

THE IMAGE OF ISLAM IN BEUR LITERATURE

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Abstract

Islam, as a religion and a culture, is an important topic in literature nowadays, due to the conflicting interpretations that have sprung up around it and to the terrorist attacks that have been committed on the pretext of serving it during the 20th and the 21st century. That is why it is also a major subject in North African literature, especially because some countries, mainly Algeria, have suffered intensely from Islamists and their radicalism. North African immigrants in France and their children, known as Beur, also suffered from demonizing Islam and Muslims. Because of this current image of Islam in the West and its media, it is interesting then to study the representation of Islam in Beur literature of the twentieth century and Beur literature of the twenty-first century; knowing that this literature does not only hold a message for their alike, for the natives of North Africa, and for Muslims in general, but also it shows a certain image of the religion to the Western reader. Beur--i.e. French people born to immigrants of North Africa—is a term that was created by this group of people to refer to themselves in a culture that rejects them. In this literature, the representation of Islam differs based on time frame, and on gender. Islam in Beur literature of the Eighties and early Nineties is presented as a culture and an ethnic background, while in novels by Beur writers of the 21st century, such as Leila Marouane, Islam is discussed as a religion that caused conflicts between Beur and France, the only land they know. These two distinct representations of the same religion from a group of people who shares the same roots stimulates questions of how Islam is purposely exiled from some of their novels, as well as how it was one of the main reasons for exile for some characters in the novels under study.

Keywords: Beur, Exile, Francophone, Identity, Islam, North Africa