathizers with Algerians—like the character Luigi—as well as hostile or detached individuals such as Suzy. Thus, the settler world in the novel is divided into three distinct social groups, differing in their economic and social standing, their level of empathy with Algerians, and their overall place in colonial society.

### 3.3.4. The Representation of the Indigenous Algerian World

The portrayal of the indigenous (Algerian) world in the novel also reflects its marginalized and downtrodden status:

Traditional (rural) society suffered under the oppression and violence of colonial rule.

Urban society includes the wealthy and middle social classes such as barbers, café owners, and small merchants.

This world is further divided into two generational currents:

The first generation comprises the elders and fathers—Si Mokhtar, Si Ahmed, and the tribal chief of Keblout.

The second generation is represented by the four protagonists mentioned earlier, along with Nedjma, who symbolizes the land of Algeria for which these characters are fighting.

The sociological framework becomes evident in the practice of endogamous marriage—such as Nedjma's marriage to Kamal, a fellow tribesman and relative of the protagonists. This type of union, according to social custom, must occur within the same social group or tribe [12]. The novel subtly conveys that deviation from tradition leads to alienation, while the lingering presence of colonial influence continues to dominate the values and beliefs of the four main characters.

## 4. Social Space and Its Role in Defining Social Structure

Through the study of social space in the novel, it is essential to examine the various types of places frequented by the characters and how these places help define the nature of social structure in Algerian society during that historical period.

### 4.1. Identifying the Locations Where Characters Move in Nedjma

Social space in the novel appears in various forms: closed, semi-closed, and open. Each type of space plays a specific role and is usually associated with a particular world (that of the colonized or the colonizers). In some instances, spaces may be shared by both worlds.

### 4.2. Analysis of the Classification of Social Spaces in the Novel

Based on our analysis of the different social spaces used in the novel, we found that closed spaces are the most prevalent, representing 61.4% of all spaces referenced—102 mentions out of 166. Open spaces rank second at 22.8%, followed by semi-closed spaces at 15.8%.

### 4.3. The Nature of Social Space in the Novel

In Nedjma, social space takes on a distinctive form and structure, divided into three types. The dominance of closed spaces reflects the isolation of the indigenous Algerians within a society increasingly governed by Europeans. The world of the colonized appears more prominently in the novel, accounting for 83.8% of the space usage, while the European world appears in only 16.2% of the narrative.

This emphasis highlights Kateb Yacine's portrayal of the suffering of the Algerian people under colonial rule, while also suggesting the potential paths to liberation through the different roles played by Algerian characters in the novel.

### 4.4. Types of Social Spaces or Places in the Novel

**Closed Social Spaces:** These include: prison, interrogation cell, cave, villa, fireplace, hotel, pastry shop, hammam (bathhouse), hospital, mosque, and home. These are considered closed spaces belonging to the indigenous world, with rare appearances by European characters. When the two worlds do intersect here, it is typically out of necessity—for example, in prison, where interaction is defined by

hierarchy and oppression. Europeans appear as police officers and guards, enforcing surveillance and repression on the Algerians.

The interrogation cell is distinct from the prison: the former is used to question suspects—whether indigenous Algerians or French collaborators—while the latter is a space of punishment. The hospital, although architecturally enclosed, also hosts both worlds, but reflects the same power dynamic found in prisons.

The pastry shop, however, serves as a secret meeting place for members of the resistance. It is closed off from the outside and reserved for trusted Algerian characters, especially those from the second generation. This space is deliberately hidden from Europeans.

**Semi-Closed Social Spaces:** These include: barbershop, school, café, and bar. Though these are built environments, they are considered semi-closed due to their partial openness—courtyards in schools, open seating in cafés, or windows in bars. These are spaces where both worlds may meet, but not on equal footing.

An important distinction is made between the barbershop and the pastry shop: despite their physical similarity, the barbershop is accessible to both worlds openly, while the pastry shop is exclusive and clandestine, open only to second-generation Algerians involved in resistance.

**Open Social Spaces:** These include: workshop, street, bus, port, market, train, train station, and cemetery. These are spaces in the open air, although some (like the bus) may be functionally enclosed due to limited mobility. The train station, on the other hand, is open to all, without inherently representing conflict or tension. These places serve as neutral or transitional zones.

From the above, it is clear that social space plays a central role in the novel. Without it, it would be impossible to uncover or understand the type and nature of social structure that the author sought to portray. The classification and function of these spaces reflect the deep divisions, power dynamics, and social tensions within colonial Algerian society.

## 5. Research Findings and Discussion

Social space can be understood as a field of social relationships that brings together social, economic, and cultural units. Therefore, social behavior can be considered the outcome of an active social field that links individuals to their social positions. In the novel *Nedjma*, this relationship is tangibly constructed. A key question arises: why do social spaces appear in multiple forms in the novel—especially with the prominence of closed spaces? To answer this, we must return to the

historical period in which the events take place, allowing us to link the novel's content to Algeria's social reality at the time.

The novel recounts real events occurring primarily between 1930 and 1945. It opens and ends with the events of May 8, 1945. Prior to that massacre, the Algerian people—or more precisely, the indigenous world—were closed off from the outside world, not expressing their existence clearly. During this period (1930–1945), political parties and institutions began to emerge, fostering political awareness among the Algerian population. This phase saw the formation of:

- The Association of Muslim Scholars in 1931
- The People's Party led by Messali Hadj in 1937
- The Party of the Manifesto and Liberty, founded in 1943 by the group "Friends of the Manifesto and Liberty"

Before 1930, the colonial regime had adopted a repressive policy against nationalist movements. These groups were either forced underground or into exile, as in the case of the North African Star Movement, whose leaders left Algeria in 1926.

In 1930, Europeans celebrated the centenary of Algeria's occupation—a move that deeply angered indigenous Algerians and galvanized the national movement.

This historical backdrop reveals that the period from 1930 to 1945 was marked by gradual political struggle, symbolized by the clash and overlap of the two worlds. Social spaces in the novel mirror these dynamics, with most events taking place in private or closed spaces, unlike the European world, which enjoys freer movement or isolation from these spaces—except for the character Luigi, who appears in a closed setting (the prison).

The four protagonists—Lakhdar, Mustapha, Rachid, and Mourad—move within these closed social spaces: from prison cells to hotels, from hotels to the secret pastry shop, and so forth.

If we examine the role of each social space, we find that prisons and cells represent oppression and tyranny inflicted upon the Algerians. The presence of the characters in prison cells symbolizes the growth of their political consciousness, turning these places into secret revolutionary venues. These cells bring together marginalized, educated youth. Likewise, the pastry shop's hidden room becomes a secret space for discussing political issues and independence.

For example, Mustapha is seen engaging with fellow intellectuals, discussing Algerian history, its figures, its

political context—symbolizing the accumulation of national awareness.

The isolation of the indigenous world in closed spaces symbolically reflects the covert preparation for revolution and independence.

The time period chosen by Kateb Yacine to set his narrative corresponds to a stage of severe colonial repression, during which the indigenous population turned inward and began organizing clandestinely. Members of this community opposed French decrees, aiming to build national consciousness and resist colonization. The first signs of rebellion appear in the May 1945 uprising, when Algerians expressed tension and anger that would soon erupt violently. While Europeans celebrated the end of WWII, Algerians seized the opportunity to voice their political demands publicly.

This attempt to transition from closed to open social space—from secrecy to public action—was short-lived. The brutal colonial response crushed their hopes, pushing them back into closed spaces to continue organizing in secret.

The novel's central conflict is not only between colonizer and colonized, but also intergenerational within each world.

The characters can be split into two generations:

**First generation:** Fathers and grandfathers, who cling to inherited traditions and social norms

**Second generation:** Youth caught between preserving cultural heritage and embracing new values

This generational conflict appears throughout the novel, especially in the abduction of the French woman by the four male cousins—Si Mokhtar, Professor Gharib, and Abu Rachid. She became the lover of each, and from these illicit, taboo relationships came Nedjma, the protagonist.

The abduction serves as the first signal of internal rupture within the Keblout tribe. The younger generation deviated from tradition, engaging in forbidden acts such as premarital relationships, alcohol, and drug use. These behaviors deepened the generational divide in the indigenous world.

The four protagonists—Mustapha, Lakhdar, Mourad, and Rachid—each suffer from internal confusion: Should they follow in their fathers' footsteps or forge a

new path that breaks with tribal customs?

On the other side, conflict also exists within the European world. The novel portrays disagreements among colonial parties and between French policymakers and Algerian resistance forces in the pre-1954 era. The generational divide within colonial society also reflects rifts within the French government, which was grappling with deep political crises over how to manage its colonies.

## Conclusion

From the above analysis, it becomes clear that the nature of the relationships between characters from both worlds contributed significantly to their distribution across the three types of social spaces, leading to the construction of a four-part relational dynamic, which includes:

- The first generation of Algerians with the first generation of Europeans
- The second generation of Algerians with the second generation of Europeans

Through this four-sided relational structure, and the way characters are positioned within the novel's social spaces, we can draw several key conclusions:

The conflict depicted in the novel takes two distinct forms:

The first form is simple and superficial, occurring between generations within each world. This type of conflict can potentially be resolved through dialogue, debate, and mutual understanding.

The second form, which is far more dominant in the narrative, is a violent and deep-seated conflict between the two worlds themselves. It presents them as fundamentally separate entities, each functioning as an independent class or micro-society.

Conflict clearly takes precedence over harmony and cohesion, highlighting the fragmented state of social structure during the colonial period. A unified social structure appears only rarely in the novel.

Therefore, we can interpret the nature and form of social structure through the lens of social space, since social space serves as the foundation upon which social structure is both constructed and defined.

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