



Front Cover Iconography and Algerian Women's Writing: Heuristic Implications of the Recto-Verso Effect (After the Empire: The Francophone World and Postcolonial France)

Pamela A. Pears

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The front covers of books written by Algerian women serve as the primary source of investigation in *Front Cover Iconography and Algerian Women Writers*. These covers have implications that extend beyond selling the book. What we see on one side of the page—or in this case, the cover, (recto) controls what we read on the reverse—in this case, the text itself (verso). Using theories of the paratext, including those of Gérard Genette and Jonathan Gray, this book determines how four dominant iconographies used on the covers of Algerian women's writing – Orientalist art, the veil, the desert, and the author portrait – work with and against the texts they represent. These images have an impact on the initial reception of the book, but beyond that, book covers determine how both the informed and uninformed reader categorize and interpret francophone Algerian women's writing in France and beyond. As the covers help to sell the works, they also produce messages, represented via their iconographies that embed themselves into the texts. A sometimes explicit, and at the very least, implicit dialog between the visual paratextual representation and the written textual one is created: a dialog that extends beyond the life of the physical book to a sort of canonical paradigm for reading these authors' works. Thus, even if the cover image appears ephemeral, it never truly disappears. Its powerful control over critical reception and, ultimately, interpretation of francophone Algerian women's writing remains.

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Amanda Lara:

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