



Algerian Lebanese Novelist Fadila Farouk

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Scrutinize taboos

Algerian Lebanese novelist, Fadila Farouk, is said to be having a daring pen that never retreats at the face of what ought to be said.

Without hesitation, she writes to tackle the problems of her society and scrutinize taboos.

According to Farouk, criticism which gets to the depth of any work is fair and adds to it – but when the critic ventures as a lecturer or political struggler, criticism becomes, as Farouk puts it, a real foolery.

An Algerian by origin, a Lebanese by living, Farouk unveils to the reader through

her works a whole world of existence as her style knows no temperaments.

Asked about the way she reached the stage of making the novel an element of expression, the writer said that she wrote short stories for 10 years and had always felt like she needed a wider space to express what she felt.

She added that after years, she had released her first collection in Beirut and had been stunned it had not being received the way she expected – it was like the style of writing had been almost outdated. People, she explained, like details and in a short story, a fictional

narrative prose that tends to be more concise and to the point than longer works of fiction, events are accumulated.

Telling she realized that she enjoyed reading novels more than any other form of writing, Farouk expressed that composing fluently without prison bars imposed by the short stories' form of writing is more pleasant.

As she had been working on her first novel "A Juvenile Temperament", the writer revealed, she had been transported by floods of words.

Asked about the development of the novel as literary

genre in our days and about the prospects of a narrative of considerable length, Farouk said that she had no idea about the novel's development and the phase this literary genre reached in the present instance, yet she added that all she knew was that Arabs had always had a tendency to blemish everything. Hoping that it is not the case for the novel, Farouk explained that Arabs had always instigated things well to subsequently end them in a real bad shape.

According to the Algerian writer, the Arab world gave birth to wonderful writers like Abdul Rahman Munif, Hanna Meena, Souhail Idris, Ibrahim El-Koni, El Tayeb Salih, Tahir Wattar, Ghada El Seman and Wassini Al-Araj, and others.

Yet, unfortunately, the Algerian writer pointed, new names were invading the literary scene and working on novels without realizing that writing, in itself, was a critical and serious profession.

Assertively, Farouk resumed with her criticism of the current literary scene saying: "Nowadays, the Arab Novel is stumbling due to scratches of adolescents who are dumping writings of good or bad quality in the market; we have been transformed into bad team players and if we are not allowed into the game, we attempt to spoil it. This is, actually, what is happening in the literary arena."

Farouk said as she attempted to explain the decline of writing: "Publishing houses stopped being selective as far as contents are considered; they always make an effort to promoting their names by publishing any staff that brings in profit. Accordingly, any person born with a silver spoon in his mouth can buy the prestige of being a writer."

Asked about Algeria, the country of Sheikh Abdul Majid Bou el Arwah the extremist, and about Constantine, the city where Fadila Farouk lived and the "T of Shame" novel's events took place, the writer replied: "May be one does not realize that Constantine is like all the other Arab cities which have two faces and are submissive to patriarchy. I have not known Constantine until I worked as a journalist there, discovered the city's women-banned districts and its strange and dangerous areas. In "T of Shame" – I did not say something probably. One novel is inadequate to talk about Constantine. Each time I visit this city after one year or two years abroad, I

find it acquired new traits, and wore new costumes. Bottom line –Constantine is the city of allures, contradictions, rumors, surprises and a spiral circle motion."

Commenting on a quotation from her novel, "A Moment to Steal Love", which goes: "In Algeria we always need an official spokesman to translate our emotions – we are illiterate people when it comes to the language of love!", the writer said: "Actually, we are illiterate when it comes to love. The Algerian man does not express his love in words; he loves in silence and he is a courting disaster. Instead of telling the woman of his feelings, he presents her with a list of prohibitions to express to her how dear she is to him. The Algerian man does not tell his lover "I am jealous " ; rather he tells her " Do not go out!", "Do not leave home!"; he does not tell her how beautiful she looks in a dress – rather he says " Change your dress – you're looking like a fool!"

Fadila Farouk added to explain the Algerian man's attitude: "Unfortunately –the consecutive wars left us no chance to learn the language of peace and truce. We are at constant war even with ourselves. We were brought up timid, restricted, and bound by rotten traditions born out of the ignorance that the French occupation consolidated in our society. It is no shame to be illiterate when it comes to love; hearts do have their own language too and few are proficient in the language of love. I am an Algerian myself; I am perfect when it comes to writing about love – but I loose words in front of the man I love. This is part of my Algerian genes."

Asked if the characters in her novels are telling what she dares not to divulge, the writer said with no hesitation: "To me each writer exposes himself half the time and make his characters speak the other half. Since I am an Algerian I write about Algeria. Would it sound logical if I write about Congo or Japan for example? A journalist can write about countries other than his own as a correspondent or a political analyst, but a writer is a product of his environment. It looks pretty ridiculous to me to write like hypocritical writers who tell about fantastic heroism and a beautiful but imaginary present.

Unhappy with the situation and the suffering of fellow women in Algeria, Farouk said: "Thousands of women are exposed to rape

and parents have the right to dismiss their daughters when raped from home in fear of disgrace , meanwhile numbers of victims are increasing , and law completely turns a blind eye to this issue! "

Speaking about the role of the writer, Farouk stressed: "Literature should point the finger at these problems, and then initiatives by decision makers are taken." "How much time would it last?" the question looks overwhelming for me because I am a writer and decision making takes place inside the legal institutions behind curtains. We expect governments to be handled by the intellectuals who do have a human touch and are willing to protect women's pride and dignity. I hope this will happen soon. We Algerians married to foreigners have already been given the right to grant our sons the Algerian nationality and this is, actually, a great achievement which will be definitely followed up by more and more positive achievements."

Unveiling her attitude towards Algerian reality, norms and traditions, the novelist said: "I love Algeria and it is my first and only country; I have no second country; I have always been an Algerian and will die Algerian. It is true, I live in Lebanon and I am married to a Lebanese, but I am an Algerian – I always introduce myself to people as Fadila Farouk, the Algerian writer. I speak Berber, my mother tongue, fluently and hate people speak to me in French because they know Algerians are proficient in this language. Some are proud of being francophone, I do not see why.

Farouk added: "I criticize Algerians a lot, and I do that because only Algeria does give me the right to criticize her. If I pass judgment on any other Arab country, a lot of faulty accusations will be conspired against me and media will impose a security belt that I will never be able to penetrate."

Mulling over the democratic climate Algerian writers are blessed with, the writer said that many were not realizing that the country has paid very high dues for this gain.

"What I repudiate in Algeria are the ancient laws that should be substituted! What I dislike in the Algerian character is the bias toward an imported foreign "mind" that has devastated Algeria", the writer concluded.