

# A Sociological Reading of the Reality of Women in the novel "Teenage Mood" by "Fadila Farouk" a Critical Approach

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## Abstract

This research paper aims to study the novel "Teenage Mood" by Algerian author Fadila Farouk, which is considered one of the most important literary works that addressed the image of women in Algerian society with freedom and boldness. The author also attempted to shed light on the necessity and importance of liberating women from social and cultural constraints and empowering them to achieve self-fulfillment. In the same context, this novel provides a complex portrayal of women in society to highlight the contradictions and conflicts they face. Thus, fictional writings have helped change the stereotypical image of women and raise awareness of women's issues such as gender equality and liberation from social constraints. They contribute to societal transformation by breaking down barriers between genders and promoting understanding between them. On the other hand, the pens of writers were moved, and the theme of women was present in their works. Therefore, we chose the novel "Teenage Mood" by Fadila Farouk, which served as a photographic portrayal of the reality of women in Algerian society.

**Keywords:** *Women, Reality, Feminist Novel, Image, Algerian Society.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Arabic literature, the novel is considered one of the most vital domains that express the hopes and pains of the nation, as it conveys the feelings and aspirations of society. The writer, with their sensitivity, constantly seeks to connect their experiences with the reality of their society, conveying a portrayal of the community and the problems it faces. Therefore, the novel, in turn, attempts to present the awareness of both the educated and uneducated classes, as well as provide a depiction of social, cultural, and political relationships. Thus, the novel becomes a mirror of society and its main substance. There is a close relationship between the novel and reality, as it has the ability to embrace many aspects of human conflict in society.

Among the issues addressed by Arabic literature in general, and feminist literature in particular, is the issue of women, as they are an integral part of society. Women are seen as a sensitive phenomenon and an important axis in its construction. The necessity to highlight the achievements of the female gender, which are still ongoing to this day, has become apparent.

Accordingly, we have chosen the topic of the portrayal of women in the novel "Teenage Mood" by the writer Fadila Farouk. Our curiosity and interest led us to explore the intricacies of Algerian women, as well as to highlight the new and sensitive image in literature, specifically, and society in general. From here, we can pose a set of questions:

How did Algerian literature express women? How did the portrayal of women manifest in the novel "Teenage Mood" by Fadila Farouk? As for the most important findings, they are as follows: The novel "Teenage Mood" received significant attention from critics and gained their admiration due to its refined style and the author's ability to address important issues.

The novel "Teenage Mood" is considered an important novel that discusses women's issues in Algerian society in a simple and straightforward manner.

## **2. A READING OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL "TEENAGE MOOD" - GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FORM AND CONTENT**

The novel takes the form of an average-sized text consisting of 275 pages. It is divided into titled sections and chapters, which provide specific and defined expressions that can establish appropriate criteria for segmenting and analyzing the text. The text is detailed in eight different-length sections. The use of sections instead of chapters or parts is attributed to the connection of others to the existence of specific parts of the events framed in a particular time and place. The author relied on the temporal criterion as the basis for dividing the text, considering that the novel takes the form of a recording and reportorial expression in which the events unfold in a regular chronological order. Despite the text being distributed into multiple textual spaces, the reference time compelled the author to adhere to a strict temporal rhythm, resulting in a less complex and structured experience compared to some modern narrative writings.

Perhaps this is what makes its central significance appear, especially to the ordinary reader, as simple and confined to the social status of women and their emotional relationships. However, a deeper exploration of its overall structure reveals that as much as it addresses the social and emotional aspects of women, it engages the mind and prompts the reader to imagine and reflect. This enriches the text and provides it with the potential for multiple, non-sloganeering, and ready-made reading approaches (Vidouh, 1994, p.10).

## **3. THE REALITY OF WOMEN IN ALGERIAN LITERATURE**

Our Algerian society, like other Arab societies, suffers from numerous social problems that hinder its progress, such as backwardness, injustice, and inequality. One of the prominent issues is the problem of women, which is an old (urgent and new) problem. Women in literature have received significant attention in both literary works and social studies. Despite the existence of numerous studies on women, whether positive or negative, these studies are conducted in other places. Therefore, these studies are almost limited to urban women, mostly in locations close to universities and educational centers. Our judgments are mostly based on our knowledge of urban women. (Mafqouda, 2009, p. 9). Due to the nature of the women's subject, it is characterized by freedom of approach, boldness in presentation, and giving and envisioning possibilities.

The feminine self-image of women in creative works was represented in stories and novels as symbols of the homeland, motherhood, and beloved. The female body served as a tool for expressing these symbols, enabling them to carry many political and social issues and to engage in experiences and satisfy the expression of social ideas. The body was an instrument for expressing societal ideas, sometimes realistically and other times romantically (Lamyaa, 2013, p. 90). Women did not differ from men in terms of their approach but rather in representing their unique emotions towards certain issues. Some critics argue that women have not deviated significantly from the male perspective and its symbolism. Dr. Issa Barhoma attributed the linguistic convergence between men and women to their ability to interact and mingle, thus facilitating the exchange of ideas.

Women are considered half of society, as they are the beautiful and charming beings without whom life loses its flavor and meaning. Therefore, it is not surprising that the male-dominated society becomes alarmed when women prove their superiority in education and work in scientific and intellectual fields. The source of this alarm is their fear that women will taste the joy of intellectual work and be drawn into that path, leaving men without someone to serve them at home (Nawal, n.d., pp. 160-161).

Furthermore, the portrayal of women in Algerian narrative models reflects the image of Algerian society after the revolution and independence. In this regard, several authors have extensively addressed this topic, including Abu Al-A'id Doudou, Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga, Tahar Wattar, and others. They delve deeply into the subject of women, considering them as central and pivotal characters.

Mohamed Dib also highlights that Algerian women stand helpless in the face of mountains of customs and traditions that hinder the realization of their personal identity. He portrays the image of Algerian women during the revolution (Jabour, 2013, pp. 252-255). In addition, Dr. Mohammed Msaif notes the significant position of Algerian women in Algerian Arabic novels, a position no less important than that of men. He states, "In our novels, women do not play the subordinate role as often depicted in romantic literary works, serving and entertaining men. This term has completely changed, and women have become like men, playing a role of struggle and leadership in the movement. It is enough to read novels like 'Reeh Al-Janoub' by Abdelhamid Ben Hadouga, 'The Sun Rises on Everyone' by Ismail Gomaqaat, 'Fire and Light' by AbdelilahMartad, and 'Ambition' by Mohammed AbdelaliArrar" (Msaif, 1983, p. 312).

What matters to us in the end is not only the presence of women in the literary work but also how they embody their issues and the nature of the social and political causes they carry. It is important to explore how readers interact with these portrayals.

#### **4. THE PRESENCE OF THE THEME OF WOMEN IN THE NOVEL "MOOD OF ADOLESCENCE" BY FADILA FAROUK**

##### **4.1. The Portrayal of the Loving and Passionate Woman**

There is no doubt that love and emotion occupy a very important place in an individual's life, especially in novels. This is because it is one of the main issues in women's writing, and for this reason, most female novelists give it a prominent position in their works (Boujamaa, 2005, p. 76). "Love is one of those feelings that not everyone can understand or experience, even though its definitions are countless. However, the definition of love itself remains unique to each person, according to their own perspectives on love." The author defines it through the character of Louiza, the protagonist of "Mood of Adolescence," as she says, "He had reached certain events that humanized his self after planting his flags on my land" (Ibradsha, 2013, p. 76).

The theme of love is embodied in the novel and is considered one of the central themes. The protagonist, Louiza, experiences multiple love stories, as she falls into the trap of a romantic relationship with her cousin Habib, whom she loves with all her being. However, this relationship turned into a devastating whirlwind that shattered Louiza's life. She was betrayed by this person after experiencing the most beautiful moments and days with him, as she says, "As we walked towards the house, I felt that his slogan illuminated the street, a feeling that moved the pens of my heart and made them pour colors with my eyes as a source onto the

whiteness, suggesting the intersections of my love. I didn't understand exactly what happened" (Farouk, 1999, pp. 28-29).

She also says, "And there I am, returning with my beloved, having forgotten most of my worries, and then, the presence of my beloved changes everything. He blows like a breeze, fragrant on the territories of my feelings" (Farouk, 1999, p. 29).

From here, the love story began when Habib sympathized with Louiza during their trip to Batna for university registration. In every conversation, he tried to distance her from her sadness and sorrow. She was naive, like a little girl searching for warmth amidst her sadness, so she leaned towards his warmth.

Habib, whom she was shy of and feared, made her forget her worries and problems. He took hold of her emotions, and their relationship developed. Habib knew exactly what would make a teenager like Louiza feel joy and happiness and escape from the state of sadness that was always apparent on her. He had a special way of reaching her emotions and exploiting them with expressions filled with love, as shown in the passage: "I miss seeing your hair touched by the breezes. You're crazy, let me see it a little, don't stop me here? In the street, in front of people? Let me see it" (Farouk, 1999, p. 32).

She also says, "I want him to be mine, to bathe with him every evening, and let him write love on my body... (I want to love you)" (Farouk, 1999, p. 33).

Habib was a source of trust for Louiza, and he provided the affection that she had been missing from her father. With this warmth and tenderness, he made her surrender to him, and in her eyes, he represented paternal authority in her imagination. Habib transformed into the man, the protector, and the support, or the man she envisioned. She says, "I thought he was a beloved who understood me, who grasped the reasons behind my tears on his arms. I deluded myself that those hugs were only for my containment, to erase the traces of my depression. I believed in his lips that touched my forehead with words of love, and I trusted him as a man who would change my reality" (Farouk, 1999, p. 34).

Louiza believed that Habib was the right man for her, and he couldn't hurt her or differ from her. All her hopes were attached to him. However, unfortunately, Louiza and Habib's story ended in failure because he wanted to discover her and uncover her secrets. He said something that deeply affected her and left it as a souvenir she would never forget.

For a period of time, Louiza abandoned all her dreams and refused to pursue her aspirations. She surrendered to the reality she grew up in. She threw herself into another romantic relationship with the writer she loved, Youssef Abdel Jalil, to suppress her weaker love and defy this failure, despite her failure in her relationship with Habib, who stabbed her and considered her a greedy woman.

Louiza is trying to heal her internal wounds and prepare herself for a new phase of falling in love. The love she feels for Youssef Abdel Jalil made her lose control over herself, as she says, "I was completely unaware of whether my great love for him was what caused my body to lose control of its functions in the moments I longed for" (Farouk, 1999, p. 104).

This refers to the moment they first met, where her admiration for him grew both on a literary and personal level, solidifying their relationship. The meetings between them became frequent, and sometimes they engaged in conversations outside of literature, which increased her admiration for him. She expresses this when he says to her, "Oh, these hands that tied me

with love, they were happy hands radiating desire, and the short, long, and well-groomed nails carried more than a declaration of love..." (Farouk, 1999, p. 156).

She says, "Don't cry, my little gazelle... don't cry... get used to living sometimes in the moment, for the beauty of the moment. Get used to living sometimes in solitude because in all cases, there is a strong possibility that I will leave life before you" (Farouk, 1999, p. 236). This passage comes after a threat to Youssef Abdel Jalil by a terrorist group. Louiza went to check on him and was afraid of losing him. However, Youssef Abdel Jalil's personal strength and self-confidence made him not care about the situation or the threat.

Indeed, Louiza expresses her deep love for Youssef Abdel Jalil with great passion. This is evident in the passage: "We forget about death when we love only... I am a lover... I am a lover, oh tenderness... I am a lover. I stood in the middle of the room and started imitating Majida El Roumi in her special dance, singing the remaining parts of her song in my memories (I love you... I love you... I love you...)" (Farouk, 1999, p. 204).

Louiza confesses her love despite the unsuitable and unstable circumstances. The feeling of love made her forget all the fear she had been experiencing. She joyfully expresses her love through romantic words and singing songs that resonate with her. She says, "I confessed everything to him without saying anything, and he did the same. But I was afraid of fate, so love remained trapped in my throat until I die. I exchanged love with him" (Farouk, 1999, p. 245).

The passage highlights that Louiza and Youssef Abdel Jalil share a passionate and emotional romantic relationship. However, Louiza's son, Tawfiq Abdel Jalil, is infatuated with her. Louiza, on the other hand, chooses his father, perhaps because she longs for the affection she was deprived of from the beginning.

In particular, the protagonist Louiza falls in love with two men at the same time and loses them both, even though she didn't want to let go of either of them. Youssef Abdel Jalil was the man she loved and wished to be her ideal partner, while Tawfiq Abdel Jalil was the backup man in her life. She says, "In the end, they are two different generations, two currents that do not meet, two histories lost in between them, a connection that was supposed to be, but they were together in my mind and emotions, my weakness and strength. That's why when I wanted to keep one of them, I lost them both" (Farouk, 1999, p. 7).

Despite the fact that the novel "Fadila" represents several intelligent characters, it is the woman who concerns us in the novel, and its theme is embodied in the pain she expresses in her own way as she tries, like other educated women, to rebel by not being satisfied with her position as a woman. She is a university student and works for a magazine, and she also writes reflections. She also attempts to write serious stories. She says, "But I took a risk ever since I held the pen to write reflections and then stories, hiding them, thinking that if my family found out, it would only increase their ridicule towards me. Until I found myself at the Institute of Literature, gradually opening my narrative boxes...perhaps...perhaps to boast about what I write" (Farouk, 1999, p. 76).

Louiza strives to overcome life's obstacles through writing and sees it as a weapon to save women from death through words and the pen, and to wrest women's rights from the grip of men. She says, "You must not fear death as long as you possess a sweet pen, or rather, as long as you write. Writing is the most powerful weapon against death... In the end, we will only experience what God has written for us" (Farouk, 1999, p. 141).

From the above, it can be concluded that women have a role in raising awareness and educating their societies. They are the ones who express their experiences and reflect the reality of their lives in detail. "She comes to tear apart the myth of male superiority over women in the field of intellectual contribution and money. They are the openings of the feminine self..." (Najah, 1998, p. 42).

#### 4.2. The Traditionally Oppressed Mother

The mother is the miracle that God has blessed humanity with, and Paradise lies beneath her feet. She embraces her fetus without complaining or getting tired of carrying it, after having tightly wrapped it in her womb for nine months during the pregnancy period. The mother is the foundation of society, the axis of the family, and the secret to its survival. When mothers are sound, society is sound, and when mothers are corrupt, they produce corrupt generations. Due to the prominent role that mothers play as symbols of compassion, sacrifice, and love, they have been honored in the Islamic religion more than any other humans.

The image of the mother is embodied in the novel "Teenage Mood" in several instances, such as the mother of the protagonist Louiza, who is often described as a woman who knows nothing but serving her husband, her family, and her children, "in weakness, naivety, negativity, and surrender," the conservative woman. And all of these qualities align with the role that society has defined for women, which is serving men. Femininity is characterized by qualities of a submissive and weak servant. Louiza's mother is a sad character who dedicated her life to raising her children without a husband living in France. She devoted her life to raising her children, bearing the responsibility for them, and striving to provide them with all the affection she could, so they could replace some of their father's affection. This is what we find Louiza saying about her mother: "It's difficult for me to die, and my mother's life follows me to every corner... I rarely see her smile. She doesn't care about joy, holidays, or any of those occasions that crave ecstasy" (Farouk, 1999, p. 13).

Here, Louiza expresses the deep sadness on her mother's face, which never left her. Her mother was always gloomy, concealing her sadness inside. Not only did her father's absence and distance from his family suffice, but he was also unfaithful, evident through his suspicious relationships with other women.

This made her surrender to the reality and lose interest in what he did. This is evident in the passage: "I don't remember my mother being affected by it, unless her sadness was not related to his repeated betrayals, but rather to that old promise he broke on the day he married her, to hang her on a piece of paper that meant no more to him than a paper suitable for wiping his shoes... or members of society" (Farouk, 1999, p. 14).

Louiza also says: "It seems that she cannot live unless her sadness is repeated... and in her evening attire in front of any Egyptian production on television, she excuses herself with watching something sad to cry her own sadness" (Farouk, 1999, p. 13).

Her husband's migration turned her into a miserable woman who is not at ease in this world and does not care about her appearance or emotions. This is what made her adore sad and gloomy movies, to relieve her children's sadness from their father's absence and loss, and to release her own sadness on the television screen.

It is very difficult to see a constantly sad mother who cannot do anything for her children. She has great love in her heart, but unfortunately, she failed to do so.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In any case, the novel is a valuable combination of rich experiences, simple representation, and charm, affirming that the author is capable of keeping up with Arab novelists.

- The Algerian novel addressed current issues that perplex public opinion, particularly the role of women in confronting the circumstances surrounding them and the harsh reality they live in.
- The issues of Algerian women (their concerns, problems, and aspirations) are the result of the efforts and collaboration of Algerian women writers. Algerian novels are known for their boldness, especially regarding women's issues.
- Fadila Farouk's writings are a revolution against the social reality that marginalizes women, reflecting her challenge to all the male-dominated laws that hinder their freedom. The novel embodies the suffering of Algerian women from injustice and oppression.
- The novel encourages literary culture and education to uplift the social level. Women in the novel are important and dominant elements in most of the events, through the narration of their characteristics, their suffering in society, and their struggles with the opposite sex.
- The theme of love is one of the main topics in the novel.

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