



## **Narrative Interference Between the Novelistic Discourse and Folk Narrative**

**Fahima Ziadi CHIBANE**

Lecturer – A –

Specialization: Modern and Contemporary Literature,  
August 20, 1955 University, Skikda, Algeria.

Email: [f.ziadi\\_chibane@univ-skikda.dz](mailto:f.ziadi_chibane@univ-skikda.dz)

**Sabrina BOUSSEHABA**

Professor of Higher Education,

August 20, 1955 University, Skikda, Algeria.

Laboratory of Poetics and Discourse Analysis

Email: [boussehabasabrina@yahoo.fr](mailto:boussehabasabrina@yahoo.fr)

### **Abstract:**

*This study constitutes a broad space between artistic interpenetration, between a novelistic discourse that draws its subject from a wild imagination accompanying the present lived reality with a well-structured architectural composition, and a folk narrative that has been fused within the folds of the narrative discourse through the diversity of its expressive forms, for which the translated popular proverb was representative. On this basis, the artistic connection between the novel and the popular proverb is strengthened through artistic experiences included in the Algerian novelistic models selected by this study.*

**Keywords:** Narration – Interpenetration – Novelistic Discourse – Folk Narrative – Popular Proverbs.

**Résumé :**

*Cette étude explore un vaste champ d'interpénétration artistique, entre un discours romanesque qui puise son sujet dans une imagination débordante accompagnant la réalité vécue du présent, avec une composition architecturale bien structurée, et un récit populaire qui s'est fondu dans les replis du discours narratif grâce à la diversité de ses formes d'expression, dont le proverbe populaire traduit est représentatif. Sur cette base, le lien artistique entre le roman et le proverbe populaire est renforcé par les expériences artistiques présentes dans les modèles romanesques algériens sélectionnés par cette étude.*

**Mots-clés :** *Narration – Interpénétration – Discours romanesque – Récit populaire – Proverbes populaires.*



## **Introduction:**

The novel, as a narrative storytelling genre, is one of the most expansive and profound literary arts. This is due to its constant striving for uniqueness and distinction. For this reason, necessity has required the creation of new methods and contents that enable it to be an effective tool on the literary level, resulting in what is called the integration between heritage and modernity within an architectural structure contained in a single literary text. It is characterized by multiple features in its narrative writing, combining lived reality with popular expressive forms that have also attained a distinguished place within the novelistic discourse, thus transcending time as texts engage in dialogue within spaces that are difficult to grasp collectively. This imposes a critical effort on the reader to uncover the poetics produced by the integration of narrative discourse and folk narrative (popular proverbs).

Therefore, it is not surprising that this study is based on the foundations of the creative movement and what the critical movement has established, raising issues and questions about the nature of popular literature and official literature. How has the narrative achievement merged with folk narrative in its various expressive forms, especially popular proverbs that have imposed themselves within the novelistic models selected in this study? To what extent has the interpenetration between the novelistic achievement and folk narrative been realized in the emergence of poetics within Algerian novelistic texts?

**First: The nature of official literature:**

It is all literature of a known source, reaching us in a linguistically solid style, grammatically structured, with eloquent vocabulary and constructions. It is written and published and includes poetic and prose literary genres, among which the novel is one of its arts that has dominated the literary and critical scene.

**Second: The nature of popular literature:**

The concepts and sources of popular literature have been diverse. This diversity in presenting the nature of this expressive art is due to the differing perspectives of those interested and specialized in it. It is defined by "Mohamed Saidi" as: "that which is organically linked to the issues, problems, hopes, and pains of the popular masses, and thus is considered the artistic and aesthetic vessel of the spirit of the people, portraying their social, cultural, and intellectual dynamism, and is connected to their civilizational progress."<sup>1</sup> Thus, popular literature, with its social and cultural content, is a support, a companion, and a carrier of the suffering of peoples, preserving their identity and relieving them of pain. It emerges from the work of many generations of humanity, from the necessities of their lives, their relationships, their joys, and their sorrows.<sup>2</sup>

As for Mohamed Ailan, he sees that: "It is the oral literature of the nation, whether of unknown or known authorship, expressing its emotions, hopes, and its view of life in the form of inherited or modern texts, expressed in a language common among the members of the same nation despite the differences in their dialects or the diversity of their regions and interests."<sup>3</sup>



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The nature of popular literature has been associated with its characteristics, such as orality, anonymity of authorship, and other features that will be addressed in due course.

### **Third: Motivations for the interpenetration of official literature and popular literature**

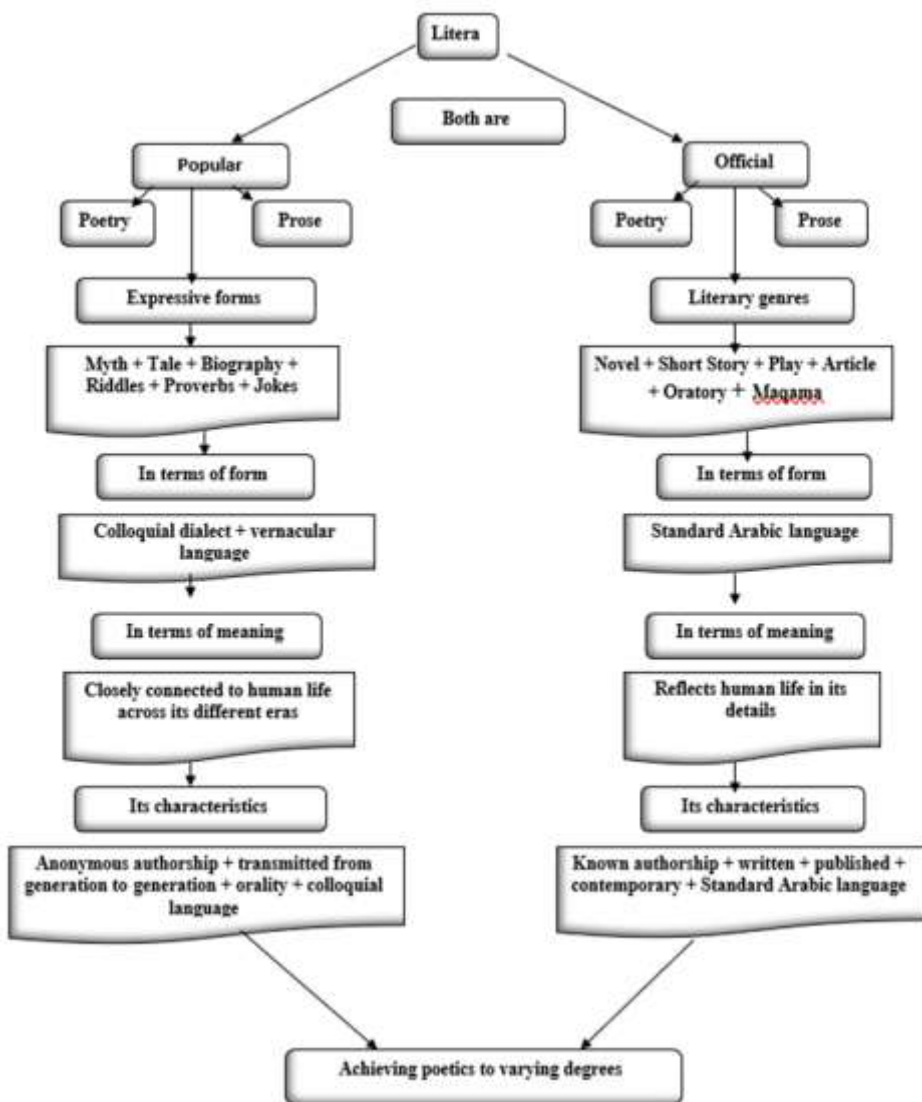
The concepts of popular literature have multiplied due to factors that are not disputed, as the nature of popular material itself, its intellectual and creative richness, and the diversity of its expressive forms represented in popular proverbs, folk epics, myths, riddles, jokes, and popular songs have led scholars and specialists to give it great importance through study, research, and collection.

Thus, popular literatures, due to their antiquity, preserve for us a rich reservoir through which we can understand the intellectual and spiritual life of our ancient ancestors, and through which we can also determine the social history of these early stages of human society.<sup>4</sup>

Since the field of popular literature is concerned with preserving, and indeed protecting, the glories of peoples across ages, and given the readership it enjoys, it has intersected with the genre of the novel, which “has allowed all genres to enter into its structure, whether expressive, literary (stories, poetry), or extra-literary (studies of behaviors, rhetorical texts, global and religious texts...).”<sup>5</sup> Thus, narrative interpenetration within creative works was embodied in models of expressive forms that have their impact within the genre of fashion (the novel), as some Western critics have termed it.

In order to provide a methodological clarification of the relationship between novelistic discourse and folk narrative,

we have chosen to present a diagram that reflects approaches summarizing their connection and separation at shared points, as follows:





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The literariness of literature does not arise from a vacuum, according to Todorov; every artistic work carries a message it seeks to convey and ensures its readability. The elements contained in the previous diagram, representing shared aspects between the two literary forms and the particularity of narration that unites them, have created a semantic interconnection between the novelistic discourse and the folk narrative. Both attempt to express a certain intentionality, and both are creative literary works that complement one another despite the difference in their sources.

### **The presence of the proverb in the novelistic discourse:**

Since the popular model that was fused within the folds of the novelistic production was the popular proverb, as previously indicated, many Algerian novelistic works have invoked it, and its presence was evident, as it helped the novelistic work reveal what was in the mind of the creator.

The nature of the popular proverb: As the popular proverb has gained remarkable interest among the peoples of the world, Ibn al-Muqaffa' defines it by saying: "If speech is made into a proverb, it becomes clearer in expression, more refined to the ear, and broader in conveying discourse."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the incorporation of popular proverbs within novelistic texts grants them a pleasant auditory quality and ease of memorization.

Mohamed Reda defines it by saying: "Proverbs, in every people, are the essence of their experiences and the product of their knowledge. They are statements that indicate the accuracy of meaning and the appropriateness of expression. This is from the perspective of meaning. As for form, the proverb is distinguished from other types of speech by

brevity, elegance of wording, and beauty of rhetoric. Proverbs are a mode of expression that conveys what the soul holds of knowledge, experience, and real truths, entirely removed from illusion and imagination. Hence, proverbs are distinguished from poetic sayings.”<sup>7</sup>

Since all expressive forms of popular literature align with the novelistic discourse in expressing human experiences and depicting their mechanisms in various fields, the popular proverb specializes in presenting this due to its distinctive features compared to other forms, such as eloquence, brevity, strength of expression, and wisdom. Above all, it is “a distillation or summary of a story or tale, and it cannot be understood without knowing the story or tale that the proverb expresses in its content.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, the proverb here serves as a sensory medium invoked by the novel to condense epochs of time with their events and repressions.

### **The harmony between the popular proverb and the novelistic discourse**

The proverb, as a translator of feelings and inner psychological contents, operates with clarity, achieving what narrative linguistic levels may fail to convey. Due to the features that distinguish it from other forms, the proverb has had the greater share in this regard. Consequently, the proverb has become one of the references of novelistic narration in order to achieve poetics and aesthetics as a result of the interpenetration between the novelistic discourse and the folk narrative. This is confirmed by Henry James, who states: “The only justification for the existence of the novel is that it attempts to represent life.”

Thus, we find that the novel and popular proverbs, through their interactions, have produced a kind of harmony



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and coherence. This, in turn, has led to the emergence of a distinguished Algerian novelistic pole as a result of the shared characteristics between them. Accordingly, the texture and composition of the narrative structure of the novel, filled with suspense and excitement, have been the real incentive in attracting an elite readership, due to the high artistic and aesthetic features achieved by this creative work, as confirmed by the selected novelistic models.

For methodological necessity, given the diversity of contexts in which the art of the popular proverb is employed within the genre of the novel, it is logical to address its functions as summarized by scholars as follows:

- Deepening and consolidating the idea
- Intensifying the novelistic scene
- Embellishing the artistic image
- The disappearance of dramatic theatricality (...)
- Spontaneity indicating spontaneous use, emphatic use, and crafted artistic use
- Enriching the semantic level of the novelistic narrative by benefiting from form (beauty) or content (meanings)
- Expressing a human essence
- Generating renewed meanings through the use of popular proverbs and their representations.

Challenging the prevailing situation, expressing popular heritage in its virtuous aspects of the human being while juxtaposing vices and flaws, and employing the technique of flashback as a cognitive background indicative of the authenticity of popular heritage<sup>10</sup>, which flourished and diversified through the blending of the popular with the official and the diversity of languages within a single

novelistic text. This is evident in the inclusion of the popular proverb in a colloquial dialect within a classical novelistic discourse, which has created diversity in the novelistic structure and produced the feature of multilingualism with its mechanisms such as stylization and hybridization. Thus, it became a manifestation of experimentation that aligned with the architecture and structuring of the novelistic discourse. The creator's adoption of this approach in his creative work, and his reliance on the popular proverb in his works, is evidence of his awareness of its impact on the message (the creative text) and the recipient (the reader or critic). Alain Robbe-Grillet says: "All the critical awareness that may distinguish the novelist benefits him only at the level of choices; he feels the need to use a particular form or to reject a certain feature or to construct a paragraph in a specific way. He devotes all his attention to the careful search for the appropriate word and its correct place."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the diversity of themes of the popular proverb and the vast meanings it conveys have served as a reference for the diversity of its functions, which writers have prioritized in their choices by adopting the proverb in different forms and positions within the novelistic text.

The entertaining function also played a role as a companion in their gatherings and a relief from their sorrows: "We may point to the pride of villagers in memorizing proverbs, and perhaps competitions would arise among them over who memorizes them best... Some of them would entertain themselves by exchanging the most witty, sharp, humorous, and amusing proverbs."<sup>12</sup>

In the novel *Zhour Wansi (A Bridge for Confession and Another for Longing)*, "The dear asked for the cheap,"<sup>13</sup> which indicates pride in generosity, hospitality, and the good



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nature of the rural person, and also reflects the value of the human being as priceless. Likewise, in the field of entertainment and recreation, the novelist Waciny Laredj does not withhold from his readers in his novel *Sayyidat al-Maqam* (Elegies of the Sad Day) various Chaabi proverbs. In this regard, he says: "What the wolf has learned, the greyhound has memorized."<sup>14</sup> It indicates a perceptive person, a trait that has long spread in popular environments as a result of their hardships and harsh natural conditions. He also says: "He who meddles in others' affairs goes to bed without dinner,"<sup>15</sup> which reflects the sincerity of rural people and how people are of different natures, not always repaying kindness with kindness, making betrayal their companion. We also recall the writer Abdelhamid Benhadouga in his novel *Rih al-Janoub* (The Wind from the South), where he says: "When the belly is full, it tells the head to sing."<sup>16</sup> Which indicates joy as a physiological result that human beings constantly strive for.

**2/ The educational function:** The human pursuit of forming a well-balanced personality does not arise from nothing, but rather from what is acquired of knowledge and moral virtues. Human experience: "contributes to refining generations, correcting morals, and guiding people to the right path, and perhaps a proverb can influence the soul what a hundred lectures on ethics and ideals fail to achieve."<sup>17</sup> This is what we find in the novel *Rih al-Janoub* (The Wind from the South), where it says: "A good son is like fertile land; if it does not bring you much profit, it will not cause you loss."<sup>18</sup> The novelist Habib Sayeh also participates in advice and guidance in his novel *Zaman al-Nimroud* (The Time of Nimrod), where

he says: "Ask one who has experience, do not ask a doctor,"<sup>19</sup> "He who surpasses you by a night surpasses you by a trick,"<sup>20</sup> and also: "Plant it and it will grow."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, we find that some proverbs, due to their moral content and the human values they carry aimed at reforming society and spreading advice among its members are repeated within the novelistic discourse. Each time, they take on a specific narrative position, yet they all fall within the educational and didactic framework.

**3/ The aesthetic function:** What distinguishes the popular proverb are its characteristics such as strength of expression, brevity, reliance on similes and clarification without verbosity, as well as the beauty of imagery, paronomasia, and rhyme, and the musicality they produce. Here, many proverbs are evoked within various novelistic discourses. In the novel *Zaman al-Nimroud* (The Time of Nimrod) by the novelist Habib Sayeh, he says: "He eats the harvest and causes trouble for the community,"<sup>22</sup> a musical rhythm pleasing to the ear that carries semantic dimensions, enhancing the beauty of meaning and reflecting at the same time the serious nature of the human being. Also in his saying: "Their oil is in their own house,"<sup>23</sup> which indicates keeping secrets, expressed with a pleasant musical tone.

Likewise, the novelist Tahar Ouettar in his novel *Al-Laz*, which also abounds in the diversity of circulating popular proverbs, says: "Give it on credit and do not throw it with mud."<sup>24</sup>

The feature of repetition of the same popular proverbs across Algerian novelistic discourses from one novelist to another, with the same dialect and the same wording, is also present. This indicates the Algerian novelist's good selection



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of proverb content and his concern for conveying his artistic message and achieving aesthetic value. For example, Tahar Ouettar in his novel *Al-Laz* employs the popular proverb: "Ask one who has experience, do not ask the doctor."<sup>25</sup> All of them convey experience across the various novelistic texts, despite the difference in their authors. We find his saying: "Bran attracts dogs,"<sup>26</sup> and "Nothing remains in the valley except its stones."<sup>27</sup>

The communicative function: The experiences that the individual has lived through across ages have been preserved and narrated by popular literature in its various expressive forms. At the present time, these proverbs, with the stories and tales they encapsulate, constitute a link between the primitive human and the modern one. This is what led most writers to draw on proverbs for their communicative function, whether between individuals or between nations and the events they have gone through across the stages of their lives. For example, the novelist Mohamed Sari in his novel *Al-Waram* (*The Tumor*) says: "If the meat spoils, they throw it to its owner."<sup>28</sup> It symbolizes that when harm or illness befalls relatives, it may destroy the one who takes responsibility for them. In the same context, he says: "The one who owns the crown is still in need."<sup>29</sup> Also, whenever maintaining kinship ties and emphasizing communication and unity, he says: "Support your brother, whether he is wrongdoer or wronged."<sup>30</sup> And to further emphasize the importance of cooperation among individuals, how people coexist within it, and how one relieves his brother's distress, another proverb says: "Preserve the 'M' and it will preserve you."<sup>31</sup>

It shows that human relationships require caution and prudence in order to avoid individual conflicts. This is what the novel has sought to embody in its discourses, where the popular proverb is the most appropriate and effective means of expression.

### **The harmony between the proverb and the novel in terms of themes:**

Since the Algerian novelistic discourse, throughout its development, has coexisted with contemporary reality, embodied the issues of the nation, and sought ways to protect its identity by reviving heritage which represents the authenticity and antiquity of the nation the popular proverb, from the perspective of the novelistic discourse, with its heritage and thematic diversity, is worthy of coexistence and fusion with it (the novelistic discourse).

This aims to liberate the novelistic genre from Western dependency and to reread the Algerian popular heritage within contemporary developments that the creator must address. This has compelled him to return to reviving heritage in its poetic forms and its limitless artistic specificity. Thus, we find thematic diversity accompanying the subjects of the novel in their breadth and enhancing their aesthetic value, as the proverb appears within them with its concise specificity.

**1/ The theme of marriage:** We address the theme of marriage, which is presented in the Qur'an as completing half of religion, as He says: "And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves spouses that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and



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mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect.”  
(21)<sup>32</sup>

Since marriage is the first building block in forming the family, which constitutes the primary pillar in the structure of society, both the novel and the proverb seek to achieve a common goal: addressing reality and preserving the individual's sense of reassurance through a dignified life, well-being, and psychological comfort. These are principles that societies, with their diverse rituals and beliefs, strive to achieve. Thus, the expressive forms of popular literature, with the specificity of each type, aim to pay attention to these aspects. Religion and the proverb, in this regard, illustrate its importance and summarize its conditions in a clear statement: “He who marries her for her wealth dies poor, and he who marries her for her beauty dies contemptible, and he who marries her for her religion is loved by God and the Messenger of glad tidings and will prosper.”<sup>33</sup>

The symbolism contained in popular proverbs represents a condensation of the individual's life within society across distant historical periods, and this is linked to the class differences present in the structure of society. Abdelhamid Benhadouga evokes in his novel *Al-Jaziya wa al-Darawish* (*Al-Jaziya and the Dervishes*) the proverb: “The water of the mountain does not flow upward.”<sup>34</sup> A proverb that reflects the mentality of the dervishes and their refusal to marry a rural girl to a city man, based on considerations rooted in customs, traditions, and beliefs they adhere to. Their sense of distinctiveness and the prevalence of social stratification among them led them to establish their own rules: “The sons of the village are more entitled to its daughters.”<sup>35</sup>

The popular memory has excelled in promoting its creative product represented in the proverb, which has been considered an excellent communicative means due to its formal and semantic features. As in the saying of the dervishes, for example: "O dweller of the village of poplars, do not fear," "Her beloved is from the high mountain peaks," and "Whoever has a poplar tree plants a vine before it."<sup>36</sup> Here, it encourages the youth of the village to marry the rural girl living in the high mountains, who has poplar trees and vines, all of which carry connotations of authenticity and strength. Likewise, the novelist Ahlam Mosteghanemi blended the novelistic text *Fawda al-Hawas* (Chaos of the Senses) with the traditional proverb, saying: "Every day is a wedding for the unmarried woman."<sup>37</sup>

**2/ The theme of ethics:** Moral manifestations and noble values have been diverse within novelistic texts, due to the abundance of proverbs filled with such values. We find gratitude and ingratitude and their opposites, as in the saying of Habib Sayeh in his novel *Zaman al-Nimroud*: "He eats the harvest and insults the community,"<sup>38</sup> and also: "Keep me alive today and kill me tomorrow."<sup>39</sup> The occasions for using such proverbs are numerous, such as the proverb not included in this novel: "I give him fat for his mouth, and he gives me blows for my eyes," as well as the proverb: "I went to help him bury his mother, and he chased me away with an axe." These proverbs, in their meanings, fall within the same semantic field. Habib Sayeh also says in his novel: "Bad company corrupts, and scabies is contagious."<sup>40</sup> We also find the trait of loyalty and betrayal, as reflected in the novel *Sayyidat al-Maqam* by Waciny Laredj in his saying: "They kill the dead and then walk in his funeral."<sup>41</sup>



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He further affirms this meaning by saying: “Nothing scratches your skin except your own nail,”<sup>42</sup> and also: “He beat me, cried, and preceded me in complaining.”<sup>43</sup> The projection of these traits onto the characters of the novel and the description of their qualities serves as verbal reinforcement through what the popular proverb carries, reflecting the close relationship between popular belief, popular mentality, and creative thought, as influenced by the society and environment to which it belongs.

The interpenetration between the novelistic discourse and the folk narrative in the creative process did not arise from a vacuum, but resulted from the convergence of many techniques and mechanisms provided by both the novel and the proverb. Their shared role in the sincere expression of the psychology and aspirations of the people, despite their diversity, and their simultaneous processes of connection and separation, have driven change and the constant pursuit of development. This oppositional duality, combining the official and the popular, diversified its themes, enriched its style, and renewed its character.

It is a creative product that has ascended to the throne of literary modernity and unsettled the stability of critical modernity. From this, we have drawn the following conclusions :

- The constant striving of the novelistic production to achieve a theory in which nothing is fixed except change.
- The return to heritage, with its dimensions, has followed a novelistic discourse rich in its intellectual and cognitive content.
- Reviving heritage and integrating the expressive forms of popular literature have endowed the novelistic discourse

with novelty in presentation, depth, and comprehensiveness in addressing the studied issues.

- Popular proverbs are a standard by which the individual's awareness of reality and ability to coexist wisely are measured, as life is fundamentally based on experiences, and the proverb is a condensation of these experiences.

The interpenetration of the novel and the proverb, along with the modern architectural ornamentation designed through the fusion of form and content, has produced a modern poetics founded on the harmony between official literature and popular literature.

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