

**Genre Hybridity and the Construction of Novelistic Discourse :A
Linguistic-Literary Approach to *Harisat al-Zilal*
By Waciny Laredj**

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of genre hybridity and its role in the construction of novelistic discourse in *Harisat al-Zilal (The Keeper of the Shadows)* by Waciny Laredj. It explores how the novel interacts with dramatic discourse by incorporating theatrical techniques, including internal and external dialogue as well as dramatic scenes. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, drawing on concepts from textual linguistics and discourse analysis to investigate the narrative text. The findings reveal that genre hybridity contributes to the construction of a polyphonic and dynamic narrative discourse, enabling the novel to transcend the conventional boundaries of literary genres while enriching its aesthetic and semantic dimensions. The study further demonstrates the capacity of the contemporary Arabic novel to assimilate diverse expressive modes within an integrated discursive framework.

Keywords : Genre hybridity ; Novelistic discourse ; Textual linguistics ; Discourse analysis ; *Harisat al-Zilal (The Keeper of the Shadows)*.

Introduction

The contemporary Arabic novel has undergone profound transformations that have reshaped both its discursive and aesthetic structures. No longer confined to the conventions of a single literary genre, it has evolved into an open discursive space capable of assimilating

diverse expressive forms by incorporating the techniques and conventions of other literary genres, including drama, poetry, and the short story, within the framework of genre hybridity. In this context, genre hybridity should not be viewed merely as a transgression of traditional generic boundaries ; rather, it constitutes a discursive strategy that contributes to the construction of novelistic discourse, enriches its linguistic and semantic architecture, and enhances the dynamic interaction of voices and expressive modes within the narrative text.

Against this background, the present study investigates genre hybridity in Harisat al-Zilal (*The Keeper of the Shadows*) by Waciny Laredj from a linguistic-literary perspective. Drawing on selected concepts from textual linguistics and discourse analysis, the study seeks to explore how the incorporation of dramatic techniques contributes to the construction of novelistic discourse and the production of meaning.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions :

- To what extent does genre hybridity contribute to the construction of novelistic discourse in Harisat al-Zilal ?
- How does this hybridity shape the aesthetic and semantic dimensions of the contemporary Arabic novel ?

1. Novelistic Discourse and Text Linguistics : The Linguistic Framework of the Study

Novelistic discourse is defined as a linguistic and narrative construct that extends beyond the sentence level to the text as an integrated communicative unit, in which linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic elements interact to generate meaning. From this perspective, the novel is not merely a story to be narrated ; rather, it constitutes a discourse in which multiple voices and expressive systems intersect, enabling it to engage with other discourses and literary genres. Building on this conception, the present study draws on selected concepts from text linguistics to examine the impact of genre hybridity on the construction of novelistic discourse in the novel *The Guardian of Shadows*. Accordingly, the nature of the study requires the clarification of several operational concepts that constitute its linguistic framework, as outlined below :

- 1- **Text Linguistics :**Text linguistics is regarded as a branch of linguistics that investigates the text as an integrated semantic and communicative unit. It is concerned with the mechanisms governing textual construction and organization through the analysis of cohesion, coherence, and the relationships linking the linguistic and semantic components of the text, thereby explaining how meaning is constructed within textual discourse¹.
- 2- **Discourse Construction:**"Discourse construction refers to the manner in which linguistic and narrative units are systematically organized within a text according to discursive strategies that ensure its cohesion, coherence, and semantic unity. From this perspective, genre hybridity functions as one of the principal mechanisms through which novelistic discourse is reconfigured by integrating diverse expressive modes that enrich its linguistic and aesthetic structure while expanding its semantic potential.^{2"}
- 3- **Genre Hybridity:**Genre hybridity refers to the interaction and interpenetration of literary genres through the incorporation of their distinctive artistic and discursive features within a single text. Such interaction facilitates the exchange of expressive techniques and stylistic conventions while reflecting the openness of the literary text to

other generic systems without compromising its artistic identity³. In the contemporary novel, genre hybridity constitutes both an aesthetic and a discursive strategy that contributes to the construction of novelistic discourse and enriches its semantic and aesthetic dimensions.

- 4- **Literary Genre :** The concept of literary genre has long occupied a central position in literary theory, with its foundations traditionally traced to classical Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Plato and Aristotle. While the notion of genre originally extended beyond literature to encompass various fields of knowledge, it gradually evolved into a critical framework for classifying literary texts according to their distinctive formal and aesthetic characteristics. Nevertheless, the concept has remained theoretically contested, as it has frequently overlapped with related terms such as *text type* and *literary kind*, giving rise to ongoing debates in both Arab and Western literary criticism regarding their conceptual boundaries and the extent to which these terms are synonymous or denote distinct analytical categories.

4.1. The Concept of Jins (Genre) in the Arabic Lexical Tradition

From a lexical perspective, Ibn Manẓūr defines jins in Lisān al-‘Arab as "a class or category of things,"⁴ whose plural forms are ajnās and junūs. He further explains that jins constitutes a broader classificatory category than naw‘ (type or species), from which the notions of mujānasah (similarity) and tajannus (classification according to common characteristics) are derived. Accordingly, the expression "this resembles that" (hādhā yujānisu hādhā) signifies the existence of shared attributes between two entities. This definition indicates that naw‘ refers to a specific subdivision within a broader category, whereas jins encompasses several subordinate types united by common characteristics while remaining distinguishable from other categories. Thus, every jins is differentiated from other genera by its defining attributes.

A comparable definition is provided in Tahdhīb al-Lughah, where jins is described as any class or category encompassing human beings, animals, birds, grammatical categories, prosodic forms, and other entities. The dictionary likewise associates the concept with resemblance and shared characteristics, emphasizing that entities belonging to the same jins exhibit common features⁵. In this respect, Tahdhīb al-Lughah converges with Ibn Manẓūr's account by presenting jins as a comprehensive classificatory concept founded upon similarity while simultaneously distinguishing one category from another. Hence, in the Arabic lexical tradition, jins functions as an overarching category that embraces multiple subordinate types sharing common defining features.

By contrast, Ibn Manẓūr defines naw‘ (type or species) as a category that is more specific than jins, describing it as "a subdivision of a thing" and noting that it possesses a logical definition beyond the scope of lexical discussion. He further explains that the plural form is anwā‘ and that the term denotes a group of entities belonging to the same class⁶. This definition clearly establishes a hierarchical relationship between the two concepts : whereas jins represents the broader classificatory framework, naw‘ refers to

a more specific grouping comprising entities of the same kind rather than different categories.

Terminologically, the conceptual boundaries of both terms require further clarification. According to Muḥammad Mandūr, the terms *jins* (genus/genre) and *nawʿ* (type/species) originate from Aristotle's logical categories and have been employed across diverse fields, including botany, zoology, and literary genre theory. In Mandūr's view, the two terms are largely interchangeable, reflecting a broad classificatory concept that extends beyond the domain of literature. Originally developed within the natural sciences, the concept was subsequently adopted in literary studies, where it evolved into a critical framework for the classification and analysis of literary texts according to their shared formal and aesthetic characteristics.

4.2. The Concept of Genre in Western Literary Theory

In Western literary theory, the terms *genre* and *type* are often used interchangeably to denote the concept of literary genre. "Western criticism employs the term *genre* to classify literary works according to their affiliation with a particular literary category whose members share a set of common formal characteristics. From this perspective, genre functions as a ⁷" classificatory framework through which literary texts are grouped on the basis of shared formal features, while each genre is distinguished from others by the specific characteristics that define its identity and aesthetic conventions.

4.2. The Concept of Literature in the Arabic Tradition

4.2.1. Literature in the Arabic Lexical and Critical Tradition

Lexically, Ibn Manẓūr defines *adab* (literature) as that by which a person is refined and cultivated. The term derives from the notion of inviting people to virtuous conduct and discouraging reprehensible behavior, its original meaning being "invitation" or "calling"⁸. According to this lexical understanding, *adab* is primarily associated with moral cultivation and ethical refinement rather than with literary creativity or textual production. Consequently, the concept initially possessed a predominantly ethical and educational dimension before acquiring its later literary significance.

Terminologically, like many critical concepts, *adab* has undergone significant semantic evolution, giving rise to diverse and sometimes competing definitions. "It has been described as a linguistic art, the language of imagination, a linguistic entity, a verbal construct, or simply a structured set of sentences. From this perspective, literature encompasses any linguistic ⁹" construction organized through coherent discourse and shaped by imaginative expression and artistic techniques, thereby acquiring its literary character.

By contrast, Ibn Khaldūn conceives of *adab* as "a discipline that has no independent subject matter but aims at achieving excellence in both poetry and prose"¹⁰. His definition adopts a narrower perspective, emphasizing literary mastery and stylistic excellence in poetic and prose composition rather than literature as a broader artistic or cultural phenomenon.

4.2.2. Literature in Western Literary Theory

Roman Jakobson "conceives of literature as a form of writing that departs from ordinary language by transforming its conventional patterns and expressive functions. From this ¹¹" perspective, literary discourse is distinguished by its aesthetic use of language, whereby

ordinary linguistic expression is foregrounded and reshaped to produce artistic and poetic effects.

The diversity of such perspectives reflects the absence of a universally accepted definition of literature in both the Arabic and Western critical traditions. Some scholars identify literature with all forms of written expression, others regard imagination as its defining criterion, while still others restrict the concept to poetic and prose composition. These divergent views underscore the complexity and evolving nature of the concept of literature across different critical and intellectual traditions.

5. Terminological Ambiguity and Genre Hybridity

The concept of literary genre has long been a source of theoretical ambiguity in literary criticism, both in Western and Arab scholarship. This ambiguity has been further complicated in Arabic criticism by the difficulties associated with translating the concept of *genre* and related terminology. As a result, the question of literary genre has attracted considerable scholarly attention throughout the Arab world, generating numerous conferences, symposia, and academic debates devoted to genre theory, literary classification, and the challenges of generic categorization¹².

The introduction of Western genre theory into Arabic literary discourse has contributed to persistent terminological confusion, particularly concerning the relationship between *jins* (genre) and *nawʿ* (type). While some Arab critics employ the two terms interchangeably, others argue for a clear conceptual distinction. Saʿīd ʿAllūsh, for example, considers *genre* and *type* to represent essentially the same concept, "defining them as an organic organization of literary forms that may be differentiated into major and minor literary categories"¹³; By contrast, Saʿīd Yaqīn, in his attempt to formulate an Arabic theory of narrative, distinguishes between three interrelated concepts: *jins* (genre), *nawʿ* (type), and *namaʿ* (mode or textual pattern). He associates *genre* with the narrative substance or story (*qiṣṣah*), considering it the primary determinant of a text's literary identity. *Type*, in contrast, is linked to discourse, since the mode of presentation differentiates one narrative form from another. Finally, *mode* (*namaʿ*) pertains to the textual organization itself, encompassing thematic structures, textual patterns, and semantic configurations¹⁴. According to this model, every literary text is realized through a particular textual mode, whereas narrative types are distinguished by their discursive organization, and genres are defined by the narrative material from which they derive.

A similar distinction is advanced by ʿAbd al-Malik Murtaḍ, who addresses the longstanding confusion between *genre* and *type* in literary classification. "Drawing on Ibn Manẓūr's lexical distinction, he argues that *genre* constitutes the broader classificatory category, while *type* refers to the specific subdivisions that emerge within it"¹⁵. Poetry, for instance, represents a literary genre, whereas elegy, satire, and panegyric are types that develop within that overarching generic framework. This hierarchical understanding preserves the lexical principle that *jins* is conceptually broader than *nawʿ*.

Accordingly, the concept of literary genre has remained theoretically contested in both Arab and Western criticism. "Its meaning was not fully stabilized within Western critical discourse until the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the term itself extends beyond literary studies to other artistic fields such as painting and cinema. Consequently, the absence

of complete terminological stability in its original intellectual context has made the establishment of a unified Arabic equivalent particularly challenging ; Nevertheless, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines a literary genre as a category of literary works that share common themes, formal characteristics, stylistic conventions, and structural features. This definition provides a broadly accepted framework for understanding genre as a system of literary classification based on recurrent textual and aesthetic properties¹⁶.

6. Genre Hybridity and the Blurring of Generic Boundaries

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary literary production is the growing permeability of generic boundaries. "The traditional conception of literary genres as discrete and autonomous categories has gradually given way to a more dynamic understanding that recognizes constant interaction, overlap, and mutual transformation among genres. Consequently, genre hybridity has become an established feature of modern literary discourse rather than an exceptional or marginal phenomenon."¹⁷

Within this perspective, literary genres are no longer regarded as rigid classificatory systems but as flexible discursive formations capable of sharing formal, stylistic, and thematic features. Modern Arabic literature, in particular, offers numerous examples of such hybridization, including the convergence of poetry and narrative, poetry and drama, as well as drama and the novel. These hybrid configurations demonstrate that literary genres evolve not through isolation but through continuous dialogue and reciprocal influence¹⁸.

The emergence of genre hybridity is closely associated with the gradual rejection of the classical doctrine of generic purity inherited from Aristotelian poetics. Beginning in the nineteenth century, numerous literary theorists and writers challenged the rigid taxonomies imposed by classical aesthetics, advocating instead the creative freedom of literary expression. This intellectual orientation found influential support in the works of Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, both of whom rejected restrictive generic conventions in favor of artistic innovation. The movement reached one of its most systematic formulations in the aesthetic philosophy of Benedetto Croce, who, while acknowledging the practical value of literary classification, rejected the notion that aesthetic creation should be constrained by predetermined generic rules¹⁹.

A comparable position is articulated by Tzvetan Todorov, who argues that literary genres exist only through their dynamic relations with one another. According to Todorov, every literary work simultaneously participates in and transforms the genre to which it belongs ; consequently, a partial transgression of generic conventions is not merely permissible but constitutes a necessary condition for literary originality. A work that adheres rigidly to generic norms risks sacrificing the creative innovation that distinguishes literary art.

The same theoretical orientation underlies Todorov's "broader conception of the unity of the arts ; As the idea of artistic unity gradually gained prominence, literary theory increasingly emphasized the shared aesthetic principles governing diverse artistic practices, particularly poetry and painting. This perspective further reinforced the legitimacy of ²⁰ generic openness and interdisciplinary interaction while undermining the traditional assumption that each literary genre should remain formally self-contained.

Within modern Arabic criticism, Sa'īd Yaḡṡīn likewise regards genre hybridity as a "natural consequence of the historical evolution of literary discourse. He argues that the increasing complexity of communicative practices and contemporary modes of life inevitably generates greater interaction among literary genres. In this context, the novel occupies a ²¹" privileged position, owing to its exceptional capacity to absorb and integrate diverse discursive forms. Its structural flexibility enables it to accommodate multiple expressive modes, making it the literary genre most capable of embodying the complexity and fluidity of contemporary experience.

A similar position is advanced by Muḡammad Ghunaymī Hilāl, who maintains that "literary genres are inherently dynamic rather than fixed. Their formal and aesthetic characteristics evolve continuously across literary movements and historical periods, to the extent that features once regarded as essential may gradually disappear or be reconfigured²²". From this perspective, literary innovation depends not on preserving inherited generic conventions but on continually reshaping them in response to changing artistic and cultural contexts.

7. Factors Underlying the Novel's Openness to Other Literary Genres

The novel has emerged as the literary genre most capable of accommodating diverse discursive and aesthetic forms. Its openness to genre hybridity is not accidental but rather the outcome of multiple literary, cultural, and socio-historical factors that have reshaped the nature of contemporary narrative production.

Foremost among these factors is the intrinsic flexibility of narrative discourse. Unlike more conventionally bounded literary forms, the novel possesses a highly adaptable narrative structure that facilitates the incorporation of heterogeneous expressive modes. Its formal openness enables it to assimilate the stylistic and aesthetic conventions of other genres while preserving its own narrative coherence, thereby making genre hybridity one of its defining characteristics.

The expansion of genre interaction has also been driven by broader social, political, economic, and cultural transformations. As human experience has become increasingly interconnected, the circulation of ideas, values, and cultural practices across geographical and intellectual boundaries has intensified. These developments have encouraged literary forms to transcend traditional generic divisions and engage in more dynamic processes of exchange and mutual influence.

Another significant factor is the growing prominence of the reader in contemporary literary production. The increasing emphasis on reader engagement has encouraged novelists to employ narrative strategies capable of sustaining interest and responding to diverse aesthetic expectations. Such strategies include the integration of realism with the fantastic, the incorporation of extraordinary or mythical narratives, the portrayal of psychologically complex or unconventional characters, and the adoption of more accessible styles and concise narrative structures.

Genre hybridity has likewise been reinforced by intensified intercultural exchange and the growing influence of dominant literary traditions in an increasingly globalized cultural landscape. Exposure to diverse literary models has prompted writers to question inherited

generic conventions and experiment with new narrative forms, reflecting a broader shift toward more flexible modes of literary expression.

Collectively, these developments have transformed the novel into an exceptionally elastic literary form capable of transcending conventional generic boundaries. By fostering dialogue among different literary traditions and expressive systems, the contemporary novel has redefined its aesthetic possibilities and expanded its capacity to represent the complexity of modern experience. This theoretical framework provides the basis for the present analysis of Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows*, where genre hybridity constitutes a central principle in the construction of novelistic discourse²³.

8. The Interaction Between the Novel and Drama in Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows*

Before examining the dramatic dimension of the novel, it is useful to provide a concise overview of its narrative framework.

The Guardian of Shadows recounts the journey of Vásquez de Cervantes d'Almería, a Spanish journalist known as *Don Quixote*, who travels to Algeria during a period of profound political and social unrest in order to complete the novel he considers the project of his lifetime. His research centers on the legacy of his ancestor, Miguel de Cervantes, whose years of captivity in Algeria left enduring historical and cultural traces, including the cave traditionally associated with his imprisonment and a commemorative plaque that the protagonist unexpectedly discovers discarded in a landfill and offered for sale as a worthless object. During his stay, he is guided by Ḥasīsīn, an employee at the local House of Culture whose grandmother, Ḥannā, proudly preserves the collective memory of her Morisco ancestry through stories passed down across generations. The journey, however, takes an unexpected turn when the Spanish visitor is accused of espionage after entering the country illegally aboard a vessel involved in sugar smuggling. Although Ḥasīsīn attempts to establish the purely scholarly purpose of the visit, the investigation ultimately results in the journalist's deportation, while his Algerian companion loses his position because of his assistance to the foreign visitor.

Among literary genres, the novel possesses perhaps the greatest capacity for absorbing and reconfiguring the formal and aesthetic characteristics of other genres. "Owing to its structural complexity and narrative flexibility, it has evolved into an open literary form capable of integrating heterogeneous discursive practices without compromising its generic identity."²⁴ Genre hybridity, therefore, is not merely an incidental feature of the novel but one of the principal mechanisms through which it continually renews its expressive resources and expands its artistic possibilities.

Within this framework, the present study focuses on the interaction between the novel and drama. Although these two genres differ in their historical development and formal organization, they nevertheless share fundamental narrative components, making dramatic techniques particularly productive within novelistic discourse. As Aḥmad Amīn observes, "the novel and the play are constructed from essentially the same narrative elements"²⁵, despite belonging to different literary traditions.

The "novel's openness to dramatic discourse is further reinforced by its affinity with other representational arts, particularly cinema. Like film, the novel possesses the capacity to

assimilate multiple artistic forms, including storytelling, dramatic action, performance, visual imagination, and auditory effects. This aesthetic flexibility enables contemporary fiction to ²⁶ appropriate dramatic techniques with remarkable effectiveness, especially dialogue, which has become one of the most significant structural devices through which dramatic discourse is incorporated into narrative fiction.

Although the novel appropriates dialogue as one of its principal expressive devices, it reconfigures its function in accordance with the specific conventions of narrative discourse, thereby establishing a clear distinction between novelistic dialogue and dramatic dialogue²⁷. Unlike dialogue in drama, which primarily advances the action through direct stage interaction, dialogue in the novel operates within a broader narrative framework, where it interacts with narration, characterization, and interior consciousness. Consequently, dialogue has become an indispensable structural component of the novel, assuming multiple forms that extend beyond exchanges between characters to include interior dialogue and self-reflexive monologue. The following analysis examines how these dialogic forms function in *The Guardian of Shadows* and contribute to the novel's dramatic texture and discursive construction.

Interior Dialogue : Monologue

Interior dialogue, or **monologue**, refers to a form of self-address in which a character engages in an internal conversation without the participation of another interlocutor. In *The Guardian of Shadows*, this technique serves as a significant narrative strategy through which the psychological, emotional, and existential dimensions of the characters are disclosed. By allowing characters to articulate their innermost thoughts independently of the narrator's mediation, monologue enhances the dramatic intensity of the narrative while granting direct access to otherwise inaccessible states of consciousness. Hidden anxieties, suppressed desires, unresolved conflicts, and unspoken fears are thus transformed into essential components of the novel's discursive structure²⁸.

As a narrative device, interior monologue emerges from moments of heightened emotional tension, compelling characters to confront themselves in situations of uncertainty, trauma, or existential crisis. Its widespread use in modern fiction reflects a departure from the constraints of conventional narration, enabling the representation of subjective experience with greater psychological depth. In this respect, the function of monologue in the novel parallels that of dialogue in drama : both serve as powerful instruments for characterization, revealing aspects of personality that cannot be inferred solely from external actions. Through this technique, the novel constructs characters whose emotional complexity unfolds through their own voices rather than through authorial commentary.

This dramatic function is evident in Ḥasīsīn's internal monologue, where his determination to resist fear is expressed despite the trauma of abduction. Although he recalls having promised his captors never to reveal what had happened, he insists that his capacity to write remains intact, affirming that his hands and fingers still possess the power to preserve and disclose hidden truths. Here, writing itself becomes an act of resistance, transforming silence into testimony and fear into narrative agency²⁹.

Elsewhere, interior monologue conveys "a profound sense of loneliness and emotional neglect. Reflecting on illness, the character laments the absence of compassion from those

around him, acknowledging his own modest desire for care and personal dignity³⁰. Rather than merely expressing suffering, this self-reflection exposes the psychological isolation that underlies his outward composure.

The same technique also articulates the emotional collapse experienced by Don Quixote. As he imagines the footsteps of Cervantes merging with the cries of captives, merchants, animals, and sailors, the boundaries between historical memory and present consciousness gradually dissolve. The monologue reconstructs a traumatic historical landscape in which fear and sorrow coexist, allowing the protagonist to relive the suffering of the prisoners through an intensely subjective imaginative experience. The dramatic force of this passage lies not in the external description of events but in the internalization of collective memory within the protagonist's consciousness.

Interior dialogue likewise becomes a vehicle for expressing feelings of helplessness in the face of oppressive institutional authority. While waiting at the headquarters of the Central Security Directorate in Algiers, the protagonist reflects on the absurdity of bureaucratic power, describing a world governed by arbitrary rules from which no meaningful escape is possible. His inability to articulate his thoughts symbolically mirrors his inability to resist the overwhelming authority confronting him. Here, monologue functions as the only remaining space in which the character can negotiate psychologically with an external reality that has deprived him of agency.

Finally, interior monologue assumes an interrogative form through a sequence of self-directed questions inspired by the protagonist's fascination with the adventures of his ancestor, Miguel de Cervantes. Imagining the possibility of encountering Ottoman warships or falling into the hands of pirates, he projects his own fears onto the historical experience of his grandfather. These unanswered questions reveal not only his anxiety about an uncertain future but also the profound interweaving of personal identity, historical memory, and imaginative reconstruction that characterizes the novel's narrative discourse.

External Dialogue: Unlike interior monologue, **external dialogue** involves direct verbal interaction between two or more characters and constitutes one of the principal dramatic techniques incorporated into novelistic discourse. In *The Guardian of Shadows*, Waciny Laredj employs external dialogue not merely as a conversational device but as a structural mechanism through which characterization, ideological conflict, and narrative progression are simultaneously developed. The novel's appropriation of this dramatic technique exemplifies its openness to theatrical discourse and reinforces its hybrid generic structure.

The novel alternates between extended and concise dialogues, each fulfilling distinct narrative functions. Extended dialogue is generally employed at moments of heightened ideological or emotional intensity, allowing characters to articulate competing perspectives in a manner that resembles dramatic confrontation.

A representative example occurs when Don Quixote passionately condemns the systematic neglect of the city's historical heritage and the deliberate erasure of Cervantes's legacy. His sustained dialogue transcends the immediate conversation to become a broader cultural and historical argument, expressing his conviction that the destruction of historical memory amounts to the destruction of the city's identity itself. Through this dramatic exchange,

dialogue becomes a vehicle for preserving collective memory and foregrounding the novel's central concern with cultural heritage³¹.

Another significant instance is found in the extended conversations between Grandmother Ḥannā and her guest, Don Quixote. Recounting memories of her childhood, describing her ancestral home, and explaining traditional tattooing practices, Ḥannā transforms dialogue into a medium for cultural transmission and historical remembrance. Rather than merely conveying information, these conversations function as repositories of collective memory, linking personal recollection with broader questions of identity and historical continuity. Their dialogic structure, predominantly organized around questions and responses, reproduces the rhythm of oral storytelling while simultaneously advancing the narrative and enriching the novel's dramatic texture.

The recurrence of such extended dialogues throughout the novel demonstrates that dialogue performs functions extending far beyond interpersonal communication. It operates as a narrative strategy for constructing character, preserving memory, negotiating cultural identity, and dramatizing ideological conflict. To illustrate the frequency and distribution of this dialogic pattern, the following table summarizes the principal instances of extended dialogue identified in the novel.

Dialogue Participants	Pages
Grandmother Ḥannā and the Spanish Guest	50–51
Karim Lūdūk (Taxi Driver), Ḥasīsīn, and Don Quixote	57–58
Ḥasīsīn and Don Quixote	60–61, 79–80
Ḥasīsīn and the Factory Manager	64
Ḥasīsīn, Shafīq, and Don Quixote	66
Don Quixote and Shafīq	67, 71, 73
The Taxi Driver and Ḥasīsīn	122
Ḥasīsīn, Tawfīq, and the Minister of the Interior	124–126
Don Quixote and His Prison Guard	165–166
Don Quixote and the Official Conducting the Interview	175–176

Table 1. Major Extended Dialogues in Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows*

Table 1 identifies the principal instances of extended dialogue in *The Guardian of Shadows*. The distribution of these dialogic sequences demonstrates that extended dialogue constitutes a recurrent narrative strategy rather than an incidental stylistic feature. Their frequency highlights the novel's sustained appropriation of dramatic discourse, where dialogue performs multiple functions extending beyond verbal exchange to encompass characterization, ideological confrontation, historical reconstruction, and the articulation of cultural memory. Consequently, the prominence of extended dialogue reinforces the novel's hybrid generic structure and substantiates its engagement with dramatic techniques in the construction of novelistic discourse³².

Brief Dialogue

Alongside extended dialogue, *The Guardian of Shadows* makes extensive use of **brief dialogue**, a dramatic technique characterized by concise verbal exchanges composed of short

declarative and interrogative utterances. Rather than merely reducing the length of conversation, these condensed dialogic sequences accelerate the rhythm of narration, intensify dramatic tension, and sustain the immediacy of unfolding events. Their economy of expression enables the narrative to progress rapidly while preserving the spontaneity and realism of interpersonal interaction.

A representative example occurs when Don Quixote attempts to photograph a restricted military area without attracting the attention of the security guard. The rapid succession of short questions and responses mirrors the urgency of the situation, creating a heightened sense of suspense while simultaneously revealing the characters' alertness and mutual awareness of the potential danger. Here, dialogue functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a narrative strategy for regulating pace and dramatizing action.

A similar function is evident in the exchange between Don Quixote and Ḥasīsīn at the landfill site. Their concise conversational turns gradually expose the stark contrast between the official organizational structure of the facility and its actual condition. Don Quixote's ironic question whether the place is an institution or merely a garbage dump introduces a critical perspective on institutional dysfunction, while Ḥasīsīn's restrained response reinforces the underlying irony. Through this economical dialogic form, the novel conveys social criticism without interrupting the continuity of the narrative³³.

The recurrent use of brief dialogue demonstrates the author's deliberate appropriation of dramatic techniques in order to enhance narrative dynamism and realism. Unlike extended dialogue, which primarily develops ideological positions and psychological depth, brief dialogue serves to maintain narrative momentum, intensify dramatic situations, and reveal character through rapid verbal interaction. Together, these complementary dialogic forms contribute significantly to the novel's dramatic texture and further illustrate the integration of theatrical discourse into its narrative structure.

The principal instances of brief dialogue identified in the novel are summarized in the following table.

Dialogue Participants	Pages
Grandmother Ḥannā and Ḥasīsīn	44
The Man with the Glasses, Don Quixote, and Ḥasīsīn	74–75
Ḥasīsīn and Don Quixote	28–32
The Security Guard and Ḥasīsīn	115–116
Maya (the Interpreter) and Don Quixote	173–174

Table 2. Principal Instances of Brief Dialogue in Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows*

Table 2 presents the principal instances of brief dialogue identified in *The Guardian of Shadows*. Unlike the extended dialogic sequences discussed earlier, these concise exchanges are concentrated in moments of heightened narrative intensity, where rapid interaction sustains dramatic tension, accelerates narrative progression, and enhances the immediacy of unfolding events. Their strategic distribution throughout the novel demonstrates that brief dialogue is not merely a stylistic variation but a structural device that regulates narrative pacing, develops

characterization, and contributes to the dynamic movement of the plot. Considered alongside the extended dialogues analyzed previously, these exchanges reveal that dialogue functions as a fundamental organizing principle of the narrative rather than a simple medium of communication. Through its varied dialogic forms, the novel appropriates dramatic techniques to construct character, articulate ideological conflict, preserve cultural memory, and reinforce its dramatic texture, thereby offering compelling evidence of the genre hybridity that underpins its discursive construction.

The novel further extends this dramatic dimension by incorporating non-verbal communication as an integral component of its dialogic structure. Through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, silence, and whispered speech, Waciny Laredj broadens the concept of dialogue beyond verbal interaction, bringing the narrative discourse closer to the expressive conventions of theatrical performance, where bodily communication plays a central role in meaning-making. A representative example occurs when the narrator prevents Don Quixote from speaking by placing a hand over his mouth while silently signaling with his eyes that he should remain quiet. Only after Don Quixote persists in his attempts to speak does the narrator whisper that he should address Grandmother Ḥannā as *Señora*, a form of address capable of evoking her nostalgic attachment to her Andalusian heritage. In this episode, meaning emerges through the interplay of speech and gesture rather than through language alone, demonstrating that communication within the novel operates simultaneously on verbal and non-verbal levels. By integrating these complementary communicative modes, *The Guardian of Shadows* further appropriates theatrical discourse, where gesture, silence, and bodily movement function alongside spoken language to shape interpersonal relationships, regulate interaction, and intensify the dramatic quality of narrative discourse³⁴.

Scenic Representation

One of the most significant dramatic techniques appropriated by the contemporary novel is **scenic representation**, through which narration momentarily yields to the direct presentation of events. By constructing scenes that unfold with visual immediacy and dramatic intensity, the novel disrupts the linear rhythm of narration and invites readers to experience events as though they were witnessing a theatrical performance. In this respect, the scene functions not merely as a descriptive device but as a structural component that regulates narrative tempo, heightens emotional engagement, and reinforces the dramatic dimension of novelistic discourse. As dramatic theory suggests, the scene constitutes a fundamental element in shaping the internal rhythm of theatrical texts while simultaneously serving as an important mechanism for organizing narrative time in fiction³⁵.

One of the most evocative examples is the scene centered on **Carmen**, whose forced exile from Granada evokes the historical trauma of the Moriscos. Her experience of displacement resonates profoundly with that of Don Quixote, who recognizes in her story a reflection of his own longing, loss, and anticipation of redemption. Through this parallel, the novel transforms individual memory into collective historical remembrance, intertwining personal suffering with the broader legacy of exile and cultural dispossession. The scenic presentation intensifies the emotional resonance of this episode by allowing historical experience to unfold through vivid dramatic visualization rather than detached narration³⁶.

An equally powerful example is the scene depicting the murder of **Lady 'Ā'ishah** at the hands of an extremist group during Algeria's years of political violence. Rather than merely reporting the event, the narrative reconstructs it through a carefully staged dramatic sequence in which dialogue, physical movement, and visual imagery combine to produce an overwhelming sense of immediacy. The victim's daughters plead unsuccessfully for mercy as the attackers execute their mother before their eyes after she refuses to disclose information related to her work. The graphic representation of the murder transforms the episode into one of the novel's most emotionally charged scenes, confronting the reader with the brutality of terrorism while exposing its devastating psychological and social consequences³⁷.

These scenes illustrate how Waciny Laredj systematically incorporates the dramaturgical logic of theatrical representation into the narrative structure of *The Guardian of Shadows*. By privileging scenic construction over narrative summary, the novel enhances visibility, intensifies emotional involvement, and strengthens the dramatic quality of its discourse. The examples discussed here represent only a selection of the numerous scenic episodes employed throughout the novel, whose broader distribution is summarized in the following table :

Scenic Episode	Page(s)
The Abduction of Ḥūriyyah	56
The Pirates' Pursuit of the Poet Rénier	69
Cervantes's Escape	87
Don Quixote's Arrest by the Police	107
The Capture of Cervantes by Pirates	152

Table 3. Principal Scenic Episodes in Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows*

Table 3 identifies the principal scenic episodes that contribute to the novel's dramatic configuration. Although these scenes differ in their narrative contexts, they share a common dramaturgical function : they privilege direct representation over narrative summary, thereby intensifying visual immediacy, accelerating narrative progression, and reinforcing the dramatic quality of the novelistic discourse.

Beyond its extensive use of dialogue and scenic representation, *The Guardian of Shadows* further strengthens its dramatic dimension through the systematic alternation between dialogue and narration. Rather than allowing either mode to dominate the narrative, Waciny Laredj constructs a balanced narrative rhythm in which dialogic sequences are frequently followed by descriptive or narrative passages that contextualize events, deepen psychological insight, and sustain textual cohesion. This narrative pattern is established from the opening pages of the novel, where the narrator introduces his typewriter through an extended descriptive passage that invests the object with symbolic and emotional significance before the dialogic action unfolds. Such alternation prevents narrative monotony while ensuring a continuous interplay between dramatic immediacy and narrative reflection.

Taken together, the integration of dialogue, scenic representation, and narrative exposition demonstrates that the novel does not merely incorporate isolated dramatic devices but systematically appropriates the structural logic of theatrical discourse. The interaction

between these expressive modes produces a highly visual and dramatically charged narrative, allowing readers to experience events with an immediacy that closely approximates theatrical performance. Accordingly, *The Guardian of Shadows* exemplifies how genre hybridity operates as a fundamental narrative strategy, reshaping the architecture of novelistic discourse and expanding its aesthetic and communicative potential.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the interaction between literary genres constitutes one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Arabic fiction, reflecting a broader shift from rigid generic classification toward more fluid and dynamic modes of literary expression. Although each literary genre retains its distinctive formal and aesthetic features, contemporary narrative practice increasingly privileges openness, interaction, and mutual influence over the classical ideal of generic purity.

The analysis of Waciny Laredj's *The Guardian of Shadows* confirms that genre hybridity functions not merely as a stylistic phenomenon but as a fundamental principle governing the construction of novelistic discourse. By systematically incorporating dramatic techniques including extended and brief dialogue, non-verbal communication, scenic representation, and the alternation between dialogue and narration the novel expands its expressive possibilities while enhancing its dramatic, visual, and emotional impact. These techniques do not simply imitate theatrical forms; rather, they are reconfigured within the narrative framework to serve the specific aesthetic and discursive objectives of the novel.

The findings further indicate that the contemporary Arabic novel has largely transcended the constraints of traditional generic boundaries, embracing hybrid forms that reflect the complexity of modern cultural and literary experience. Within this context, *The Guardian of Shadows* stands as a compelling example of how genre hybridity reshapes the architecture of narrative discourse, transforming the novel into an open, flexible, and dialogic form capable of assimilating diverse artistic practices without compromising its generic identity. Consequently, the study confirms that genre hybridity is not an incidental formal feature but a central narrative strategy through which contemporary fiction continually renews its aesthetic structures and communicative potential.

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