

The Beur novel – classification of an emerging literary and cultural space through a textual analysis of Ferrudja Kessas' *Beur's Story*

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Bio-Note

Dr. Walter Hugh Parker has a Doctorate in French from Pondicherry University, India. His area of specialization is Francophone literature, in particular migrant literature, and literary works in French by writers of Maghrebian origin. His Ph.D. thesis titled, '*La crise de l'identité et l'exclusion sociale chez les Beurs – Étude thématique à travers une sélection de romans beur*' in French is a thematic study of identity crisis and social exclusion in 'Beur' literature, which is in writing in French by second generation authors of Maghrebian origin. His major research interest is on the identity of second and third generation children, born of Maghrebian immigrants in France, their literature, culture, language, and other means of expression, by which they make themselves visible to their host society and the world. His other research interests include the identity and ethnicity of the Anglo-Indian community in India and abroad. He is currently an Assistant professor in French in SRM University, Ramapuram at Chennai, and can be reached at walterhp4@gmail.com. His published articles can be found at the following links:

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to classify the writing of second generation French authors of North-African origin, born of Maghrebian immigrants in France. The literature belonging to this group of writers is prevalent from the 1980s to the present day. It is a literary production that has the merit of being a major part of the evolution of the phenomenon related to what is called 'migrant literature'. The collection of works by the above mentioned writers, spread out over the last four decades, is distinguished by a remarkable innovation, and often even by a total reversal of known models, since the

emergence of what has commonly been called franco-maghrebian literature, which is writing in French by authors of Maghrebian origin, in particular the countries of the Central Maghreb, including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The objective of this paper is to give an account of the significant evolution which established or rather clarified major changes to this kind of writing, testifying to active and significant points of transformation in the lives of the writers, taking into focus Ferrudja Kessas' novel entitled "Beur's Story", considered to be an autobiographical account of the writer's own life.

Keywords: Franco-Maghrebian, Migrant Literature, Beur, Ferrudja Kessas, Beur's Story

Introduction to Beur Literature

In the 1980s, a new group of writers appeared on the literary scene in France. They were part of what was called the *beur* generationⁱ [18]. *Beur* is a name popularly given to the sons and daughters of immigrants from North-Africa, especially the three countries of the Maghreb namely, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisiaⁱⁱ [17-52]. A longer established label is that of 'second generation immigrants', but since most of them were born in France, this term is something of a misnomer because they have never migrated from one country to another. The only migration they have undertaken is in their daily lives, when they have been forced to migrate constantly between the secular culture of France and the traditions brought back to them by their Maghrebian Arab parents across the Mediterranean. These experiences have been explored by beur writers in poems, plays and, above all, prose fiction.

The word 'beur' entered the circulation during the 1970s in Paris to designate the young teenagers of the North-African community who lived in the suburbs in the 1970s. The term became familiar and as included in the current vocabularyⁱⁱⁱ. 'Beur' is defined as a "young man born in France of immigrant parents of North-African

origin” [21-248]. A few years later, its global extension, ‘Beurette’^{iv}, was used to refer to young girls from the same ethnic community, born or arrived at a young age, in the host country, France. The word ‘beur’ originates from the ‘verlan’ language which is symbolic with the ‘youth of the suburbs’ in France.

Verlan was a form of slang practiced by members of the French underworld, and more recently by urban youth^v. Verlan served as a code for discussing shady activities without being understood by the authorities, and as a means of promoting sympathy among socially marginalized groups. The youth of the immigrant community have become acute practitioners.

The verlan language works by reversing the first and last syllables of words. The word ‘verlan’ itself is an example of this process, because it is an inversion of the word ‘envers’ in French which means ‘inverse’. ‘Beur’ is derived from a similar process of the inversion of syllables of the word ‘Arab’. The President of ‘Radio Beur’, Nacer Kettane, later explained the formation of the term:

“‘Beur’ comes from the inverted syllables of the word ‘arabe’: ‘arab’ becomes ‘rebe’, which in reverse, gives ‘ber’, and which is finally written as ‘beur’. But it has nothing to do with the academic meaning of the word ‘Arab’. ‘Beur’ refers both to a geographical and cultural space, the Maghreb, and to a social space, that of the suburbs and proletariat of France.”[11-21]

Through their actions and reactions, for equality as well as for a place in French society, the Beurs have given impetus to a major anti-racist movement working for the abolition of all forms of discrimination. They have also contributed to the emergence of voices and writings that will create various novel productions and spread over time. Written by writers from the second generation of Maghrebian immigration in France, a “*migrant literature*” [3-14], as Monique Gadant calls it, entered the French literary landscape and was quickly designated by the title ‘Beur literature’.

The beur novel

The beur novel invokes interest in the sense that the stories of the suburbs with delinquents, and young rebels expressing their disappointment in bursts of anger, tears and shouts, as well as news articles that make headlines intrigue and arouse curiosity.

“Some publishers exploited this state of affairs by going to the suburbs to find talent and publish texts written by these young people born of immigrant workers, who are raised in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.” [19-15]

Individual novels come together to present a common reality based on memory, history and the difficulties of marginal socio-cultural conditions. Their collective voice reveals that whatever their means of expression, the North-African children born or raised in France have in common a ‘beur’ world, and a belonging to a dual identity, Arab and French. This evolution that has emerged in a new literary space finds itself in an era of time marked by the lively debate of the France’s relations with immigrants. It is with the settlement of immigrants in France that identity seems threatened in a society where coexistence is not easy for a youth confronted with cultural duplication. Françoise Gaspard and Claude Servan-Schreiber, quite rightly, protest against this abuse of language, intentionally encouraged to reinforce the idea that integration poses serious problems with the birth of true ethnic minorities:

“This second-generation notion of immigrants is not just a convenience of language. It is responsible for content that is unacceptable on the moral and political level: it appoints to exclude and marginalize. She denies that these young people are immigrants for the simple reason that most of them have not immigrated. By designating them through the emigration of their parents, they are identified with them, and with a history that constitutes their inheritance, but which is not the only constitutive element of their identity. Everything is taking place as if the same social role is assigned to them, and confining them to the same economic functions as their parents. It is as if the fact that they are what France makes of them is still denied.” [5-48]

Thus, the French public discovered the names of these young people of North-African origin in the suburbs, which was published at that time. And to mention some dates, it must be said that it is in 1981 that the production of novels from these youth of the suburbs will see the light with the publication of the first beur novel entitled *L’amour quand même (Love Nevertheless)* by Hocine Touabti. It should be noted that Beurs have used various writing strategies to assert a cultural identity of their own, in order to bear witness to their experience, irreducible to the simple condition of their parents’ emigration, and to mobilize a discourse that they are

progressing “from a border they have built to fight against the double marginalization arising from the fact of what they are subject to in the French and the Maghrebian societies.” [14-686]

The emergence of a variety of writings, which according to Michel Laronde is “*a beur movement*”, draws the attention of several researchers who have been interested in this cultural and literary phenomenon by listing and analyzing it through the main recurring themes. In fact, this movement acknowledged its strong moments during the 1980s and many critics felt its influence until after the 1990s. It also constituted itself in a new literary space, which was labeled, as soon as it came to the fore, by different designations such as ‘migrant literature’, or ‘literature of the second generation of Maghrebian immigration’, from writers born in France, of parents who were themselves immigrants, whose roots come from elsewhere for one or both, mainly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia; other names given to this literature were ‘minor literature’ or ‘natural literature’ [8-19], according to Habiba Sebkhii [22-17].

However, the first wave of literary production aroused great interest, and has even gained a prominent place in Francophone studies. In doing so, more research was undertaken that reflected its development, which allowed some critics to look into this particular phenomenon, and be the authors of the first two critical works published on this literature [15, 16]. Also, considering this movement as ‘an emerging literary space’, Charles Bonn held a conference at Paris-Nord University^{vi}. A first volume of the proceedings of this conference appeared and in its presentation, Bonn did not fail to give a relevant explanation for the purpose of such an event at that time, as well as to mention the contribution of various critics, with regard to this literary phenomenon:

“The origin of this colloquium and reflection is a recent literary phenomenon which is barely ten years old: the novel from ‘second generation French writers of Maghrebian origin’ in France and Belgium. It is therefore not surprising to see an important place in this set of studies, or the fact that it is already the most theorized subject. This first volume therefore begins with a theoretical perspective of the literary problems posed by the emergence of this new literary space to a certain extent, escaping in any case from the usual critical approaches, as if the problem that arises in literature is that of the very possibility of a literary activity in a

domain which until recent years has never been considered as a literary domain.” [1-12]

It is pertinent to recall that the first critics who were interested in this literary phenomenon, which emerged over the years and gathered a plethora of young authors from Arab immigration, were of varied, and even mixed origins [4, 6]. Many have agreed that the texts appeared overwhelmingly in response to the urgency of a particular situation, and to testify to a serious and severe, as well as very significant condition in the urban fabric of the French suburbs. Very poor housing and availability of basic facilities like water were at the root of this situation. The originality and specificity of the writings can constitute the sketch of a literature which is located inside the French literary field. In fact, the publication of various largely autobiographical stories reveal the anger and distress of young rebels, and also express their disappointments, their desire for integration and their rejection of all forms of hostility, contempt and discrimination against them. Several critics singled out the emergence of this phenomenon as the voice of the ‘Other’ with subjectively identifiable texts, rich and endearing, but also dissimilar in the elaboration of narrative frames; the manifestation of intimate aspirations conveys the dreams and expectations of a whole generation. The extent of the denunciation of the ills of society is at the heart of these ‘identity wanderings’ between here and there. With that said, most of the works, which touched on the writing of the Beurs, show the same main characteristic, namely, the manifestation of a pain of being of this generation of young French people, of immigrant origin who everyday denounce racism at all levels of society and demand the equality, respect and dignity of every citizen of the French Republic. In fact, in France in the 1980s, women were also represented in the emergence of the literary movement initiated by youth of foreign origin, very active in combating all the problems of insertion and integration.

There is, therefore, reason to note that a literary space appears jointly under the writings of the young authors of maghrebian origin. This requires personal styles to narrate authentic experiences, having in common, as Fatiha El Galai underlines, “*an origin, a theme, an interest and a strategy given to the questioning of society, but which nevertheless presents peculiarities.*” [20-14]

In this variety of writings collected under the 'beur literature' term, quite distinct from Maghreb literature, female voices took part alongside their male counterparts to enlighten women as they lived, and thereby register their struggle against growing marginalization. They are faced with difficulties in their communities as well as in French society. This means that beyond the uprooting of the family, physical integration, they will bring to light another dimension that of the feminine context, imposed not by the host land, but resulting from the long-standing ancestral culture endlessly lasting through time. Through their various writings, they will display an unexpected and surprising courage that allows them to denounce the various abuses they suffer, as a result of their femininity, the rules imposed on them by the religious leaders of their community, and the hardships they overcome, being born of an immigrant community in France. They have described and written their testimonies in various ways. In fact, they affirm a very significant determination and willingness to transcend family, as well as cultural, social and religious barriers. Because, as Tahar Ben Jelloun recalls,

"A girl who dares to express herself by imposing herself, by asserting her individuality and independence is generally frowned upon; it is considered as an element of disorder, carrying a double betrayal; it crumples two images and itself becomes a wound that hurts: it causes a tear in the original social fabric, supposed to be maintained in its reality, despite or because of emigration; then it disrupts the image that the family tries to convey from the host country. To speak out is a form of rebellion; this process can sometimes lead to emancipation; it is accelerated because of the cohabitation of two universes, the one from which one comes and which one carries with oneself (it is part of the baggage, even if it does not support the journey, and the one in which one tries to live while waiting for a possible return to the country. The girl, even if she is in solidarity with the family and the community as a whole, particularly because of the racist threat, maintains a distance from her environment to signify a break in her body and her psyche. The situation of exile – she did not choose it or guarantee it – becomes for her a requirement to assert her will to understand, to act, and especially not to reproduce the itinerary (destiny) of the parents. Her obsession does not bring them together. Since uprooting is in itself a fatality and a failure, she would like to make

it a dynamic of liberation. She cannot always do it. The pressures come from all sides." [12-112]

If in the early days, only a few female voices were heard when this new form of writing of the second generation emerged, they quickly took to writing to tell the French that this was the life of women of maghrebian origin in the suburbs. Several of these young women made their entry on the French literary scene, in the political line of the 90s, during which Adil Jazouli comments, in his book entitled, *Les Années Banlieues* (The Suburban Years), an evolution is developing for young Arab-Islamic girls:

"After years of campaigning and speaking on behalf of the reference social group, many girls focus on the issues faced by their mothers and sisters as if [...] today they feel the need to speak of what currently makes their difference in the difference: woman and person of Maghrebian origin in France." [10-184]

In such a generation, fruit of marginalization and of "exile in exile"^{vii} [12-106], these writers have been called the "generation of the spoken"^{viii} [9-16], since without any consultation, they have chosen to follow the paths of writing to spread their rebellious and contentious word, that of discomfort, distortion and difference that carries and even denounces, in its humor, anger and rupture, raised between two nations, two cultures and two ways of life. In France, the country of their birth, and with family, rooted in the traditions of the country of origin, the female characters, as well as their creators, live a deep feeling of alienation, pain of living, because they realize that they cannot be their true selves when it is necessary to reconcile with these two sides of one's being. This is the integral question in any text from these writers.

From among the first texts of a woman writer of maghrebian origin, that of Ferrudja Kessas' *Beur's Story* was warmly welcomed by critics. According to Charles Bonn, the novel surpasses "straightaway this simplicity of 'direct' testimony by settling in an obvious literary quality." [2-105] Indeed, if one examines the interest of the criticism for the feminist literature, one can note the existence of analyses having approached this phenomenon within the literary movement of the Beurs, which emphasize the will of these women writers to detach themselves from their male precursors by expressing different themes in a specific way, among which are identity, assimilation, integration, the history

of their community in France as well as their roles and place in the host society. Their writings tell of multiethnic experiences and confirm the image of the Maghreb woman as a double victim of both the patriarchal society of origin in its violence and humiliations of immigrants in a hostile society. Except for some articles evoking the production of this generation of women from Maghreb immigration, either through monographic studies or by presenting several texts in a comparative perspective, it is clear that the reflections on the feminine contribution of this literary movement of Beurs remain minimal in literary criticism. And yet, female voices have not ceased to rise over the years, distinguished by diversified creations, which have transcended the reductive images proposed by various critics adopting a hostile attitude from the onset of the literature, despite the virulent attacks and the severe judgments of the women writers having nevertheless participated in the visibility of this phenomenon.

Ferrudja Kessas' *Beur's Story* (1990)

Ferrudja Kessas was born in Paris in 1962 to parents of Algerian origin. She fits perfectly in a line where the crossing of childhood deprived of reassuring landmarks or that of adolescence, confronted with internal and external torment, is most often the ferment of the writings of the second generation children of North-African immigrants. Her only known novel^x, *Beur's Story*, appears as a text anchored in a lived reality, claimed as such in her dedication and carrying a message: “*I dedicate this story to my Maghrebi sisters so that we cease to be this negligible entity haunting the background of the novels of our young Maghreb writers.*” [13] Therefore, we find ourselves in the presence of a ‘history’ that the author claims by the affirmation of the initial ‘I’. History written by a Maghrebian for her ‘sisters’ in order to differentiate themselves from ‘young Maghreb writers’ who are not very concerned, it seems to her, by the place of women in the vagaries of immigration.

At the same time, and obviously, by reading the title *Beur's Story*, one thinks of *Love Story*^x, a cult film that sends the reader back to a world of tragic everyday life. However, the collusion between the English term and the designation – more or less pejorative – of the second generation of Maghreb emigrants in France is surprising and sounds like a provocation. If the possessive case attributes the property of the announced narrative to a specific social and cultural category, it

implies a doubt as to the gender concerned, by abandoning the feminine ‘beurette’ for the generic ‘beur’, as a way of asserting and claiming gender equality. In fact, the heart of the novel lies in this perspective – shouted loud and clear to free the double internment of the female condition inside the community and racism outside. Nevertheless, the liberating writing, both narrative and testimony, from the title, claims to be in the culture of an ‘other’, specifically reserved for the youth of the ‘70s, fascinated by the American dream that would metaphorically connect, the native and immigrant.

In about forty chapters, Ferrudja Kessas narrates the daily life of two schoolgirls of Kabyle^{xi} origin, each trapped in her family environment. Malika and Farida, these two characters who open and close the story, live in a suburb of the Havre, from which they escape only to follow their classes in high school. While Malika belongs to a large number of siblings, Farida lives with her father, stepmother and half-sister Aisha, but both have the same feeling of total and desperate loneliness. The construction of the novel is indeed present from the first pages where the reader is immersed in the heart of the subject – the rejection from their classmates and the prohibitions of their respective families:

“*Every year, every time they have a party we're left out! [...] Why do you get angry? Since one way or another, we would not have been there!*” [13-11]. If the event itself does not seem of extreme importance, it acts as a revealer, on one hand, of the characters of the two protagonists, and on the other hand, of the gap that separates them from their young French counterparts because of their origin.

The suburb of the Marais Noirs (Black Marshes) where Malika lives is symbolic of stagnation and mourning, and becomes the paragon of all suburbs developed with no other concern than emergency shelter. The bitter acknowledgment of the deterioration of her building punctuates each of Malika's returns to her family: “*The stairs were dirty and smelly ... The opaque stench seemed to ooze from the walls and stairs [...] cautiously she went up the stairs counting the eight steps because there was no light in a long time.*” [13-16, 51]

Nauseating smells, rubbish clogging the entrance halls, screams of drunkards escaping from the apartments, waves of aggressive music, contribute to the malaise of the young Malika, and draw up, in a few sentences, the living environment reserved for the

populations' immigrants in the HLM^{xii} housing estates. Moreover, in chapter 36, a vast retrospection of police raids on the neighbourhood, and the brutality of Abdel's arrest signal the violence and contempt of the authorities towards immigrant families. If Kessas does not deny the delinquency present in the suburbs, she denounces the rapid amalgam made between the immigrant and the crime and the lack of human respect from certain policemen: "Oh hey, you do not understand the French; Old man, go get your son or it's me who gets him off the bed with a kick in the ass!" [13-145]

We are witnessing the abandonment by the host country of a population trying to survive, which is often lost. The very heart of the home is not a refuge, nor a shelter against external aggressions, but hides another hell. Promiscuity and violence dominate family relationships. Indeed, the siblings are numerous and there are six children whose ages span almost two generations: Mohamed, the eldest, is 28 years old, his youngest, Abdel, 2 years old, then come two daughters, 18-year old Malika and Fatima, 15 years old, followed by three boys, turbulent Slimane, 13 years old, and the two youngest, Youssef and Mustapha, 5 years old; the father is only a shadow, the victim of a system that has crushed him, taken refuge in the conjugal room or seated at the cafe; the mother, weighed down by successive pregnancies, survives only thanks to encounters with neighbours and escapes dreaming of the lost village. Material difficulties, small housing and uprooting induce parents' helplessness, internal tensions and the frustration of the children.

The two main characters in the novel, Malika-the wise is a double of Farida-the mad, depicting the schizophrenia of a situation between two cultures, two attitudes, and two possible destinies. Farida dares rebellion with suicide, this ultimate revolt against life; Malika tries to survive, but will be shattered by the loss of her friend, her double. In the same way, some episodes recall popular readings and give in to an easy writing: "She closed her eyes and stretched her lips in a smile" [13-132], or "Farida loved to swag her long hands imprinted with new majesty" [13-164]. These touching naiveties bring to the text a realistic dimension by restoring the cultural environment according to bookish encounters, mixing literature and the sentimental press. Literature is a loophole where the imagination takes its entire share: "Very heterogeneous in her choices, Malika particularly liked the good big novels on historical background, but she also did not hesitate to read harder books, often autobiographies which lacked Eluard's

poetry" [13-14]. In addition, the heroine feels divided between the rejection of her parents' prejudices, the fear of anger she suffers while understanding her mother's helplessness and her father's weaknesses:

"They feel aggrieved by this world they reproach, but which they are forced to accept. They know of course that the danger will not reach them, but their children, sensitive and attracted by this world, so different from the house, this world so generous in forbidden fruits; already their sons, in whom they had invested all their confidence, scorn them, doing only their own thing; the mediocre academic results, their union with French women, disappoint and frighten them to the highest point, even if they leave nothing to them." [13-222]

These righteous observations emphasize the generational gap between the parents from Kabylia and their children growing up in France.

Malika who is sick lives a few hours in the privacy of her mother who is a storyteller. From this *tête-à-tête* comes the story of Farida's origins and the curse that hangs over her. Further on, the text leads the reader to the limits of the fantastic. The hallucinatory encounter between Malika and the dead Farida that ends the novel refers to the belief in the appearances of the souls of the dead from tales of Kabylia folklore. The climax, where the body of Malika "broke like porcelain on the ground" [13-232] closes the deadly circle, the elements of which have been delivered throughout the text. The meeting between Malika and Farida, skillfully postponed in chapter 38, recalls "this stranger dressed in black who resembled me as a brother" [13-168] from the *Nuit de décembre*^{xiii} (*December Night*) and places the friendship of the two teenagers in a sinister aspect. The first words that Farida gives to her friend will call death "Oh! But you cannot stay here! You want to die frozen, Malika worried. The child straightened her bust: Yes, precisely, I hope to die!" [13-169]

Farida's suicide, announced from childhood, first takes a metaphorical form when she decides not to go to high school: "[...] it is me, me alone who decided to stop. You think I would have allowed them. So, it's over, no one, you hear, no one will have the upper hand over me [13-113], and materializes when her marriage with a stranger is arranged by her family: "The Mektoub^{xiv} remained what it was and Farida was without her cup (of destiny). A tragic character, the girl bears the faults of

her mother who killed herself in front of the village gathered to punish her for having loved another man.” [13-110] Kessas tackles the taboo subject of suicide, which she inscribes in a generational continuity; on one hand, the disgrace and rejection of the community for Farida's mother, and on the other hand, the impotence of the revolt for her daughter and ultimate refuge in the liberty to dispose of her body for powerless women who cannot be masters of their destiny.

Anchored in the '70s, after the cultural revolution of May 1968, which established co-education in schools and granted adolescents new liberties, the daily life of the Beurettes is a total shift. *Beur's Story* openly reveals obsolete practices in French society that immigrant families and their religious leaders continue to impose on their daughters in the name of honour and spirituality.

Results of the research and conclusion

It should be made clear that in the various writings of the Beurs from the beginning until today, we discover the extent of this problem of rejection and discrimination, as insoluble, made of outbursts, denunciations, heartbreaks and indifferences. Young people from all generations of Maghreb immigration suffer. They are hurt, are lost, confused and disoriented. Their word carries rage and violence and reveals their difficult and perilous journey in French society. What remains is that the last decade was, undoubtedly, marked by a great wave of new writing of the Beurs, with the evolution of some of its styles and writing strategies.

For many, the word 'beur' represents a state of exclusion and marginalization in French society, especially for young people originating from North-African immigration. By continuing to use it and accept it, there is a risk of sinking into a contradiction: to name and isolate a mixed group justly desirous of integrating into a dominant population, supposedly pure, like the French born from previous interbreeding. The name of a part of this writing of the suburbs insists on the linguistic and cultural contribution of a generation that does not consider the literary act only as the expression of an identity claim, but also as an artistic creation, which in its own way testifies to the repeated and continuous defiance that has won today's Republican France, making integration more and more difficult. In fact, this plural word is used to emphasize the fact that young people from Maghreb immigration are considered to be lacking

integration, because as long as they are stigmatized as a 'second' or 'third' generation, they will always be socially excluded and marginalized. Moreover, they are harassed by mistrust, hostility and racism. Despite all the resistance of the French institution against the integration of writers from other cultures, and their contribution to the development of the literary field, the writing of the Beurs exists nevertheless to participate actively in the literary and cultural life in France.

As far as the reception of the texts of the Maghreb women writers is concerned, like the Arabs, they have to undergo another marginalization, resulting from a traditional conception of literary criticism aiming to relegate the feminine contribution to a very specific category of production. Admittedly, the diversification of their writings is classified as 'Women's writings on immigration', 'Women writing of Maghreb immigration in France', 'Writing of the Maghrebian in France', or 'Migrant Women writing', but whatever the abundance of appellations, their contribution illustrating many novelistic forms is original and deserves, despite all reservations, to acquire a considerable place in the French literary landscape. Thus, by the desire for fidelity to the voices of all these men and women resulting from immigration, a special place must be given to these writers. Each of these texts, despite the nature of the writing, presents a particular perspective of their view of the world, of human relationships, of their identity and struggle for the right to exist, to speak, to express and to write about what concerns and affects them.

Endnotes:

ⁱ The *Le Nouveau Petit Robert* (2002 edition), while giving the definition of the word 'beur' (noun), also refers to the use of feminine forms such as 'Beurette' (noun) and 'beure' (adj.). But there is also an option to use, as an adjective, the masculine or neutral form - 'beur' like other researchers and critics. “[...] *beur* is often used in its masculine form, singular and plural, even to designate a feminine noun, singular or plural.” (all translations in this paper from French to English are my own).

I opt for the choice of the neutral form of the adjective and a capital letter at the beginning of the name (Beur) to designate the population of North-African origin in question, originating from a specific geographical space in France.

ⁱⁱ The 'Maghreb', an Arabic word meaning 'where the sun sets' or the West, whose equivalent in French is 'le Couchant' as opposed to 'Machreq' meaning 'where the sun rises' or 'le Levant' in French, is a region strictly comprising, until 1989,

the three states of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia colonized by France before the formation of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), in the year before unifying five countries - Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania to the far west, and Libya to the far east of North-Africa, under a common market, and under what is currently known as the Maghreb region. Since my study focuses only on the immigrant population of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, and when I refer to the term 'Maghreb' in this paper, it only means the three countries mentioned above, known as the 'Central Maghreb'.

ⁱⁱⁱ The term was included in the *Larousse* dictionary in 1986.

^{iv} The word 'Beurette' appeared in Soraya Nini's novel entitled *Ils disent que je suis une Beurette* (*They say that I am a Beurette*) in 1993 (Fixot, Paris). It was included the same year in the *Le Nouveau Petit Robert* dictionary.

^v Their association with the 'Underworld' has not been clearly defined, but I think that because of the fact that they are aimless and they fail in establishing an identity for themselves, and their constant struggle to find the job, they could have been called upon to involve themselves in shady activities.

^{vi} As part of an 'Integrated Action' linking Paris-Nord University to the Faculty of Letters 2 of Casablanca, a symposium was held from 19 to 21 December 1994, in Paris. The title of this colloquium was: *Littératures des immigrations en Europe* (Literatures from Immigrants in Europe).

^{vii} Tahar Ben Jelloun argues that "*The immigrant girl lives as an exile in exile. She accumulates and crystallizes in herself the contradictory elements of the vision of a world that encompasses her only to neutralize her, stifle her voice or try to reduce her in what takes the place of traditional culture.*" [12-106]

^{viii} In her study, Susan Ireland argues that "*the first generation of Maghrebian immigrants was often called the generation of silence and the second generation the "generation of the spoken". Most women of the first generation did not speak french well and therefore had no way of being heard in France. Their role as a traditional Muslim woman reinforced this silence and deprived them of speech even at home.*" [9-16]

^{ix} Throughout my years of research on this topic, I did not find any books or computerized documents that spoke about Kessas' biography or any other novel published by her. What was available on the 'L'Harmattan Editions' website is what is already in this paper. In a subjective tone, I must say that among all the beur novels I have read, I have never felt such sadness in the depth of my heart, as I felt on reading *Beur's Story*.

^x Arthur Miller's *Love Story* (1970) was a worldwide success in staging the meeting of two young people separated by their social condition, united by a passion that the sickness of the young woman breaks.

^{xi} Kabylia is a cultural, natural, and historical region in northern Algeria.

^{xii} HLM or 'Habitations à loyer modéré' (moderate rent housing) is a form of social or private housing in France. HLMs make up 16% of all housing in France. There are about four million such residences, housing about 10 million people. The average HLM has 20 apartments in one building.

^{xiii} *Nuit de décembre* is a poem written by Alfred de Musset in 1835. Written after the poet's break-up with the writer George Sand (whose real name was Aurore Dupin, a woman writer with the pen name of a man), this lyric poem, one among the four poems with 'Nuit' in the title (along with the months of May,

December, August and October) form a passionate and painful chronicle declining the seasons of the heart and life.

^{xiv} Arab word for 'destiny'

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