

# FROM FRANCOPHONE TO WORLD: REDEFINING MOROCCAN WORLD LITERATURE AT THE INTERSECTION OF LANGUAGE, MIGRATION AND A COMPARATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

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## Introductory Note

In its naming of a Moroccan world literature, the Anglo-American concept of World Literature, I argue in this presentation, reflects questionable paradigms of universal value and literary merit. As a body of theory and a reading strategy, Comparative Literature should be involved in this system of cartographic naming, and it should put to the test World Literature's ethical and political engagements with emergent and postcolonial literatures.

My concern with world Moroccan literature, and thereby with Moroccan comparative literary theory, grew out of my concern with the reasons that made francophone Moroccan literature in English translation eligible for World Literature status while Moroccan literatures in Arabic, Amazighi, Dutch and English, to name some but not all, fail to figure in World Literature anthologies. I no doubt welcome the distinctions some francophone Maghrebi writers such as Assia Djebar, Tahar BenJelloun and Abdelkebir Khatibi won, but I find the world literature theory that regulates the circulation and worldliness of texts too Euro-American centric and built on hegemonic standards of World Literature and on politically unsound collectivities.

Arabic literature shares with Moroccan literature in Arabic a lack of representation in world literature anthologies.<sup>2</sup> Online World Literature forums and international prizes tend to be just as exclusionary in this regard. The International Impac Dublin Literary Award has had little to do with literature either from Morocco or from elsewhere in the Arab world.<sup>3</sup> Only Alaa Aswani's *Yacobeian Building* and some other controversial English translations from Arabic pop up sporadically on the lists of this prize. There are, in my opinion, a number of questions which await answers; I here point to four of them:

1. How many languages should one know and write in to be potentially adequate according to World Literature standards? In an essay titled "In the Name of Comparative Literature", Rey Chow points to multilingualism as a double-edged sword, one "which can as easily serve the agenda of reactionary politics as it can serve progressive ones" (Row 110).
2. May Moroccan world texts exist independently from translation? Or should the function of translation with regard to a Moroccan Comparative Literature serve other purposes than that of linguistic contact and communication? What should be the task of translation in verbal contexts

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<sup>2</sup>The three volumes of *The Longman Anthology of World Literature* (2009) edited by David Damrosch and David Dike, to give an example, run over three main historical eras: The Ancient, the Medieval and the Early Modern periods; only the medieval era mentions Arab-Islamic literature. Edited by Sarah Lawall and Maynard Mack, *The Norton Anthology of World Literature* (Second edition, 2002) counts six volumes and covers the history of literature from its beginnings to the 20th century. Only the medieval and the 20th century periods make mention of Arabic literature, with Abbasid verse in the former and Tawfiq El Hakim in the latter.

<sup>3</sup>The Guardian qualifies the prize's version of global literature "distinctly parochial" and comments: "For all the prize's 18 years, there has been no work by Elias Khoury, no Hanan al-Shaykh, no Bensalem Himmich, no Ibrahim al-Koni, no Fadhil al-Azzawi" (*Guardian News & Media Limited* 2016)

that are inherently diaglossic, as it is the case in Morocco? Should translation not have a philosophical function instead?<sup>1</sup>

3- Who should decide about the criteria of world in Moroccan World literature and how might that decision be made? Are Moroccan specialists represented in editorial boards of World Literature anthologies? If not, why?

4. Should Moroccan comparatists in dealing with World Literature theory abide by existing Western paradigms, or should they create their own theories? If such is the case, where should this theory begin?<sup>2</sup>

Providing a critical overview of the state of the discipline in Morocco since its inception, defining its current challenges, and situating Moroccan literature in world languages at the intersection of three decisive concepts: language, migration /diaspora, and a comparative consciousness, my article in a sense addresses the above issues.

## **I. Moroccan Comparative Literature: Major Phases, Shifts in Perspective and Current Challenges**

Since its inception in the early 1960's on the margins of language departments in the Faculties of Humanities in Rabat and Fes, Comparative Literature in Morocco has had to deal with two legacies which impeded its healthy development: first, a Middle-East centric tradition of Comparative Literature that was too focused on the Middle East, to which Morocco was considered a marginal market; secondly, a disciplinary orientation that the discipline in Morocco took towards the theory of theory rather than a theory relevant to, and verifiable in a Moroccan Literary corpus.

### **a. First phase (1963-1979)**

The Comparative Literature impulse of this first phase (1963 - 1979)<sup>3</sup> was provoked by the cultural vision that had crystallized, back in the 30's of the 20th century, from the controversy between two cultural paradigms: a francophone bicultural paradigm, and an Arabophone one-dimensional paradigm, whose advocates defended identity and cultural politics through a communal, nationalist impulse. The French/ Francophone model wielded its hegemony on the course of Comparative Literature in Morocco for almost two decades. The Middle Eastern experience of literary studies was highly steeped in French literary criticism, and Syrian scholar Amjad Tarabulsi, not a comparatist himself, drew largely on the Middle Eastern legacy for his elaboration of the

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<sup>1</sup>In "Translatio Globale: The Invention of Comparative Literature," Emily Apter speaks of the humanism of Edward Said and of its virtues for the future of Comparative Literature. It is a humanism which considers translanguistic perspectivism an *a priori* and proffers agency onto the intellectual; Apter quotes Said's memoir *Out of Place* as the example of a "culturally lightened and globally expanded philology" (Apter 59) which gives humanism the dimension of World.

<sup>2</sup>Some of the theses that I find pertinent are Wa Thiong'o's concept of "poor theory", Majid Anouar's concept of "indigenous theory" and Spivak's thesis of a gender-sensitive, heterogeneous and irreducible collectivity based on a politics of friendship.

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, the first Comparative Literature unit was created in 1962 at the Faculty of Letters in Rabat by Syrian Visiting Scholar expatriate Amjad Tarabulsi and followed the intention of Higher Education laureates. A first doctoral degree in Comparative Literature was conferred in 1963, but the name of the degree was changed to "Comparative Studies in Language and Literature" in 1966.

Comparative Literature program which was then offered to students in Mohamed V University.

The shortcoming of this Middle East vision of Moroccan Literary Studies lies, according to Said Allouch, in the promotion of the discipline of Comparative Literature as if it were a Western discipline that should be adopted as a supreme model, before any move could be made towards any national Arab model.<sup>1</sup>All in all, the field was marked by the authority of Amjad Tarbulsi and the French-oriented Middle Eastern tradition. Tarbulsi soon walked out of this project, suspended the Comparative Literature degree, and declared that the discipline could not flourish in the Moroccan University because of the rigid architecture of Higher Education, the disciplinary orientations of syllabi, and the waning levels of graduate students.<sup>2</sup>

## **b. Second phase (1981-2010)**

This second major phase was championed by pioneer Moroccan comparatist, Said Allouch. Allouch defended his PhD dissertation at the Sorbonne in 1982 on “Components of Comparative Literature in the Arab World”. He had created the Moroccan Comparative Literature Association in 1981, contributed to the ICLA 10th Congress in New York in the same year. He also expanded the field of literary comparisons and re-established the Comparative Literature graduate degree in 1984.<sup>3</sup>

Said Allouch’s project of a true renaissance of Comparative Literature in Morocco had strengths but also but also some downsides. On the one hand, Allouch helped dismantle the Middle –Eastern school of Comparative Literature and rid the Moroccan discipline of the streak of self-veneration manifest in the accounts of the great achievements of Medieval Arab Ruins Literature in the Far and Middle East and in Andalusian Spain. Allouch called for the study of Comparative Literature from an academic, intercultural perspective. He thus created a strong alignment between Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, an alignment which was to determine the course that translation took in comparative literary studies. He drew attention to the Orientalist model as an inspiring case of the full knowledge that a culture may have of another. In so doing, he underestimated the ideological straitjacketing that Orientalism’s tool box imposed on Comparative Literature, and he established a somewhat instrumental use of translation in the field. He also underestimated the importance of philology to the Moroccan literary context.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In the scope of this Middle Eastern tradition, Comparative Literature in Morocco was composed of two main subfields: studies in the history, development and theory of Comparative Literature; and Literary Critical Studies whose objective was to trace the influences and affinities between Arab Literature — in its medieval or modern periods — with other literatures, mainly Persian, European, and Greek in French translation (see *Moroccan Comparatists Today*, Vol.I).

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, the Ministry of higher education had decreed the exportation of the Arabic Department (and its promising Comparative Literature Unit) from Rabat to Fes. This move resulted in the dispersion of qualified staff and their weariness due to double workload.

<sup>3</sup>The Comparative Literature re-instated the degree that now comprised the following modules: “Western influences in Literary Genres” and “The image of the Arab in European Theatre.”

<sup>4</sup>On being asked, in a national conference held in Agadir on “Comparative Literature in Morocco: Aspects and Orientations” (March 2016), why Comparative Literature was a success story in Istanbul in the 1930’s but not in Rabat in the 1960’s, Said Allouch admitted that, added to the misgivings of the rigid Higher Education system in post-independence Morocco, early Moroccan comparatists failed to pay enough attention to philology.

Allouch's project remains also inadequate as regards the relation between the theory and the practice of Comparative Literature in Morocco. In the arabophone Comparative Literature graduate program he created and passed on to a younger generation of scholars,<sup>1</sup> little effort was made to secure the relevance of theory to Moroccan literature corpuses. The "theory of theory" model that he initiated stopped at a general descriptive study of literary comparisons and of translations in and out of Arabic. This descriptive model proved inadequate in coping with the shifting paradigms of Comparative Literature, and it fell short of making distinctions between a planetary, transnational Comparative Literature, and a Comparative Literature oriented towards Cultural Studies. The danger of an alignment between Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies lies in the confusion of the tasks assigned to each, and in the smothering of the agenda in Comparative Literature by the ideological restrictions of non-secular Arab cultural discourses.<sup>2</sup>

### **c. Third phase:**

The most recent major phase in the history of Comparative Literature in Morocco could be traced to the creation, in 2010, of the first Anglophone graduate program in Comparative Literature in a Moroccan University. The "Comparative Studies in Literature" MA program, to be expanded in the near future to a doctoral cycle and a degree in Comparative Literature, started in the Department of English Studies at Ibn-Zohr University on premises of rigorous distinctions between courses in literary theory, critical theory and hermeneutics; and content comparative courses in World literatures, mainly in English, Arabic and French. The training creates interdisciplinary links between literature and the sacred, literature and the plastic arts, literature and philosophy, or literature and issues of gender and power. It also provides seminars on Modernism and Postmodernism, on 17th century philosophical thought, and on Applied Hermeneutics. True to its proposition of a Comparative Literature major, the program creates clear theoretical borderlines between Comparative Literature and Cultural or Translation Studies as adjacent disciplines. It also trains the students in the possibility of working with the paradigm of interdisciplinarity at a crossroads between the Arts, the Human Sciences and other Sciences such as Environment, Public Policy and Human Rights in the Arab world.

One of the strengths of this program is working with texts in the original language and favoring comparative work on the history of translations of a given work, and on questions of the relation between an original and its translated versions. Another promising orientation of this

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<sup>1</sup>The program bore the title of "General Literature and Comparative Poetics", and Said Allouch set up two main objectives for the program: first, work on the theory of theory; second, translation from foreign languages to Arabic, in collaboration with foreign language departments.

<sup>2</sup>In "Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies," Michael Riffaterre maintains that Comparative Literature traditionally based its negative assumptions (and uses) of Cultural Studies on "a confusion between research and teaching, between the comparative approach and building a canonical esthetics and a normative hermeneutic upon that approach». He insists that "there is no reason to fear such a confusion if comparative literature sticks to comparing, to defining general and constant rules, and cultural studies focusses on identity and difference, the unique blend of a given social setup and the verbal forms expressing that difference." A redistribution of the tasks assigned to each is therefore primordial to the future of the Comparative Literature discipline. This redistribution is all the more necessary because it helps set translation on a right course in the field, by moving it away from literary translations to non-literary translations as "not a genre, not an object of criticism, but an analytical tool" (Riffaterre 68-69).

program is exploring the potential of philology in Comparative Literature.<sup>1</sup>

### Current Challenges:

More than ever before, Moroccan Comparative Literature is now required to raise the challenge of providing the right theory for Moroccan literature in world languages to thrive, as well as to negotiate its place among other world literatures in a spirit of dialogism, cultural contact and mutual influence. Comparative Literature has to stand the test of real comparatism: that of engaging simultaneously with assessing the local in terms of the conditions of its creation and appearance, and analyzing the extent of its influence on world literatures (See Mohamed Adiwane).<sup>2</sup> German comparatist Hendrick Birus proposes a new understanding of Goethe's famous dictum on World Literature, warning that it should not be taken at face value:

For, what we meanwhile observe is not the replacement of national literatures by world literature, but the rapid blossoming of a multitude of European and non-European literatures and the simultaneous emergence of a world literature (mostly in English translations) as two aspects of the one and the same process. The understanding of this dialectic — should not this be one of the main targets of comparative literature today? (Birus 7-8)

The politics of parity that Mohamed Adiwane advocates, and which Hendrick Birus puts at the heart of a dialectic between World Literature and world literatures, recalls Gayatri C. Spivak's politics of friendship. In *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak foresees the birth of a new Comparative Literature which will emerge from crossing disciplinary and geographical borders and which will attend to the social viability of the 'othered other' in the semiotic text. Spivak maintains that the other's agency may be properly examined in the literary text through effective collectivities of planetarity and gender.<sup>3</sup> Collectivity in Spivak is not predicated on the conventional notions of culture or nation;<sup>4</sup> it is the ability to integrate one's self within large human collectivities without

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<sup>1</sup>To back up the efforts of this program and reset Comparative Literature on a planetary course of action, we have created a number of support mechanisms: the creation of The Moroccan Comparative Literature Association (February 2014); the organization of the first national conference on the state of the discipline from the 1960's till now (the proceedings of this conference will be published in a first edition on the State of the Discipline in Morocco); and the creation of a research unit on "Comparative Studies in the Arts and Environmental Humanities", (LAGOS Lab), to break across the borders of disciplinary academic training, and to bridge the arts and the sciences. We also now have the support of our university to create an interdisciplinary academic center bringing together the Human and the Social Sciences, and offering Comparative Studies as a major. This will be an occasion for us to establish a doctoral degree in Comparative Literature.

"فالحوارية تنبنى على الرغبة في المعرفة و التواصل مع الآخر...بعيدا عن المقارنات التي تقع ضحية المفاضلات الأديولوجية و التاريخية السياسية.<sup>2</sup> الغاية من توضيف الحوار في التيارات و التأثيرات الأدبية هو أسلوب موضوعي لتعامل الشعوب مع بعضها على أساس الندية و التساوي الأنساني" المقارنون العرب اليوم ، القسوة الأولى 2014. ص 253-258 2014

<sup>3</sup>Spivak's concept of collectivity formation is inspired by Jacques Derrida's reading of Carl Schmitt's Politics of Friendship, which demonstrates how Humanities and Social Sciences can complement one another.

<sup>4</sup>Spivak distinguishes the rhetorical fallacy of *hysteron proteron*, or "the logical fallacy of...using as premise a proposition that is yet to be proved" (Spivak 2005:27) from efficient collectivities as undeterminable and transnational forms of humanism, whose "possibilization" in the discipline depends on the result of one's creative work with regard to language.

disavowing their singularity or difference. Efficient collectivities, Spivak asserts, are formed via “imaginative making” or what Derrida designates “telepoiesis”: moving beyond the conventional conceptions of belongingness and imperialist worlding and reaching out for the distant other. In “Speaking for the Humanities”, Spivak calls this contact with the other in difference “productive heteronormativity” (2009:9).

Moroccan Comparative Literature should also develop a clearer vision on whether to move towards a Comparative Literature built on a transnational, translingual humanism, or to one that relies on the Moroccan Arab Cultural Studies heritage, for a widening of the field’s horizons. There are risks in a confusion of tasks; there are risks of using the wrong paradigms. Riffaterre points to the necessity for Comparative Literature of using theory, rather than literary history, “for a definition of the invariant features of change” (Riffaterre 69). The result of an ill use is often that “invariance and variation [are] contaminated with values attached to the time dimension, depending on whether the observers’ interests or ethical perceptions make them favour tradition or evolution, or sublimate evolution into revolution, and so on” (69). By tying Comparative Literature in with an un-secularized, deeply religious Arab cultural tradition, Moroccan comparatists compromise the innovative “centrifugal radiation” (J. Culler) that good comparative work requires.

The question of language/ languages being central to comparative work in Morocco, Moroccan comparatists should invest less in theorizing theory, a move bequeathed by the Middle-Eastern influence, and more in the creation of a body of theory verifiable on a corpus of Moroccan literatures. The extraordinary richness of Moroccan literature in different languages requires comparative reading strategies involving, when needed, such paradigms as interdisciplinarity, ecocriticism and collectivities; These strategies should also generate fresh analytic categories involving gender, race, class or nation. By shifting Moroccan literature from the paradigms of francophone, ethnic or traditional postcolonial studies to real comparatism and innovative interdisciplinarity, Comparative Literature may contribute in the transformation of such key concepts as literature, culture and religion in Morocco.

#### **IV. A Moroccan Literature in World Languages or a World Moroccan Literature in Translation?**

Translation no doubt guarantees a wide circulation to francophone Moroccan writers, but it also places the Moroccan literature corpus in a somewhat contending zone between neocolonial French and global English. It also restricts the concept of a World Moroccan Literature to literature in translation. In so doing, it ignores the tremendous potential of those Moroccan literatures written in Arabic, in Amazighi languages, or in the languages of Moroccan Diasporas, namely Dutch and English. So instead of reacting to these different Moroccan literatures in terms of formally corresponding theories such as francophone, postcolonial, or diasporic studies, I believe in the urgency of creating some unifying paradigms to come by the complexity and richness of this corpus and to maintain to the literatures in question their linguistic, formal and aesthetic distinctness; while at the same time finding ways of exploring interactions and influences between them and literatures of other places, times and genres.

I therefore propose a tripartite paradigm, one attentive to language and philology, to experiences of migration and diaspora, and to a gender-comparative collectivity at the basis of Moroccan writers’ consciousness. On the one hand, Philology, as Timothy Brennan maintains,

is everything comparative literature has always struggled over, failed to recognize in itself, or busily (and impossibly) tried to abandon. In Herder (not Goethe) philology gives us world literature and incipient postcolonial theory; in Vico, radical sociology, anthropological linguistics, and the first historical materialism; in Leo Wiener, the case for an African new World; in Gramsci, a scathing critique of calligraphic textual ontology and modernist elitism; in Volosinov, a paean to the orality of peripheral cultures; in Said, a humanistic riposte to the scientizing of the humanities where authorship matters (as authority) and sources are vital as consciously chosen influences and lineages (*State of the Discipline* 2014).

On the other hand, Lawrence Venuti's notion of language as a major form holding sway over a number of variables, and his advocacy of a "minoritizing translation" resonate well with Abdelfattah Kilito's ideas on the inherent bilingualism of Maghrebi languages. Kilito reminds us that Arab writers, consciously or unconsciously, take the translation-comparison into account. In "Comment peut-on être monolingue?"<sup>1</sup> translation becomes a tool and a trope of cultural transformation from one literature to another, in a dialogism where the writer speaks all languages, but in his language. Due to the inherent bilingualism of Moroccan literature and due to the indebtedness of this literature to the language of the Koran, to Persian, Greek and Latin languages, I think that Philology and Hermeneutics are important tools of work for Moroccan comparatists.

I also believe that gender collectivity is the kind of heterogeneous and irreducible bond with which Comparative Literature can supplement Euro-American globalization theories and other flawed forms of collectivities, such as Francophony, Third World, International Feminism or Postcolonial Studies. My key argument here resonates with Gayatri Spivak's notion of Collectivities, mentioned before; and with Global Moroccan critic Anouar Majid's ideas about the need for a gender revolution in the Islamic cultural tradition. Majid underlines the importance of creating an indigenous theory of change proper to the Arab-Islamic world. His criticism of both Islamist ideologies and Western social theories of change purports to recover a long-obfuscated egalitarian Islam, and to re-conceptualize it for the future. Such an endeavor requires the careful articulation of a progressive Islam and of a new Islamic consciousness founded on economic socialism and gender equality, and engaging culturally with a polycentric world. Such an Islamic imagination recalls Kenyan comparatist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's notion of a globalectical imagination. Wa Thiong'o maintains that a world literature which is the fruit of this imagination is in essence a postcolonial literature, for a "globalectical imagination assumes that any center is the center of the world. Each specific text can be read as a mirror of the world" (Wa Thiong'o 2014)

### **Moroccan Literature in Arabic: its Inherent Bilingualism and Worldliness**

The example that I choose of a World Moroccan text in Arabic is Abdelfattah Kilito's novel *أنبؤنى بارؤيا* (2011) translated as *Dites- moi le songe* (2010) by Abdelkebir Sherkwai. The novel is cross-genre, half essay and half narrative; it retells the folktales of the Arabian Nights from the perspective of a 21st century flâneur. Written with infinite humour, the novel is a voyage into

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<sup>1</sup>Contrairement à l'espagnol, monolingue heureux, le Maghrébin sait, par expérience, que la vie est plus facile lorsque l'arabe est secondé par le français. Dans les échanges de tous les jours, il est effectivement ou virtuellement bilingue ; aussi le français n'est-il pas pour lui, à proprement parler, une langue étrangère, pas vraiment.

different times and different cultures; it cuts through places as different as Damascus of 12th century and Harvard of 21st century; and experiences as different as Sheherezad and Sheherayar's tricked romance and the narrator's own abortive romance with Ida, on the margins of his Fulbright Visiting Scholar leave in Harvard University. Kilito quotes Avicennes, Strauss, Melville and a number of medieval Arab poets. The novel celebrates, above all, the art of writing as a longstanding Arab tradition which contributed tremendously to world poesis and world literatures in other languages.

### **Francophone Moroccan Texts or the Trap of a Liminal Imaginary**

Hailed, read and studied as a world author, Tahar Benjelloun is a good example of the writer who traps himself and his characters within a liminal space of in-betweenness between past and present, realism and fantasy. His two volume novel *L'enfant de Sable* (Seuil, 1985) and (Seuil, 1987) are the first to be translated into English and to win their author world renown; They make use of the folktale narrative structure, a frame which echoes Benjelloun's creation of a "liminal space" of representation.<sup>1</sup> This liminal space, I argue elsewhere in more detail<sup>2</sup>, gives to the writing of Benjelloun a self-ethnographic dimension which generally characterizes the francophone Maghrebi novel; one which meets the neo-orientalist expectations of some of his Western readers, but utterly fails the test of comparatism. This space also constitutes a dangerous retreat, an escape of the Maghrebi migrant writers from the contradictions of the real world. The writers end up, as a result, writing not autobiographies, but "self-ethnographies" in that they write, not their present, but their inner sense of existence through a present-formulated past of dreams, memories, and forgetting. A reading of Benjelloun's two-volume novel in terms of a gender-comparative collectivity proves that Benjelloun could not conceive of his female protagonist as an autonomous person free to move "from one myth to myth", or to detach herself from a religion which, he is ready to own, favors man and constructs a regime of spirituality unjust towards women. Creating for his characters a liminal space of interpretation in between two languages, two cultures, and two regimes of signification, he traps himself along with his characters, in a state of in-between, hence the importance of the veiling. For these and other reasons, I believe that there is little in Benjelloun's fiction that meets the requirements of transnational humanism; and very little indeed in the way of those disinterested humanist distinctions that make an author a world writer.

### **Moroccan Literature in English, or the Merits of a Mobile Comparative Consciousness: Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account***

A Moroccan postmodern novel written in the "histographic metafiction" mode, *The Moor's Account* (2014) retells the European narrative of the discovery of the New World, or more exactly the Spanish imperial invasion of the Indian American Coast in the scope of the Narvaez Expedition, from the perspective of the Moroccan slave Mustapha/ Esteban. Selling himself for dear money to the Portuguese sailors to save his parents of the Great Famine that Morocco was prone to in the fifteen century, Mustapha ends up in the hands of the Spanish Conquistadores. Lalami has him narrate the story, in a decision to tell the truth about the expedition, and to take it as God's will

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<sup>1</sup>See Matthew D. Sharpe "Maghrebi Migrants and Writers: Liminality, Transgression and the Transferal of Identity." *Dialectical Anthropology* (2005) 29: 397-421 @ Springer 2005

<sup>2</sup>See Touria Nakkouch, "Moroccan World Literature and the Test of Comparativism: Tahar Ben Jelloun's Novels," Visiting Scholar Lecture Series (December 2014) @ <http://complit.fas.harvard.edu/people/touria-nakkouch>

that it should be so, as “whichever you turn, there is the face of God, God is Great” (Lalami 228). This novel effects a “contrapunctal reading” of Spanish history, bringing to the fore that unforgotten other text on which the Spanish narrative is structurally dependent. The novel also relates between different times and places, and brings different religious and cultural experiences together, in a spirit of dialogism and symbiosis in spaces of cultural difference.

### **Dutch Moroccan Literature: Diaspora as a Site of New Postcoloniality**

In the Netherlands Hafid Bouazza, Abdelkader Benali and Said El Hajji are distinguished diasporic debut writers. Their hybrid Dutch Moroccan identities enable them to create innovative forms of cultural contact and interactions. Bouazza’s *Abdullah’s Feet* (2000) is a satirical reprise of the *Arabian Nights*, and Benali’s *The Long-Awaited* (2003), which won its author the prestigious Libris Prize, exploits the rhetorical and political potentials of magical realism; while Said El Hajji combines religious allegory and autobiography to discuss boldly the Islamic religious tradition. His novel *The Days of Shaytan* (2002) reverses the myth of creation, with the diabolic son rebelling against the authority of the Father/ God figure. All three contribute significantly to Moroccan literature in world languages. Besides, they represent a body of writing which transgresses the limits set by postcoloniality, and they create new spaces and new times of a world literature in action. Comparative Literature, both in and out of Morocco, ought to draw attention to them as interesting world Moroccan authors.

### **Moroccan Literature in Tamazight: the Great Absent from World Literature Anthologies**

One of the critical charges that could be made to Comparative Literature in Morocco is its systematic exclusion of Amazighi languages and literatures all along the process of its development. One might say in this regard that just as Moroccan Comparative Literature suffered marginalization for long from the Middle-East-centric tradition of comparative literary studies, it has itself exerted an Arab-centric hegemony with regard to Amazighi literature. This interesting body of Moroccan literature knows no better lot in World Literature Anthologies. The Macmillan Literature Series of World Literature, published in 1991 by the Glencoe Division MPC, cuts thematically through different periods, genres and continents; but its representation of North African texts is limited to Albert Camus’s “The Guest” (Algeria) and to Traditional Kabile Writing with “The Story of the Chest” (for Algeria and Tunisia). Does Morocco have no stories or poems in Amazighi language that deserve quotation?

The *Glencoe World Literature Reader Choice* edition covers all five continents. The African continent fails to have a sample text from the Maghreb. One wonders about the reticence of World Literature theory to recognize Morocco and the Maghreb as part of the African continent; one equally wonders about World Literature’s tendency, initiated by Area Studies departments in the USA and coveted since, to map the geo-political North African space as Near East, MENA and more recently MENAP<sup>1</sup>. These presumable analytic denominations, I think, are steeped in rational choice theory and its persisting neo-Orientalist logic of world control.

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<sup>1</sup>An English language acronym created by the International Monetary Fund in 2013, referring to The Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This new analytical region adds Afghanistan and Pakistan to the MENA countries.

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