

## Women, War and Memory: Exploring the Experience of the Algerian Women in Al-Faruq's *Tā'ul Khajal*

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### Abstract:

This paper examines how Fadila al-Faruq's *Tā'ul Khajal* confronts the gendered violence of Algeria's postcolonial civil war, particularly the systemic rape and abduction of women weaponized by extremist groups like the GIA. Against the backdrop of the 1990s "Black Decade," the novel interrogates how women's bodies became ideological battlegrounds, entangled in colonial legacies and patriarchal oppression. Employing trauma theory and feminist frameworks, the textual analysis reveals how al-Faruq's fragmented narrative structure—interweaving personal testimonies, such as the 1994 "year of shame" and the GIA's 1995 campaign of mass abduction—disrupts official silences around wartime atrocities. By juxtaposing graphic accounts of violence with theoretical insights on collective memory, the novel exposes the stigmatization of feminine bodies while challenging norms that normalize gendered aggression. The findings demonstrate that al-Faruq's innovative narrative form not only documents trauma but also reconfigures it as a site of resistance, binding individual suffering to broader sociopolitical critique. Ultimately, the novel underscores literature's capacity to dismantle the false dichotomy between wartime brutality and everyday patriarchal violence, urging a reckoning with Algeria's contested histories.

**Keywords:** Abduction, collective memory, gendered violence, postcolonial Algeria, rape, Ta'ul Khajal, trauma literature.

## المرأة، الحرب والذاكرة: استكشاف تجربة النساء الجزائريات في "تاء الخل" للفاروق

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### الملخص:

تبحث هذه الورقة البحثية في كيفية مواجهة رواية "تاول خل" لفضيلة الفاروق للعنف الجندي الذي شهدته الجزائر خلال الحرب الأهلية ما بعد الاستعمارية، لا سيما الاغتصاب والاختطاف الممنهج للنساء، والذي استخدمته جماعات متطرفة مثل

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مجلة آداب الكوفة - جامعة الكوفة مرخصة بموجب ترخيص المشاع الإبداعي ٤.٠ الدولي.



الجماعة الإسلامية المسلحة (GIA). على خلفية "العقد الأسود" في تسعينيات القرن الماضي، تتساءل الرواية عن كيفية تحول أجساد النساء إلى ساحات معارك أيديولوجية، متورطة في إرث الاستعمار والقمع الأبوي. باستخدام نظرية الصدمة والأطر النسوية، يكشف التحليل النصي كيف أن البنية السردية المجزأة لرواية الفاروق - التي تتشابك فيها الشهادات الشخصية، مثل "عام العار" عام ١٩٩٤ وحملة الاختطاف الجماعي التي شنتها الجماعة الإسلامية المسلحة عام ١٩٩٥ - تُعطل الصمت الرسمي حول فظائع الحرب. من خلال الجمع بين الروايات المصورة للعنف والرؤى النظرية حول الذاكرة الجماعية، تكشف الرواية عن وصمة العار التي تُلحق بالأجساد الأنثوية، بينما تتحدى المعايير التي تُطبّع العدوان الجندري. تُظهر النتائج أن الشكل السردى المُبتكر لرواية "الفاروق" لا يوثق الصدمة فحسب، بل يُعيد صياغتها كمكان للمقاومة، رابطاً معاناة الفرد بنقد اجتماعي وسياسي أوسع. في نهاية المطاف، تُبرز الرواية قدرة الأدب على تفكيك الثنائية الزائفة بين وحشية الحرب والعنف الأبوي اليومي، حاثاً على إعادة النظر في تاريخ الجزائر المُنتازع عليه.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الاختطاف، الذاكرة الجماعية، العنف الجندري، الجزائر ما بعد الاستعمار، الاغتصاب، تاول خجال، أدب الصدمات.

## Introduction

*War will never become the past. For those who still carry bits of lead in their flesh and bones, the lead of the losses in their hearts, and the eternal burden on memory and mind...*

—Yuri Nagibin, 1985

War

*"Rape is as much of a weapon of war as the machete, club, or Kalashnikov."*

—Christian Lamb, 2020

It has been established in literature, both in academic and advocacy spaces, that war disproportionately affects women. This includes ways that do not become immediately obvious to simpletons given that they may observe war from the point of militaristic combat predominantly involving men. Yet, beneath the visible theater of armed conflict lies an insidious matrix of gendered violence that marks women's experiences in profoundly traumatic ways. Fadilah Al Faruq's *Ta'ul Khajal* (تاء الخجل) confronts this reality through the lens of post-colonial Algeria— a nation fractured by colonialism, civil war, and patriarchal oppression. The novel centers on Khaleedah, a journalist navigating the "Black Decade," a period marked by extremist terrorism and state collapse. Through fragmented storytelling and raw firsthand accounts, it mirrors the

disorienting weight of trauma, showing how violence lingers long after the guns fall silent This makes the novel an essential text within trauma literature, a genre that foregrounds the complexities of traumatic experience.

The plot follows Khaleedah's journey from a silenced girl in a patriarchal family to a journalist documenting atrocities. Her world spans rural homes, universities, and war-torn streets, each setting reflecting Algeria's fractured identity. Central to the story is her encounter with Yameenah, a young rape victim whose suicide becomes a haunting symbol of collective grief. The novel's first-person narration blends personal pain with journalistic detachment, blurring the line between memory and testimony. Flashbacks and repeated imagery—like green coffins carried through silent streets—force readers to confront how trauma reshapes both individuals and societies (Assmann, 2011).

To unpack these themes, this analysis draws on trauma theory and feminist perspectives. Trauma theory, initially rooted in Freudian notions of “unspeakable” rupture (Mambrol, 2018), now acknowledges how cultural and gendered power dynamics shape narratives of violence (Halbwachs, 1992). The novel's disjointed chronology and repetitive imagery resist erasure, acting as tools for reclaiming memory. Feminist perspectives deepen this lens: Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1974) illuminates how Algerian women's bodies are policed, while Liz Kelly's work (2000) link wartime rape to everyday sexism, showing how aggression in battle fuels domestic abuse. Similarly, we employ Pankhurst (2008) conceptualisation of rape as a form of “war booty,” wherein enemy women are dehumanised and subjected to sexual violence as a means of humiliating their communities. This notion is reinforced by arguments that portray rape as a strategy to diminish the honour of opposing forces by violating their most cherished symbols—the bodies of their women (IRIN, 2004). Braidotti (1994) describes this process as “the



medicalization of the female reproductive body,” whereby women's bodies are transformed into sites for enforcing and legitimising patriarchal norms. These frameworks reveal that Ta’ul Khajal critiques not just war but about systems of patriarchal control that transcend physical battlefields and outlast the conflict itself (Braidotti, 1994). As Christian Lamb (2020) poignantly observes, “around the world, a woman's body is still very much a battlefield, and hundreds of thousands of women bear the invisible wounds of war.” This observation resonates deeply in the Algerian context in which Al Faruq sets the novel. Here, women’s bodies have been systematically targeted both as extension of battlefields and as symbols of societal control designed to erode community cohesion and individual agency. Consequently, women's women's bodies become living records of this violence.

Previous studies of Ta’ul Khajal have touched on its feminist themes or narrative style but missed crucial connections. Riad (2019) lauds its feminist advocacy but neglects its structural indictment of patriarchy, while Naita (2021) explores narrative experimentation without engaging trauma’s psychological dimensions. Sultan (2019) reduces rape to demographic patterns, ignoring societal complicity, and Su’ad (2019) prioritises linguistic style over thematic resonance. Though Barbaro (2015) links the text to collective memory, they overlook how its narrative form—through gaps and repetitions—challenges historical amnesia. Collectively, these studies fail to interrogate how the novel binds wartime violence to everyday oppression or how its aesthetics enact resistance.

This paper addresses these omissions. By synthesizing close textual analysis with trauma and feminist theory, it demonstrates how Ta’ul Khajal bridges individual and collective suffering. The novel’s fragmented structure mirrors the struggle to articulate trauma, transforming private pain into public reckoning. Simultaneously, it confronts Algeria’s silence around gendered violence, offering not

merely a record of atrocity but a call to dismantle patriarchal systems. In doing so, the paper reaffirms literature's capacity to reshape memory and imagine liberation.

### **Contextualizing Sexual Violence Against Algerian Women: From Colonial Oppression to the "Black Decade"**

Sexual violence against women has been a persistent instrument of terror and control in Algeria, deeply embedded in its colonial and postcolonial history. This violence, spanning the French-Algerian War (1954–1962) to the civil conflict of the 1990s known as the “Black Decade” (1991–2002), reflects a continuum of gendered aggression rooted in colonial exploitation, patriarchal domination, and ideological warfare. This section provides a comprehensive historical foundation for analyzing Fadila al-Faruq's *Tā'ul Khajal*, linking colonial and postcolonial patterns of gendered sexual violence, thus foregrounding the novel's thematic concerns.

#### **Sexual Violence During the French-Algerian War**

The French-Algerian War marked a turning point in the institutionalisation of sexual violence as a weapon of colonial subjugation. French military forces systematically targeted Algerian women, using rape and torture to dismantle resistance, humiliate communities, and assert dominance. Historian Marnia Lazreg (1994) underscores the paradox of France's “civilizing mission”: while colonial authorities claimed to emancipate Algerian women from patriarchal traditions, they simultaneously subjected them to brutal sexual violence. This duality exposed the hypocrisy of colonial rhetoric, as women's bodies became battlegrounds for asserting control over both individuals and the broader nationalist movement.

Sexual torture was not merely incidental but a calculated strategy. Interrogations of female suspects often involved rape, electric shocks to

genitalia, and public humiliation, methods designed to exploit cultural taboos surrounding female honor (Lazreg, 1994). For instance, Djamila Boupacha, a prominent female militant in the National Liberation Front (FLN), endured 33 days of torture at the hands of French paratroopers. Stripped naked, burned with cigarettes, and raped with a bottle, her ordeal was compounded by the forced witnessing of her abuse by male relatives—a tactic meant to emasculate Algerian men and erode familial bonds (Nimis, 2015). Such acts were not isolated; Jacques Zéo, a soldier stationed in the Kabylie region, admitted that rape occurred “frequently” during military operations, with officers openly facilitating access to civilian women (Jansen, 1987).

The French military’s awareness of these atrocities is evident in internal archives. Reports from rural detention centers detail “systematic rapes” committed during counterinsurgency campaigns, often framed as “pacifying” rebellious regions (Wilson, 2018). Mouloud Feraoun, an Algerian journalist, documented this violence in his wartime writings, critiquing the colonial logic that justified brutality under the guise of modernity. Feraoun cynically noted that rural Algerians were deemed too “primitive” to accept the violation of their women, reversing colonial stereotypes to highlight the barbarity of French tactics (Wall, 2002).

Colonial authorities further weaponized cultural norms to amplify the impact of sexual violence. In Algeria’s patriarchal society, where female honor was tied to familial and communal dignity, rape inflicted collective shame. Men unable to protect their wives or daughters faced emasculation, while survivors were ostracized, their trauma silenced to preserve social cohesion (Turshen, 2002). This strategic exploitation of cultural values underscores how sexual violence transcended individual suffering to destabilize entire communities.

## **The Black Decade: Gendered Violence as Ideological Warfare**

The legacy of colonial-era violence resurfaced during Algeria's "Black Decade," a period of civil war between government forces and Islamist insurgents, notably the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Extremist groups weaponized rape and abduction to terrorize populations, punish dissent, and enforce ideological conformity. Flood (2006) documents how the GIA institutionalized sexual violence, declaring in 1995 that women's bodies were legitimate targets in their war against the state. Mass abductions, public rapes, and forced marriages became hallmarks of their campaign, mirroring colonial tactics but framed through Islamist rhetoric.

The GIA's 1994 "year of shame" epitomized this brutality. In a single year, 151 women were assassinated, often after enduring sexual torture, while thousands more were abducted (Khadra, 2020). These acts were not random but deliberate: by attacking women, the GIA sought to fracture societal morale, as families and communities were forced to confront the violation of their most vulnerable members (Lloyd, 2007). Moghadam (2021) argues that such violence aimed to dismantle Algeria's social fabric, replacing collective resilience with fear and fragmentation.

State responses further compounded the trauma. Official narratives often dismissed rape as collateral damage of war, echoing colonial-era dismissals of sexual violence as an inevitable byproduct of conflict (McDougall, 2010). Survivors faced stigmatization, their testimonies suppressed to maintain illusions of national unity. This silence perpetuated a culture of impunity, enabling cycles of violence to persist long after the war's end (Amrouche, 2021).

## **Continuities of Patriarchal Control**

Both colonial and postcolonial regimes relied on patriarchal structures to normalise gendered violence. Colonial authorities manipulated traditional gender roles, positioning themselves as “protectors” of Algerian women while subjecting them to state-sanctioned rape (Ben Youssef, 2010). Postcolonial Algeria, though liberated from French rule, retained these patriarchal frameworks, with women’s bodies remaining sites of ideological contestation. The FLN, for instance, celebrated women’s participation in the independence struggle but later relegated them to subordinate roles, reinforcing domesticity as a national ideal (Cooke, 1996).

This entrenched patriarchy enabled the resurgence of violence during the Black Decade. Extremist groups like the GIA framed their campaigns as a defense of Islamic morality, accusing women who pursued education, employment, or political engagement of moral corruption. Rape became a tool to “purify” these women, reducing them to symbols of deviance needing correction (Daulatzai, 2016). Such rhetoric mirrored colonial justifications, illustrating how patriarchal norms transcend political ideologies to perpetuate oppression.

## **Resistance and Reclamation**

Despite systemic silencing, Algerian women have persistently resisted erasure. During the French-Algerian War, figures like Djamila Boupacha transformed their trauma into political capital, leveraging international attention to expose colonial brutality. The Djamila Boupacha Committee, led by Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, challenged French authorities to acknowledge wartime rape, though officials like Maurice Patin dismissed such efforts as threats to military morale (Nimis, 2015). Similarly, during the Black Decade, journalists and activists risked their lives to document atrocities, creating archives of resilience that counter state-sanctioned amnesia (Moore, 2007).





The foregoing underscores that the sexual violence depicted in Tā'ul Khajal cannot be divorced from this historical continuum. As the subsequent section will spotlight, Al-Faruq's novel, set against the Black Decade, echoes the colonial-era tactics of using women's bodies to assert dominance and erase identity.. The novel's fragmented structure—mirroring the disorientation of trauma—serves as a literary resistance, reclaiming silenced histories and challenging readers to confront the enduring legacies of gendered violence.

## Result and Discussion

سنوات الموت تلك علمتني أن الحياة هباء. ولعلي  
كنتُ سألجاً إليك في تلك الفترة الحمراء. ربما هكذا هم  
الرجال! إن لهم طريقة غريبة في الحب. لن أحاكمك،  
سأواصل السرد فقط. سأقول لك متى التوت جوارحي  
فعلاً، ومتى تحركت زلازل الداخل بقوة غيرت  
خارطة مشاعري.

سنة العار. سنة ١٩٩٤ التي شهدت اغتيال ١٥١  
امرأة، واختطاف ١٢ امرأة من الوسط الريفي المعدم.  
ثم ابتداء من عام ١٩٩٥ أصبح الخطف والاغتصاب  
استراتيجية حربية، إذ أعلنت الجماعات الإسلامية  
المسلحة (GIA) في بيانها رقم الصادر ٢٨ في ٣٠  
نيسان (إفريل) أنها قد وسعت دائرة معركتها:  
(لانتصار للشرف بقتل نساءهم، ونساء من يحاربوننا  
أيما كانوا، في كل الجهات التي لم نعترض فيها  
لشرف سكانها، ولم نحكم فيها النساء (...)) وسنوسع  
أيضاً دائرة انتصاراتنا بقتل أمهات وأخوات وبنات  
الزنادقة اللواتي يقطن تحت سقف بيوتهن واللواتي  
يمنحن المأوى لهؤلاء ...)).

٥٥٠ حالة اغتصاب (الفتيات ونساء) تتراوح  
أعمارهن بين ١٣ و ٤٠ سنة سجلت تلك السنة.  
تضاربت الأرقام بطريقة مثيرة للانتباه في حضور  
قانون الصمت. ١٠١٣ امرأة ضحية الاغتصاب

الإرهابي بين سنتي ١٩٩٤ و ١٩٩٧، إضافة إلى ألفي امرأة منذ سنة ١٩٩٧، والبعض يقول إن العدد يفوق الخمسة آلاف حالة. ولا أحد يملك الأرقام الصحيحة، إن السلطات مثل الضحايا تخضع لقانون الصمت نفسه. جاءت هذه السنوات متلاحقة لتصنع سجنني الذي لم أتوقعه، سجنني الانفرادي داخل وطن مليء بالقضبان. إذ لم تعد أسوار العائلة هي التي تستفز طير الحرية في داخلي للهروب، صار الوطن كله مثيراً لتلك الرغبة، مثلي مثل ملايين الشباب الحالمين بالهجرة إلى حيث النوم لا تقضه الكوابيس، صرت أخطط للهروب. أريد هواء لا تملأه رائحة الاغتصابات. ( , Tā'ul Khajal

Page35)

#### Translation

Those years of death taught me that life is futile. Perhaps I would have turned to you during that bloody period. Maybe that is just how men are! They have a peculiar way of loving. I will not judge you; I will simply continue narrating. I will tell you when my innermost being truly twisted, and when the internal earthquakes shifted the map of my emotions. The year of shame... The year 1994, which witnessed the assassination of 151 women and the abduction of 12 women from impoverished rural areas. Starting again in 1995, kidnapping and rape became a war strategy. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) declared in its 27th communiqué, issued on the 30th of April, that they had expanded the scope of their battle:



“To defend honor by killing their women, and the women of those who fight us, wherever they may be, in all areas where we have not yet attacked the honor of their inhabitants, and where we have not yet judged the women... We will also expand the scope of our victories by killing the mothers, sisters, and daughters of the apostates who live under the roofs of their homes and those who provide them with shelter...”

In that year, 550 cases of rape involving girls and women aged between 31 and 40 were recorded. The numbers were alarmingly inconsistent, hidden behind a veil of silence. Between 1994 and 1997, 1,013 women fell victim to terrorist rape, in addition to hundreds more since 1997. Some claim the number exceeds 5,000 cases. Yet, no one has the correct figures, as the authorities, like the victims, are bound by the same law of silence. These years came one after the other, creating a prison for me that I never expected—my solitary confinement within a homeland filled with bars. No longer were the walls of my family home the only thing provoking the desire for freedom within me. Now, the entire nation ignited that urge, just like millions of other young people dreaming of escaping to where sleep is undisturbed by nightmares. I



began planning my escape. I long for air  
that isn't tainted by the stench of rapes.  
(Our translation)

According to the novel, Islamic extremist organizations, such as the GIA, have extreme traditional ideas about the place of women in society. Women who do not obey their view of Islamic norms were considered to be worthy of being attacked. Women who, for instance, wore Western attire, sought education or employment, or just disobeyed the insurgents' rigid moral standards were targeted out for kidnapping and rape. Since terrorists could readily overcome local resistance in remote rural villages, many of these kidnappings occurred there. The countryside turned into a battlefield where women's bodies were used as power symbols. Women in these regions were subjected to terror, which transmitted a strong message of fear to the local populace as well as to Algerian society at large. Khalidah narrates this in the novel where she says:

تجبرك قسنطينة على الوقوف احتراماً لمرور جنازتها،  
ولهذا سنتوقف عند مرور الجنازة الأولى. ثم الجنازة  
الثانية.. ثم الجنازة الثالثة ..... لا أذكر أن تلك السنة  
بدأت بيوم إثنين، ولكنني أذكر الحزن وهو يحتمي  
بقضبان الجباه والخوف بحر في العيون، والصمت.  
صمت الشوارع مخيف والناس وقوف والنعوش  
الخضراء تقصد بيوتها الأبدية. ها هي أيام الثورة تعود،  
الموتى في كل مكان، والقبور كالمكاهي تزورها الناس  
أكثر من مرة في اليوم. (Tā'ul Khajal, Page 37))

#### Translation

Constantine compels you to stand in  
respect as her funerals pass by, and so  
you will pause for the first procession.  
Then for the second... And then for the  
third... I cross the street, I did not recall  
if that year began on a Monday, but I do

remember sorrow hiding behind  
furrowed brows, fear as vast as the  
oceans in people's eyes, and the silence.  
The silence of the streets is terrifying,  
with people standing still, and green  
coffins making their way to their eternal  
homes. The days of revolution have  
returned—death is everywhere, and  
graves are like cafés are which are  
visited more than once a day. (Our  
translation)

Sexual abuse against women who were deemed "immoral" was a common form of punishment. The extremists saw this violence as a way to purify their ideology and "cleanse" society of Western influences. In order to use terror to enforce their strict interpretation of Islamic law, militant groups turned women's bodies into battlefields for ideological conflict. The communities in which they lived frequently shamed and shunned women who had survived rape and kidnapping. Many survivors were seen as dishonored or defiled, and sexual abuse has a strong stigma in conservative Algerian society.

Khalidah in this novel made us to understand that the act of raping girls and women in the Algerian society is not limited to the Islamic extremist group alone, she mentions a situation whereby a forty-year-old man rapes an eight-year-old girl:

حكاية كنزة جعلت الوحل يجتاح حلقي، لكن الأسوأ  
في تلك الأيام كانت حكاية (ريمة نجار)، طفلة في  
الثامنة رمت بنفسها من على (جسر سيدي مسيد). لم  
أصدق أن الأطفال ينتحرون، لهذا حققت في  
الموضوع وبعد أن رمتني تفاصيله في أكثر من  
متاهة، اكتشفت أن الوالد هو الذي رمى بابنته من على  
الجسر، نسي الناس الاغتصابات الجماعية وصاروا  
يفكرون بريمة.

قال إنه خلصها من العار لأنها اغتصبت. اغتصبها رجل في الأربعين، أحذب وقصير، يقطن بالحي نفسه، وله دكان صغير يبيع فيه الحلوى و((البسكويت)) والعلكة. قال إن البنت دخلت عنده لتشتري حلوى، فأشار لها أن تتناولها بنفسها من على أحد الرفوف، فيما أغلق باب المحل وانقضَّ عليها. ولم يكن صراخها ليصل أحداً، كانت هناك ورشة لتزفيت الطريق في الشارع نفسه ابتلعت استنجات الصغيرة. وقد جاءت توابع القضية مضحكة؛ حكم على الأحذب بعشر سنوات سجنًا بسبب حنكة محاميه. ( *Tā'ul Khajal*, Page 39)

#### Translation

The story of Kansah plagues my throat, but the worst story in that year was the story of Rimah. An eight-year-old girl that threw herself from down from Masid bridge, I could not believe that small girls also commit suicide, this is why I investigated the case, having gotten the details from more than one source, I discovered that it was the father that threw her daughter down from the bridge, people forgot about the mass rapes and began to think about the incident of Rimah.

He said he rescued her from tribulations because she was raped, a forty-year-old man raped her, a hunched back and short man who reside in the same area, he has a small shop where he sells sweets and biscuits. He said the girl went to him to buy sweet, he directs her to pick the

sweet by herself from a top row, he closed the door of his shop and raped her. Her screams could not reach out to anyone, although, there was also a workshop on that same street that can also allow maltreat of small girls. Another funny scenario followed, the hunched back man was sentenced to ten years imprisonment because of the expertise of his lawyer. (Our translation)

The above excerpts show how the novel critiques the societal structures that perpetuate gender inequality by exposing how women's bodies are subjugated both during war and in everyday life. Al-Faruq's narrative, which recounts brutal episodes of abduction and rape, aligns with de Beauvoir's framework of embodiment by demonstrating that women are not only physically violated but are also symbolically reduced to instruments of ideological warfare. Moreover, the novel portrays the collective mourning and enduring impact of such violence. In one passage, al-Faruq evokes the image of a city compelled to halt as green coffins—symbols of both death and resistance—are carried past, while streets are held in a terrifying silence. Through these images, Tā'ul Khajal not only memorialises individual tragedies, such as the case of Rimah—a young girl whose suicide after rape is narrated with gut-wrenching intimacy—but also reflects on the broader societal implications of such acts. Here, literature becomes a means of both bearing witness to and resisting the erasure of traumatic memories. Drawing on theoretical perspectives that emphasise the role of memory in constructing social identity (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 2011), this paper argues that al-Faruq's work does more than recount individual suffering; it actively participates in reconstructing Algeria's postcolonial social memory.

Furthermore, within the confines of a patriarchal society, personal relationships in the novel serve as a site for negotiating the tension



between individual desire and societal expectations. Khaleedah's love affair with Nasrullahi becomes emblematic of a broader conflict where intimate relationships are imbued with both the possibility of personal joy and the burden of sacrifice. This duality resonates with feminist critiques that argue the oppressive social order often transforms even acts of love into performances dictated by cultural norms. In this regard, Khaleedah's experiences can be seen as reflective of the notion that the body—and by extension, love—is continuously regulated and re-inscribed by societal forces.

Also, the novel provides a stark depiction of how sexual violence is strategically employed during conflict to undermine the enemy. The theoretical discussion highlights that, in various contexts—from Bosnia to Sierra Leone—mass rape has been used as a tactic to both reward combatants and to degrade the honour of enemy communities (IRIN, 2004; Pankhurst, 2008). In *Tā'ul Khajal*, the systematic rape and abduction of women are presented not merely as isolated acts of brutality but as part of an orchestrated campaign aimed at dismantling the social fabric of Algerian society. For example, the narrative details the harrowing accounts of victims and provides quantitative evidence of the atrocities (e.g., “550 cases of rape involving girls and women aged between 13 and 40”), thereby situating individual suffering within a broader context of state-sanctioned violence. This depiction mirrors the theoretical claim that rape in conflict is intended to humiliate men—undermining their honor by violating the very symbols of femininity and purity.

Despite the pervasive violence and structural inequities, *Tā'ul Khajal* also foregrounds the possibility of resistance and the assertion of agency. Khaleedah's transformation into a journalist who meticulously documents these crimes is emblematic of how trauma, when channeled through the act of narrative, becomes a powerful tool for social critique. The theoretical literature on trauma studies argues that innovative narrative forms—characterised by disrupted chronology, repetition, and even character doubling (Mraović-O'Hare, 2022)—serve as means to





bear witness to the unrepresentable nature of extreme violence. In the novel, Khaleedah's voice challenges the "law of silence" that often envelops such atrocities, thereby creating a space where collective memory can be reclaimed and interrogated. This act of resistance, as theorized by scholars like Kelly (2000), is not simply about individual survival but is intimately linked to the broader struggle against entrenched patriarchal systems that render women's suffering invisible.

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing underscores that the rape and abduction of Algerian women must be understood within a broader framework of gender-based violence that encompasses the intersecting forces of militarization, state-sanctioned aggression, and culturally embedded patriarchy. This multifaceted analysis not only highlights the brutality of these acts but also calls attention to the enduring structures that continue to dehumanise and marginalise women. Through both its narrative and its implicit critique of societal norms, *Tā'ul Khajal* serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need to dismantle these oppressive systems and restore agency and dignity to those who have long been silenced. Through its vivid portrayal of gendered trauma and its insistence on bearing witness, the text calls for a reconstruction of social memory—a process that is indispensable for both recognizing past atrocities and forging pathways toward justice and healing. Khaleedah's narrative transcends individual narratives of suffering to evoke a collective trauma—one that reflects the enduring psychological, emotional, and social repercussions of systemic oppression. Moreover, by foregrounding these themes within a framework of feminist arguments the text challenges established societal norms and advocates for the reconstruction of social memory through critical engagement and reform. Ultimately, *Tā'ul Khajal* not only documents historical atrocities but also serves as a clarion call for transformative change, urging society to dismantle oppressive structures and restore agency and dignity to those long silenced.



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