ROSSIISKAYA ISTORIYA
ISSN: 0869-5687
No. 1(2026)
https://rossiiskaya.com

Reception and Rewriting: Dostoevsky as a Formal and Philosophical Resource in French and Algerian Literature

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Received : 10-10-2025 Accepted : 05-02-2026 Published :28-04-2026

Abstract
This article examines the reception and transformation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's work in the French and Algerian literary fields, focusing on how his novels have served as both formal and philosophical resources across different historical contexts. Moving beyond a simple model of literary influence, the study adopts a comparatist perspective to analyse how Dostoevsky's ideas and narrative techniques were reinterpreted and redeployed by major twentieth-century writers. In France, André Gide engages with Dostoevskian psychological fragmentation and narrative multiplicity to rethink the structure of the modern novel. At the same time, Albert Camus reads Dostoevsky through the philosophical crises of nihilism and revolt that shaped the twentieth century. In Algeria, Kateb Yacine mobilises polyphonic narrative structures, partly mediated by Faulkner and later theorised by Bakhtin, to articulate the fragmented consciousness of a colonised society and to challenge the formal conventions of the French realist novel. Through these three case studies, the article demonstrates that the reception of Dostoevsky is not merely a matter of textual transmission but an act of creative reinterpretation shaped by cultural, philosophical, and political contexts. Ultimately, the study highlights how Dostoevsky's work participates in a transnational literary dialogue linking Russia, France, and Algeria and how this dialogue reveals the capacity of great literary works to generate divergent yet productive reinterpretations across time and space.
Keywords: Dostoevsky; comparative literature; polyphony; postcolonial literature; French and Algerian literature.

I. Introduction: The Radiance of a Work beyond Borders

Few works in the history of modern literature have generated so many echoes. That of Fyodor Dostoevsky, this writer whom his Russian contemporaries sometimes perceived as a "second-rate writer", nevertheless irrigated the Western twentieth century in a manner that surpasses mere literary influence. It traversed it philosophically and politically, extending even to its most unexpected fringes, such as that of the colonial world. From one end of the world to the other, from Paris to Algiers, from the *Nouvelle Revue française* to the poetic workshops of Algerian independence, Dostoevsky's work provided both the mirror and the reservoir of forms and languages through which to think historical situations that its author himself could not have envisaged.

The paradox is striking: Here is a writer who conceived of himself as profoundly Russian, a fervent Slavophile and Orthodox believer, whose original ambition was to define the "Russian

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idea,"[1] However, he became one of the indispensable references of French intellectual circles and, in the natural extension of this process, of a portion of Maghrebi letters; this gap between the national anchoring of the work and its global radiance deserves to be emphasised. It cannot be explained solely by the literary quality of the novels but by a singular capacity to formulate, with unparalleled intensity, the great questions of the human condition: nihilism, freedom, collective guilt, and metaphysical revolt.

The present article proposes to delineate the paths this work has taken within the French and Algerian literary spheres, to assess its transformations and creative appropriations and to examine what these filiations reveal about the receiving works themselves. Our guiding hypothesis is that each encounter with Dostoevsky has been an encounter with its own epoch reformulated through the prism of Russian problematics: the nihilistic temptation in Gide and Camus finds in Dostoevskian characters a formulation that national literatures alone could not have produced; the polyphony of colonised voices in Kateb Yacine finds formal legitimation in the Dostoevskian structure. Our approach is situated within the methods of contemporary comparative literature, as theorised by Paul Ricœur in his analysis of cultural transfers and by Pascale Casanova in her work on the World Republic of Letters,[2] while also drawing upon the analytical tools forged by Mikhail Bakhtin, whose reading of Dostoevsky remains one of the most pertinent critical instruments for accounting for the manner in which this work is translated into different contexts.

II. The Discovery of Dostoevsky in France: The Slowness of a Reception

2.1 The First Intermediaries: de Vogüé and the Vogue of the "Russian Novel"

The reception accorded to Doseoevsky in France was neither swift nor tranquil. It was during the 1880s and 1890s that part of the Parisian literary world began to recognise the importance of Russian literature. Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé was the first to draw attention to certain works of Doseoevsky, but the image he presented was reduced and incomplete. The public that formed at that time remained a small nucleus, largely eclipsed by the immense prestige of Leo Tolstoy. This rivalry is significant: it durably conditioned the way French readers apprehended Russian literature by opposing two poles, epic and psychological, that would mark the reception of each author.

The fact that de Vogüé retained only three works, Dostoevsky, *Poor Folk*, *Notes from the House of the Dead*, and *Crime and Punishment*, reveals much about the limits of this first approach. The image circulating in France was that of a Dostoevsky of social misery, close in certain respects to naturalism. According to Gide, Charles Morice published only a considerably mutilated version of *The Brothers Karamazov*; it was not until 1906 that the Librairie Charpentier published a supposed complete edition. This delay in the dissemination of the texts explains why the profound philosophical reception of Dostoevsky in France could

[1] The expression "Russian idea" refers to Dostoevsky's project of defining a spiritual and civilisational mission proper to Russia, distinct from the Western model. Dostoevsky develops it notably in *Diary of a Writer* (1873–1881) and in the speech he delivered in 1880 in homage to Pushkin.

[2] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999); Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983–1985). See also Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990) for his reflection on narrative identity and cultural transfer.

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only truly take place in the twentieth century, once the major works had become accessible in sufficiently reliable translations. The time separating the author's death (1881) from the French literary milieu's understanding of his work amounted to an entire generation. To discover Dostoevsky in the years 1900–1920 was to burn with a revelation that had arrived too late.

2.2 Philosophical Reception: Léon Shestov and Russian Irrationalism in Paris

Even before André Gide or Albert Camus took up Dostoevsky as a tool of writing, his works had entered the French intellectual sphere by way of philosophy, through a name often forgotten: Léon Shestov (1866–1938), a Russian philosopher who emigrated to Paris after the Bolshevik Revolution, whose role as a mediator was considerable.

In 1922, the *Nouvelle Revue française* published *Dostoevsky and the Struggle against Self-Evidence*, translated by Boris de Schloezer, within an editorial framework endorsed by André Gide and Jacques Rivière. The event was of major significance in the Parisian intellectual field of the 1920s: it conferred upon Dostoevsky a philosophical status that French literary criticism had not yet granted him.

Placing at the center of his interpretation the concept of a “philosophy of tragedy,” Shestov recognised the consciousness of misfortune in Dostoevsky and rejected the consolations of reason, thereby preparing the ground for later existentialist readings. His struggle against the “crystal palaces”, a Doseoevskian expression denoting the illusion of rational progress, would constitute a conceptual resource for Camus, who would appropriate it to think the revolt against totalitarian systems.

III. André Gide and Dostoevsky: Freedom as an Inheritance

3.1 Companionship of Three Decades

André Gide's relationship with Dostoevsky's work is among the richest and most complex in French comparative literature. It spans nearly twenty years of critical writing and culminates in a foundational book on the French reception of the Russian novelist.

In 1923, André Gide published with Plon *Dostoevsky*, a collection of texts written between 1908 and 1923: the essay *Dostoevsky According to His Correspondence* (published in *La Grande Revue* on May 25, 1908), the article “The Brothers Karamazov” (published in *Le Figaro* on the occasion of Jacques Copeau’s staging in 1908), the address delivered at the Vieux-Colombier for the centenary of the writer on December 24, 1921, and a cycle of six lectures given between February 18 and March 25, 1922.

The chronological density of this corpus reveals something essential about the nature of Gide’s engagement: it was not a passing enthusiasm but a relationship constructed over time and nourished by successive rereadings. One finds within it a constant dialectic between identification and critical distance, which Gide himself acknowledges by admitting that he used the figure of Doseoevsky as a “pretext.” This word is valuable: it signifies that the reading of the other becomes the occasion for a reflection upon oneself, a dynamic that the comparatist will recognise as one of the fundamental mechanisms of all literary transfer.

3.2 The Question of “Doubling” and Its Implications

At the heart of Gide's reading of Dostoevsky lies a notion that would structure an important part of twentieth-century French literary reflection on novelistic psychology: doubling. In his

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1923 lectures, Gide evokes the “doubling” or “dispossession” of the self in Doseoevskian characters, linked to the hold of an idea that alienates them.

This notion resonates with Gide’s own novelistic concerns, as he was then seeking to move beyond the nineteenth-century psychological novel, centred upon the coherence of a unified self. The Dostoevskian character, as Gide reads him, is traversed by contradictory forces that exceed him. For this reason, *The Counterfeiters* (1925), published two years after the book on Dostoevsky, is often considered the French novel that pushed experimentation with multiple voices and irreconcilable points of view furthest.

Gide's lectures address a set of revealing themes: the question of passions, the epistemological critique of language, the anthropological question of spontaneity, the discussion of nihilism, the confrontation between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, the clash between the French critical spirit and the Russian soul, and the question of nations and of European sentiment. This list, admittedly partial, shows that Gide did not consider Dostoevsky merely as a foreign novelist of remarkable psychological talent but as a thinker whose intuitions articulate with the major philosophical tensions of his time. Comparison with Nietzsche alone is eloquent: it situates Dostoevsky within the movement of the crisis of Western metaphysics, granting him a place in the grand narrative of philosophical modernity that far exceeds his Russian rootedness.

3.3 Indirect Inheritance: *Counterfeiters* as a Dostoevskian Novel?

The question of the extent to which *The Counterfeiters* (1925) owes something to Dostoevsky goes beyond Gide’s explicitly stated intention. The multiple voices simultaneously present, the absence of a dominant omniscient narrator, the pluralism of consciousnesses without reduction to a single truth: these are principles that Gide seems to have found, or confirmed, in his long familiarity with the Russian novelist.

It was Bakhtin who, in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929, translated into French in 1970), forged the expression “polyphonic novel” to describe a narrative space in which a plurality of voices and consciousnesses coexist, without any point of view, not even that of the author asserting itself as superior. Bakhtin probably did not know *The Counterfeiters* when he elaborated this concept. However, it is remarkable that Gide, for his part, was already working through this same intuition when he reflected in his *Journal of The Counterfeiters* (1927) upon the impossibility of fixing a single point of view in his novel.

IV. Bakhtin and Polyphony: A Russian Theory for Reading the World

4.1 *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929): The Genesis of a Global Concept

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) is not, strictly speaking, a mediator. He elaborated a theory of the novel that takes Dostoevsky as its archetype and would, after long detours, transform the way world literary criticism approaches narrative fiction. Dialogism, a concept forged in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929), designates the interaction between the discourse of the author-narrator and that of the characters, as well as between two discourses internal to a single character.

What distinguishes Bakhtin’s theory and renders it operative for comparative literature is its generative power: it is not merely a matter of accounting for Doseoevsky but of proposing a way of reading the novel as a space of irreducible tensions between voices that no hierarchy can pacify. Bakhtin thus sets the “polyphonic” work of Dostoevsky in direct opposition to the

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"monologic" work of Tolstoy, in which an omniscient authorial voice unifies the narrative. The fertility of this opposition for thinking about the literatures of divided societies traversed by conflicts of languages, cultures, classes, or races is considerable. It is therefore not surprising that Bakhtinian theory has been mobilised to read postcolonial literature, which testifies precisely to a plurality of voices irreducible to any hegemonic synthesis.[3]

4.2 The Reception of Bakhtin in France: The Role of Julia Kristeva

The reception of Bakhtin in French culture constitutes an emblematic example of cultural transfer. It was Julia Kristeva who, in a foundational article published in the journal *Critique* in 1967, introduced Bakhtinian thought into the French theoretical field.[4] There, she forged the notion of intertextuality, a translation of Bakhtinian dialogism into the language of structuralism. In "Bakhtin, the Word, Dialogue, and the Novel," Kristeva highlights the theoretical implications of Doseoevskian polyphony with a precision that would leave a lasting mark on literary theory.

This transfer is revealing because it shows that ideas rarely travel intact: they are transformed as they change language and intellectual context. Bakhtinian polyphony becomes Kristevan intertextuality, which in turn becomes one of the central concepts of French poststructuralism and, subsequently, international literary criticism. At the other end of this chain: Doseoevsky. A way of writing the novel in nineteenth-century Russia became, through successive mediations, one of the most productive theoretical paradigms of contemporary literary criticism.

V. Albert Camus and Dostoevsky: Revolt, Absurd, and Algerian Inheritance

5.1 Camus, Reader of Dostoevsky: A Formative Encounter

Albert Camus's relationship with Dostoevsky is not like Gide's. It is less critical than existential: it concerns the very formation of Camus's thought on the absurd and revolt. Camus himself recalled, during a collective tribute to the Russian writer in 1955, the profound impact that reading Dostoevsky, undertaken around the age of twenty, had on his work.

This dating is significant. In Algeria, at the beginning of the 1930s, Albert Camus was a young man with a modest background, emerging from French colonial society. It was therefore in a context radically different from that of Saint Petersburg or Paris that he encountered Dostoevsky: a Mediterranean encounter with a Russian thought of suffering and revolt. This geography of reading is not insignificant: it perhaps explains why Camus retained from Dostoevsky what touched upon the universal human condition rather than what anchored the work in Russian culture. These readings nourished the developments of *The Myth of Sisyphus* and, later, *The Rebel*, where the Doseoevskian notions of logical suicide and metaphysical revolt are explicitly invoked.

In his Algerian youth, Camus had staged *The Brothers Karamazov* before, and twenty-one years later, he offered an adaptation of *The Possessed* at the Théâtre Antoine. It is also known that a portrait of Dostoevsky adorned his desk. This detail deserves attention. That an Algerian–French writer, whose desk overlooks the Mediterranean, should hang on his wall the portrait

[3] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).
[4] Julia Kristeva, *Séméiôtiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969).

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of a nineteenth-century Russian novelist reveals something essential about the nature of literary filiations: they transcend national borders, simple chronologies, and geographical logics. They obey deeper affinities, touching upon the manner in which certain writers interrogate the fundamental questions of the human condition.

5.2 Ivan Karamazov and Metaphysical Revolt

Camus devotes a central chapter of *The Rebel* (1951) to the character of Ivan Karamazov, whom he presents as "the most accomplished figure of metaphysical revolt in the whole of literature. "[5] What attracts Camus to Ivan is the question that the character embodies at the end of his trajectory: can one live in revolt without betraying it, without its drifting into nihilism or the terrorism of the mind? Ivan pushes revolt to the formula "everything is permitted"; Camus, for his part, reflects upon a self-limiting revolt that recognises in the other a value that revolt cannot sacrifice.

The choice of a Russian character to figure the point of no return of metaphysical revolt is not accidental. It corresponds to the intuition that Dostoevskian thought possesses a singular capacity to push questions to their extreme logic, where the French tradition tends to moderate and to seek equilibria. As Steiner observed, the great Russian novelists surpass the French realist tradition from Balzac to Zola via Flaubert precisely because their art is not founded solely on the faithful transcription of reality but on a radical exploration of the depths of consciousness.

5.3 *Possessing* and Contemporary Nihilism

Camus's relationship with *The Possessed* illustrates particularly well how he reads Dostoevsky in the light of his own epoch. In the statement of intent accompanying his theatrical adaptation, he writes that *The Possessed* is a prophetic book not only because it anticipated our nihilism but also because it expresses the condition of torn souls, deprived of a love that they can no longer give yet wish to give, of minds at once destined to believe and to whom faith is refused a condition which is, according to him, that of our society and of our spiritual world.

This retrospective reading is one of the major gestures of the comparatist approach: to seek in a work of the past the prefiguration of the crises of the present. In the nineteenth century, Camus sees the spiritual ancestors of the totalitarian revolutionaries of the twentieth century. It is precisely because Dostoevsky had perceived, within the nihilism of his own time, the possibility of a total catastrophe that his work could serve as a framework for interpreting the century that followed.

5.4 Camus between Algiers and Saint Petersburg: Algerian Mediation

This is a fundamental point, often neglected in Camusian studies: Camus's reading of Dostoevsky is not a French reading; it is an Algerian one, undertaken from a borderland position, within a culture at once French and other. Born in Mondovi, Algeria, into a modest milieu, Camus grew up in Algiers, a city of composite identity, both French and Algerian. This intermediate position undoubtedly influenced his sensitivity when he approached Doseoevsky's work. Just as Dostoevsky's characters find themselves at crossroads seeking harmony with their society while being torn by internal conflicts, Camus himself occupies a threshold position between two worlds that do not reconcile.

[5] Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951).

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His relationship with Russian irrationalism, Dostoevsky, and Shestov bears witness to this duality: a current of thought that enjoyed a certain vogue in France during the 1920s found in him a singularly attentive reader, precisely because he himself was a figure of the in-between, culturally and geographically. This intermediate posture forms the basis for a possible reading of a work that is itself traversed by tensions: between faith and unbelief, between Russia and Europe, and between tradition and modernity.

VI. Kateb Yacine: Polyphony and Decolonisation

6.1 *Nedjma* (1956): A Novel at the Confluence of Inheritances

The publication of Nedjma by Éditions du Seuil in 1956 constitutes a major event in the history of Francophone literature. Nedjma, which is generally considered the founding novel of Maghrebi literature in French, is distinguished by its radical rupture from the realist novel model that was still dominant at the time. The novel appeared at the very moment when the Algerian War of Independence began. This coincidence is not accidental: Kateb Yacine had been profoundly marked by the massacres of May 8, 1945, in Sétif and Guelma, which were for him, as for an entire generation of Algerians, the founding moment of a political and literary consciousness. Kateb Yacine himself emphasises this: “It was then a matter of showing in French that Algeria is not French."

This statement is fundamental for understanding the Katebian project. The French language is at once the instrument of a resistance addressed to those who speak it as masters and the material to be transformed to be “defrancised,” to make it say something other than that for which it had been fashioned. It is from formal models moving in this direction that Kateb saw it be possible to shatter the language of the novel to make something else of it, and from these models, he constructed his work.

6.2 The Chain of Influence: From Dostoevsky to Faulkner to Kateb Yacine

The relationship between Kateb Yacine and Dostoevsky is indirect but authentic because it passes through two principal mediations: the work of Faulkner on the one hand and the Bakhtinian theory of polyphony on the other.

Faulkner's influence on Kateb is documented and explicitly acknowledged by the author himself: “I have a certain passion, a certain hatred for Faulkner. At the cost of everything nonreligious, I admit him as a kind of prophet." He adds, in a significant gesture of comparatism: “Balzac, Dostoevsky, Proust, Kafka were of the same race of panting labourers. "[6] This enumeration of Balzac, Dostoevsky, Proust, and Kafka reveals how Kateb conceives of himself as a novelist: beyond all literary nationalism, within an aesthetic of kinship, of belonging to those who inhabit the novel with a double demand, aesthetic and ethical.

Within this circle, Dostoevsky occupies a particular place: that of the author, who demonstrated that a novel can bear the weight of an entire nation without ceasing to be a work of art and that fragmented and polyphonic narrative form is better suited than classical realism to account for humanity in situations of extreme crisis. After reading Joyce and Faulkner, Kateb says he writes "as he feels it." This formulation is valuable: it signifies that influence is not imitation but

[6] Jacqueline Arnaud, *Maghrebi Literature in the French Language*, vol. 2, *The Case of Kateb Yacine* (Paris: Publisud, 1986).

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liberation. These readings granted him the right to free himself from the naturalist-realist framework that then dominated Algerian literature, a framework whose limits Doseoevsky and the Russian tradition, with their manner of bearing violence and collective guilt, had been among the first to reveal.

6.3 Polyphony as a Political Weapon

What is striking in Kateb's use of polyphony is that he makes of it an instrument with a political aim. The notion of polyphony, as theorised in Bakhtin's reflections on *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, emphasises the diversity of voices issuing from different social contexts and their irreducible coexistence within the novel.

In Dostoevsky, polyphony is linked to a philosophical conception: the impossibility for the author to decide between voices representing opposing metaphysical positions. In Kateb, this polyphony assumes a resolutely postcolonial dimension. The multiple voices of *Nedjma* reflect the profound divisions of a colonised society, where varied temporalities, antagonistic memories, and conflicting languages coexist without achieving harmony. The narrative fragmentation of the novel thus becomes the literary form of a torn historical consciousness; it echoes, within a distinct national and individual context, the Doseoevskian fragment of suffering consciousness, torn between its irreconcilable "yes" and "no."

6.4 *Nedjma*, Figure of an Impossible Algeria

The eponymous character of the novel, this mysterious and inaccessible Nedjma, at once Algerian and French, the object of the desire of four men, has often been read as an allegory of colonial Algeria.[7] A woman perpetually withdrawing behind the unreal appearance of a dream, a hybrid and elusive character, she largely embodies the impossibility for the Algerian people to represent themselves through an identity of their own.

This allegorical dimension of the female character is not unrelated to certain figures in Dostoevsky, notably Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot* or Aglaya, who are likewise figures of impossible desire, catalysts of a crisis that exceeds the individual. In Doseoevsky's work, these women often function as revealers of a crisis in Russian national identity and of the tension between Russia and Europe. In Kateb, Nedjma operates within an analogous register: she symbolises the impossibility of an Algerian identity unmarked by colonial history.

This parallelism is not a mere formal coincidence. It reveals something deeper: how the novels of societies in crisis project collective anxiety onto female characters. It is one of the questions that comparative literature can pose with greater acuity than national studies: How can cultures that are very distant from one another, when confronted with an analogous situation, establish similar narrative devices?

VII. The Question of Influences: Limits and Nuances from a Comparatist Perspective

7.1 Influence Is Not a Source

It is necessary to question the limits of an approach on the basis of influences. For a long time, comparative literature defined itself through the search for sources and influences. However, recent studies have demonstrated the limitations of this method when it is implemented

[7] Jacqueline Arnaud, *Maghrebi Literature in the French Language*, vol. 2, *The Case of Kateb Yacine* (Paris: Publisud, 1986); Charles Bonn, *The Algerian Novel in the French Language* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985).

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mechanically. To say that Camus is "influenced" by Dostoevsky or that Kateb Yacine inscribes himself within a Dostoevskian tradition relayed by Faulkner, is not to explain the works; it risks dissolving them within a network of antecedents.

The more fruitful question is that of redeployment: what has each author done with what he has read? What has he retained, transformed, and infused into his own writing? These questions highlight the singularity of each work rather than its imputability to a model. In the case under consideration, three distinct modes of transformation emerge. Gide transforms Dostoevskian psychology into a novelistic technique: what interests him is the plurality of voices and the impossibility of a single point of view. Camus transforms Dostoevskian metaphysics into an ethics of revolt: he makes the philosophy emerging from the Russian novels a reflection upon the human condition. He articulates it in terms of political thought about his own century. Finally, Kateb transforms Dostoevskian polyphony received more through Faulkner than directly into a writing of decolonisation, making it an instrument for fracturing the coloniser's language and inscribing within it voices not destined for it.

7.2 Reception as a Creative Act

These variations emphasise that the reception of a work is always as much a creative act as it is an act of reading: Gide reading Dostoevsky creates a Gidean Dostoevsky; Camus reading Dostoevsky creates a Camusian Dostoevsky; Kateb reading Dostoevsky through Faulkner creates a Katebian Dostoevsky. These figures do not coincide: they coexist as divergent versions of the same work, each revealing what the work can become within a given context.

This idea renews reflection on the nature of the literary text. To borrow a formulation from Borges himself, a great reader of Dostoevsky, every great author creates his precursors. It is Kafka who leads us to reread Zeno of Elea differently; it is Dostoevsky, as read by Camus, who enables us to reread Dostoevsky in another way. Reception retroactively transforms the work received.[8]

7.3 Dostoevsky between Balzac and Hugo: The Reciprocity of Exchanges

The relationship between Russian literature and French literature is not unilateral. While Dostoevsky influenced French thought and literature, he himself was profoundly shaped by French literature. His admiration for Racine is well known; his enthusiasm for Balzac and for Hugo is documented, and the presence of *Les Misérables* can be felt from *Crime and Punishment* to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Another current of French literature influenced him on the technical level: that of the popular novel, from Eugène Sue to Paul de Kock.

This reciprocity is a fundamental dimension of a literary history that cannot be reduced to the imposition of one study upon others. What emerges here is neither a French model determining a Russian disciple nor a Russian master bringing his knowledge to French and Algerian disciples: it is a circulation, a trans-European dialogue in which each participant is both transmitter and receiver and in which influence is only a matter of perspective within a network of exchanges far more complex. Tolstoy himself, in *What Is Art?*, affirmed that the finest works of his time expressed sentiments of unity and fraternity among human beings, citing Dickens, Hugo, and Dostoevsky. This list of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Russians sufficiently

[8] Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors" (1951), in *Inquiries*, trans. Paul and Sylvia Bénichou (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

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indicates that great creators have always conceived their work within a horizon that transcends national boundaries.

VIII. Perspectives: Toward an Expanded Franco-Algerian Comparison

8.1 Beyond the Triangle Paris–Saint Petersburg–Algiers

The analysis conducted thus far opens avenues for a broader question: the manner in which Algerian literature positions itself within the world literary space. By mobilising Dostoevsky directly or indirectly as a formal and philosophical resource, Algerian writers of the twentieth century writing in French inscribe themselves within an implicit comparatist approach. They position themselves within a tradition that is neither exclusively French nor exclusively colonial or even exclusively Western. They belong to the sphere of the great literature that has been compelled to consider the human condition in the form of an extreme crisis.

This implicit belonging to the great tradition of the world novel is also a political claim. Kateb Yacine, admiring Faulkner and placing Dostoevsky in his literary firmament, implicitly conveys the message that Algerian literature is not an appendage of French literature; it belongs to a broader space where the criteria are those of great universal literature.

8.2 Subsequent Generations: Rachid Boudjedra and the Polyphonic Tradition

The Katebian legacy itself constitutes a compelling object of comparatist study. The influence of *Nedjma* on the Algerian authors of the following generation manifests itself notably in Rachid Boudjedra through parody and in Rachid Mimouni through pastiche. This phenomenon of intertextuality, internal to Algerian literature, reproduces, on the scale of emerging national literature, the same process of creative reception described at the level of Franco-Russian exchanges.

Rachid Boudjedra, in particular, develops an aesthetic of excess and repetition deeply inspired by Dostoevsky (via Kateb) and by French literary modernity. *La Répudiation* (1969) and *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (1975) extend and radicalise the Katebian rupture with the realist novel. This constitutes an almost exemplary illustration of what Bakhtin termed the dialogic chain: each text responds to earlier texts and opens the way to future texts within an endless dialogue.

8.3 The Question of Language: Between Spoils of War and Complex Inheritance

Mediation through French raises a singular question in the Algerian case. Kateb Yacine described French as the “spoils of war” of the Algerians.[9] This formulation indicates that the coloniser's language can be turned against him and serve as an instrument of resistance. However, it also implies that such a transformation has a cost: it requires a relationship to language always undermined by history, never simple, never natural.

To draw upon formal models that are not French Dostoevsky, Faulkner, Joyce is therefore not merely a matter of aesthetic influence but also of formal decolonisation. Seeking in Russian or American literature models of the polyphonic novel enables Algerian writers to circumvent the model of the French realist novel itself, the model of the colonial novel, and to signify, through form itself, that novelistic modernity is not a specifically French attribute.

[9] The formula is generally attributed to Kateb Yacine, although its exact source is sometimes disputed. It is cited and discussed by Lise Gauvin in *The Francophone Writer at the Crossroads of Languages* (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 8, as well as by numerous critics of Maghrebi literature.

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IX. Conclusion: Geographies of Influence

At the end of this trajectory, the passage of Dostoevsky's work through the French and Algerian literary fields follows logics that go beyond mere exchange history. What we have attempted to show is that this passage is, each time, a transformation, a creative appropriation that reveals not only what French and Algerian authors sought to accomplish but also what Dostoevsky truly was.

Gide reads Dostoevsky through the prism of his own quest for a new novel capable of grasping the complexity of modern consciousness: from him, he derives a Dostoevsky of formal freedom and of overcoming traditional psychology. Camus reads Dostoevsky through the lens of his confrontation with the nihilism and totalitarianism of the twentieth century. From him, he derives a Dostoevsky of the philosophy of revolt and of the refusal to be complicit in murder. Kateb Yacine reads Dostoevsky from within the experience of decolonisation and the search for an Algerian voice in a borrowed language: from him, he derives a Dostoevsky capable of bearing the weight of a torn nation without sacrificing either formal complexity or poetic intensity.

These three Dostoevskys do not contradict one another: they coexist, like the voices of a polyphonic novel do. This is the most fruitful lesson of this study: the great literary work is precisely that which can engender divergent readings without exhausting itself in any one of them. Strength, endurance, and creative energy: This is no doubt what Gide, Camus, and Kateb Yacine perceived in Dostoevsky and what, despite a century's distance, two-world wars and a colonial war could nourish literary and philosophical projects so differently. In this sense, the reception of Dostoevsky in France and Algeria is not merely a literary history: it is the history of the way in which men and women of an age marked by crisis seek in the great works of the past the resources with which to think their present.

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