

A Critique to Mouloud Feraoun's Vision to Colonialism from Clear 'Ambivalence' to Implicit Criticism

*BOUDERSA Hemza

'Assia Djebbar' Higher College for Teacher Training (ENS Constantine)
(Algeria).

boudersa.hemza@ensc.dz

Dep. Day : 2/8/2022

Acc. day: 9/10/2022

Pub. day: 2/3/2023

Abstract :

This paper aims at demystifying Feraoun's critique of colonialism and investigates to what extent he shows 'initial ambivalence' towards his French education, language, culture and the French people and, by extension, towards colonialism in general in his early novels (*Le fils du pauvre*, *Les chemins qui montent*, *La terre et le sang* and mainly *Les jours Kabyles*). It also investigates how his denunciation of colonialism started 'implicit' and became 'crying' and more radical in *La cité des roses* and *Journal*. This paper explores the evolution of Feraoun's critique of French colonialism and its pitfalls. Research findings affirm that Feraoun's writings prove to carry underlying philosophical insights, rather than mere descriptions. To a large extent, his works are not straightforward descriptions of some forgotten hills, but carriers of genuine messages based on Algerian national and identical constants.

Keywords: Critique of colonialism, initial ambivalence, Mouloud Feraoun, Algerians social life.



Feraoun's novel [*Le fils du pauvre*] is more than just a testimony in which he recounts the daily life of his Berber mountain village, the emigration of his father to Paris, and especially his adolescent efforts to succeed in becoming a teacher rather than a simple shepherd. Through its austere authenticity and the modesty of its form, it became a classic for young Algerians...

(Assia Djebbar, *Le fils du pauvre* Préface 'English version')

* BOUDERSA Hemza.: boudersa.hemza@ensc.dz

Introduction

This paper explores how Feraoun criticized colonialism and to what extent he shows some 'ambivalence' towards his French education and, by extension, towards colonialism in general.

Mouloud Feraoun is one of the icons of the Algerian literature in French expression. This part of the paper explores Mouloud Feraoun's life and works.

I-1- Mouloud Feraoun (1913-1962). Growing up Poor

Mouloud Feraoun is an Algerian author and educator. He was born on March 08, 1913 in Tizi-Hibel. He grew up in a family of poor fellahs (peasants) made up of five children. He was the third child and the first boy.

At the age of seven, Mouloud Feraoun entered Taourirt-Moussa Primary School, near his native village. Having won a scholarship, he joined Tizi-Ouzou Middle School in 1928 (Yacine-Titouh, 2004, p.194). Four years later, he successfully obtained a spot at the Teachers College of Bouzaréa in Algiers. After his graduation from the teacher's college, Feraoun began his career as a teacher in his native village Taourirt-Aden (1936-1937). A year later, in 1938, he married his cousin Dehbia with whom he had seven children (Feraoun, *Le journal*, 1962, p. 223).

After teaching in several other schools in the same region (Taourirt-Aden 1936-1937, Taboudrist, 1937-45; Ait-Abdel-Moumen, 1945-46; Taourirt-Moussa, 1946-52), Feraoun was appointed principal of a school in Fort-National (Larba Nath Irathen) in 1952. Because of the harassment pressure he suffered at the hands of Archard, a French administrator and member of the Sections Administratives Spécialisées (SAS, Specialized Administrative Sections), in July 1957, he moved to the suburbs of Algiers, precisely to the *Nador* School in Clos Salembier, as principal. The following year, he became an inspector and co-director of the Centres de Services Sociaux Éducatifs (The Centers for Social and Educational Services) at Château Royal near Algiers (Feraoun, 1962, *Le journal*, p. 223). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to enable the poorest in society to receive a formal education established the centers.

Mouloud Feraoun was assassinated in March 15, 1962 in El-Biar while having a discussion over the Algerian postcolonial education at the CSES. Two ordered Feraoun and five other colleagues outside: Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) [Secret Armed Organization] brigades and were machine-gunned (Yacine-Titouh, 2004, p.195).

Germaine Tillion wrote in *Le monde* shortly after Mouloud Feraoun's assassination, a few days before the ceasefire, which signaled the end of the War of Independence:

This honest man... this man who never did wrong to anyone, who devoted his life to the public good, and who was one of the greatest writers in Algeria, has been murdered ... Not by accident, not by mistake, but called by his name and killed with preference. (Lenzini, 2013, p 360)

He was a man of hope; he preached hope; he instilled hope and continues to instill hope to Algerians through his legacy. His Friend Emmanuel Roblès wrote: "Feraoun was ill-understood by both the Europeans and the Arabs of Algeria...he is the one who wanted us believe desperately in a new and free nation which can enrich the cultures and forces of its entire people (Ibid 358)". Roblès added in another context: "Here he is as patient, generous, impregnated with the virtues of these mountaineers..., in love with honor and justice (MABIROUK, 2018, p 11-21). Virtue as commitment come from Feraoun's inspiring writings.

I-2. His Works

Feraoun wrote many novels, namely: *Le fils du pauvre* (*The Poor Man's Son* 1950), *La terre et le sang* (*Land and Blood* 1953), *Les chemins qui montent* (*The Ascending Paths* 1957), and *La cité des roses* (*The Roses Housing Project* of 2007). Feraoun also wrote many short stories, describing the daily life of peasants in his village *Jours de Kabylie* (*Kabylie Days*, 1954), as well letters *Lettres à mes amis* (*Letters to One's Friends*, 1969), and a war diary *Journal* (*Journal* 1954-62) (Aoudjit, 2018, pp.68-69). Finally, Feraoun is known as the editor of an anthology of *Mhand ou Mhand poems: The Poems of Si Mohand*.

Le fils du pauvre (*The Poor Man's Son*, 1950)

Le fils du pauvre has become a **classic**. Many critics consider it as one of North Africa's greatest and artistic literary masterpieces. It opens the way with many other novels for an Algerian literature to a universal reach. *Le fils du pauvre* is a 'semi-autobiographical' novel that is simple in its unique descriptive style, form and style. The story revolves around a young boy nicknamed Fouroulou Menrad, struggling to get an education, covering the period from 1910's to 1940's, a time of great economic hardship, colonial injustice and horrific misery...

The most prominent themes of the novel are poverty, misery, injustice, hypocrisy, honor, justice innocence, patience and perseverance. These themes are omnipresent vividly in Feraoun's novels. Life in rugged and forgotten hills in Algeria is an ongoing struggle against hunger, destitution, misery, injustice and debt. It is also precarious. Men are unable to feed their families; emigration is seen as the only solution to many Algerians, including Ramdane, Fouroulou's father, and Amer n'Amer in *Les chemins qui montent*. Medical care is entirely absent. Not surprisingly, "death cuts people down in the prime of youth" (Aoudjit, 2018, p.70.). Life of the colonized is miserable and different from that of the colonizer, Feraoun keeps writing.

Feraoun's novel is unique. Throughout the novel, for example, Feraoun alludes to many characters drawn from Greek mythology and world literature such as Odysseus (7) and Don Quixote (Aoudjit, 2018, p.3). In addition to Feraoun's descriptive and reportage-like text, he also places himself as an insider and story to provide the reader with an opportunity to taste the element of drama in the text.

Feraoun's unique narrative and descriptive techniques enable the reader to be acquainted with the most striking features of the writer's village: its djema, pottery making, and agricultural activities. The narrator is virtually omniscient. Feraoun was inspired by the grand traditions of nineteenth-century French realists: Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Gustave Flaubert and Honoré de Balzac (Aoudjit, 2018). To serve his purpose; Feraoun uses realist narrative techniques and the indirect discourse.

Indeed, the first person plural frequently introduces information about Feraoun's village traditions: "as we say..." and "as we Kabyles..." This technique shows that the narrator is speaking from within his culture and that he addresses the French reader (Saadouni, 2015, p.147). Feraoun's novel is

written in a simple but not shallow style, a style that is profound but not complex and ambiguous.

Feraoun unveils the nature of the Algerian nif (dignity) exemplified by his father Ramdane and uncle Lounis, despite all atrocities, misery and deplorable life caused by the colonizer. He shows determinism and hard character in his matriarch Tessadit and tenderness and devotion in his mother, his aunts Nana and Khalti. He reveals the imperfection of the human nature by means of Helima and her daughters. Throughout his first novel Feraoun suggests that all misery he sees around him is caused first by colonialism.

The editor of his book *Le fils du pauvre* (in its English version) summarized the story by saying:

...Feraoun accomplished what few writers ... had been successful at doing in their fiction, which was to take readers inside a time and place, inside the experiences of people burdened by the history and hardships of colonialism in Algeria, inside the misery, poverty ... and most important, inside their hopes. (Feraoun, *The Poor Man's Son*, 2005, p. xiii)

Critics divided the novel into many levels (**lingual issues, ethnographic concerns, aesthetic sense, and philosophical meanings**) that embody autobiographical features with a humanistic touch. Charles Bonn, French writer and critics, wrote: "ce n'est pas de la poésie, ni une études psychologique, ni même un roman 'aventure puisqu'il n'a pas imagination (...).il voulait tout simplement (...) raconter sa proper hisdtoire)" (Saadouni, 2015, p.20). Feraoun himself affirms the ethnographic concern in his novel by saying : « Nous, Kabyles, nous comprenons, qu'on loue notre pays,. Nous aimons meme qu'on nous cache sa vulgarité sous des qualificatifs flatteurs » (Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre* , 2015,p.12). Other critics firmly confirm that Feraoun's writings are not synonumous to "ethnocentric intentions or communitarist militantism, but to a 'universalist fantasm' to qualify humanistic aspirations " (Saadouni, 2015, p.20). Mohamed Sarri, an Algerian writer, affirmed this sense (Ibid 15). Jean- Maurice Monnoyer, French critics, referred to the « homo-diégétique » style of Feraon that is « not descriptive », but rather profoundly « narrative » with a touch that aspires

« disintellectualizing history » (Ibid 29). These dimensions in Feraoun's work give it a great merit to be called « rich masterpiece » .

In a few words, Feraoun's strong connection to his culture, on the one hand, and his use of the French language and his French education on the other hand, were the two poles of his existence that motivated him to write his first text *Le fils du Pauvre*. The French school merits being indebted, Feraoun frequently declares with some reservations.

La terre et le sang (Blood and Land, 1953)

In this novel, Mouloud Feraoun offers a portrait of life for Algerians from the Kabyle region in the 1920s and 1930s through the story of Amer. The latter leaves his village to work in the coalmines of France.

The second part of the novel inspires its events from Amer's native land. This land that Amer left for fifteen years after being back with Marie, daughter of his uncle Rabah whom Amer had killed accidentally in France. Being in the village, Amer falls in love with Chabha, Sliman's wife. Slimane wants revenge to Rabah, Amer's uncle (Mouloud Feraoun, *Land and Blood*, 2012).

Land and blood are symbols embodying a set of themes. Feraoun carries his themes with some discourses, namely: a discourse on poverty, a discourse on emigration, a discourse on religion and social discourse on primogeniture and another on women (Saadouni, 2015). Themes tackled are; honor, land conflicts, emigration / immigration, treason and betrayal with a tragic features. The novel provides a clear account of Muslim, Berber-Arab social, cultural, and religious practices of rural Algeria in the pre-independence era.

The same techniques and the same narratives used by Feraoun in this novel to highlight the narrator's stance as speaking from within Kabyle culture. *Land and Blood* illustrates the many cultural and religious set of beliefs that characterize the Kabyle cultural realm.

Les Jours de la Kabylie (The Kabylie Days, 1954)

It is an ethnographic account of Kabylia in the 1950s. It sets a mutinous description of the daily days in the region from inside. A set of chronically set events guided fully by the region's traditions periled by a movement towards a changing future. The work was set quite simple, but not shallow and descriptive, but not superficially illustrative. An honorary merit was given to *Tajmâat* and their consulting role. The latter that provides a catalyst wisdom to the Kabyle society. Simply... "Il ya des joies qui ne s'achètent pas, des plaisirs insoupçonnés, des bonheurs simples et tranquilles don't il faut jouir en cachette" (Feraoun, *Jours de Kabylie. Chroniques algérienne*, 1968), Feraoun artistically put.

Les chemins qui montent (The Ascending Paths, 1957)

This novel continues where *La terre et le sang* left off. It tells the story of young Dehbia passionately in love with Amer n'Amer (Marie's son). Dehbia is distressed by her village life. She reflects on her childhood misery and her conflict with Mokrane, Amer n'Amer's rival. She was born at Ai-Ouadhou, a predominantly Christian village, of a Christian father and a Muslim mother from Ighil-Nezman, Melha. She recalls her hard times and difficult childhood.

Amer n'Amer recounts his life, starting with his mother's death. He recalls as well the hostility of his fellow villagers after he founded a communist cell in Ighil-Nezman. He goes further back in his memory to remember the abuse and humiliation he faced as an orphan.

The novel ends up with the protagonist's intense sense of 'ambivalence', 'isolation', and 'non-being'. Amer n'Amer's life turns to be a nightmare. He feels that he is in a kind of a cultural limbo, and that he fits neither in Algeria nor in France.

Like the other Feraoun's novels, *Les chemins qui montent* tackles the issues of hardship, emigration, ambivalence, and identity crisis but it is, above all, a scathing critique of life under colonialism.

L'anniversaire (The Anniversary, 1972)

L'anniversaire represents the last part of the Mouloud Feraoun's novel *Le fils du pauvre*, which was deleted from 1954 edition. Feraoun divided this section into three subsections: "Bouzaréa", La Guerre ("the War") and

epilogue (“epilogue”) (Feraoun, *L’anniversaire*, 1972). This part shows more about misery and injustice in colonized Algeria. In the second, subsection “La Guerre”).

Feraoun describes how World War II worsened life in Algeria. He recounts how “deplorable parade of misery personified... [How] a young man waiting in line shamelessly reveals to anyone passing behind him a bit of filthy buttock... [While another] does not even try to hide a swarthy testicle freed by the trip in his narrow pants (Feraoun, *L’anniversaire*, 1972, pp. 128-131).

This novel shows further how extreme poverty is not the only thing destitute peasants faced, they also endured humiliation and abuse because of a combination of colonialism, war and the Vichy regime. This trial pushed people to behave in a peculiar way. Feraoun says that misery is such that “one is ready to cheat a friend, swindle a brother or break one’s promise” just to have enough not to starve (Feraoun, *L’anniversaire*, 1972, pp.133). Feraoun adds:” Dans l’Algérie en revolution les paroles de paix sont couvertes depuis longtemps par le fracas de la guerre” (Ibid).

La cité des roses (Housing Project of Roses, 2007)

The title of the novel is ironic; it does not reflect the reality Feraoun describes. As in previous novels, Feraoun describes life is in the colonial times; the ravages of the war, and the violence and inhumanity of colonialism.

In the midst of this miserable life and echoes of deaths everywhere, a love affair develops between an Algerian school headmaster and a French woman, Françoise. She does not really know what to make of this new infatuation she already loved a handsome Frenchman and an Algerian man. Their love is rather impossible as they are already married (Feraoun, *La cité des roses* , 2007). Françoise is also conflicted because she still loves MG, the French officer of “Les Unités Terrestres” even though he “préchant l’intégration des âmes à tout prix et la fraternization obligatoire” (Feraoun, *La cité des roses* , 2007, p.50)

The Algerian headmaster seems ‘ambivalent’ about the relationship as Françoise is. Both belong to two opposing camps: the colonizer and the colonized. Feraoun writes: She is “engagée sur une pente...!” (63) and he is

aware that “[il] n’était pas un traître mais un hybride. Personne n’en voulait plus, il était bon pour le couteau, la mitraillette ou tout au moins la prison (18)”.

In *La cité des roses*, Feraoun explores many themes, namely: love, liberty, exile and identity. Feraoun uses a perfect linear narrative technique in the form of diary as in his *Journal*. In all dialogues that are found all over the novel, Feraoun makes clear that all communication between the French and the Algerian characters is impossible. The lack of communication between the two parties symbolizes the idea that the only solution to the thorny situation is the independence of the country.

Feraoun wrote this novel to object colonialism, its pitfall and atrocities. The publisher asked Feraoun to modify his manuscript. Feraoun understood that the reason behind the request was more political than professional. Forty-five years after Feraoun’s death, his son Ali submitted the manuscript for publication in 2007.

This novel split into two parts. Feraoun uses in the first part the third person narrator and uses in the second part the personal pronoun I to express his days and nights. In this autobiographical novel, Feraoun changes his style to include many flashbacks in a form of a diary.

Le journal¹ (The Journal 1955-1962)

In November 1, 1955, one year after the outbreak of the Algerian revolution, Feraoun started writing his diary. It ends on March 14, 1962. One day before, the OAS assassinated him. Feraoun wanted to publish his journal to inform the public about the situation, but the editor declined his request on the pretext that it was too violent and the situation too delicate.

The representatives of France, here, have always treated me as an enemy since the troubles began, yet they would like me to act like a good French patriot---simply out of gratitude because France has made a headmaster and a writer of me...as though all that were a generous gift I would only had to hold out my hand for. As though in return I ought to support the French cause to the detriment of my own people, who may be in error but who suffer and die ...I’m simply asked to die as a traitor and then I should have paid my debt². (Feraoun, *Journal*

1955-1962, 1962, p.131)(Translated from French by the author)

To protect his manuscripts, Feraoun gave it to his friend Emanuel Robles who hid it in his garden. In *Le Journal*, he recorded everything, detailed all his preoccupations, and narrated all the major events that took place. On February 5, 1962, he wrote: “De Gaulle will deliver a speech to end up the war in Algeria. How many victims would be? OAS is killing... with cowardice of all...a blessing to deaths, peace to those alive... stops violence... vive liberty (345-346)”.

On February 22, 1956, Feraoun sent a lucid letter to the League of Teachers showing his position to what the French called the insurrection. He said:

J’ai pour la Kabylie, écrivait-il, une tendresse filiale que j’ai voulu exprimer dans mes livres. J’en ai donné une image sympathique mais non-une image trompeuse. Que puis-je écrire à présent alors que l’angoisse me noue la gorge? Dirai-je sa souffrance ou sa révolte? [...]Il s’agit seulement de comprendre pourquoi cette unanimité dans la rébellion, pourquoi le divorce est si brutal. La vérité c’est qu’il n’y jamais eu mariage! Les Français sont restés à l’écart. Ils croyaient que l’Algérie, c’était eux. [...] Ce qu’il eut fallu pour s’aimer. Se connaître d’abord. Un siècle Durant on s’est coudoyé avec curiosité, il ne reste plus qu’a récolter cette indifférence réfléchi qui est le contraire de l’amour. [...] Les comptes, c’est la reconnaissance de notre droit à vivre, de notre droit à l’instruction et au progrès, de notre droit à être libre.

(Feraoun, *Journal* 1955-1962, 1962, p.10)

On May 6, 1957, he wrote describing how savage the colonizer was. “I come back from Algiers after three days there, I saw people in misery...French soldiers beating, stealing, torturing and killing... (227-228).”

In a scathing critique of the hypocrisy of the colonialists, he writes: “civilized people think they offer moral lessons to the world with killing innocents... with no consciousness...they kill...civilized people happy with their wrong doings... (348).”

Feraoun's journal is both a diary and a historical testimony. The writer shows his pain and ache towards what was happening in Algeria. He was present in flesh, mind, and soul with the Algerian cause. He added, at the end, "Oui, je me battrais parce que j'ai vécu dans ce pays que je crois être le mien. He says:

I had given myself a fortnight to escape from my horizons, my friends, my habits and my worries. As an obsession followed the image of my country in revolt, a country determined to proclaim its suffering, its anger and its hatred. I was proud to hear his voice, but frightened that he would not be understood that the raucous cries that from his throat are not intelligible to the attentive world that listens to him [...] It is generally believed that such questions which would be frightening, now comes, must not be asked now or all efforts must be of liberation. (Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962*, 1962, pp 34-61³) (Translated from French by the author).

In most of his works, Feraoun mixes romantic narratives, diary and history-like writing carrying profound messages in a simple, yet not shallow language.

II- Feraoun's critique of colonialism

This section explores, in brief, the evolution of Feraoun's critique colonialism. The latter started ambivalent and ended radical, findings of the paper show.

II-1- The Ambivalence of Feraoun's early writings

Feraoun's early novels, especially *Le fils du pauvre*, are sometimes rejected out of hand on the grounds that they are merely 'ethnographic', even 'apolitical'. As Aoudjit puts it:

The publication of *Le fils du pauvre* in 1950 was uneventful. While French critics gave it lavish praise and described it in a not so subtle paternalistic tone as "a beautiful novel" and "simple, touching, written in a language, which is accessible to everyone," Algerian critics met it with indifference. (Aoudjit, 2010, p.1)

Readers who are already familiar with the writer's life and career can easily tell that *Le fils du pauvre* is full of personal details. For instance, there is almost no difference between the author and the novel's main character. Both were born in the same period (1912-13) and both were raised in poor mountains villages. Furthermore, both Feraoun and Fouroulou lived in extreme poverty. Finally, both struggled to get an education and had the misfortune of seeing their fathers emigrate to France.

However, *Le fils du pauvre* is 'not strictly autobiographical'. It is a 'means of cultural affirmation and a powerful indictment of the deplorable social and economic conditions of Algerians during the occupation of their country'. Feraoun evokes the values, customs and traditions of Algerians as a challenge to the colonialist ideology. He presents the unique experience of being Algerian during the colonial period. He also shows the Algerians' profound love of their land and his affection and respect for peasants and emigrant workers. Feraoun writes: "cette terre aime ses enfants, elle reconnaît tout de suite les siens; ceux qui sont faits pour elle et pour que elle est faite..., il faut la découvrir et pour cela, il faut l'aimer" (Feraoun, *La terre et le sang*, 2016, p.31).

Despite the fact that Feraoun reveals the deplorable situation of Algerians, pointing out their poverty, their lack of quality health care, education, and social services, he does not put the blame on the French—at least not explicitly. Indeed, sometimes he seems to welcome their presence.

To start with, he shows a strong affection for the French school. He believes that it is thanks to its administrators and educators that Fouroulou, a "humble" shepherd succeeded in escaping his fate to become a teacher and a brilliant writer. Furthermore, he is full of praise for his French teacher M. Lemberet:

M.Lemberet est un homme admirable. Sa haute taille légèrement voûtée, sa démarche un peu raide, comme celle d'un officier, la longue barbe qui orne sa belle figure inspirent un respect mêlé de crainte. Il a aussi une voix forte, grave, mesurée. Mais près de lui, quand il vous a regardé de ses yeux pleins de franchise, de douceur, de naïveté, le respect se transforme en confiance absolue. (Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 2015, p.165)

Feraoun also speaks highly of the Catholics missionaries and compares them ‘relatively’ to the Muslim clerics:

Azir expliqua qu’un missionnaire est un homme de bien, fait pour aider les pauvres, à peu près dans le genre des Pères Blancs. En plus de tous les services qu’il rendait aux malheureux montagnards, chaque soir, il les réunissait dans une grande salle pour leur parler de religion, les conseiller, les éduquer. C’était admirable. (Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 2015, p. 163)

La parole est aux cheikhs ! L’un d’eux sort un vieux livre en arabe tout noir de fumée, enveloppé dans un mouchoir. Il lit quelque chose d’incompréhensible, appelle sur nous la baraka puis, sans transition, les foudres du ciel ne nous apaisons pas. Instantanément, ma grand-mère tremblant va effleurer le livre saint de ses lèvres timides... (Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 2015, p 55).

Worse, even, not content with belittling the Muslim clerics, Feraoun puts down Muslim clerics by suggesting that, unlike Christianity, they are segregationist:

Le dimanche, on se sent un peu différent des autres, un peu supérieur, affranchi en quelques sortes puisque les barrières conventionnelles entre home et femmes, jeunes et vieux, disparaissent dans le temple de Dieu... Les musulmans les ferment, au contraire. (Feraoun, *Les chemins qui montent*, 2015, p.22-23)

Was the French ‘Civilizing Mission’ influencing Feraoun? Did he believe in it? Many critics questioned.

However, nowhere is Feraoun’s ‘ambivalence’ towards colonialism more explicit than in *Jours de Kabylie* where he calls the French teachers “apostles” and says, in a language reminiscent of colonialist propaganda that they teach reason and humanity:

Le cheikh est un homme instruit, il ne saurait ni mentir, ni tromper. Ce que l'on exige de lui, il n'a aucun mérite à le donner. Nos anciens réussirent ce prodige de faire de l'école du village lieu où l'on envoie les enfants pour qu'ils deviennent meilleurs, le temple d'une religion nouvelle qui n'exclut pas l'ancienne, car elle s'adresse au cœur et à la raison, se sert du langage humain et enseigne la vérité humaine. Ainsi chez nous, ceux qui ont... ces vieux maîtres ne disent pas qu'ils furent des apôtres et des saints. Ils disent que ce furent d'honnêtes gens, toujours prêt à rendre service, des savants qui avaient bien vite gagné l'admiration, l'estime et le respect. Très souvent ils ajoutant: que Dieu leur réserve une place au paradis. (Feraoun, *Jours de Kabylie. Chroniques algérienne*, 1968, pp.132-133)

Mouloud Feraoun adds in *Les chemins qui montent* showing another perspective to his 'ambivalence' by claiming a peaceful co-existence that he paradoxically refers to as a 'fraternal exchange of cultures and ideas'. "Il y'a un siècle que les Français viennent chez nous. Il y a un demi-siècle que nous allons chez eux. Un échange fraternal dont je suis le batard authentique" (Feraoun, *Les chemins qui montent*, 2015, p.185)⁴. Furthermore, Feraoun's use of some terminology like 'Fellagha' and 'Out of laws' keeps considered by some critics questionable (Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962*, 1962, p.17-19...). Indeed, a set of 'ambivalence', 'paradoxical' logic, and contradictions were openly detected in these cited novels.

II -2- A radical critique: *Journal* and *La cité des roses*

Starting with his *Journal*, Feraoun's attitude towards the French presence in Algeria undergoes a paradigm shift; it becomes unequivocally pro-independence: He says: "La vérité... Les Français croyaient que l'Algérie c'était eux: non-messieurs, l'Algérie c'est nous. Vous êtes étrangers sur notre Terre" (Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962*, 1962, p.62)

Feraoun's pro-independence stance is also apparent in his empathy and praise for the fighters of the Armée de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Army, ALN):

Les hors-la-loi sont des nôtres. Ils se comportent en Kabyles et ont soin de ne pas nous blesser. Selon le cas ils flattent notre

fanatisme, notre orgueil, nos espoirs, ou alors ils partagent nos idées, nos conceptions démocratique de la société, nos sentiments humanitaires. Ils ont de tout parmi eux. N'importe qui se sentirait à l'aise dans le maquis [...] l'objectif pour les patriotes était donc de prouver que l'Algérie n'est pas territoire français contrairement aux prétentions gouvernementales. (Feraoun, *Journal* 1955-1962, 1962, p. 61-69)

Feraoun refers to two love affairs in *Le journal* and *La cité des roses*. In *Le journal*, the protagonist's lover is *Claire*. The name *Claire* ("clear" in English) symbolizes the author's conviction that the relationship between Algeria and France must end. The same message is conveyed by the failure of the relationship between Françoise and the school headmaster in *La cité*. Accordingly, the Algerians and the French must divorce even though they cohabited for almost a century and half.

For the Algerian headmaster, Françoise represents the two faces of France: a supposedly civilized France that preaches the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which the writer would like to believe, and an uncivilized, tyrant, oppressive France that used all its power to subjugate and oppress the Algerian people.

In *La cité des roses*, Feraoun shows that the relation between the Algerian school headmaster and Françoise is uneasy. It traps both in an ambivalent situation. The schoolteacher feels torn between his love and his values:

Tous deux, nous n'attendions plus grand-chose de ce lundi. Peut-être le baiser d'adieu avec des larmes de bêtes. Peut-être rien du tout une simple poignée de main parmi toutes les autres. Enfin, dans le domaine du possible, double crise de colère suivie d'une vive altercation pour s'en aller avec de la rancune. Une fausse rancune qui masquerait notre tristesse...En fin de compte, ça été la poignée de main, accompagnée d'un regard chargé de toute la tristesse du monde et aussi d'un soupçon de promesse. (59)

The schoolteacher finally chooses to preserve his dignity and put an end to his dilemma. Françoise (in *La cité des roses*) and Claire (in *Le journal*) who represents France also decide to give up their lovers.

As time goes by, Feraoun becomes even more militant: “Vous les dupes, taisez-vous, nous criaient les jeunes. Cachez-vous ou alors disparaissez à jamais. Nous sommes des musulmans...Bravo mes chères petits, vous ne voulez plus que nous soyons les dupes (Feraoun, *La cité des roses*, 2007, p. 169). Feraoun adds: “Plus que jamais, il s’agissait pour les Français de garder l’Algérie en supprimant toute opposition. Il s’agissait pour nous de reconquérir notre liberté et d’être maitres chez nous (166).”

Ambivalence is present again, Feraoun told in his *Journal* a story of a French teacher ‘indoctrinating’ his pupils with a bit ‘confusionist’ temper. Feraoun put:

Il ya en moi le français, il y’a en moi le Kabyle [...] La France était patrie et que, par consequent, il était un petit orphelin don’t on prenait soin...[...] Cela mit dans mon coeur beaucoup d’humilité et de reconnaissance attendrie et j’aimais la France plus qu’un petit Francais. (ppp. 97-98-99)⁵

As the Algerian revolution chronologically evolved in tension, Feraoun starts to show a shift in his vision toward Colonialism. He reveals his anti-assimilationist categorization to his attitude by saying: « Tous ceux que j’ai rencontrés savaient que je n’était ni Francais, ni intégrable» ((Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962*, 1962, p.100).

Convinced later that the Algerians are different from the French and Algeria cannot be France. Feraoun says: “La lutte s’est engagée entre deux peuples différents, entre le maitre et le serviteur...les Algériens n’ont pas attendu le xx e siècle pour se savoir Algériens. La meilleurs preuve c’est que tout de suite on s’est groupé derrière les libérateurs” (Feraoun, *Journal 1955-1962*, 1962, p.64). Was Feraoun clear, constant, consistant, and coherent in his ‘vision’?

Overall, the impossible love affairs in *Le journal* and in *La cité des roses* symbolize of the impossibility of any reconciliation between the two communities as long as colonialism was in place.

Conclusion

Working within the conventions of the realistic novel, Feraoun has succeeded in creating a vivid picture of Algerian society during the colonial period. He has also succeeded in presenting a scathing critique of the way the French treated Algerians at home (*Le fils du pauvre*, *La cité des roses*, *Le journal*) and in mainland France (*La terre et le sang*, *Les chemins qui montent*). However, despite his strong condemnation of the deplorable social situation that existed in Algeria during the French occupation, his critique of colonialism in his early novels does not go as far as to reject colonialism as a system.

Nevertheless, Feraoun's novels are still worth reading for the following reasons: they provide a strikingly realistic picture of life in Algeria from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of the War of Independence. They therefore help make sure that the tragic events that marked that period are not forgotten, they help keep alive the customs and traditions of Algerians' ancestors, they invite comparison with more radical critiques of colonialism such as Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma*, and they provide a good example of realist literature by combining incisive social critique with elegant language. In sum, Feraoun is so important for his achievements as much as for his shortcoming.

NOTES

¹ "Dans mon journal , j'ai note fidèlement ce que j'ai vu et su" (Feraoun, *Journal* 1955-1962, 1962).

² The version in French above.

³

La vérité c'est qu'il y'a jamais eu de mariage. Non. Les Français sont restés à l'écart. Dédaigneusement à l'écart. Les Français sont restés étrangers. Ils croyaient que l'Algérie c'était eux. Maintenant que nous nous estimons assez forts ou que nous les croyons un peu faibles, nous leur disons : Non messieurs, l'Algérie c'est nous. Vous êtes étrangers sur notre terre. [...]. Qui s'est jamais préoccupé de déclencher chez les jeunes français « une mobilisation » pour éduquer les 80% d'enfants algériens non scolarisés ? Qui a parlé d'intégration alors que l'intégration était encore possible, il y a trente ou quarante ans ?

(Feraoun, *Journal* 1955-1962, 1962, p.161.)

⁴ Sylvie Thenault, French scholar, said about *le Journal* : « Ce texte est relativement difficile à interpréter car il mêle récit et analyse. Il permet cependant de reconstituer la pensée paradoxale de Mouloud Feraoun : reconnaissant le caractère oppressif du système coloniale, il opte pour l'indépendance mais ne cesse d'en appeler à la fraternité, comme s'il ne pouvait se résoudre à la rupture » (Saadouni, 2015, p318.)

⁵ José Lenzini in his book *Mouloud Feraoun. Un écrivain engagé* wrote : « Et s'il devenait le bon Kabyle ? Un peu Romain, pas trop Arabe, très cultivé, quasi-Français » (Lenzini, 2013, p.177). Many questions are raised, accordingly.

Bibliography

- Abdelkader, A. (2018). *Algerian Literature. A Reader's Guide and Anthology*. New York : Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, .
- Aoudjit, A. (2010). *The Algerian Novel and the Colonial Discourse. Witnessing to Différend*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Feraoun, M. (1962). *Journal 1955-1962*. Paris : Editions du Seuil .
- Feraoun, M. (1968). *Jours de Kabylie. Chroniques algérienne* . Paris : Editions du Seuil .
- Feraoun, M. (1972). *L'anniversaire* . Paris : Editions du Seuil .
- Feraoun, M. (2005). *The Poor Man's Son*. (J. D. Sueur, Éd., & J. D. Sueur, Trad.) Virginia: University of Virginia Press.
- Feraoun, M. (2007). *La cité des roses* . Alger: Yamcom.
- Feraoun, M. (2015). *Le fils du pauvre* . Bejaia: Editions Talantikit.
- Feraoun, M. (2015). *Les chemins qui montent* . Bejaia: Talantikit .
- Feraoun, M. (2016). *La terre et le sang* . Bejaia : Editions Talantikit.
- Land and Blood*. (2012). (P. Geesey, Trad.) Virginia : University of Virginia Press.
- Lenzini, J. (2013). *Mouloud Feraoun. Un écrivain engagé*. Alger: Casbah Editions .
- MABIROUK, S. (2018). *Ecrivains Algériens d'Expressions Française*. Constantine : Numidia Livres .
- Saadouni, R. (2015). *Mouloud Feraoun. L'éternel Fouroulou Menrad*. Ain Mlila : Dar El Houda Editions .
- Yacine-Titouh, T. (2004). *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés. Aux origines du malaise culturel des intellectuels algériens* . Alger: Casbah editions .