

SOCIAL CRITICS AND THE  
CONDITION OF WOMEN IN  
ALGERIAN LITERATURE IN ARABIC:  
'Abd al-Ḥamīd Benhadūga as a Case Study

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to present the work of the Algerian writer 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Benhadūga, and to discuss how woman's identity and role in society are mirrored in the Algerian narrative discourse in the post-independence literature written in Arabic. In particular, I will read Benhadūga's novel *Rīḥ al-ḡanūb* (South Wind, Benhadūga 1972) which presents a female character who, from the author's point of view, represents a critique of power. As in other novels by the same author written between 1970 and 1980, as well as in novels by other Algerian authors (e.g. in *Al-zilzāl* (The Earthquake) by At-Tāhar Waṭṭār and *Mā lā tadruhu al-riyāḥ* (What Winds cannot erase) by Muḥammad Al-'Alī 'Ar'ār), *South Wind's* protagonist tries to envision herself by opposing tradition, but she fails, because to succeed she would have to give up her 'feminine' side. Usually, Benhadūga's novels are labelled as "regime novels"; they are not set in a specific historical background, nor do they belong to the field of interdisciplinary studies (though, as Terry Eagleton points out, "such 'pure' literary theory is an academic myth" (Eagleton 1997: 170). In fact, Benhadūga participated in the socialist ideal and chose to write in Arabic. At the same time, even in such conditions, the intellectual can contribute to a real change, contradicting the idea that a free intellectual can define themselves only at the margins of the literary field and is condemned to such status in order to maintain his or her freedom of thought.

**Keywords:** 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Benhadūga, Algerian literature, Arabic contemporary literature, *South Wind*, *Rīḥ al-ḡanūb*

In this paper, I will focus on literary writing and political discourse, stressing the relationship between the author and ideology, which finds its means of expression in the Arabic language as the embodiment of "Arabicity". Underlying this are the margins that the writer has at their disposal in relation to the "marginalisation of his intellectual activity" (Bourdieu 1992), margins that allow them to express their critical thinking about the ideology and to respond to the State's control of literary expression.<sup>1</sup>

To do so, I will adopt a reading that is both stylistic and thematic at the same time, and bound to what Pierre Bourdieu calls the relation

1 I have addressed this subject more than once in my academic work. See e.g. Guardi 2008.

between the literary production and fields of power (Bourdieu 2005: 290). I will try to explain the novel's *fil rouge* and show how Benhadūga addresses the dilemma of the relationship with power.

My goal is twofold: first, to show how this literary genre can contribute to a better understanding of history from an interdisciplinary perspective (Rivet 2002: 11); and second, to restore justice to authors like Benhadūga, who are the link between the Algerian literary past in Arabic, and the so-called “nouveau soufflé” (new wave) of contemporary Algerian literature (Moukhtari 2006). The latter goal relates to the way Arabic literature, and Algerian literature in particular, is studied in the West. As Debbie Cox maintains:

The Arabic literature is generally dismissed as being a reproduction of the state discourse, too politicised to constitute literature, and too close to state propaganda to merit consideration. Furthermore, the Arabic literature stands accused of being complicit in authoritarian rule and the suppression of freedoms. Algerian authors writing in French (and publishing in Paris) unintentionally contributed to this view by asserting that any work critical of the state was subject to censorship, since this implies that critical writing was impossible within Algeria (Debbie Cox 2002: 38).

In my reading, I will refer to the notion of the intellectual field as conceived by Pierre Bourdieu (1966: 865–906), not in order to discuss culture per se, but to challenge its sacral conception and to take into account the social conditions of production and reception. In fact, only these conditions allow us to adequately understand cultural phenomena. I will also rely on Terry Eagleton's works on ideology<sup>2</sup> because:

Literature... is the most revealing mode of experiential access to ideology that we possess. It is in literature, above all, that we observe, in a peculiar complex, coherent, intensive and immediate fashion the workings of ideology in the textures of lived experience of class societies (Eagleton 1976: 110).

If literature is a signifying praxis (Mulhern 1992: 19–20) *in* society, and at the same time *in relation* as well as *in opposition* to it, it will be necessary to consider not only the social and political situation in Algeria at the time the novels were published, but also to take into account the Arabisation<sup>3</sup> and women's roles in Algerian society.<sup>4</sup>

‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Benhadūga was born in 1925 in al-Manṣūra, in the Sṭif wilāya (Sétif; today, the village is located in the Burġ Bū Arririġ – Bourdj Bou Arreridj province). Together with Al-Ṭāhar Waṭṭār, he was one of the few authors of his generation to always write in Arabic. Well-known in his homeland and abroad, his work has been translated

2 Especially Eagleton 2007.

3 See on this subject: M. Benrabah 1999. A-E. Berger 2002. A. Moatassime 1992. K. Taleb Ibrahimi 1997.

4 An interesting study on the subject is: Ahlam Mosteghanemi 1985.

into several languages. For some time, he was Chief Responsible for the Culture National Council (1990), as well as the First Secretary in the National Consultee Council (1992). He later became the interim president of the National Consultee Council when Riḍā Malik<sup>5</sup> was called upon to become a member of the State High Council in 1992, Benhadūga was also the general director of the national publisher ENAL (1991–1992). He left the Algerian Broadcasting Corporation, where he'd worked to serve the revolution in the fifties, and migrated to Tunis (1958), where he directed "La voix de l'Algérie", a radio station. He is considered the father of the Algerian contemporary novel. The idea that pushed him to write, in his own words, was to let the Algerian novel in Arabic become a literary reality.

It is interesting to note how Benhadūga became a writer; his path is similar to that of other authors of the period: he spent his childhood with his grandmother in a little mountain village, where he attended a French elementary school. He learned Arabic from his father, who'd had a classical education acquired from the *iğāza*<sup>6</sup> masters. After completing elementary school, he attended the *Ben Hamlawī zāwiya* (a religious school) near Constantine for three years. He then spent another three years in Marseille with an uncle, a business man, and obtained a professional diploma (as a plastic beveller-turner). When he returned to Algeria, he attended courses at the Constantine Al-Kettaniyya Institute (an affiliate of Zaytūna University). In 1950, he enrolled in the Zaytūna University to study Arabic Letters. At the same time, he took drama courses at the Drama Institute of Tunis, where he was the general secretary, and later president of the Algerian Students Association. He was also responsible for the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD). Back in Constantine, he was Professor of Arabic Literature at the Al-Kettaniyya Institute from 1954 to 1955. In November 1955, pursued by the police, he went to France, where he attended courses at the Alliance Française in Paris and wrote radio plays for ORTF and the BBC. In 1958, he reached Tunis, travelling through Belgium, Germany and Italy, and joined the Armée Nationale de Libération (ALN). He was unsuccessful in entering Algeria, so he stayed in Tunis, working for Radio Tunis (working on radio plays as well as literary, children's and educational broadcasts); he

5 Riḍā Malik graduated from the University of Algiers in Arabic Literature and Philosophy and completed his studies in France. He was one of the founders of the Union Générale des Etudiants Musulmans Algérien (UGEMA) (Algerian Muslim Students General Union) in 1955, and during the Algerian war he founded *Al-muğāhid* ('The Fighter'), a clandestine newspaper. He was the spokesman and member of the FLN Delegation during the Evian Conference. After independence, he served as a diplomat and mediated when Americans were taken hostage at the American embassy in Teheran in 1980. He always struggled to separate religion and the state. During the Black Decade (1990–2000), he was in the Army, and served as the Foreign Affairs Minister in 1993. From 21 August 1993 to 11 April 1994, he served as the Prime Minister. In 1995, he founded L'Alliance Nationale Républicaine (ANR) (National Republican Alliance). He has authored several historical works.

6 The Arabic baccalaureate degree awarded privately during the French colonisation of Algeria.

was a daily contributor at *La Voix de l'Algérie*, publishing literary and political articles in *al-Muğāhid* (The Freedom Fighter), and a member of the *aš-Šabāb al-ğazā'iri* (The Young Algerians) editorial board. In 1958, he published a fifty-page study in Arabic on behalf of the Ministry of Information of the Algerian Republic Provisional Government (GPRA), *Al-ğazā'ir bayna al-'ams wa al-yawm* (Algeria Yesterday and Today), as well as two short story collections. Back in Algeria in 1962, he worked for the radio, and then for the Algerian Radio and Television (RTA), first as chief of service, then as a coordinator, and afterwards as the director of the Artistic Department; he was the director of Channel I (in Arabic) and II (in Tamazight) on the radio, before becoming the president of the RTA Reading Board<sup>7</sup> in September 1970.

Among his many works, we find novels, short stories, children's books, television screenplays and translations. In 1971, Benhadūga published *Riḥ al-ğanūb* (1971), the first volume of a trilogy (completed in the eighties), which continued with *Nihāyat al-'ams* (Yesterday's End, 1975) and *Banā aš-ṣubḥ* (Morning Has Come, 1980). In *Nihāyat al-'ams*, he highlights the role of women during the war of liberation, following the life story of a teacher in an abandoned village. *Banā al-ṣubḥ* on the other hand blends together the different cultural and social registers of contemporary Algeria, which is represented by the young Dalīla, who refuses the family *Diktat* of a feudal father overcome by history, and pays for her desire for emancipation and her will to be. His fourth novel, *Al-ğāziyya wa-al-darawīš* (Jaziya and the Dervishes), published in 1983, was a great success. In it, the author experimented with a new genre: myth and popular story telling (*ḥikāya ša'biyya*), drawing more from Algerian heritage and Arab tradition in general. His last novel, *Ġadan yawm ġadīd* (Tomorrow Will be a New Day, 1992), about memory, received unanimous approval from critics.

Among Benhadūga's other writings are short story collections such as *Zilāl ġazā'iriyya* (Algerian Shadows, 1960), *Al-'ašī'a as-sab'a* (The Seven Rays, 1962) and *Al-kātib wa qīṣaš 'uhra* (The Writer and Other Stories, 1974); as well as translations such as *Qīṣaš min al-'adab al-'ālamī* (Short Stories From World Literature, 1983). His final work, *Amṭāl ġazā'iriyya* (Algerian Proverbs, 1993), is a scholarly work published in 1993 by the Algerian Children's Association. In it, Benhadūga addresses the young generation which has lost or is going to lose its history and rich, cultural heritage: "My goal with this anthology of proverbs is to shed light on the multifaceted Algerian cultural heritage as well as on popular Algerian and Arab literature" (Benhadūga 2007: 7).

In his novels, Benhadūga describes contemporary Algeria, and the publication date and the date in which the novels' events take place are generally close. This means that his work is anchored in the present, which is as interesting as it is limiting, since it is always difficult to write

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<sup>7</sup> Benhadūga died in September 1996 after a long illness.

about history without the necessary temporal detachment. The aim of the author, no doubt, is to describe a country in search of itself, and one that does not know well which path to follow. The novels present critical moments where the protagonists — often, characters in opposition to one other — find themselves facing different possible choices, becoming spokesmen and spokeswomen for different societal strata, or symbols.

In Benhadūga's novels, it is always possible to recognize a protagonist (generally identified as the hero), and an antagonist (the villain), who help the reader clearly understand the author's idea, which could be summed up as follows: the hero defends the revolution and the country's development, while the villain opposes it, usually by putting his private property and his own before the collective wellbeing.

This opposition at the ideological level is reproduced at the human level, as the villain privately behaves as a tyrant as well and considers women as goods to be exchanged for land, property or power; conversely, the hero is respectful of people and their needs. Another important element is Benhadūga's pro-women stance. He correlates the improvement in their status with the country's progress; all the contradictions, complexity and difficulties that they confront, all their hopes, are always in juxtaposition to the country and its independence.

These elements are evident in *Ġadan yawm ġadid*. Here, the protagonist is a woman, whom the author respects not only because of her age, but also because of her ability as a storyteller.<sup>8</sup> She comes from a little village in the mountains, lives during the revolution, and overtly expresses her critical thoughts, not always positive, about Algeria and the results of revolutionary politics. The narrator (Benhadūga himself?) is truly fond of her: her personal story and Algeria's history meld in a soliloquy that she defines as a "hallucination", or rather, a "dream" (Benhadūga 1992: 7–9). Algeria's development from a colonised country to an independent state is interwoven with the protagonist's path of emancipation, starting when she is a child wearing "mountain boots", which she removes after coming to town, since the streets seem to her to be softer than her shoes. Mas'ūda, the heroine, blends together narration, remembrances, dreams and reality; different planes of narration interweave with that of the narrator who, in turn, stimulated by the protagonist's storytelling, recalls his own life.<sup>9</sup> These different narrative planes, oneiric for the most part, let the author play with reality and truth, and sometimes to express un-

8 This refers to the local and Arab traditions. To know how to tell a story is considered a virtue, and Benhadūga had a strong interest in this tradition. Women and men who narrate have always been referred to as *rāwiyya/rāwi*; from this root, the word *riwāya* (novel) is derived.

9 Benhadūga used this technique more than once. In the short story, "Set fire on words", for instance, we find the following incipit: "ʾLastu ʾadri ʾa-kāna ḡalika fi ḡilm, ʾaw fi kābūs, ʾaw fi yaqīza ḡāṣṣa/" (I don't know if it was a dream or a nightmare or even in a particular state of wakeness) (Benhadūga 1997: 59).

comfortable thoughts. The reader is pushed to concentrate to unravel the thread common to the whole narrative. The protagonist herself asks the narrator to recount the story of his life, staying true to the events but not the chronology. This confusion allows the narration's rhythm to become haunting: the reader is pushed to read without resting until the end of each chapter, only to discover there is nowhere to go.

Another interesting aspect which appears time and again in Benhadūga's works is denouncing the traditional values that contribute to a society's sclerosis, especially those regarding the woman's role. In the second chapter of *Ġadan yawm ġadīd*, for instance, Mas'ūda's feelings when facing an unpredictable event are expressed in but a few phrases; she is unable to do anything other than watch:

She put the upper part of her veil on her face, noting that a man on the other side of the sidewalk looked at her from the corner of his eye. She felt strange, impressed. That man is certainly more handsome than her husband who sits beside her. But her husband is her husband. That one is a foreigner, he is not allowed to see her face. Even if he is more handsome than her husband. He wears a suit that fits him better than her husband. He now measures the station sidewalk with a firm step, back and forth. Who knows why he is walking like that. Why doesn't he sit down as the others do? Just to wait for the train... (Benhadūga 1992: 20).

The quality of this writing lies in the fact that Benhadūga, although treating a very sensitive and controversial subject, does not resort to banality. He does not totally destroy the protagonist's original cultural heritage, nor does he judge her based on western mores, and yet he clearly describes the woman's passive condition.

In *Riḥ al-ġanūb*,<sup>10</sup> Benhadūga's critical engagement towards the State develops by presenting the vast differences between life in town and life in the country in the 1970s Algeria. This was in contrast to the official discourse, which pretended to provide moral and material welfare for everyone, based on the Socialist Republic foundation. Nafisa, a university student in Algiers, comes back home on vacation. She is told that her father, Belqāḍī, in order to protect his land from agrarian reform, will prevent her from returning to the capital and make her marry Malik, the village mayor. Shocked, Nafisa refuses the marriage, and writes to her aunt in Algiers, asking for help. She gives the letter to Rabāḥ, her father's shep-

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10 Several studies have been published in Arabic and French about Benhadūga's novels. The writer was long considered almost the only Arabic language author of value in Algeria. His works were never read in the light of political engagement, least of all by western critics ('Ilān 2001 is the only study totally devoted to Benhadūga's work in this field), although he never denied his support for the Algerian revolution. See, for instance, Hassan 2006, and Pantůček 1969. In Arabic: M. Fāsi 1999; Ba'ītiš 2000; Ĥ. Burqūma. 2007; Benšayḥ 2007; Sārī. 2007; Al-A'riġ. 2008; the *Al-luġa wa al-adab* journal devoted a special issue to 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Hadūga in 1998. The Benhadūga Congress, whose venue is every year or two in Burġ Bū 'Arīriġ, has published the proceedings on a regular basis since 1997; here one can find a lot of Algerian and international scholarship devoted to the author.

herd, so that he can send it. Rabāḥ misunderstands her attitude and thinks she is attracted to him. Consequently, he sneaks into her house one night. When Nafisa wakes up and finds him in her bedroom, she shouts at him, calling him a “dirty shepherd”. Rabāḥ feels unfairly treated and decides he won’t be a shepherd anymore, and will support his family by collecting wood. While he is wandering in the woods, he meets the village vase maker, Raḥma, who has fallen and is injured. He takes Raḥma to his home and gives her water, but she dies anyway. During the woman’s funeral, Belqāḍī sets his plan in motion and introduces Malik to his daughter, who decides to flee. In the forest, she is bitten by a snake and falls, but Rabāḥ finds her and takes her to his house, where his mother helps her. A villager sees Nafisa in the house and reports this to her father. Blinded by rage, he goes to Rabāḥ’s house and, believing that his daughter’s honour is forever compromised, assaults Rabāḥ with a knife, injuring him. Seeing her son bleeding, Rabāḥ’s mother goes mad and attacks Belqāḍī. At the end of the novel, it is not clear if Belqāḍī dies, but Nafisa decides to return home and accept her fate.

A fundamental theme in the novel is knowledge and, consequently, Arabic, the national language.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the contrast between town and the country is shown in the different attitudes towards the written word as well as other means of expression:

To revolt? Which revolt? To what goal? She didn’t know anyone in the village. A solitary revolt was nonsense, in the village there was no section of the Women’s Union nor the Party’s youth organisation. Not a single organisation to support those who would revolt and oppose all these tyrannies (Benhadūga 1972: 88).

From the beginning, Benhadūga underscores the protagonist’s difficulty in re-adapting to the village family life. “She speaks with rage”, we are informed by the narrator (Benhadūga 1972: 13), because life in the country is spent in prayer and small talk, without any intellectual possibility.

The gap between Nafisa and the village is so deep that in the beginning the protagonist is not even aware that she shares the same fate as other women: “She questioned her freedom for the first time without being prepared, she faced what she had read about the Arab woman in the papers and in short stories where the woman was always described as a victim, throughout her life” (Benhadūga 1972: 202).

In the background is the agrarian revolution of the 1970s and the painful conditions of the Algerian peasants, who move to town attracted by the official discourse, but once evicted from their homes, become only numbers in the mass of the disinherited living in the slums.

<sup>11</sup> See the special issue of *Al-luġa al-‘arabiyya* (The Arabic Language), published by al-Maġlis al-‘alā li-l-luġa al-‘arabiyya (High Council for the Arabic Language) in 2005 titled “Al-‘arabiyya min miḥnat al-kūlūniyāliyya ilā isrāqat aṭ-ṭawra at-taḥririyya” (Arabic from Colonialism up to the Freedom Revolution).

Benhadūga choses a female protagonist to represent this contrast, as he always used his writing to reflect on the condition of Algerian women<sup>12</sup> and supported their emancipation.<sup>13</sup>

In the rural milieu of *South Wind*, for instance, a woman is perceived as a reprehensible being, and is described as perfidious, untruthful and lustful:

When a man speaks about his wife to another man he tells him, “My wife, sorry...” and when he is angry he curses, saying, “You’re a woman’s face, you, who are considered a woman...” When he gives a piece of advice to somebody else, he spells following proverb: “Hit your wife, even if you do not know why, she knows why” (Benhadūga 1972: 203).

*South Wind* is also the first novel in Arabic where the woman’s body enters. Nafīsa is, as ‘Aḥlām Mostagānmī maintains, “the first Algerian girl in the Arabic language literature who is acknowledged to have a body” (Ahlem Mostaghanemi 1985: 2017) and desires of her own, although this is not fully accepted; the weight of tradition is still very heavy, as the author clearly explains in the novel (Benhadūga 1972: 103–104).

Benhadūga also tries to underscore the existing contradiction between desire and reality:

- Don’t be scared I am Rābah, don’t be scared...

She used a hand to cover herself with the bed sheet while rejecting him with the other. She was taken by surprise as if she was struck by lightning.. She said in a scared voice:

- Go away you criminal.

He said: I am Rabah the shepherd don’t be scared

- Go away, you criminal, go out or I scream.

- But...

He couldn’t speak, his tongue stuck in his mouth as she went on with an angry voice:

- Go out, you criminal, you pig, you dirty shepherd (Benhadūga 1972: 107–108).

In this passage, the author shows how an Algerian woman is not free to dispose of her own body: Nafīsa does not react after reflection, but instead has an automatic response, mostly due to the education she has received. In fact, rejection is present as well as desire. The writer tries to present the reader with a moral quandary, rather than a scene in which the judgment has already been delivered. He succeeds in framing the problem

12 In *Ġadan yawm ḡadid* (1992), *Al-ḡāziya wa al-darāwīš* (1983) and *Bāna al-ṣubḥ* (1980), all available in ‘A. Benhadūga 2002.

13 A different reading is proposed by Gafaīti 1996, which is, in my opinion, distorted, as it is based on a faulty French translation of the novel.

of the woman's sexuality: Nafisa's desire must remain unfulfilled, because accepting the shepherd would represent a cliché — a young woman who succumbs to her instincts and who is judged to be morally bad. Moreover, Benhadūga does not discriminate between women's desires and the constraints men, too, face in Algerian society — to Benhadūga, the inequity concerns both women and men.

The notion of class is present too. If Nafisa disturbs the village people it is also because she comes from a town. The village teacher falls in love with her without even having seen her once; the shepherd sees in her the class she represents, and which he dreams to possess and be part of one day, and he transfers this desire to her body. To everyone, she is “a town girl”, and because of this, is desired and considered to be “easy”. In this way, Benhadūga inserts the problem into a wider context involving social, political and economic elements. It is not by chance that the woman is connected to the land and to the Agrarian Revolution issue, following the parallel between woman and land — both are there to be fecundated, possessed and exploited — that we find in all cultures (this motif can also be seen in *Alzilzāl* by Waṭṭār). Women and land depend on the same master, the one who refuses to acknowledge the shepherds' right to the land, who fights against the Agrarian Revolution and refuses women the right to their own freedom; the woman is considered inferior to the land. In the novel, Nafisa's father, Belqādī, uses his daughters to build political relations that allow him to “inseminate” the land. He sacrifices his older daughter during the war of liberation by getting her engaged to a *muḡāhid* (freedom fighter); but the girl dies in a train accident, while the fiancé becomes the village *wālī* (chief) after independence. Belqādī then thinks to sacrifice Nafisa, forcing her to get engaged to her sister's fiancé, without asking for her consent and without considering even for a moment that the *wālī* may refuse.

Nafisa comes to the village without knowing about her father's plan, but conscious of the inferior position of women in the village, where their only duty is the one to marry and bear children:

One could say – she thought – that woman is a deeply perverse creature. Everything she does is shameful. To go out is shameful, to laugh is shameful, to speak in front of men is shameful, to wear make-up, not to wake up early, not to pray, not to be a perfect housewife is shameful, here everything is shameful (Benhadūga 1972: 36).

Benhadūga discusses social status, calling into question the Algerian Women Association as well, which focuses its efforts only in towns. Nafisa's attempt to escape tradition is condemned to fail anyway, so the author seems to maintain, because every personal initiative that does not convert itself into a collective organised struggle is condemned to failure. During an episode of the television programme *Film min kitāb* (A Movie From a Novel)<sup>14</sup>, Benhadūga himself explains his view, discussing

<sup>14</sup> The broadcast was transmitted by Jordanian television 1977–1978. I was not able to check

the transposition of the novel to cinema (which he did not like very much)<sup>15</sup>. In fact, he states that in the novel he wanted to describe the “Algerian country life as it was in the moment I wrote”,<sup>16</sup> stating that the change in the relationship with the land (from single owners to the State) would not have been possible without “a change in relations between women and men in society”. He adds that the freedom Nafīsa is looking for is that of a responsible member of society to choose a life companion; she did not succeed because he did not believe that in Algeria, in the period he was writing in, there were conditions for this to be realised. Benhadūga, then, does not accept the State discourse meekly, and builds a space for criticism through his writing, although he partakes in the political project of a socialist Algeria and assumes the didactic role asked of intellectuals in the journey from colonialism to the building of a socialist state.

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15 *Riḥ al-ġanūb*, by Muḥammad Slīm Riyāḍ, 35 mm, in colour, 115 min. Algeria 1975.

16 This and the following statements are taken from the quoted broadcast.

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Јоланда Гварди

*Друшћивена кријтика и јоложај  
жена у алжирској књижевности на арајском*

*Резиме*

У раду се представља књижевно дело алжирског писца Абделхамида Бенхедуге и разматра како су идентитет и улога жена у друштву пресликани у наративном дискурсу алжирске књижевности на арајском након независности. Фокус је стављен на Бенхедугин роман *Riḥ al-ḡanūb* (*Јужни ветар*, 1972) у коме женски лик, с ауторовог становишта, представља критику моћи. Као и у осталим романима 70-их – као што су *Al-zilzāl* (*Земљотрес*) Ел Тахара Ватара, или *Mā lā tadruhi al-riyāḥ* (*Оно што ветрови не могу одрисати*) Мухамеда Елали Араја – протагониста *Јужног ветра* види себе као некога ко се противи традицији, али не успева да је одбаци, јер успети у томе значило би напуштање „женске“ стране сопствене личности. Обично се Бенхедугини романи описују као „режимски романи“; они су лишени конкретне историјске позадине и не припадају пољу интердисциплинарних студија. Међутим, као што Тери Иглтон истиче, „таква ‘чиста’ књижевна теорија је академски мит“ (Eagleton 1997: 170). Заправо се Бенхедуга залагао за социјалистички идеал и одабрао да пише на арајском језику. Истовремено, и у таквим околностима интелектуалац може допринети стварној промени, супротно идеји да слободан интелектуалац може дефинисати себе само на маргинама књижевности и да је осуђен на такав статус како би сачувао слободу мишљења.

*Кључне речи:* Абделхамид Бенхедуга, алжирска књижевност, савремена арајска књижевност, *Јужни ветар*, *Riḥ al-ḡanūb*

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