

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Abou Bekr Belkaid University

Tlemcen



Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English

**Popular Culture in the Algerian Literature: Wattar's  
*al- Laz* (1974), Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* (1971)  
and Abdeljalil Mortad's *Domoue wa Chomoue* (2001).**

An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirement for a Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation

**Presented by:**

Mrs. Sabri- Dich Kelthoum

**Supervised by:**

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**Board of Examiners:**

**Chairperson:** *Pr. Hadjoui Ghouti*

**Supervisor:** *Pr. Serir- Mortad Ilhem*

**Examiner:** *Dr. Khaladi Mohammed*

Academic Year: 2018- 2019

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# Dedications

*To my dear children Youssef and Yacine*

*Kelthoum*

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## ABSTRACT

The present research paper is entitled “Popular Culture in the Algerian Literature: Wattar’s *al- Laz*, Benhadouga’s *Rih El Djanoub* and Abdeljalil Mortad’s *Domoue wa Chomoue*”. It aims to examine the main elements of the Algerian popular culture in each novel and to show to what extent the Algerian novels are similar or different in shedding light on the main elements of the popular culture. Through the analysis of the three Algerian novels and the combination between the historical and comparative approaches, this dissertation validates that the postcolonial Algerian writers, and the contemporary ones use the same elements of the popular culture and differ in some; but popular culture still exists in most of Algerian novels.

**Key words:** Popular culture, Tahar Wattar, Abdelhamid Benhadouga, Abdeljalil Mortad, *Al-Laz*, *Rih el Djanoub*, *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

## **Table of Contents**

Dedications .....	III
Acknowledgements .....	IV
ABSTRACT .....	V
List of Tables .....	IX
General Introduction.....	2

### **Chapter one:**

#### **Literature Review**

1.1 Introduction .....	6
1.2 Introducing Algerian Literature .....	6
1.2.1 Pre-Independence Algerian Novels .....	6
1.2.2 Post- independence Algerian Novels .....	7
1.2.3 Contemporary Algerian Novels .....	7
1.3 Introducing Popular Culture .....	7
1.4 Elements of Popular Culture .....	8
1.4.1 Proverbs .....	8
1.4.2 Taboo .....	8
1.4.3 Sorcery .....	8
1.4.4 Riddles .....	9
1.4.5 Popular Songs.....	9
1.4.6 Folk Medicine .....	9
1.4.7 Popular Games .....	10
1.4.8 Superstitions.....	10
1.4.9 Legend and Myth .....	10
1.4.10 Destiny .....	10
1.4.11 Beliefs in the Blessing of the Righteous People .....	11
1.4.12 Popular Dance .....	11
1.5 Summaries of the Novels .....	11
1.5.1 Al-Laz .....	11
1.5.2 Rih El Djanoub.....	12

1.5.3 Domoue wa Chomoue .....	13
1.6 Biographies of the Authors .....	15
1.6.1 Tahar Wattar .....	15
1-6-2 Abdelhamid Benhadouga .....	16
1.6.3 Abdeljalil Mortad .....	16
1.7 Conclusion .....	18

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels**

2.1 Introduction .....	22
2.2 Elements of Popular Culture in al-Laz .....	22
2.2.1 Proverbs .....	22
2.2.2 Riddles .....	23
2.2.3 Popular Songs.....	24
2.2.4 Superstitions.....	24
2.2.5 Beliefs in Sorcery .....	25
2.2.6. Taboo Words and Expressions.....	26
2.3 Elements of Popular Culture in Rih El Djanoub .....	26
2.3.1 Proverbs .....	26
2.3.2 Beliefs in Destiny .....	28
2.3.3 Folk Medicines.....	28
2.3.4 Legends and Myths .....	29
2.3.5 Popular Games .....	29
2.3.6 Popular Songs.....	30
2.3.7 Beliefs in Sorcery .....	30
2.3.8 Taboo Words and Expressions.....	31
2.4 Elements of Popular Culture in Domoue wa Chomoue .....	32
2.4.1 Popular Proverbs .....	32
2.4.2 Beliefs in the Blessing of Allah’s Righteous People .....	33
2.4.3 Popular Dance .....	33
2.4.4 Beliefs in Sorcery .....	33
2.4.5 Folk Medicine .....	34

2.4.6 Taboo Words and Expressions.....	34
2.4.7 Riddles .....	35
2.5 Comparison of Elements Use of Popular Culture in Postcolonial Novels and Contemporary Ones.....	35
2-6 Conclusion .....	36
General Conclusion .....	39
Bibliography.....	41
Summaries in three Languages .....	43



## **List of Tables**

<b>Table.2.1 Comparison of Elements' Use of Popular Culture in the Selected Novels.....</b>	<b>36</b>
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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

Algeria lived in a hard period, that of colonialism which destroyed its civilization, culture and identity. Algerian literature in the post-colonial era witnessed many writers who wrote in the language of the colonizer because Algerians learnt the French language during the French rule in Algeria for 132 years. After independence there was a controversy among Algerian writers whether to write in the French language or Arabic. Some of them considered writing in the language of colonizer as patrimony's conspiracy and privilege to colonial powers. Abdelhamid Benhadouga and Tahar Wattar were the first Algerian writers who wrote in the Arabic language.

Popular culture or as it is sometimes known as pop-culture is the culture of the people in a given society. There is no doubt that the Algerian novelists from time to time use the popular culture in their writing taken from their cultural legacy. This is a remark in most Algerian novels. For the sake of showing to what extent The Algerian novelists use the pop-culture; this research is going to cast light on different elements of pop-culture in the Algerian novels; Wattar's *Al- Laz*, Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* and Abdeljalil Mortad's *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

Hence, two questions are worth to ask in the following:

- 1- What are the main Algerian pop-cultural elements used in the chosen novels?
- 2- Do the contemporary writers still use the pop-culture in their writings?

The approaches selected for this research are the historical criticism approach, and the comparative one. The first one is an approach which casts light on author's life and situation; and the second one is comparison between two or more authors and novels.

## **General Introduction**

This dissertation is divided into two chapters; the first one shows biography of each writer and summary of each novel and introduces the Algerian literature; its history and definition; because Algerian literature could not exist and flourish without the Algerian's suffering under the French colonization. Also this chapter sheds light on the popular culture; its definition and its main elements.

Many contemporary Algerian novels are different in terms of themes, literary genre and the use of popular culture. The second chapter attempts to depict the main elements of the popular culture in each novel and to show the differences and similarities between the post-colonial writers and the contemporary ones in the three chosen novels.

The selection of these three Algerian novels permits an attempt of showing how the Algerian novelists focus in using the pop-culture in their writings.

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

## 1.1 Introduction

## 1.2 Introducing Algerian Literature

### 1.2.1 Pre-independence Novels

### 1.2.2 Post-Independence Novels

### 1.2.3 Contemporary Novels

## 1.3 Introducing Popular Culture

## 1.4 Elements of Popular Culture

### 1.4.1 Proverbs

### 1.4.2 Taboo

### 1.4.3 Sorcery

### 1.4.4 Riddles

### 1.4.5 Poplar songs

### 1.4.6 Folk Medicines

### 1.4.7 Popular Games

### 1.4.8 Superstitions

### 1.4.9 Legends and Myths

### 1.4.10 Destiny

### 1.4.11 Beliefs in the Blessing of Righteous People

### 1.4.12 Popular Dance

## 1.5 Summaries of the Novels

### 1.5.1 *al-Laz*

### 1.5.2 *Rih El Djanoub*

### 1.5.3 *Domoue wa Chomoue*

## 1.6 Biographies of the Authors

### 1.6.1 Tahar Wattar

### 1.6.2 Abdelhamid Benhadouga

### 1.6.3 Abdeljalil Mortad

## 1.7 Conclusion

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Before embarking with the works of the three chosen novels, it is important to have a look first on the Algerian literature and popular culture. The present chapter puts forward an introduction about Algerian literature and a working definition of the popular culture aiming to shed light on the summary of each novel and the biography of each writer.

## **1.2 Introducing Algerian Literature**

Algerian literature derives from life experiences of the writers and their environments. It is either written in the Algerian mother tongue Arabic (Tahar Wattar) or Tamazight language (Mouloud Maamri) or the second language French (Mohamed Dib).

Roman, French, Turkish and Spanish cultures affected the Algerian literature; this made it a richer literature which plays an important role in African literature.

Algerian literature can be divided into three main phases; the pre-Independence literature, the post-independence literature and the contemporary literature.

### **1.2.1 Pre-Independence Algerian Novels**

During the Algerian revolution, there was the emergence of new type of novels where the writers were using their pens as weapons in order to fight the French colonization and their aim was the independence. The main well known writers of that period were Ahmed Reda Houhou, Mouloud Feraoun, Mohammed Dib and Kateb Yacine.

# Chapter One: Literature Review

## 1.2.2 Post- independence Algerian Novels

After the end of the Algerian war of independence, there was the emergence of new category of writers who tackled many subjects in diverse domains such as the Algerian suffering during the war, illiteracy, unemployment and agricultural revolution. The famous writers were Tahar Wattar and Abdelhamid Benhadouga.

## 1.2.3 Contemporary Algerian Novels

This period of the contemporary Algerian writers who write in all domains mainly youth problems, feminism, black decade and other issues.

The main Current Algerian writers are Assia Djebbar with her novel written in 2003 *The Disappearance of the French Language*. Yasmina Khadra pen name of Mohammed Moulesshoul *the Dictator's Last Night*, it spoke about colonel Gadhafi, and Abdeljalil Mortad and his novel *Tears and Candles* which is one of the most important novels and literary works presented to the readers.

## 1.3 Introducing Popular Culture

There is no specific definition of popular culture, everyone and every area has its specific popular culture. It was defined as:

Popular culture is always defined, implicitly or explicitly in contrast to other conceptual categories: folk culture, mass culture, high culture, dominant culture, working class culture. A full definition must always take into account. (Storey 1)

Storey used popular cultural ways with contrast of other kinds of cultures, he also defined it: "Popular culture is in an effect an empty conceptual category; one can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of use" (1). In his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Storey defines



## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

popular culture as a culture that is appreciated and loved by many people and agreed by them. (5).

### **1.4 Elements of Popular Culture**

There are many elements considered as pillars of pop-culture mainly; proverbs, taboo, beliefs in sorcery, riddles, popular songs, folk medicines, popular games, superstition, legend and myth, beliefs in destiny, beliefs in the blessing of righteous people and popular dance.

#### **1.4.1 Proverbs**

Proverbs are popular sayings which contain advice or a state generally accepted truth. According to Collins dictionary “a proverb is a short sentence that people often quote, which gives advice or tells you something about life.”; proverb carries a meaning or gives wisdom or advice.

#### **1.4.2 Taboo**

According to Cambridge dictionary “taboo is a subject, a word or action that is avoided for religious or social reasons”. In the same vein Liedlich states that taboo is: “Associated with things which are forbidden because it is not suitable with certain religion or custom in a society, and it also provokes violent relations of apparently very real shock and disgust” (107), it means that taboo words and expressions are prohibited to be used by people in a polite speech, because they are aggressive expressions.

#### **1.4.3 Sorcery**

Sorcery has been defined in the Cambridge dictionary as “a type of magic in which spirits, especially evil ones, are used to make things happen”, it

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

means that the use of miraculous power with spirits' help over others. It is used in love relationship stories when one of the couples wants to attract the other or makes him/ her far.

Subbotsky states that: “magical belief is an old fashioned kind of beliefs that existed in the past centuries and persist today only in a young children and a limited population of superstitious adult individuals.” (2), it means that even sorcery is inherited from grandfathers and it is subject of debates in the current century.

### **1.4.4 Riddles**

According to Cambridge dictionary, a riddle is “a type of question that describes something in a difficult and confusing way and has a clever or funny answer, often as a game”. A riddle is a problem which is difficult to solve and a person must be smart in order to solve it.

### **1.4.5 Popular Songs**

According to a definition given by Merriam Webster, popular song is “a song written and marketed with the intention of achieving mass distribution and sales principally in the form of recordings”. Popular songs are inherited from one generation to another and it unifies between members of the same society; in this context Sharp states that “Folk songs stimulate the growth of the feeling of patriotism” (35), popular songs reinforce the relationship between people in the same community and promote the feeling of patriotism.

### **1.4.6 Folk Medicine**

Merriam Webster dictionary defines folk medicine as: “traditional medicine as practiced non-professionally especially by people isolated from modern medical services and usually involving the use of plant-derived remedies on an empirical basis”, it means that folk medicine is used by ordinary people by

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

using herbs and it is found especially in rural areas and it is transmitted orally from one generation to another.

### **1.4.7 Popular Games**

Costikyan defines the word game as: “a game is form of art which participants, termed players, make decision in order to manage resources through game tokens in a pursuit of a goal” (78) , it means that game is where players engage in conflicts following some rules in order to reach a result. The examples of Algerian famous popular games are dice and card games.

### **1.4.8 Superstitions**

Cambridge dictionary defines superstition as: “a belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc.”; superstitions are irrational beliefs.

### **1.4.9 Legend and Myth**

According to Merriam Webster definition a legend is “a story coming down from the past” and myth is “popular belief that has grown up around something or someone”. It means that legends are famous deeds and myths are traditional stories.

### **1.4.10 Destiny**

Collins dictionary defines destiny as: “a person’s destiny is everything that happens to them during their life, including what will happen in the future, especially when it is considered to be controlled by someone or something else”, it means that there is a force which controls human tasks.

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

### **1.4.11 Beliefs in the Blessing of the Righteous People**

Righteous people are those who did good works in their lives and when they died ordinary people believed that they are blessed and they can benefit from their blessing, and considered them as holy people and made festivals for them each year, where they slaughter sheep and do a charity by making nice meals for poor people.

### **1.4.12 Popular Dance**

Popular dance is a kind of dance related to a certain community which has a specific method to do. There are several kinds of popular dance in Algeria and one of the most famous one in Tlemcen is 'Alawi'.

## **1.5 Summaries of the Novels**

The following are the summaries of each novel individually, starting with *al-Laz*, then *Rih El Djanoub*, then *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

### ***1.5.1 Al-Laz***

*Al-Laz* or *the Ace* is a novel written by the Algerian writer Tahar Wattar in 1974. It is a kind of flashbacks, it started in the post office where one of the characters named Rebiai was receiving a financial grant of his son Kaddour the martyr, and he remembered the Algerian revolution, and how Algerian people sacrificed their lives in order to be free from the French colonialism, it was a historical novel.

It took place in one of the Algerian villages, in a period of colonialism, this is why most of the events in the novel were about the Algerian revolution, revolutionists and every positive thing like the power of the Algerian people and their fight against the French colonizer as well as its negative things

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

such as the betrayal of many Algerian people of their country who were known as harka (traitors).

The title of the novel *al-Laz* is about a name of the protagonist, and its meaning is ambiguous and Wattar used it in different meaning in his novel. There are other main characters in the novel who were the faithful revolutionists as Al-Laz's father Zidan, his uncle Hamou and his friend Kaddour and the unfaithful characters like Baatouch but by the end, he changed and, became a revolutionist.

Al- Laz was the main and the central character in the novel, so all the events were developing around him. After arresting him many characters appeared and they were divided into two groups; one group supports him and the Algerian revolution and the other group was against him and the country.

In all his life, Al-Laz was rejected by the people in his village; he thought that he had no father and he was known as foundling till he met his father Zidan who confessed his love to him, and his big enemy Hamou became his uncle.

Through the events of the novel, Wattar showed the life's change of Al-Laz from a rejected person to a revolutionary one who had a value. When he was arrested, he was saved by his friends from the French jail and after his freedom he and the other revolutionists start a big revolution.

By the end, Zidan was killed by his friends because of his communist ideas. It was a shock for his son Al-Laz but they continued their fight till they got their independence.

### ***1.5.2 Rih El Djanoub***

*Rih El Djanoub* or *Southern wind* is a novel written by Abdelhamid Benhadouga in 1971. It is the first novel written in the Arabic language after the Algerian independence. It was translated to many languages.

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

The story is about Algerian lives in the post-independence era. Its central character was Nafissa a damsel of 18 years old who studies in Algiers and stays at his aunt's house there and spends her holidays in her father's house in the village near Djourjra range. Nafissa has a thinking different from her family; a mentality of city not like villagers.

Through the events of the story Nafissa's father is programming to stop her from her studies, and to marry her with Malik a young man who was a great fighter against the French colonizer during the Algerian revolution. After hearing this news, Nafissa disagreed and wrote a letter to her aunt in Algiers. She asked Rabeh, young man, shepherd and a flute player to put the letter in the mail office. Rabeh thought that Nafissa loves him and at night he came to her window but he became disappointed because he was pushed away by her and she called him dirty shepherd; this made him shameful about his job and changed it to wood seller.

After that Nafissa's father insisted to make this marriage between Malik and Nafissa but she was against the idea and this time she escaped from her house and planned to go to Algiers, but in her way she was bitten by snake and she passed out. Rabeh; the wood seller found her and took her to his house where he lived with his dumb mother.

Her father heard that his daughter is in Rabah's house; he went there and fought him. Rabah's mother took an axe and attacked the father's head till he died. Nafissa had been expelled from Rabah's house and returned back to her house.

The novel shows the life of the villagers which helps the reader to have an authentic image of the traditions, customs and pop-culture of the Algerians.

### ***1.5.3 Domoue wa Chomoue***

The novel of *Domoue wa Chomoue* or *Tears and Candles* is one of the most important novels and literary works presented by the pen of Abdeljalil

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

Mortad, a smooth narration and precise expressions used by Mortad to achieve a proper description of the characters of his novel and events so able to transfer events from the reality of his pen to the reality of the reader. The novel takes you in the events and steals your mind to the corners of her characters.

The story is about Samir a university teacher and his wife Nora a Gynecologist. They have two children Youssef and Aziz. The novel started with a dream. Samir dreamt and spoke during his dream by names of countries and people, after waking up from his sleep and delirium; he was astonished by seeing Sheikh Si Ali who was brought by his wife. He asked himself how an intellectual woman can think in this way. His wife told him that her colleague Dr. Bachir told her that he has nothing to do except the solution of Si Ali.

Nora is an ambitious woman; she travelled to many countries to attend scientific meetings. In one of her trips, Samir received a phone call from a woman from Paris named Sarah who asked him to send her his passport's copy in order to help him travel to Paris and be with her, because they were in relationship before Sarah's escape to Paris; and because of the black decade. Sarah was morally decadent and she was afraid of being killed.

Samir went into dilemma and decided to tell his wife about his relation with Sarah. After his wife coming from the conference, he could not talk with her. At night, the telephone was ringing several times but Nora asked her husband not to reply. Few minutes later, they heard a knock on the door, when Samir asked who is out; Dr. Bachir replied that he needs Nora in an urgent way because his wife is going to give birth to a baby. Nora went quickly to the hospital and told Dr. Bachir that it is not an easy surgery and there is a risk to lose either the baby or his mother. She entered to the surgery room with her students. The surgery lasted long hours but they succeeded to save the lives of the both; mother and her baby, Dr. Bachir was the happiest person in the world.

Dr. Bachir thanked Nora about her great work and wanted to alert her about Samir's old relation. Nora decided to talk with her husband about the topic

## Chapter One: Literature Review

however before talking to him; she received a letter from Sarah explaining to her everything and told her that she is regretful and asked her forgiveness. The day after, Nora wore a beautiful dress and went to the hospital and met her assistants and she gave them two riddles; a name of woman starts with S and ends in h and a name of a country starts with F and ends in e.

### **1.6 Biographies of the Authors**

The following are the lives and backgrounds of each writer individually, Tahar Wattar, Abdelhamid Benhadouga, and Abdeljalil Mortad.

#### **1.6.1 Tahar Wattar**

According to what was written in biographical encyclopaedia of Modern Middle East and North Africa, Tahar Wattar or Tahar Ouettar or al-Tahir Wattar is an Algerian writer and journalist. He is considered among the first Algerian writers who wrote in the Arabic language. He wrote many novels, plays and short stories.

He was born in 1936 in Sedrata. As all Algerians, he followed traditional Arabic primary school and learnt Qur'an. At Ben Badis Institute in Constantine, he had been taught Islamic Jurisprudence in two years from 1952 till 1954. During the Algerian revolution Wattar was attending Islamic Zaytouna University.

He read many literatures such as modern Algerian literature, French literature, and other world literature. His first short story was published in 1955 in newspapers. In 1974, he wrote *al- Laz* or *the Ace* and *al- Zilzal* or *the Earthquake*, in 1978 he wrote *Urs baghl* or *the Mule's wedding*, in 1995 he wrote *al -Shama'a wa'l Dahaliz* or *the Candle and the Dark Tunnels*. He founded al-Jahizia Cultural association in 1989. He worked as director of state radio



## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

company from 1989 to 1992. In 2004, the UNESCO awarded him Sharjah Prize for the promotion of the Arab culture. (Gale)

Tahar Wattar's novels are subject of many theses in many countries and they are translated to many languages such as English, Bulgarian, Suisse, French, German, Italian and many other languages.

### **1-6-2 Abdelhamid Benhadouga**

According to biographical encyclopaedia of Modern Middle East and North Africa, Abdelhamid Benhadouga or Abd al- Hamid Bin Hadouga was born in 1925 in one of the countrysides of Setif in the east of Algeria. He attended his primary school and studied in French language. He was taught Arabic by his father. In Marseille, He studied radio production, and then in Zaytouna University in Tunis, he studied literature and drama. He worked as teacher in 1954 and in 1962, the year of Algerian independence; he worked in radio and television broadcasting. He died in October 1996. (Gale)

Benhadouga's first literary work was in 1950 named "Hamil al Zahr"; it was a divan and published in 1952. He wrote many plays, short stories, sketches and novels. The famous novel is *Rih el Djanoub* or the *Wind of the South* in 1974; this novel made him one of the pillars of the Algerian literature. This novel was translated to many other languages and became a scenario of a film.

### **1.6.3 Abdeljalil Mortad**

Abdeljalil Mortad is an Algerian writer and university teacher; he was born on December 2, 1942 in Mssirda Tlemcen. He has many diplomas and he wrote many books and novels.

He got his licence degree in Arabic language and its literature in June 1973 from Oran University, in June 1975, he got diploma of methodology in linguistics from Algiers University. In 1977, he obtained

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

diploma of advances studies in philology from Algiers University; from the same university he got his magister in philology in 1982. In 1994, he obtained PhD in linguistics from Tlemcen University.

He held many positions, teacher in secondary school, university teacher in several universities all over Algeria, he supervised many PhD and magister theses, he worked as head of Arabic language and its literature department at Tlemcen University from 1978 to 1981, he worked as director of the Institute of Arabic Language and Literature at Tlemcen university from 1981 to 1984, he also worked as director of the National Institute of Higher Education for Arabic language and Literature at Tlemcen University from 1984 to 1990. From 1988 till today, he is a member of the Union of the Algerian Writers, he is also a member of National Committee of the Arabic Language Program, he is a member of the association of International Islamic Literature from 1988 till today, and he is also a member of the Supreme Council for Arabic Language from 1998 till today.

He wrote many books, *Linguistics Concept*, *Semiotic and Semantic Study in the Novel and Heritage*, *Initial Approaches to Dialectics*, *In the World of Text and Language* and other books.

He wrote many novels, *Punishment of the years* (1990), *Tears and Candles* (2001) which was translated in French language by Prof. Mortad- Serir Ilhem, *You are the Others* (2004), *I do not like Sun in Paris* (2005), and other novels.

He made many researches and studies in different Arab Academic Journals. He participated in several national and international meetings and he has many other activities.

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This chapter casted light on the lives and backgrounds of the chosen Algerian novelists and the summaries of their novels; Wattar's *al-Laz*, Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub*, and Mortad's *Domoue wa Chomoue* and working definition of Algerian literature and popular culture and its main elements.

This chapter casted lights on Algerian literature, which is the result of diverse cultures and languages; it is divided into three main phases, colonial literature, post-colonial literature, and contemporary literature. Elspeth Black states that the colonial period influenced Algerian literature especially in terms of language. This chapter also shed lights on Algerian popular culture and its main elements. The next chapter is going in details with the main elements in each novel individually.

Chapter Two:  
**Elements of Popular  
Culture in the Algerian  
Novels**

**Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al-Laz*, *Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al-Laz*, *Rih El Djanoub*, and *Domoue wa Chomoue*

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Elements of Popular Culture in *al-Laz*

2.2.1 Proverbs

2.2.2 Riddles

2.2.3 Popular Songs

2.2.4 Superstition

2.2.5 Beliefs in Sorcery

2.2.6. Taboo Words and Expressions

2.3 Elements of Popular Culture in *Rih El Djanoub*

2.3.1 Proverbs

2.3.2 Beliefs in Destiny

2.3.3 Folk Medicines

2.3.4 Legends and Myths

2.3.5 Popular Games

2.3.6 Popular Songs

2.3.7 Beliefs in Sorcery

2.3.8 Taboo Words and Expressions

2.4 Elements of Popular Culture in *Domoue wa Chomoue*

2.4.1 Popular Proverbs

2.4.2 Beliefs in the Blessing of Allah's Righteous People

2.4.3 Popular Dance

2.4.4 Beliefs in Sorcery

2.4.5 Folk Medicine

2.4.6 Taboo Words and Expressions

**Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

2.4.7 Riddles

2.5 Comparison of Elements use of Popular Culture in Postcolonial Novels and Contemporary ones

2-6 Conclusion

## **2.1 Introduction**

The Algerian writers believe that the use of popular culture in their novels makes the reader and the writer near to each other. The presentation of the popular culture elements in the chosen novels appears many times throughout the whole novel.

This chapter aims at detecting the main elements of popular culture in each novel and to extract the similarities and differences between the post-colonial writers and the contemporary ones in using the elements of popular culture.

## **2.2 Elements of Popular Culture in *al-Laz***

Throughout the novel *al-Laz*; it appears many elements of popular culture mainly; proverbs, riddles, beliefs in destiny, folk medicines, superstitions, belief in sorcery and taboo.

### **2.2.1 Proverbs**

Wattar used several proverbs in his novel, and they were written in Algerian dialect. The most repeated one is “nothing remains in the valley except its stones”<sup>1</sup> (8, 39, 41, 49), (translated by the researcher); Wattar used this proverb in order to refer to the French colonizer which means that there will be a day which the French will be kicked out by the Algerians. In the same meaning, there is another proverb: “truth, truth and it will stay in the country only the right”<sup>2</sup> (39), (translated by the researcher).

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<sup>1</sup> ما يبقى في الواد غير حجارو  
<sup>2</sup> الصح الصح ما يبقى في البلاد غير الصح

## Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub and Domoue wa Chomoue*

Another proverb “blue eyes, do not shepherd and do not plow on him”<sup>3</sup>, (translated by the researcher); he used this proverb in order to refer to the people who are pessimistic from a blond person with blue eyes and considered him as a bad omen. “Bad acts of parents come out in the children”<sup>4</sup>, (translated by the researcher); this proverb means that Bad acts of the parents reach their children, it is as a chain; whatever a person does badly, its harms will reach his children. “Ask the man with experience and don’t ask the doctor”<sup>5</sup> (31, 32, 35), (translated by the researcher); it means that experiences of people play an important role in life. “Continuity punches the marble”<sup>6</sup> (255), (translated by the researcher); it means that when a person is used to see things and then to be used to it and become something easy and simple. Another proverb “Slaughtered for Eid or for Ashura”<sup>7</sup>, (translated by the researcher), Wattar used this proverb when Al-Laz escaped from the jail and when he did not believe that he was outside and still alive. This proverb clarifies the idea of destiny.

### **2.2.2 Riddles**

In his novel, Wattar used two main riddles; the first one was a joke and a mockery on an old man who considers himself as a person who knows metaphysical knowledge. One group of young took an orange and put it under the bowl and asked the old man what was hidden under the bowl and they said this riddle: circular and spherical in red and yellow colours and contains water<sup>8</sup>. The old man failed in solving the riddle. The second riddle in the novel is about Al- Laz the title of the novel and he wrote “This riddle, this al-Laz”<sup>9</sup> so the title itself is a riddle.

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<sup>3</sup> أزرق عينيه لا تسرح لا تحرث عليه

<sup>4</sup> دعاوي الوالدين تنفذ في الضنابية

<sup>5</sup> اسأل المجرب لا تسأل الطبيب

<sup>6</sup> الدوام يثقب الرخام

<sup>7</sup> مذبح للعيد والا لعاشوراء

<sup>8</sup> مدورة و مكورة مستحمة ومستصفرة و في قلبها الماء

<sup>9</sup> هذا اللاز هذا اللغز



### **2.2.3 Popular Songs**

In his novel, Wattar used two main popular songs which were sung by the militants in the hard period of the Second World War, where all the world's inhabitants suffered from poverty and bad ways of living.

The first popular song has an unknown composer but Zidan's friend Ramadan claimed that he is the composer and the singer of this popular song, and he sang it during the wedding ceremonies. It is: "Oh Russian tune, there is a lack in supply and it is expensive Oh mountains tune, stand up for fun and come"<sup>10</sup> (179), (translated by the researcher).

The second oral popular song with unknown composer too, it glorifies the Europeans and Americans and devalues the Arabs, It is as follows: "I will not marry the Arab; I will marry the American who wears the watch I will not marry the Arab with big feet; I will marry the European who eats cakes"<sup>11</sup> (218), (translated by the researcher); when reading this song, it comes in mind the idea of the composer who was either traitor or colonizer himself.

### **2.2.4 Superstitions**

In *al-Laz*, Wattar used two main superstitions; one from seeing a blond and the other from laughing. People believed that if ever they see or meet a blond, they will face problems and consider it as a bad omen. When Hamou saw a blond from the army he said: "what is the bad news that comes with this blond?"<sup>12</sup>, (translated by the researcher). Also, Zidan, although he does not believe in old people beliefs but he was convinced that grandparents were superstitious from seeing a blond and they changed their ways when seeing a blond person or even blond animal.

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<sup>10</sup> يا لحن الروس التموين غالي ومخصوص يا لحن الجبال انهض للهو وتعال  
<sup>11</sup> ما ناخذش العربي لباس القاعة ناخذ الجوني (الامريكي) يمشي بالساعة  
ما ناخذش العربي رجلين الراطو ناخذ الجوني وكال القاطو  
<sup>12</sup> فأى شبيئ خطير يا ترى من القيادة مع هذا الأشقر

## Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al-Laz*, *Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue*

The Algerian through this novel believe that after laughing, big problems happen to them, so they always see laughing as a bad omen. They always say “good, God willing” after laughing. In many different passages of this novel this expression “may God bring this laughter to a happy end”<sup>13</sup> is repeated several times after laughing a lot. For example, when Zidan told al-Laz that he snores like a pig when sleeping, and al-Laz started laughing but rapidly stopped and said: “may God bring this laughter to a happy end”, (translated by the researcher). Al-Laz asked his father about this bad omen after laughing; Zidan told him that it is only an old people’s belief, but al-Laz was not convinced because he has bad luck whenever he laughs a lot.

There are many expressions in the novel which show the superstition from laughing such as; oh God, give us good hearing after this laughter. When al-Laz said: “I swear, I experienced it, whenever I laugh a lot, bad thing happens to me”<sup>14</sup>. Also, “I did not like the laugh of yesterday”<sup>15</sup> and “may God protect us from this laughter”<sup>16</sup>, these are the main expressions which shows how Algerian through *Rih El Djanoub* fear from laughing.

### **2.2.5 Beliefs in Sorcery**

In *al-Laz* novel, Qaddur, al-Laz’ friend used sorcery in order to attract Zina and makes her loves him but he did not succeed; he said: “I lost more than twenty thousand dinars, I use the sorcery of Si Hamouda, Si Koraichi, Si Othman but they all failed”<sup>17</sup> (Wattar 27), (translated by the researcher). Then, he was advised to read a book of Soyouti, *Mercy in Medicines and Wisdom*; he got positive results.

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<sup>13</sup> الله يخرج هاد الضحك على خير

<sup>14</sup> وحق ربي جربتها، كلما ضحكت كثيرا أصابني مكروه

<sup>15</sup> ضحكة البارح لم تعجيني

<sup>16</sup> الله يسترنا من هاد الضحك

<sup>17</sup> حق ربي ما تركت بابا، خسرت أكثر من عشرين ألفا، حرز سي حمودة وما ادراك لم ينفع، سحر سي القرشي وما ادراك، وحرز سي عثمان و ما ادراك كذلك

## **Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al-Laz*, *Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

Wattar shows through *al-Laz* characters the strong belief of people in sorcery and spiritualities. Although they are poor people, they spend their money on sorcerers.

### **2.2.6. Taboo Words and Expressions**

Wattar used taboo topics in his novel; one of the topics is that of Baatouch who raped his aunt by the order of a French captain, he asked to make a baby to that woman in front of his eyes.

Also, Hammu and Zidan, both of them got child without getting married. Another taboo topic is that of Hammu and his three mistresses who called them the three calamities and he was in relation with the three sisters without getting married, and he has had a child with one of the sisters but he killed him. Another taboo topic is about the relationship between Qaddur and Zina who visited her secretly when her parents are sleeping.

## **2.3 Elements of Popular Culture in *Rih El Djanoub***

*Rih El Djanoub* is a rich novel of cultural elements such as proverbs, popular songs, popular games, sorcery, folk medicines, legend, myth, and taboo.

### **2.3.1 Proverbs**

Benhadouga through his novel used many proverbs, most of them were quoted on the tongue of an old woman Rahma; the first one is: “no one can feel goatskin except who is hitting by it”<sup>18</sup> (16), (translated by the researcher); it means that no one can feel the true pain of a person except himself. Another proverb is “we are eating food and waiting for death”<sup>19</sup> (17), (translated by the researcher); it means that when a person becomes old he will be weak and

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<sup>18</sup> ما يدري بالمزود غير اللي ضرب به والا انضرب به  
<sup>19</sup> ناكلو في القوت ونستتو في الموت

**Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

hopeless and wait for death only. One other proverb is “do not be sweet till you will be swallowed or bitter till you will be refused”<sup>20</sup> (32), (translated by the researcher), it means that a person should be neither too much kind nor rude when patronizing people; this was a kind of advice given to Nafissa’s mother Kheira. Another proverb is “learn a craft and hide it”<sup>21</sup> (39) (translated by the researcher), it means that learning any craft or any job will be beneficial in the future, it was a piece of advice to Nafissa. The last proverb said by Rahma is: “feet cannot walk except to the places which are loved by heart”<sup>22</sup> (36), (translated by the researcher), which means that the feet of a person guide him to his beloved people.

There are also some proverbs said by Kheira, when she was disappointed by her bad attitudes of her daughter Nafissa, “liver’s wound hurts only his owner”<sup>23</sup> (31) (translated by the researcher), when she was in the cemetery behind her mother grave, Kheira was crying and Nafissa did not cry with her this is why she said this proverb to show that her daughter cannot feel her wound. Another proverb is “who does not been told by his heart, there will be no benefit from reminding him”<sup>24</sup> (32), (translated by the researcher), it means that a person who has no will to change; there will be no need to advise him.

“Hit two birds with one stone”<sup>25</sup> (53), it is a proverb said in the cafe when a player achieves different goals by one way. Another proverb is “when the belly is satiated it asks the head to sing”<sup>26</sup> (67) (translated by the researcher), it means that when a person is full, he will enjoy himself. Another proverb exists in the novel: “hit your wife and if you do not know why she knows”<sup>27</sup>, it means that women in villages have no value and they are in the margin and they have only

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20 لا تكن حلوا فتبلع ولا مرا فتدفع

21 تعلم صنعة و أخفها

22 لا تمشي الأرجل الا حيث يحب القلب

23 جرح الكبد لا يضر إلا صاحبه

24 من لا يحدثه قلبه لا يفيد تذكيره

25 ضرب عصفورين بحجرة

26 اذا شبع الكرش تقول للرأس غني لي

27 اضرب زوجتك فان لم تكن تعلم فهي تعلم

## **Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub and Domoue wa Chomoue***

one role is to take care of their husbands and children. The last proverb is said by the enemy of Nafissa's father when she escaped from her house. He told him "today with me and tomorrow with you"<sup>28</sup> (313), (translated by the researcher); he said that in order to let her father down.

### **2.3.2 Beliefs in Destiny**

Benhadouga portrays how the characters in his novel have a strong belief in destiny. Nafissa's mother always explains her patience towards her severe husband and disobedient daughter by destiny and bad luck, she said: "this is the destiny of Allah first and then my bad luck"<sup>29</sup> (242), (translated by the researcher). The old woman Rahma wants to prepare coffee and the matches did not light, she said: "this is Allah destiny, I will not drink coffee"<sup>30</sup> (161), (translated by the researcher). The author shows the strong belief of the villagers in destiny.

### **2.3.3 Folk Medicines**

Benhadouga shows through his characters that the villagers see folk medicine as the best cure from many illnesses. The most famous one is chicken soup; they believe that the ill person will never recover unless he eats chicken soup. When Nafissa was bitten by a snake; Rabeh's mother prepared a soup of chicken and beans for her.

Another kind of folk medicine was used when Rabeh succoured Nafissa with an herb anti-toxin when she was bitten by a snake and then his mother added garlic to this herb. Another herb used as folk medicine in *Rih El Djanoub* by the old woman Rahma when she succoured Malik, She put malva parviflora on his wounds and said that even onions are used but she hates their smell.

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<sup>28</sup> اليوم عندي و غدوة عندك

<sup>29</sup> ربي قدر هذا، ثم حظي العاثر

<sup>30</sup> هذا ما كتبه الله. لن أشرب القهوة

## **Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

Rahma used again malva parviflora when she felt pain in her arm and neck she used it as a bandage before sleeping.

The villager's society in *Rih El Djanoub* is known with natural herbal remedies such as malva parviflora, garlic, onions, anti-toxin herb, and chicken soup.

### **2.3.4 Legends and Myths**

There are many stories in this novel, some of them have a relation to reality like the story of Rabeh's mother about her dumb which was told by Rahma and the story of the martyr Zoulikha, Nafissa's sister told by her mother Kheira. There are other stories which are a mixture of reality and imagination.

One of the legends in the novel is the one of the man who sold his head in order to bring rain, the story is told by Rahma to Rabeh, from this myth, the reader meets with the different ways used by villagers for the sake of bringing rain and it shows the simplicity of believing everything.

Another legend is about the origin of the coffee and the first person who drunk it. Drinking coffee has a big value in all villages and they are proud of drinking it, they believe that it is useful and does not have any harm to health. It is known as the 'daughter of Hassan Al Chadli' because this good man is the first person who drunk it, this is why it is known as 'chadlia'. When Nafissa asked Rahma not to drink a lot of coffee, the old woman told her that the daughter of Hassan Al Chadli does not have any harm to health.

### **2.3.5 Popular Games**

The main games mentioned in the novel are dice and card games. Benhadouga mentioned card games when players were playing and saying: "trace grilled", "grilled in the moon", and this language was bizarre to the cafe owner, El hadj Quider, who was a good player in the past. In the same cafe, he

## **Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub and Domoue wa Chomoue***

also mentioned that other people were playing dice, this game is much known among the youth and the old villagers.

### **2.3.6 Popular Songs**

Popular song is a kind of poetry with rhythm; it is used in sorrow and joy. The first popular song used by Benhadouga in his novel is said by the cafe owner, el Hadj Quider when he heard about Rahma's death: "Oh ground you took good people -you hide the faces of our beloveds"<sup>31</sup> (191), (translated by the researcher). He also said: "Death, we all die, if not now it will be after We all have to go to the hereafter. The songs )translated by the researcher((192), <sup>32</sup>" show the obligation of death and it is a fact that no one can change it.

Another song told by the villagers during Rahma's funeral, which means that the harsh thing in the life is death, it takes beloved people. In their way to the cemetery, people were singing a song as kind of prayer on the prophet Mohammed peace be upon him.

### **2.3.7 Beliefs in Sorcery**

Through the characters of the novel, Benhadouga shows the strong beliefs of people in spiritualities and its power on them. He shows that in countryside, villagers believe that jinns and spirits are living with them and they can be rid of them only by reading some verses and using charms.

During the fake illness of Nafissa, her parents brought Taleb Si Hamouda as her mother said that no one can cure her daughter except him. Si Hamouda told them that Nafissa has jinn epilepsy because she passed by a lake or river and told them that it is important to make Al-Azima (a kind of complex incantations) in order to cure her and asked them to slaughter a black goat because the jinn will disappear after seeing blood, and he asked her mother to

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<sup>31</sup> ماذا تدي يا تراب من الزينين يا دراق وجوه الاحباب خسارة  
<sup>32</sup> الموت لا نموتشي حيين\*\*\*لازم ديك الدار راهي تفنيها

## Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue*

burn one paper written by him each night during seven days. He also gave her a talisman and asked her to put it in a red cloth and hung it to Nafissa.

### 2.3.8 Taboo Words and Expressions

In *Rih El Djanoub*, Benhadouga used taboo words in different ways, sometimes by narration and other times by characters. In the beginning of the novel the author described Nafissa

She stayed in her bed, and put her fingers under her dress, and touched her chest and she felt a strange lustiness in her body, a pleasure like when mother breastfeeds her baby<sup>33</sup> (9), (translated by the researcher).

There was a taboo expression when Rabah's understanding was false about Nafissa's request of sending the letter, in his view it was only 'sexual desire'. The scene in the cemetery which was seen by Nafissa when a male donkey was preparing itself in order to get over its female. Another taboo example when the author wrote: "she went bed naked"<sup>34</sup> (120) and "Rabah saw Nafissa's bed and approached to see it he saw her naked"<sup>35</sup> (124), (translated by the researcher). Another example when they met in the wood and helped her to ride a donkey; "and he felt for the first time the connection between their bodies, it was as electric current shacked him"<sup>36</sup> (298), (translated by the researcher). These are the taboo words and expressions used by the author.

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<sup>33</sup> بقيت في فراشها، و أخذت أصابعها تحت غالاتها تلمس صدرها في رفق وحنو، وشعرت بلذة غريبة تسري في أجزاء جسمها، لذة تشبه ما تجده الأم وهي ترضع صغيرها.

<sup>34</sup> وأرتمت في الفراش عارية

<sup>35</sup> رأى رباح السرير الذي تنام فوقه نفيسة فاقترب منه فإذا هي عارية!

<sup>36</sup> وأحس لأول مرة في اتصال جسمها بجسمه كأن تيارا كهربائيا هز كل كيانه



## **2.4 Elements of Popular Culture in *Domoue wa Chomoue***

*Domoue wa Chomoue* is a novel written after the black decade, it is full of the elements of popular culture such as popular proverbs, beliefs of the blessing of Allah's righteous people, popular dance, beliefs in sorcery and folk medicines.

### **2.4.1 Popular Proverbs**

Mortad used many popular proverbs in his novel, the first example is "The blessing is in the little"<sup>37</sup> (8), (translated by the researcher); it shows the contentment of people in little and small things and they believe that it will be blessed. Another example is "the free understands with a blink of an eye and the barbarian understands with stick"<sup>38</sup> (11), (translated by the researcher); it means that the intelligent person understands only by a sign whereas the stupid one understands you by beating. Another famous proverb is "they do not marry till they are similar"<sup>39</sup> (23), (translated by the researcher), it means that every couple shared the same beliefs, same thinking and same characteristics. Another one is "the lamb plays on his mother's back"<sup>40</sup> (71), (translated by the researcher); it means that a person cannot be at ease only with his closest people. Another example of popular proverb is "Allah is great"<sup>41</sup> (41), which means that a person cannot do anything without the conciliation of God. Another one exists in the novel "what is over is passed away"<sup>42</sup> (81), (translated by the researcher); it means that a person has not to leave with past memories.

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<sup>37</sup> البركة في القليل

<sup>38</sup> الحر بالغمزة والعبد بالدبزة

<sup>39</sup> ما يتزوج حتى يتشابهو

<sup>40</sup> الخروف يلعب على ظهر أمه

<sup>41</sup> الله غالب

<sup>42</sup> لي فات مات

### **2.4.2 Beliefs in the Blessing of Allah’s Righteous People**

There are three names of Allah’s righteous people repeated in the novel; “Sidi el Djilali”, “Lala Setti”, and “Sidi Boumedien”. Mortad shows how people consecrate the places of the righteous people and the belief in their blessing, one example is “These trees are holy for the inhabitants; it is the tree of Sidi el Djilali”<sup>43</sup> (7), (translated by the researcher); another example of the belief in Allah’s righteous people is, “they come from every place in order to visit Sidi Boumedien”<sup>44</sup> (24), (translated by the researcher). The author used the word “Sidi” which means my master and in contrast for female he used “Lala”.

### **2.4.3 Popular Dance**

The author used one popular dance named ‘Alawi’ which is known in Tlemcen, it is a folklore dance; they use their shoulders, feet and a stick with special instrument named ‘Bendir’.

### **2.4.4 Beliefs in Sorcery**

In *Domoue wa Chomoue*, the author shows how people believe in spiritualities and jinn which can inhabit a person. Even cultivated people like Nora, the doctor, when her husband Samir was in unconscious, she brought “Taleb” in order to help him to recover and she believed him when he told her that her husband is haunted by unbeliever jinn.

One expression of the belief in sorcery, when Samir wanted to stop his wife from going to work in the Sahara, he thought if he can allied with Si Ali in order to give him a talisman to prevent her from being there.

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<sup>43</sup> هذه الشجيرات المظلة مقدسة لدى السكان... انها شجرة سيدي الجيلالي  
<sup>44</sup> يأتون من دياردانية و نائية لزيارة الولي الصالح سيدي بومدين

### **2.4.5 Folk Medicine**

Folk medicine exists in *Domoue wa Chomoue* when Nora's mother told her son in law that she brought an herb from Kabyl countryside to her daughter in order to use it for the sake of getting more children, because she believed that her daughter is suffering from Tlemcen's cold.

### **2.4.6 Taboo Words and Expressions**

Mortad used taboo word and expressions in his novel; the first example is:

When a man sees a beautiful woman wearing only bra which shows her nipples and short pants which does not hide her body, he has been told she is a *giaour* and she does not irritate any sexual desire as if he sees an oil paintings not human being. And when a woman sees a handsome man wearing short pants, she has been told that he is a *giaour* and she does not affected in her sexual sensitivity<sup>45</sup> (42), (translated by the researcher).

Another example is "he does not understand what she wants especially when she is appearing every part from her body and lying behind a man in the same bed"<sup>46</sup> (77), (translated by the researcher); this was when Nora and Samir entered their bed room after finishing dinner with their mothers and children. Another example is when Nora woke up and met her mother and her mother in law and they have the same thinking that Nora spent a beautiful night with her husband, "Both old ladies thought that Nora spent

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<sup>45</sup> الم يكن الواحد من الفتيان اذا رأى علة فاتنة لا ترتدي غير صدرية حلمتا نديها بارزتان، وسروالا قصيرا لا يكاد يخفي عورتها قيل له: هي 'قاورية' ولا تهيج فيه اي غريزة، حتى كأنما يرى لوحة زيتية لا آدمية تتحرك، وكانت الواحدة من فتياتنا اذا ما قضي لها ان ترى علة لالا يرتدي غير سروال قصير، كان يقال لها: هذا قاوري ولا يظن انها كانت تتأثر في حساسيتها الجنسية

<sup>46</sup> لم يفهم اطلاقا ماذا تريد امرأة مبدية كل عنصر من فيها من عناصر جسدها، وهي منسرحة امام رجل على سرير واحد؟

## **Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

second wedding night.”<sup>47</sup> (78), (translated by the researcher). These are expression of taboo words and expressions in *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

### **2.4.7 Riddles**

Through all the novel of *Domoue wa Chomoue*, Mortad used only two riddles told by Nora. The first one is a name of a country starts in F and ends in e and the second one is a name of woman which starts in S and ends in a. The solution is France for the country and Sara for the woman.

## **2.5 Comparison of Elements' Use of Popular Culture in Postcolonial Novels and Contemporary Ones**

Each author used the elements of popular culture differently and the aim is the importance of using these elements in Algerian novels, because it represents the real culture of the Algerian society in the three chosen novels and it is a way to bear up the mind of the readers.

All the selected authors used popular proverbs, taboo words and expressions, beliefs in spiritualities and sorcery. *Al-Laz* and *Rih El Djanoub* shared the popular songs. *Al-Laz* and *Domoue wa Chomoue* shared riddles. There is superstition only in *Al-Laz*. *Rih el Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue* shared folk medicine. Legend and myth, belief in destiny and popular games are used only in *Rih El Djanoub*. The belief of the blessing of righteous people and popular dance are used only in *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

The following table shows the similarities and differenced in details:

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<sup>47</sup> كلتا العجوزتين توهمت أن نورة قضت ليلة زفاف ثانية.

**Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

	<i>Al-Laz</i>	<i>Rih El Djanoub</i>	<i>Domoue wa Chomoue</i>
Proverbs	7	11	6
Riddles	2	0	2
Popular songs	2	3	0
Superstations	5	0	0
Beliefs in sorcery	1	5	3
Taboo	4	5	3
Beliefs in destiny	0	2	0
Folk medicines	0	5	1
Legends and myths	0	2	0
Popular games	0	2	0
Righteous people	0	0	3
Popular dance	0	0	1

**Table.2.1 Comparison of Elements' Use of Popular Culture in the Selected Novels**

Although there is a difference in using the elements of popular culture in postcolonial novels and the contemporary ones, there are many elements that can be shared between them and the most important that in the contemporary Algerian novel elements of popular culture still exist.

## **2-6 Conclusion**

The use of the elements of popular culture helps to introduce the real milieu of the Algerians and their correct cultures. The three chosen writers use elements of popular culture differently, most of them were repeating in the three novels such as, proverbs, taboo expressions, belief in destiny and spiritualities. There are other elements which are particular to each writer

**Chapter Two: Elements of Popular Culture in the Algerian Novels: *al- Laz, Rih El Djanoub* and *Domoue wa Chomoue***

according to his period of time and his environment. The use of popular culture is for the sake of inviting the readers from different social classes to like their novels and to represent the Algerian culture in its real picture.

**GENERAL CONCLUSION**

### General Conclusion

This research paper has presented a detailed analysis of the use of pop-cultural elements in the selected novels, the result that can be reached is that all the selected novels contain the elements of pop-culture differently; which means that the contemporary writers are still using the pop-cultural elements in their novels.

By combining the historical, and comparative approaches and dividing the dissertation into two chapters, it has been proved that the contemporary novel and *Domoue wa Chomoue* as example contains different elements of the Algerian pop-culture.

All the selected authors cannot marginalize any element of pop-culture in their novels for the sake of being honest and faithful to the real context.

Considering literature as a mirror which reflects all aspect of life particularly culture, the author must use elements of pop-culture which are essential parts of the Algerian culture. These pop-cultural elements can be considered as a national heritage; hence, the same belief which existed in the postcolonial era still exists nowadays with slight differences.

The questions raised in the general introduction have been provided with answers. Within the examination of the selected novels, postcolonial novels and contemporary ones use elements of pop- culture interchangeably.

Using the elements of pop-culture in the Algerian novels is a way to attract local readers but it can be an obstacle for the foreign readers, because it is difficult to understand the real meaning, since most of the elements of pop-culture are used in an informal language and there are many idiomatic expressions which do not have the real literary words in other languages. When making this research I faced these obstacles and this question can open doors for my future studies or for someone else who wants to continue in this field of research.



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## Summaries in three Languages

### ملخص

يتناول البحث الحالي عناصر الثقافة الشعبية في الأدب الجزائري ، رواية *اللاز* (1971) للطاهر وطار ، رواية ربح الجنوب (1974) لعبد الحميد بن هدوقة، و رواية *دموع وشموع* (2001) لعبد الجليل مرتاض كمنادج. في البداية ، يقدم البحث نبذة مختصرة عن الأدب الجزائري والثقافة الشعبية وعناصرها الرئيسية ويقدم ملخصات لكل رواية وسيرة ذاتية لكل كاتب على حدة. كما يوضح كيف استخدم الكتاب الثلاثة العناصر الثقافية الجزائرية الشعبية في رواياتهم وأوجه التشابه والاختلاف في استخدام هاته العناصر في الروايات الثلاثة المختارة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقافة الشعبية ، طاهر وطار ، عبد الحميد بن هدوقة ، عبد الجليل مرتاض، *اللاز* ، ربح الجنوب ، *دموع وشموع*.

### Résumé

Cette étude traite les éléments de la culture populaire de la littérature algérienne, le cas *d'al-Laz* par Wattar (1971), *Rih El Djanoub* par Benhadouga (1974) et *Domoue wa Chomoue* par Abdeljalil Mortad (2001). Au début, il présente la littérature algérienne et la culture populaire ainsi que ses principaux éléments. Il fournit des résumés de chaque roman et des biographies de chaque auteur individuellement. Il montre également comment les trois écrivains ont utilisé les éléments de la culture populaire dans leurs romans, les similitudes et les différences d'utilisation de ces éléments dans les trois romans sélectionnés.

**Mots-clés:** Culture populaire, Tahar Wattar, Abdelhamid Benhadouga, Abdeljalil Mortad, *Al-Laz*, *Rih el Djanoub*, *Domoue wa Chomoue*.

### Summary

The present research work deals with elements of popular culture in the Algerian literature, the case of Wattar's *al-Laz* (1971), Benhadouga's *Rih El Djanoub* (1974) and Abdeljalil Mortad's *Domoue wa Chomoue* (2001). In the beginning, the research provides a brief overview of the Algerian literature and popular culture and its main elements and provides summaries of each novel and biographies of each writer. It also shows how the three writers used the elements of popular culture in their novels, and the similarities, and differences in the use of these elements in the three selected novels.

**Key words:** Popular culture, Tahar Wattar, Abdelhamid Benhadouga, Abdeljalil Mortad, *Al-Laz*, *Rih el Djanoub*, *Domoue wa Chomoue*.