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<div>Keywords</div>	<div>Algerian literature; Russian literary criticism; cross-cultural interpretation; postcolonial studies; translation and reception; Mouloud Feraoun; literary sociology; cultural otherness; French and Arabic literary production.</div>
<div>Abstract</div> <div>This study examines Russian critical discourse on Algerian literature as a distinctive form of cross-cultural literary engagement that emerged prominently during the second half of the twentieth century. By focusing on how Russian scholars perceived, interpreted, and classified Algerian literary production, the article investigates the dynamics of reading the Algerian text through the lens of the cultural “Other.” Particular attention is given to the ways in which Russian criticism negotiated Algeria’s historical experience, colonial legacy, linguistic plurality, and sociocultural specificity. The research highlights the pioneering role of Russian scholars—most notably Victor Palashov, Irina Nikiforova, Svetlana Brazhoghina, Galina Jogashvili, and Robert Landa—in introducing Algerian literature to Russian academic and intellectual circles. Through university lectures, encyclopedic contributions, critical essays, and extensive translation efforts, these critics played a crucial role in mediating Algerian literary voices to new readerships beyond Francophone and Arab contexts. Special emphasis is placed on Svetlana Brazhoghina’s critical reading of Mouloud Feraoun, which exemplifies the methodological richness of Russian literary criticism. Her approach integrates historical contextualization, biographical analysis, psychological interpretation, sociological inquiry, and ethnographic observation. By situating Feraoun’s literary production within the broader historical, political, and cultural realities of colonial and postcolonial Algeria—particularly Kabyle society—Russian criticism contributed to a deeper understanding of Algerian literature as both a national and universal cultural expression. Overall, this study argues that Russian criticism did not merely replicate Western critical paradigms but developed a distinct interpretive position that emphasized social realism, historical materiality, and cultural specificity. In doing so, Russian scholars significantly enriched global Algerian literary studies and reinforced the transnational circulation and recognition of Algerian literature through translation and comparative analysis.</div>	
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## Introduction

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Russian Critical Engagement with Algerian Literature: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, Interpretive Frameworks, and the Construction of the Literary “Other”

Souad Arioua

Russian criticism of Algerian literature—produced in both French and Arabic—offers a distinctive perspective on how the literary “Other” perceives, interprets, and represents the Algerian literary phenomenon. This body of scholarship reflects a conscious intellectual endeavor to broaden critical horizons and engage diverse readerships, whose interpretive contributions have significantly enriched and expanded academic literary discourse. Through varied analytical approaches and classificatory frameworks, these perspectives collectively affirm the aesthetic, cultural, and historical value of Algerian literature, as well as its remarkable capacity to transcend geographical and cultural boundaries—most notably through the medium of translation.

Russian scholars played a particularly decisive role in this process. During the 1960s and 1970s, they translated a wide range of Algerian literary works written in both French and Arabic, thereby facilitating their circulation beyond their original linguistic and cultural contexts. These translations included major works by prominent Algerian authors such as Mouloud Feraoun, Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Malek Haddad, Rachid Boudjedra, and Tahar Wattar. Among the most influential figures in Russian Algerian literary studies were Irina Nikiforova, Svetlana Brazhoghina, Galina Jogashvili, and Robert Landa. The present study focuses on these critics by examining a selection of their most representative and influential critical writings.

Within this critical tradition, Svetlana Brazhoghina occupies a particularly prominent position due to her sustained and insightful engagement with the works of Mouloud Feraoun. She regarded Feraoun as a central figure in Algerian literature whose literary reputation extended well beyond national borders. In her study *“Mouloud Feraoun and His Creativity,”* Brazhoghina offers a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of Feraoun’s literary personality, emphasizing the intellectual and ideological complexity of his novels. Her reading pays special attention to both his explicit and implicit positions on colonialism, as well as to the formation and evolution of his political and cultural consciousness.

Brazhoghina’s analysis is grounded in a contextual approach that connects key episodes in Feraoun’s life to broader historical developments, specific social conditions, and concrete lived experiences. The historical dimension occupies a central place in her interpretation and is supported by extensive use of Feraoun’s autobiography, which provides detailed insights into his birth, personal development, literary career, travels, assassination, and burial. This biographical and historical anchoring allows her to situate Feraoun’s literary production within the complex realities of colonial and postcolonial Algeria.

At the same time, Brazhoghina’s critical method extends beyond historical contextualization. She incorporates interpretive frameworks drawn from psychology and sociology, while also drawing on anthropological perspectives—particularly ethnography, which emphasizes the description and interpretation of social practices, customs, and traditions. These methodological choices are justified by the thematic richness of Feraoun’s works, which vividly depict Algerian history, the lived experiences of Algerian individuals, the internal dynamics of Algerian society, and the cultural traditions specific to the Kabyle region.

The principal issues addressed in Svetlana Brazhoghina’s critical engagement with Mouloud Feraoun’s works can be summarized under the following thematic axes:

1. Mouloud Feraoun’s position on colonialism and its ideological justifications.
2. The thematic organization and narrative structure of Feraoun’s novels.
3. The interrelation between behavioral writing, historical experience, and social reality in Feraoun’s literary production.

#### 1 – Mouloud Feraoun’s stance on colonialism and its justifications:

Svetlana does not draw a strict distinction between the protagonist in Feraoun's works and the author himself. Through the protagonist, she examines the ideas that preoccupied Feraoun and the intellectual approaches he considered most appropriate for navigating life's complexities. The critic acknowledges the inherent difficulty—and indeed the profound complexity—of this interpretive task, given that the writer and his fictional counterpart were often torn between two opposing concepts: integration versus armed struggle.

As Svetlana explains, identifying Mouloud Feraoun's precise position on the Algerian struggle was far from straightforward:

"For a long time, the writer maintained firmly pacifist positions, believing that a truly humane person should not accept the shedding of blood or the conflict of peoples, especially those who had lived together for a long period on the same land. Feraoun assumed that France—being the homeland of a great culture and the land of the noble slogans of the 1791 Revolution—should help the Algerian people participate in civilization and meet their legitimate demands for freedoms and political rights."<sup>1</sup>

From this perspective, the critic interprets Mouloud Feraoun's reasoning in addressing France as an expression of idealistic hope—a hope for a reality in which the oppressor and the oppressed could coexist within a shared moral and human framework. Yet Feraoun's position toward France can also be grasped indirectly: the discord, tension, and ideological conflict among the characters in *The Poor Man's Son*—particularly regarding matters of religion—suggest the impossibility of accepting the "different Other."

They reveal a tendency on both sides to impose their superiority and authority, despite living together on the same land. This dynamic can be applied to the French colonial presence—even though it was an external intruder—which enforced racial discrimination and contradicted Feraoun's aspirations for justice, equality, and equal opportunities between the indigenous population and the settlers.

From this point onward, a transformation in Feraoun's stance becomes visible, revealing his explicit rejection of France's colonial policies and his growing conviction regarding the necessity of violence as a legitimate means to achieve justice and reclaim freedom. This transformation appears clearly in his *Diaries*. Svetlana states:

"His diaries recount how Feraoun came to recognize the inevitability of violence and to understand the justice of the war waged by the Algerian people for independence."<sup>2</sup>

His diaries, published after his assassination—and even the assassination itself carried out by the Secret Organization—demonstrate without ambiguity his explicit shift toward opposing the colonial system. Svetlana examined Mouloud Feraoun's anti-colonial stance with notable balance and precision; she did not seek to provoke controversy concerning what might be perceived as a "negative position" against colonialism. Instead, she presented it as a fundamentally humanistic orientation, one whose hopeful assumptions eventually collapsed under the weight of harsh realities that revealed the greed, selfishness, and inherent violence of colonial rule.

### **The Theme in Mouloud Feraoun's Novels**

Svetlana Brazhoghina arranged Mouloud Feraoun's narrative works chronologically according to their publication dates. Her study also shows considerable interest in his other writings—articles, translations, and letters—which she analyzes in a coherent thematic framework. She identifies the primary thematic foundations of Feraoun's work, stating:

"The subject of Feraoun's works is based on three essential points: the native land—with its traditions, customs, temperaments, and the conditions of human existence in one of Algeria's major regions (the Kabyle area)—and the situation of Algerian workers in France."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding *The Poor Man's Son*, the critic notes that Feraoun vividly depicted daily life in Kabylia: "Mouloud Feraoun wrote in *The Poor Man's Son*, showing how the true character of the Kabyle man is formed."<sup>4</sup>

The critic examines the protagonist's trajectory in *The Poor Man's Son*, highlighting a character torn between two paths: either to accept the traditional life of his ancestors or to struggle toward becoming a teacher. Embedded within this struggle lies another: the effort to affirm the self while acquiring the language of the Other—a process marked by constant feelings of non-integration and a fragile sense of belonging that is shaken with every setback.

In *The Earth and the Blood*, the critic focuses on the clash between Eastern and Western worlds, as well as the migration of Algerians to Europe. Feraoun portrays:

"the first stage of the migration process of North African inhabitants for work, due to the harsh conditions endured by laborers and farmers in the colonies, a migration that began intensively in the first decade of this century."<sup>5</sup>

The encounter between deeply rooted traditions and the emerging manifestations of a new way of life, along with the harsh conditions endured by Algerian migrants, fostered a growing awareness of profound and striking differences. Feraoun also captures the emotional dimension of migration: the migrants' ability to adapt despite the pain of separation from their homeland and the various forms of marginalization and inferiority they faced. Yet this is followed by a second moment of shock upon their return home, when they observe the deep and expanding gap between the West and their own country.

"Thus Amer, in *The Earth and the Blood*, returns to his homeland with his young French wife, after working for several years in France and experiencing all forms of deprivation endured by expatriates in Europe. Yet he is unable for long to adapt to life in his original village, which now seemed backward and savage to him. He needed two years to become Kabyle again, as if he had not seen much in his life, had not been hardened by hardships, and had not confronted death."<sup>6</sup>

Amer—who, in one way or another, contributed to the killing of his uncle—quickly marries the uncle's illegitimate daughter out of a sense of moral duty toward her. Yet he later betrays her when he returns to the homeland accompanied by his uncle's widow. This narrative development reveals a complex relational dynamic shaped by conflicting obligations, emotional instability, and a calculated attempt to satisfy the expectations and desires of multiple parties. Such contradictions highlight the moral ambiguity of characters shaped by the tensions of exile, identity loss, and cultural displacement.

Svetlana's commitment to thoroughly examining all of Mouloud Feraoun's novels led her to illuminate the most prominent issues they address. She subsequently turned to analyze *The Narrow Paths*, where—according to her—the narrative tone carries a subtle yet unmistakable protest. This protest emerges gradually, representing an awareness of the flaws within the community to which the characters belong. The psychological conflict intensifies within the protagonist, evolving into a mature form of rebellion. The text suggests that the people of this region "do not know how to live," a phrase that encapsulates the existential frustration and the internal critique embedded in the narrative.

### Behavioral Literature and History in Mouloud Feraoun's Works

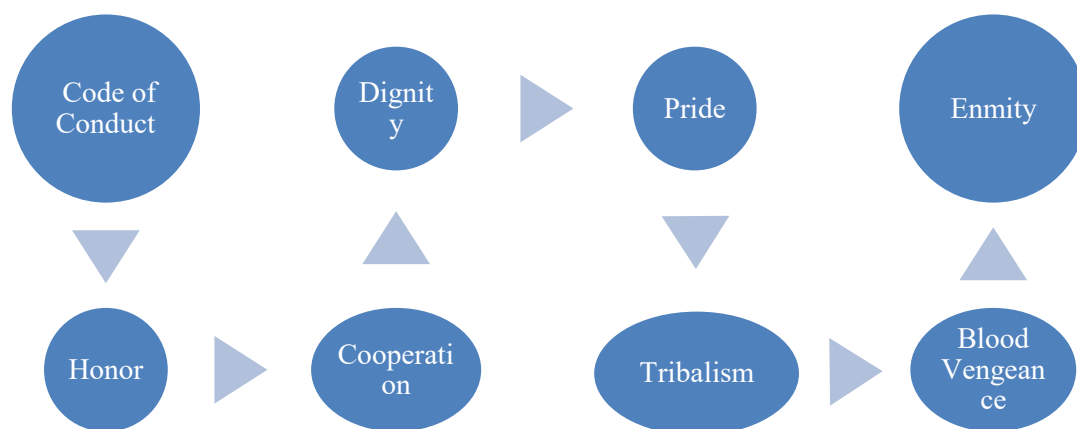
Svetlana argues that Mouloud Feraoun's writing emerges from a distinctly historical vision:

"Feraoun is perhaps more historical in what he portrays, inclined toward a more objective and epic investigation—sometimes even more objective than his era—whereas some writers (Dib, Chraïbi, Mammeri, for example) are more inclined (in the positive sense of the word) and more concerned with depicting the essence of the phenomenon, and more logical and clearer in their relationship with the object described."<sup>7</sup>

Here, Svetlana draws a comparative evaluation between Feraoun and other novelists of his generation. She acknowledges that what truly distinguished Feraoun was his dedication to portraying behavioral literature, an approach deeply rooted in inherited communal values and moral codes. She elaborates:

“Moreover, Feraoun, as a novelist and as the writer of the essays *Days of Kabylia*, shows above all the value of these traditions and the inherited conceptions passed down from ancestors since ancient times: about life and death, the sense of pride, honor, and human dignity; about the rules of morality and human behavior within the family and society; about the concept of tribal solidarity; and about hostility and blood vengeance. Through highlighting the original essence of his world... a person can regain... his own face and the culture of his uniqueness as a fundamental trait of national consciousness awakening.”<sup>8</sup>

From this analysis, the critic justifies Feraoun’s inclination toward behavioral literature and interprets it as a deliberate narrative strategy. She implies that this orientation follows a recognizable analytical path—one that can be outlined clearly to better understand the foundations and objectives of Feraoun’s literary project.



This diagram represents the constellation of values and behaviors that prevailed during that historical period. These values comprised both positive and negative dimensions, yet the negative behaviors became increasingly dominant under the pressures of colonial policies and the harsh conditions imposed on the Algerian people. As their identity was challenged and division was fostered among citizens, these destructive behaviors intensified. For this reason, Mouloud Feraoun interweaves the past with the present in order to anticipate the future—demonstrating how historical continuity shapes collective consciousness.

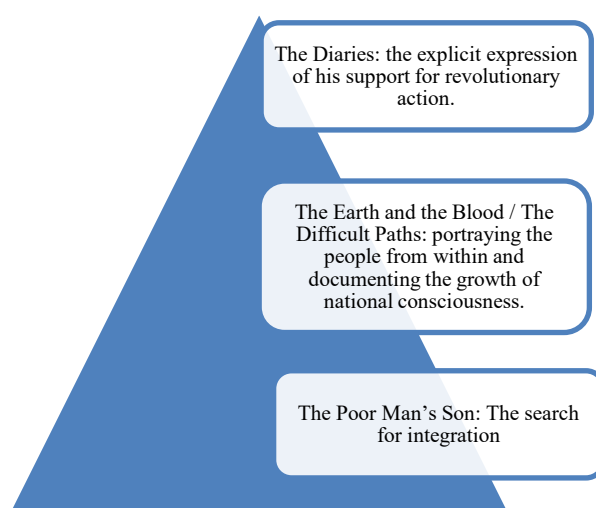
However, an important question arises: **Was the description of behavior and the documentation of events sufficient?**

Did such an approach truly serve the people? This question leads us directly to the relationship between Mouloud Feraoun and members of the French school of writers, particularly Emmanuel Roblès and Albert Camus. At a certain point, Feraoun came to the conclusion that a Frenchman cannot be Algerian, while Camus himself asserted that French-Algerian brotherhood could not exist outside the distinctive environment that shaped the writers of the so-called “Algerian school.”

Feraoun expresses his definitive positions in *The Diaries*, where he openly declares the futility of silence and moves beyond the duality that had long characterized his thinking. This transformation occurred especially after he became fully convinced of the stark reality he confronted: the complete uselessness of the humanistic values for which he had sought recognition from an Other who refused to acknowledge the Algerian, denied him the right to his own land, and ultimately sought to erase him from existence. Feraoun clearly perceived the irreconcilable duality between the world of the colonizers and the world of the wretched of the earth.

His works reflect this evolving clarity:

- **The Diaries:** the explicit expression of his support for revolutionary action.
- **The Earth and the Blood / The Difficult Paths:** portraying the people from within and documenting the growth of national consciousness.
- **The Poor Man's Son:** illustrating the search for integration and the complexity of identity formation.



What represents the apex of this conceptual diagram is encapsulated in the critic's affirmation: "The lesson from Feraoun's fate is that it is the experience of a citizen and a representative of a nation who understood, at a decisive moment in its history, that the duty of the writer and the duty of the citizen are inseparable. In this particular moment, he crossed to the frontline, because the border no longer meant to him the meeting of two worlds and the possibility of uniting them through goodness and brotherhood; rather, it took on its original meaning: the frontier of two worlds — one was the world of the colonizers, and the other the world of the wretched of the earth."<sup>9</sup>

Svetlana Brazhoghina carefully examined Mouloud Feraoun's literary creativity and addressed the central issues he sought to express. Her study is extensive and demonstrates her deep familiarity with the precise details of his life. However, her analysis contains few aesthetic evaluations of his literary style, largely because her primary concern was to objectively justify his stance toward colonialism, as well as to highlight his deliberate use of repetition as a means of reinforcing this stance. She also clearly aligns herself with the idea that a writer must articulate the issues of his era and reflect the concerns of his society.

While some critics argue that portraying the rhythm of daily life in Kabylia does not provide a solid basis for serving national causes, Svetlana maintains that the depiction of collective behavior plays a major role in representing history and, consequently, in understanding the self. Even when *The Poor Man's Son* is classified as an autobiographical novel, we do not find her elaborating on the artistic features that transform autobiography into fiction. Instead, she seeks evidence outside the text—parallel events and historical similarities—to confirm this classification, and she justifies Feraoun's writing of the novel as an attempt to introduce others to the true reality of Algerian life, particularly in the Kabyle region.

Svetlana Brazhoghina also examined the literary output of Rachid Boudjedra in her article titled "Rachid Boudjedra and the Divorce from the Past." Boudjedra is considered one of the most prominent Algerian novelists who emerged in the 1960s. In this study, Svetlana traced his creative trajectory across both poetry and prose, beginning with his first poetry collection, *For Closing the Windows of Dream*. It is after this early work that Boudjedra articulated his firm belief in the essential role of the authentic writer in reforming society—a role that grants the writer an active responsibility in shaping collective consciousness, influencing readers, and contributing to societal development.

Accordingly, Svetlana's analysis of Boudjedra's work may be divided into two main sections:

1. **Analyzing Rachid Boudjedra's poetry and emphasizing the role of the poet**
2. **The novelistic writing of Rachid Boudjedra**

### 1 – Analyzing Rachid Boudjedra's Poetry and Highlighting the Role of the Poet

In her study, Svetlana Brazhoghina selected specific poetic passages and analyzed them through the ideas Boudjedra intended to express. She emphasized the poet's acute awareness of the mechanisms that activate the reader's emotional and intellectual reception—particularly through depictions of torture, oppression, and the darkness that overshadowed life during the colonial period.

Concerning the role of the poet in Boudjedra's work, she writes:

"The political intensity and the inciting character of many of Boudjedra's poems are evident, and in Boudjedra's lyrical poetry this declarative tone—established by the war and the resistance as the foundation of all Algerian poetry, and which creates that high tension that prevents his national enthusiasm from fading to this day—is accompanied by a vivid figurative style and a heartfelt sincerity... and an awareness of the relation of his creativity to the aims and missions of the popular revolution."<sup>10</sup>

Here, Svetlana demonstrates how the poet instills in the reader a spirit of resistance, reigniting national fervor through emotionally charged poetic expression. This influence arises from the very essence of poetry for Boudjedra: poetry itself is an act of struggle.

The critic classified him as an innovative poet who believes in human values and in the necessity of struggling for positive dreams. In her analysis of the title of the collection, she states: "The title of Rachid Boudjedra's collection does not imply abandoning the dream associated with the impossibility of fulfilling hopes or realizing them; rather, it is a call to reject stagnation, negative dreams, and contemplative indifference."<sup>11</sup>

The critic also pointed to Boudjedra's poetic language, which she described as direct and linear, as well as to the metaphorical structure of his poetry, which she considered clear and straightforward, relying heavily on repetition. All of this was based on her analysis of seventeen selected passages from his poetry.

### 2 – Novelistic Writing in Rachid Boudjedra



The critic based her study of *The Denial* on two principal dimensions, the first of which concerns the content of the novel. She did not present the narrative merely as it appears in the text; rather, she analyzed it by situating it within Algerian social reality and by exploring the complex psychological world of its fictional characters.<sup>12</sup> According to her reading, the conditions prevailing in Algeria constituted the very source of the psychological deformities experienced by individuals within society. Svetlana writes in her discussion of *The Denial*:

“In the consciousness of Rachid and his brother, like a deep wound and a scar that remained in their souls forever, was imprinted the event that shook the foundations of the family structure. Their father (denied) divorced his wife and the mother of his children—while she was still a young woman in her thirties—for the sake of entertaining himself with his young lover, Zubaida. The cruelty of the Denial ritual lies in the fact that the divorced wife is not allowed to build a new family.”<sup>13</sup>

The same lover later becomes involved in an incestuous relationship with the sick son, revealing the fractured socio-moral structure of the community. Through this narrative, the critic draws parallels between corrupt patriarchal authority and the remnants of obsolete bourgeois and feudal systems embedded deeply within the collective unconscious. She argues that these social pathologies continue to survive even after the departure of French colonialism. Within this framework, the divorced mother becomes a symbolic representation of Algeria itself:

“For she too is the humiliated homeland, imprisoned and deprived of freedom, and from this arises the feeling of orphanhood, the sense of a lack of belonging, and the constantly shifting forms of domination.”<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the formal dimension of her study, Svetlana focused on describing the nature of the verbs and sentences—examining their types, lengths, and stylistic function. She observes:

“At the beginning, the author uses nominal sentences that strike like a bullet or a shot—hitting not only the target but what is more important—neglecting unnecessary details, avoiding comparisons and metaphors, and maintaining only expression and attack, with the constant movement of the idea that blends into life and permeates and slips through the cluster of small images. Thereafter, Boudjedra resorts to description... and parallels the dry documentary style and sociological assessments.”<sup>15</sup>

Throughout Svetlana’s analysis, a recurring feature of her critical method is her strong reliance on addressing the thematic issues presented in Boudjedra’s novels by tracing the chronological sequence of events, examining the psychological development of the characters, and describing the forms of consciousness produced within them—consciousness that is inseparable from the critique of society and its traditions, as well as from the persistent search for freedom.

This same approach applies to her readings of *The Illiterate* (al-Ra‘n) and *The Goats* (al-Tiyūs), among other works. According to Svetlana, Boudjedra is an innovative and experimental writer who aims to provoke the reader’s perplexity at both the level of content and the level of language. She notes that his novels are interlaced with ethnographic and folkloric dimensions, as well as with mythic structures, thereby allowing his fictional writing to intersect with his poetic sensibility. This interweaving explains why his language is at once experimental and variable—alternating between an intense, harsh, forceful tone and a soft, fluid, and gentle one.

Svetlana Brazhoghina’s study of Rachid Boudjedra’s literature is an in-depth and meticulously argued analysis that reflects a perceptive reading of both his poetry and prose. She addressed creative phenomena that genuinely exist in his works, decoded his symbolic structures, and illuminated the thematic and stylistic foundations of his writing. It is, in every sense, a critical study of significant scholarly value—one that meaningfully contributes to the presentation and understanding of Algerian literature.



Among the Russian critics who devoted notable attention to Algerian literary production is Irina Nikiforova, whose comprehensive research on North African literature—particularly Francophone novels—occupies a prominent place in the field. She traced the trajectory of Algerian narrative development through the works of selected writers and examined the ways in which these novels served as authentic expressions of the sociopolitical and psychological realities of their time.<sup>16</sup>

We begin with her study of Mohammed Dib. In her article “Mohammed Dib and Mythic Creation,” she introduces her analysis by referring to several of his major novels (*The Big House*, *The Fire*, *The Loom*, *An African Summer*), noting that they collectively depict the Algerian stance toward war and colonial repression. She later highlights the distinctiveness of two other novels—*Who Remembers the Sea?* and *Run in the Deserted Shore*—pointing out that these works rely more heavily on imaginative and symbolic structures, reflecting a significant evolution in Dib’s narrative technique. Notably, Nikiforova builds upon the research of Galina Joghashvili, demonstrating that Russian criticism constitutes an interconnected scholarly network dedicated to the study of Algerian literature.

Irina Nikiforova’s reception of Dib’s creativity can be examined by tracing the transformations of the protagonist’s character across his novels. Although the title of her article foregrounds the concept of myth, her analysis largely revolves around the figure of the hero, with the mythic dimension emerging as part of the symbolic construction of that character.

### Transformations of the Hero in the Novels of Mohammed Dib

According to Roland Barthes, “the concept of the hero poses a real difficulty in definition that is linked to the position he occupies within the narrative. Who is the acting hero in the narrative? How can he be distinguished?”<sup>17</sup> This theoretical framework underpins Irina’s approach to Dib’s narratives.

In *The Fire*, Mohammed Dib dedicates significant attention to portraying the heroic figure of Omar, yet this heroism quickly fades: “Omar, despite having grown older, was not allowed to become an adult. He gradually loses not only the personal traits of his character, but also all his truly individual qualities. The loss of the hero in *The Fire* is compensated, to some extent, by the poetic portrayal of the vast Algerian countryside and its inhabitants, who carry the idea of the necessity of struggle for a better future.”<sup>18</sup>

Dib’s narrative then shifts toward the passive hero, one who offers no resistance to the challenges that confront him—most notably the protagonist of *Who Remembers the Sea*, who suffers from an existential crisis that renders him hostile toward the world.

Irina further explains: “The heroes of Mohammed Dib’s two modernist novels are distinguished by another trait that starkly deviates from the characteristics of the narrative hero, namely intrusion.”<sup>19</sup>

This intrusion becomes a form of self-preservation and self-defense in a turbulent and disintegrating world. To this category of protagonists, Dib adds the recurring symbolic figure of the radiant woman, whose presence introduces both mysticism and fragility into the narrative structure. Yet, despite these symbolic possibilities, the course of heroism in Dib’s characters ultimately descends into disappointment, fragmentation, and defeat.

Regarding *The King’s Dance*, Irina notes that the work includes two heroes who recount their memories; however, she ultimately views it as being closer to a short story than a novel. She writes:

“There is no doubt that this literary work is closer to a story than to a novel. Its most important element is the idea formulated with ease and supported by various techniques: expansive model-like memories, shifting moods, symbolic scenes.”<sup>20</sup>

In *God in the Land of the Berbers* and *The Hunting Master*, heroism becomes shared and distributed, creating multiple perspectives on what might constitute the most viable path toward a dignified life:

“The two books are unified by the well-known sympathy with the radical leftist idea of destroying contemporary civilization. This is particularly evident in the first of the two novels, where there is a clear promise of the demise of modern life. *The Hunting Master* also contains scattered, vague prophecies by ‘Laban’ about a purifying war and a fiery storm that will sweep across the world.”<sup>21</sup>

Through these analyses, Irina Nikiforova presents a comprehensive and nuanced examination of Mohammed Dib’s evolving heroes—figures that embody Algerian existential anxieties, psychological displacements, mythic resonances, and the enduring search for meaning in a fragmented colonial and postcolonial reality.

As for mythic creation, Irina Nikiforova describes its function and manifestation in Mohammed Dib’s works as follows:

“The events of these novels unfold according to the principles of modern mythic creation—not in the reality of this era, but in a world the author himself created. It lives a somewhat independent life and undergoes mysterious transformations that continually alter its appearance. It forms endless cities from which Mohammed Dib’s heroes attempt to escape... or means of transportation that mockingly present themselves to the hero to hasten his journey toward the goal and carry him with supernatural speed, yet they bring him to the same place, or to another place no different from the one he departed.”<sup>22</sup>

Mohammed Dib thus embarked on a **new literary phase**, shifting from realism to imagination and symbolic representation:

“We found a different writer, traveling through his imagination, where wisdom is lost and the organized logic of things vanishes. It is a fictional world employing myth, symbol, and dream, exaggerating them and engaging with the fantastical absurd that refers us back to a similar reality—the reality lived by everyone in Algeria without fully accepting it or believing in its truth. In his novel *Who Remembers the Sea*, the writer achieved an aesthetic reversal born from his departure from the mantle of Balzac and his creation of a new mode of writing based on visionary expression.”<sup>23</sup>

Irina Nikiforova’s study of Mohammed Dib contrasts notably with Svetlana Brazhoghina’s approach. While Svetlana is characterized by expansive, comprehensive research, Irina is marked by conciseness, analyzing a wide range of novels without delving deeply into each narrative model. This methodological difference reveals two distinct critical perspectives within the Russian scholarly tradition on Algerian literature.

Beyond Mohammed Dib, Irina Nikiforova also explored the works of Mouloud Mammeri, particularly in her article “Mouloud Mammeri: Two Models of Consciousness.” She conducted an independent study of his novel *The Opium and the Stick*, interpreting it as a literary representation of conflicting forms of consciousness within Algerian society during the war:

“Two models of consciousness clash in it: the critical consciousness embodied by the main hero, Dr. Bachir, and the dogmatic (authoritarian) consciousness.”<sup>24</sup> Mouloud Mammeri addresses the dangers of dogmatism and the social harms of fanaticism. Through the character of Ramadan, he examines the tension between belief and real life. According to Irina’s reading, Ramadan symbolizes one aspect of the extremist Islamic movement: he labels intellectuals as traitors to the revolution, and this aggressive stance becomes his mechanism for confronting the difficulties of existence—without it, he possesses no strength or agency.

The novelist thus introduces a fundamental question: **Can such fanatics truly be effective in moments of crisis?**

Irina Nikiforova also classifies Mouloud Mammeri among the writers of “behavioral literature,” and her study of *The Opium and the Stick* emphasizes the intellectual dimension of the novel. She highlights Mammeri’s dissection of rigid dogmatic thought—its harmful nature, its lack of flexibility, and its inability to adapt to the shifting complexities of life and

society. Through this angle, she shows Mammeri's commitment to portraying consciousness in its dynamic and conflictual relationship with historical reality.

Turning to Malek Haddad, Irina classifies him—in her article “Malek Haddad: The Gazelle and the Prince”—among the realist writers. She describes the reality in his works as a “different reality,” for Haddad focuses not on external events but on the psychological reality of his characters, both in their victories and their defeats:

“The subject of Malek Haddad is the spiritual life of a character endowed with an exceptional capacity to resist the assault of destructive, anti-human forces.”<sup>25</sup>

As for his narrative style, she writes: “His narrative, for example, lacks the stylistic ornamentation and the long chapters characteristic of another distinguished artist of the revolutionary era, Kateb Yacine.”<sup>26</sup>

Through these evaluations, Irina Nikiforova presents a broad yet insightful reading of multiple Algerian writers, linking their narrative structures to the larger thematic concerns of consciousness, resistance, identity, and psychological depth within the Algerian context.

Regarding Malek Haddad's use of language, Irina Nikiforova states: “The language of Malek Haddad, despite the simplicity of its grammatical structures, is rich in figurative expressions and interwoven associations that play a significant role in the narrative. They vividly mark the psychological state of the hero—those associations that appear in the interior monologue, which usually merges with the author's voice due to the similarity of life situations.”<sup>27</sup>

Within the framework of her linguistic analysis, the critic interprets the symbolism of the “gazelle” and the “prince.” The gazelle represents harmony in existence, while the prince symbolizes nobility and moral elevation. For this reason, all peasants in Malek Haddad's fictional world are treated as princes, because their goodness, integrity, and moral clarity elevate them. All of Malek Haddad's novels revolve around a single essential problem: the role of the creative intellectual during the revolutionary period. In every case, the formulation and resolution of this existential problem follow a similar structure, entrusted to an intellectual figure—an architect, a writer, a doctor—who perceives the meaning of life in the creation of values and in the commitment to cultural and moral construction.

Thus, the intellectual figure in Malek Haddad's novels confronts reality and offers a constructive vision, far removed from the destructive tendencies that threaten the deep and sound foundations of society. Consequently, Haddad's protagonists—whether in *I Will Offer You a Gazelle*, *The Pupil and the Lesson*, or his other works—are active heroes, who both influence society and are transformed by it.

In addition to these critics, Galina Joghashvili, the granddaughter of Joseph Stalin, made important contributions to the study of Algerian literature. She possessed extensive knowledge of various Algerian novelists, particularly Kateb Yacine. In her article “*Kateb Yacine's Nedjma: Myth and Symbol*,” she regarded *Nedjma* as a landmark in the history of Algerian narrative writing. Joghashvili sought to uncover the aesthetic particularity embedded in the novel, despite the general critical consensus regarding Kateb Yacine's influence by Faulkner (in the spiral development of events) and Joyce (in the stream-of-consciousness technique). She writes:

“The issue is that the subject of *Nedjma*, even if it resembles a spiral, resembles it in that it moves—contrary to all rules—from top to bottom, and not from bottom to top... The book appears as one great return to the past, happening in an illogical and non-sequential manner, but with confusion and chaos: from the distant past to a more distant past, then back again to a nearer past. This movement truly reminds us of a trajectory in reverse, or of a direction flowing from the top to the bottom of the spiral.”<sup>28</sup>

The critic explains this temporal mechanism as follows: “What is striking in this spiral is its reverse ascending movement, which reflects the fundamental principle of Kateb Yacine's entire creative work: in order to understand the present, one

must delve gradually and slowly into the past; after discovering and explaining it, one can return to the point of departure.”<sup>29</sup>

Joghashvili then recounts the events of the novel, focusing on the four young men and their love for Nedjma, who symbolizes the homeland. She cites passages from the novel to support the analytical points she develops.

Galina Joghashvili is particularly concerned with the artistic and aesthetic dimension of *Nedjma*, especially the refined treatment of myth within the narrative. She limits her study to this single novel by Kateb Yacine, unlike Svetlana Brazhoghina, who explored numerous novels by individual authors. Nonetheless, what stands out is the comparative framework used by Russian critics when examining Algerian writers—an indication of their extensive and interconnected knowledge of the field.

Concerning the Algerian novel written in Arabic, it was examined by critic Robert Landa, particularly with regard to revolutionary themes in *al-Lāz* and *al-Zalzāl* by Tahar Wattar. At the beginning of his article, Landa underscores the status of Algerian literature, asserting that it rightfully occupies a prominent and leading position among Afro-Asian literatures. Following a comprehensive introduction on Algeria’s cultural richness and the ability of its people to preserve their identity and defend it with determination, he turns to Tahar Wattar’s narrative experience—a literary path dominated by a revolutionary and liberation-oriented spirit.

Landa highlights that Wattar’s work within the National Liberation Front (FLN) enriched his understanding of numerous political, economic, and social issues, and that this engagement profoundly shaped the thematic and ideological foundations of his fictional writing.

The novel *al-Lāz* represented one facet of the National Liberation War. In his analysis, Robert Landa examined the content of the novel, highlighting the issue of national treason committed by individuals belonging to the homeland. At the same time, he affirmed that Wattar’s work was not merely documentary; rather, it was an exploration of the psychological depths of his characters—an attempt to make the reader understand the inner lives of individuals and grasp what was truly happening on Algerian soil:

“Wattar strives to explain human behavior under extraordinary and tragic circumstances—the human being who suddenly discovers the fragility of his position in society.”<sup>30</sup> For this reason, Wattar’s heroes are not endowed with sanctity or with extraordinary abilities that allow them to continually triumph. Instead, they remain fundamentally human—with weaknesses and flaws—yet they are heroes nonetheless, even when they originate from disadvantaged social classes. Concerning *al-Lāz* and *al-Zalzāl*, Robert Landa writes:

“The two novels introduce the reader to the Algerian Revolution in its various manifestations, to two important stages of contemporary Algerian life, to the ideas and emotions of the Algerian people. In addition, they offer an idea of the achievements of Algerian culture and of the active integration of artistic literature expressed in French... And when we finish reading the two novels, we undoubtedly come to know, more clearly, the spiritual and artistic world of Algerians and their authentic culture.”

## Conclusion

The readings produced by Russian critics on Algerian literature demonstrate a high level of critical awareness and analytical precision, particularly in their engagement with the intellectual, ideological, and thematic dimensions of the novels. Significantly, these studies do not provoke fruitless or artificial debates concerning the development of Algerian literature. Whether written in French or Arabic, Algerian literature remains inherently Algerian. The critics approached the texts with a methodological rigor: they read the novels, analyzed their events and structures, and then connected them to the socio-historical context in order to uncover the purpose, intention, and ideological orientation of the author.

Based on this analytical survey, the main findings of the research may be articulated as follows:

1. Irina Nikiforova, Svetlana Brazhoghina, Galina Joghashvili, and Robert Landa stand among the most distinguished Russian critics who devoted sustained scholarly attention to Algerian literature.
2. The earliest Algerian novels were grounded in what Russian critics describe as “behavioral literature”, focusing on moral values, inherited traditions, and social conduct.
3. Algerian writers expressed—through their narrative works—the lived reality of their people and the tragedy of the human being alienated from his land, his rights, and his cultural belonging.
4. Russian critics consistently searched for the distinctive characteristics of Algerian literature, particularly the authors’ ideological positions, social commitments, and aesthetic intentions.
5. Their analyses relied strongly on comparative approaches, highlighting similarities and differences between Algerian novelists.
6. A special emphasis was placed on the representation of the hero, tracing its development, symbolic function, and psychological depth across different works.
7. Russian critics also paid attention to Algerian poetry written in French, describing it as revolutionary literature that assumed the task of motivating, stirring, and energizing the reader.
8. Many Russian critics did not prioritize the formal or structural elements of the novel, except for occasional references concerning narrative technique or style.
9. For Russian scholars, Algerian literature—regardless of the language in which it is written—is equally Algerian, expressing diverse forms of consciousness; moreover, they do not consider the works of French-origin writers as part of Algerian literary production.
10. Russian critics approached the Algerian novel as a scholarly object, a rich corpus through which they could explore, interpret, and understand the cultural identity and social dynamics of Algerian society.
11. Ultimately, the Algerian text possesses literary, cultural, and civilizational value that enabled it to attract Western critics and establish its place within global literary studies.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study is based exclusively on published literary texts, critical writings, and secondary academic sources. No human participants, personal data, or confidential materials were involved. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for this research.

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The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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