

Popular imagination and its anthropological representations: The image of women in the popular imagination as a model

المخيال الشعبي وتمثلاته الأنثروبولوجية: صورة المرأة في المخيال الشعبي

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Abstract:

Economic and intellectual. Through this research paper, we have continued to aim to identify the concept of popular imagination and its representations embodied in the subject of women as a model, that is, how the popular imagination artistically formulates a set of perceptions about them, which are linked to the social dimensions of the popular imagination, the focus of human, aesthetic and intellectual contemplation. Its representations of women are linked to aspects of nature, and to some mythical creatures. Most popular proverbs have focused on the basic and essential aspects of the process of excitement and intimidation, and have been linked to some snakes, women as a poisonous point. All of this depicts and highlights a psychological state and a specific image in the minds of those who deal with texts that employ elements of popular proverbs and other forms of expression in their daily lives.

Even nature, as symbolic elements, has been employed psychologically in a positive way, such as the connection of women to the mother earth on this basis, we will attempt, through research, analysis, and discussion, to present the anthropological backgrounds and expressive forms around it in the popular imagination, which control the popular imagination in general and the popular imagination about women in particular.

Keywords: popular imagination, representations, image, women, popular culture, symbolism.

ملخص:

نهدف من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية إلى التعرف على مفهوم المخيال الشعبي وتمثلاته المتجسدة في موضوع المرأة كنموذج، أي كيف يصوغ المتخيل الشعب فنيا، مجموعة من التصورات حولها، والتي تقترن بالأبعاد الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والفكرية. ولقد ظل المخيال الشعبي محور تأمل إنساني وجمالي وكري، فارتبطت تمثلاته حول المرأة بمظاهر الطبيعة، وبعض المخلوقات الأسطورية، والأمثال الشعبية في غالبيتها وقفت عند التركيز على المرأة كنقطة أساسية وجوهرية في عملية الاثارة والتخويف، فقرنت ببعض الحيات السامة، كل ذلك يصور ويبرز حالة نفسية، وصورة معينة في أذهان من يتعاملون بنصوص الأمثال الشعبية، وبقية أشكال التعبير الأخرى في حياتهم اليومية، حتى أن توظيف العناصر الطبيعية كعناصر رمزية، وظفت توظيفا نفسيا بإيجابية كارتباط المرأة بالأرض الأم، وقد تعددت الأشكال التعبيرية حولها في المخيال الشعبي.

وعلى هذا الأساس سنحاول بالبحث والتحليل ومناقشة عرض الخلفيات الأنثروبولوجية المتحكمة في المخيال الشعبي بصفة عامة والمخيل الشعبي حول المرأة بصفة خاصة
الكلمات المفتاحية: المخيال الشعبي، التمثلات، الصورة، المرأة، الثقافة الشعبية، الرمزية.

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1. Introduction

Any discourse about women is constantly required to work on itself, especially by refining the concepts that comprise it. Otherwise, this discourse will fall into the cycle of discursive consumerism and produce what completely contradicts it. That is, instead of the liberation it promises, it will end up perpetuating conservatism and reproducing hegemony. Hence, in our view, the need for the topic of women in its various manifestations, upon which the discourse of the social sciences about them is based. Perhaps the importance of this approach stems from the fact that it is a necessary introduction to any desired social change in the status of women within society. As the researcher Fatima Mernissi emphasizes, developing the scientific discourse about the status of women is certainly a way to contribute to improving this status. To understand the reality of women, which is the result of the accumulations and legacies of the past, deeply rooted in the depths of mythical, theological, and religious structures dating back to pre-science and pre-rational times, and passed down through inheritance from generation to generation to live with us and control our imagination. Because popular heritage is a living material, it has organized abundant artistic treasures that are a receptacle for many customs, traditions, and norms prevalent in a given society. We addressed the image of women in proverbs as an aspect of the popular imagination. The choice of popular proverbs is justified because this type of discourse is characterized by its rapid spread among different social classes, its ease of representation and comprehension, and its expressive capacity, which enables it to reflect various patterns of human behavior, as well as its continuity of presence and transmission from one generation to the next... From here, the following questions arise: What image do proverbs paint of women? What are the implications of this image and its repercussions on the reality of women in the family and society? Does this image differ according to the status, role, and age of women?

Or is it a general image that accompanies women and applies to all women regardless of the existing differences between them?

2. Defining Concepts

Any study requires examining the most important scientific concepts to facilitate the process of understanding and analysis. Since concepts "do not accept a comprehensive, exclusive definition in the language of logic, but rather are characterized by absolute flexibility that is not limited by borders or restricted by restrictions, so their meaning sometimes expands and other times narrows (Gharbi, p. 93), it was incumbent upon us to define the concepts we adopted throughout this study.

2.1 The Popular Imagination

Dr. Muhammad Najib al-Nuwairi says, "In a dialogue with a group of professors at a scientific symposium held at the headquarters of the Popular Culture Magazine in Bahrain, that imagination, as a concept and field of thought and consideration, is a broad and complex subject addressed by many and varied scientific specializations, such that no single team or single scientific field can fully grasp the scientific and cognitive issues related to its question... Therefore, we find that research units, teams, and laboratories are distributed throughout the Arab world, and studies are frequent and research is continuous. Whenever they reach results and ideas crystallize, other issues and problems occur to them. This is the nature and essence of science. Whenever it seems to it that it has solved a problem, other issues appear (Al-Nuwayri & others, 2000, p. 180).

Imagination, in language, is the state of something. It is imagined, imagined, and in the proverb, "Whoever hears, imagines," meaning he thinks. It is from the root word "I thought" and its sisters, which are used for subject and predicate. And "unclear" means cloud (Al-Nuwayri & others, 2000, p. 227).

Ibn Rushd says, explaining Aristotle It is impossible for imagination to be the imagination, whether it is a thought, a sense, an action, or the mind, or in general, whatever the rational faculties may be. It is not composed of thought and sense, as some of the ancients say. It is clear that imagination is not a thought coupled with sense, nor a faculty composed of thought and sense. Therefore, imagination is not one of those faculties, nor is it composed of them (Ibn Rushd, 1997, p. 218).

Imaginative meanings are what move the mind, not the mind itself. Imaginations are types of sensible things in the absence of sensible things. Affirmation and negation are not in the imagination (Ibn Rushd, 1997, p. 308). Imagination, according to both Aristotle and Ibn Rushd, is something contrary to affirmation and negation, right and wrong.

It is not possible, then, to separate reason from imagination, as they are two sides of the same coin. However, man creates imaginative meanings and symbols, but he imagines that these meanings are transcendent or the result of laws historical objectivity: It creates imaginary connotations and refers them to forces beyond its control, becoming their prisoner.

The term imagination is hardly used in Anglo-Saxon social and human sciences, while it has been widely used in French social and human sciences. This is not surprising, as the term imagination was coined by the psychologist Jacques Lacan in the middle of this century. French anthropology used the concept of the collective imagination and defined it as follows: “The collective imagination is a set of mythical representations of society (Al-Jawhari, 1998, p. 202).

Jean-Paul Sartre defines it as a function of consciousness in which consciousness produces absent objects and makes them present, thus creating an imaginary relationship with its objects (Wolf, 2009, p. 358).

Imagination is a psychological activity in humans, during which new sensory and mental images are generated, through the modification of their experience. Thanks to imagination, humans are able not only to imagine what actually exists, but even what is impossible to exist on the ground of reality (Mustafa, 2009, p. 214).

The concept of imagination combines perception and imagination and transcends them, as Gilbert Durand points out: “It is inappropriate to view imagination as a phenomenon prior to sound rational thought. Rather, it must be viewed as a fundamental factor in the balance of the soul (Gilbert, 1976, p. 84).

Imagination sometimes appears in the form of ideology and sometimes in the form of utopia. These are two forms of human consciousness that constitute the internal conflictual structure of the imagination. It sometimes appears in the form of a utopia that is inverted from reality, escaping from it in order to achieve a kind of lost paradise “in which humans regain their humanity.” Imagination, according to Mohammed Arkoun, “is a set of perceptions that are transmitted by a culture. In the past, culture was popularly disseminated through epics, poetry, and religious discourse. Now you find it being popularized through the media... There is a French-English imagination, Algerian-Moroccan... Imagination is the sum of perceptions shared by a people or human group toward another people or human group (Makkawi, 1993, p. 64).

The imagination relates to individuals and groups and is represented by a set of representations and perceptions that are deposited through upbringing and transmitted across generations through acculturation, which is generalized through religion, literature, arts, myths, common language, and political discourse.

The popular imagination is the spirit of popular culture. Through it, the individual acquires the culture of the group. It is what distinguishes the culture of one society from another.

In the study community, we find that the imagination plays an important role in transmitting popular culture, as the imagination seeks to consolidate certain popular beliefs that help perpetuate certain behaviors produced by society. The symbols in popular culture are not devoid of a belief dimension related to the movement of the popular imagination.

2.2 Popular Culture Foster

Defines popular culture as a shared way of life that distinguishes most or all of the individuals of many villages and small towns in a particular region (Al-Shabbah, 2014, p. 71).

We find Foster confining popular culture to areas that have not yet reached a high degree of industrialization.

De Certeau also defines it as "the ordinary culture of ordinary people, meaning that it is shaped according to daily reality and through ordinary, daily activities (Hultkranz, 1973, p. 160).

That is, for him, popular culture is the culture that pertains to the general, uneducated class in society. He used this term to denote the culture that distinguishes the people and popular society, and is usually characterized by its adherence to heritage.

2.3 Proverb

Archer Taylor defines a proverb as "a polished, well-constructed sentence that is common in popular lore as a wise saying. It usually indicates the direction of an event or offers a judgment on a situation. It is a popular teaching method in the traditional way (Koch, 2010, p. 218).

From this, it becomes clear that a proverb has a function in the lives of individuals and societies, as it plays the role of guiding individual behavior and attitudes.

Nemat Ahmed Fouad defines it by saying: "A proverb is a mirror of the people's experiences and hardships in life, times, and events. It is the clearest image of the people's interaction with the environment in which they live (Fuad, 1973, p. 24).

2.4 The Symbol

White Mills says: "A symbol can be defined as a thing, event, action, or subject to which meaning is added by humans. An example of this is holy water, an amulet, a ritual, or a word that (Hafez, 2000, p. 112), when employed in a symbolic context, takes on a meaning completely different from what it means.

George Mead, in defining the concept of the symbol and the symbolic, proceeds from the premise that man is active and effective, communicating with others through symbols that have a meaning for their recipients. In this case, when the symbol becomes a shared meaning, it becomes a social symbol acquired through interaction with individuals (Shita, 2000, p. 133).

Hence, we find that man is surrounded by a set of symbols whose meanings and connotations he has experienced throughout his life and has assigned a value that determines his relationship with them.

2.5 Significance

De Saussure presented a brief concept of significance, stating that it is "part of linguistics as signifier and signified." He thus indicates that the matter is related to linguistics, or a group of studies that aim to use language in various and numerous ways, and to the linguistic and non-linguistic context. It is, in fact, a technical term used to refer to the study of meaning (Quraitem, 2010, p. 76).

For example, we find on Greek pottery drawings representing symbols of mourning ceremonies for a dead man, which are funeral rites representative of all primitive societies. Symbolic interpretations usually assume that all human actions have meanings that go beyond the obvious, direct purposes of these actions.

3. The proverb, the symbol... What is the relationship?

The popular proverb occupies a large space in the field of popular culture for various cultures and societies. Through this verbal art, the identities and cultural affiliations of these groups can be determined, because it is based on the social history of these societies and their life experiences. The content of collective memory and the mechanism of oral transmission have enabled individuals and diverse groups to be producers and transmitters of this heritage, within the framework of the lived reality defined by the systems of social construction and intellectual heritage. The proverb serves as a channel for the symbol (Abd Al-Samad, 2012, p. 19).

The symbol in the proverb carries signs, meanings, or cognitive images, whether from the unconscious or the reality of external society, or what is called the source and the outlet, through the symbolic imagery in the popular proverb. The power of the symbol appears more in it and through it. Therefore, we can say that man is necessarily a symbolic being, as the symbol and what surrounds it form the basis of the social interactions of individuals and groups. Indeed, the history of man and of various societies is the history of his symbols, signs, and values. Society, as Claude Lévi-Strauss says, expresses its movement more symbolically than materially through customs, rituals, and institutions (Lévi-Strauss, 2006, p. 25), based on this understanding, society is a symbolic whole in which symbols operate at several levels and in varying forms.

Symbols in any social system are not satisfied with indicating and distinguishing things, discourses, and practices. Rather, they go beyond that to reproducing them and establishing their authority. The symbol has at least three functions: symbolically representing reality, socially reproducing it, and consecrating its authority symbolically and materially. Of course, the symbol cannot integrate and carry out these functions alone. It must articulate with other fields that give it the ability to reproduce reality and justify its

authority (Al-Atari, 2014, p. 28). This can only be achieved through forms of expression, the most important of which are popular proverbs.

4. The image of women in the popular proverb

From what we have previously noted of the definitions of proverbs, the discourse of popular proverbs expresses reality and stores different images of human reality, including the image of women. What is meant by image here is that mental construction that takes place on the level of subjectivity, symbolism, and imagination, and which is linked to human reality (Boukhris, 2016, p. 60).

Women received a generous share of popular proverbs in the study area, which are preserved in the collective popular memory. Proverbs about women ranged between images of approval and ugliness, sometimes according to social status: virgin, married, divorced, beautiful, or ugly. Among the proverbs commonly used about women, we find: "Women will be two markets," "Oh seeker, be careful, they will show you a thousand pounds of the wagon and will make you lose your capital," and "If a man swears at you, he will sleep, and if a woman swears at you, he will sleep." These proverbs are an explicit warning against the treachery and deceit of women. Proverbs are also used to indicate that women have a place in the home, such as: "Whoever has no daughters will not be helped, for girls are the building blocks of the house," "Propose marriage to your daughter, but do not propose marriage to your son," "Good is a woman and evil is a woman..." There are also examples about barren women, such as the saying: "A woman without children is like a tent without pegs..." The examples are countless in this context.

"Girls are the building blocks of the house", as the popular proverb goes. "Eating is for women, and plowing is for ploughing." That is, women are responsible for preparing food, and they are the ones who excel at it and are professionals at this process. Good plowing is done with horses.

"Plough the nearby land and marry the distant woman." This proverb is an invitation to plow and work in nearby land, and to marry a distant woman to avoid disease. It contains a clear Sunni call.

"The rich land is pure, and its goodness returns to its hands. Whoever wants to propose to a woman should ask about her father's lineage". It indicates the characteristics of abundant land and a woman of noble lineage.

"Ploughing is by soil, couscous is by irrigation, and marriage is by consent". That is, the farmer does not plow until the land is enriched by rain. Couscous is not eaten unless it is soaked, and marriage is not completed without the consent of both parties.

5. The symbolic dimensions of the image of women in the proverb

The presence of women in the popular proverb comes in different, often conflicting forms. Sometimes it elevates them to the highest levels and elevates them to the rank of angels, and at other times it places them at the lowest of the low.

The most important characteristic of popular proverbs associated with women is their diversity and multiplicity, to the point where it is difficult to find a link that unites them. As much as we find proverbs that glorify women and elevate their status, we find others that degrade their status and diminish their value. We even encounter the coexistence of contradiction in a single proverb: "Good is bitter, evil is bitter." "Profit is bitter, loss is bitter." "Sometimes you are raised, and sometimes you are stripped bare." These proverbs reflect the contradictory view that society holds toward women, as they are both objects of desire and objects of fear at the same time.

This can confirm the truth that many studies have previously concluded that have delved into the image of women in popular proverbs, which is that even if there are proverbs that present a positive image of women, they remain limited in number compared to the majority of proverbs that paint a negative image of women. This truth is not unique to Arab culture; rather, it is almost universal and almost historical (Al-Ashri, 1996, p. 7).

When these popular proverbs talk about the inferiority of women, they reflect it in all its dimensions. They paint a negative image of women that almost never leaves them throughout their lives, and through their different social situations and roles (wife's daughter, divorced woman, etc.) until they form something resembling a second nature for women.

Given that popular proverbs have various functions within society, the most important and dangerous of these functions is the function of socialization based on discrimination between women and men, and on perpetuating men's dominance over women.

6. Conclusion

It is clear from our treatment of the subject of the popular imagination and its anthropological representations of the image of women that this imagination is not merely a narrative or folkloric accumulation, but rather a symbolic pattern that reflects the nature of social and cultural relations within society. Women in the popular imagination are often reduced to a complex duality: on the one hand, they are a source of life, fertility, and giving, and on the other hand, they may be portrayed as a symbol of strife, threats, and evil. This duality reveals the masculine structure of society and the mechanisms of controlling behavior and values through language, myth, and tale popularity.

On an anthropological level, the study of the image of women in the popular imagination reveals deeper patterns of representation linked to collective perceptions of the body, honor, family, and power. They are a mirror of the cultural system that reproduces and frames gender roles over time.

Thus, the analysis of the popular imagination not only gives us an understanding of the way women are represented in the collective consciousness, but also opens the way for thinking about how to dismantle stereotypes and explore the possibilities of building a fairer and more balanced alternative imagination that contributes to the restoration of women's credibility as a key actor in history and culture.

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