

Women's historical figures in Francophone novels from Africa and the Middle East

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Abstract. There are women figures who have have marked history by their heroic deeds or their political gestures but also by their femininity and legendary beauty. Far from referring to the icon with cut breasts or the maiden in armor, these characters retain all the facets of the female sex. Sarraounia (Niger), Elissa (Tunisia), Nefertiti (Egypt), Zenobia (Syria) and Queen Pokou (Ivory Coast) are just some instances of such women. Some exercised power, weapon in hand, others used the power of seduction. All of them expressed their heroism with as much boldness as finesse (cunning or delicacy). We propose to analyze the relationships between femininity and warlike and/or political power in these characters of epic-looking novels, sometimes mythical, with methodologies from transdisciplinary comparatism.

Keywords: women, historical characters, legend, novel, war, power, seduction.