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DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA, PATRIMONIO  
CULTURALE, FORMAZIONE E SOCIETÀ

## Booklet of Bios & Abstracts

# Re-Writing Morocco

Poetics, Politics,  
Philosophy, and History in  
Multiple Forms

**21-22.11.2024**

**Sapienza University of Rome  
Tor Vergata University of Rome**

### Organisers

**Fernanda Fischione, Sapienza University of Rome  
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## Speakers' list (in panel order)

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Mohamed Daoudi, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco

Mohamed Sguenfel, Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco

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Amira Ghenim, writer, Tunisia

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 Francesca M. Corrao, Luiss University of Rome, Italy  
 Elizabeth S. Kassab, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Qatar  
 Shamil Jeppie, University of Cape Town, South Africa

## Abstracts and short bios (in panel order)

### Keynote speech I

#### History and Indigeneity: For an Amazigh Cultural History of Morocco

**Brahim El Guabli**, Williams College, Williamstown (MA), and Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore (MD), USA

### Bio

Brahim El Guabli is an Indigenous, Black and Amazigh scholar from Morocco. Associate Professor of Arabic Studies and Comparative Literature at Williams College, he is currently Associate Professor Comparative Thought and Literature at Johns Hopkins University. El Guabli is the author *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* (Fordham University Press, 2023), which received Honorable Mention from the Middle East Librarians' Association and is a finalist for the African Studies Association's Book Award. His second book *Desert Imaginations: Saharanism and its Discontents* is forthcoming with The University of California Press. In addition to journal articles and book chapters, El Guabli is co-editor of *Lamalif: A Critical Anthology of Societal Debates in Morocco During the "Years of Lead" (1966-1988)* (Liverpool University Press, 2022) and *Remembering Jews in Maghrebi and Middle Eastern Media* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024). He is currently completing a third book tentatively entitled *Literature and Indigeneity: Amazigh Activists' Construction of a Literary Field*. This book is part of a larger project to revitalize Amazigh studies and place Amazigh indigeneity at the core of academic debates in the study of Tamazgha. El Guabli is co-founder and co-editor of Tamazgha Studies Journal and the Amazigh Studies series (Georgetown University Press).

## Panel 1A. Reclaiming Multiple Identities through Literature

### Lost in the Desert: Moroccan Hassani Writers' Exploration of Desert Spirituality and Identity in the Modern Hassani Novel

**Erragab Eljanhaoui, Ibn Zohr University and Comparative Humanities and Applied Language Studies (CHALS) Lab, Agadir, Morocco**

#### Abstract

The Sahrawi Society has witnessed a tremendous social, economic, and cultural transformation since the first Arab-Islamic expeditions. The area spanning from Wad Noon to Lagaira has seen significant transformation and change. As a result, the south of Morocco has assembled a tremendous cultural and social baggage that provides an important opportunity for academics to explore and inspect it. This *Maure/Biddani* society has developed across the succession of different tribes and clans, which all pour into the construction of one of the richest cultures, oddly absent from the scope of Moroccan and international academia. It was not until the 90s that One could recognize an independent literary genre in the Sahrawi context. By the early 1950s, the Sahrawi society witnessed a major shift in its societal construct. The major transformation that touched on the Sahrawi society was the migration from the Bedouin sphere to the city. According to some critics – Laghla Bouzid, for instance – this shift has marked its presence in the writings of various Hassani writers. This shift – either experienced or not by these writers – finds itself within the metaphoric, symbolic, and literary executions of the Hassani writers. Hence, writers have become channels, capturing the essence of desert spirituality and identity in their literary writing and declaring an explicit longing for an early unexperienced Bedouin life. The present study looks into some productions by Hassani writers to explore how they represent the erupted history of desert spirituality and identity's complexities in a context where movement

from the tent to the city was forced by Spanish colonialism. This paper scrutinizes the works of two Moroccan writers: al-Batoul Mahjoub (*Mined Places*, 2016) and Bairouk Mohamed Naama (*Colomina*, 2017) to shed light on how these two writers portray a lost desert spirituality and identity in a contemporary city.

#### Keywords

Lost Desert Spirituality, Identity Formation, Hassani Writers, Hassani Novels, South of Morocco

#### Bio

Erragab Eljanhaoui is a PhD student at the Faculty of Lettres and Human Sciences – Université Ibn Zohr, Agadir. He is an Assistant Teacher of Guided Reading and Research Methodologies at the same Faculty. He is conducting a project that follows various Western writers who were shipwrecked on the coasts of the Sahara. These writers produced Barbary captivity narratives that represent the inhabitants of the Sahara as savages, uncivilized, and backward. Eljanhaoui is deconstructing these prejudices and stereotypes with rigorous methodologies thanks to his academic orientation in Comparative Studies in Literature. He has presented in various national and international conferences with papers that range from women's representation, and legal discrimination to Sahrawi and Hassani culture and poetry. He published his translation of a Hassani folktale in the SSRN database. Additionally, he has published an article on the poetry of Hassani women in the International Review of Literary Studies. Currently, he is finalizing the publication of his Scopus-indexed article, following Captain James Riley in 19th Century Barbary Coast, in the International Journal of Critical Cultural Studies.

## Why Nostalgia to the Homeland Is Omnipresent in Riffian Poetry: Towards a Critique of Ethnographic Discourse on the Rif Region, Northern Morocco

**Mohamed Daoudi, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco**

### **Abstract**

An important diaspora from the Rif region, northern Morocco, lives today in several European countries, namely the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Belgium and France. The history of this presence dates to the mid-sixties, and the Riffian diaspora population in Europe has been rising since. This history of international migration has radically transformed traditional socio-economic structures and culture in the Rif itself. Conventional historical and anthropological scholarship on the region has considered immigration to be a perennial and persistent feature of Riffian society. The legacy left by American anthropologist David M. Hart's segmentary analysis, widely accepted among historians and anthropologists of the region, has explained immigration as part of the internal dynamics of Riffian society suffering from demographic overpopulation and scarcity of resources. Hart further argues that immigration in the Rif, has replaced other old "Malthusian" (and Mediterranean) mechanisms of coping with these two factors, namely feuds and vendettas. This analysis is usually and unquestioningly reproduced by both Moroccan and non-Moroccan scholars and amounts to what I call an "ethnographic discourse" on the Rif (a term I borrow from the work of historians and scholars in the historical sociology of colonialism like Edmund Burke 2014, George Steinmetz 2002, Daniel P. S. Goh 2007). This paper aims at a critique of ethnographic discourse through a focus on Riffian poetry of the 1980s and 1990s (namely by poets el-Oualid Mimoun and Said el-Moussaoui, two key figures of the culturalist "revival" of the period) which has channeled the theme of nostalgia to the homeland as a central and omnipresent theme in the nascent written Riffian literary production. This

stands in stark contrast to the themes of oral poetry that have traditionally characterized the culture of the region previously. I argue that the omnipresence of the theme of nostalgia to the homeland in Riffian poetry of the last four decades reveals a cultural "melancholia," a Freudian inability "to mourn," chiefly because it is not a "natural" age-old phenomenon but a recent one that has marked the region in the postcolonial period, and has radically destabilized the relationship with the land in what has been a fundamentally sedentary agriculturalist society, a process very much akin to what Bourdieu and Sayyad (1964) called "uprooting." This is especially the case since the largest waves of migration to Europe have characteristically occurred in the years following major political uprisings and protest movements in the region (the 1959 Rif uprising, the 1984 bread riots, and the 2017 Hirak movement). The subsequent violent suppression of these movements has led to massive "exit" waves, to borrow Albert O. Hirschman's term. Thus, I argue that ethnographic discourse on the Rif ultimately exaggerates and misreads internal anthropological dynamics at the expense of the political dimension in postcolonial Morocco.

### **Keywords**

Riffian Diaspora in Europe, Riffian Poetry, Rif Uprisings, Nostalgia, Ethnographic Discourse on the Rif

### **Bio**

Mohamed Daoudi is Assistant Professor of English at Hassan II University of Casablanca. He earned his doctoral degree at Mohamed V University, Rabat (2014) with a dissertation on contemporary American fiction. He was a Fulbright scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University (2016). His research interests include American literature and culture in the Twentieth century, Moroccan-American studies, the history of Spanish colonialism in northern Morocco, discourse analysis, and translation. His most recent publications include an Arabic translation (2022)

of Vincent Sheean's *An American among the Riffi* (an inter-war correspondence and travel book), which was reprinted in a second edition in 2023, and a book chapter titled "Internal Orientalism in Morocco: Discourse on the Hirak of the Rif" (2023).

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### **The Metaphors of Suffering and Resistance in Moroccan Engaged Literature of Amazigh Expression: An Approach to the Poetry of Sidqui Azaykou**

**Mohamed Sguenfle, Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco**

#### **Abstract**

The ideological choices adopted by the Moroccan state after independence have led to the hegemony of a highly centralized unitary vision at the expense of excluded majority voices. Among these voices, Sidqui Ali Azaykou is one of the first to have proclaimed the necessity of a re-examination of Morocco "for a true conception of our cultural identity", as the title of a famous article by Azaykou reads

Sidqui Azaykou (1942 - 2004) was a Berber intellectual who left a significant mark on a period of Morocco's history through his commitment and activism in favor of the Amazigh question.

My presentation aims to highlight the perception of the Amazigh question (especially Amazigh identity) by this engaged poet through the analysis of the metaphorical discourse that runs through his texts. The study will focus on the themes of suffering and resistance, which will be analyzed through a cognitive approach to the metaphorical representations of these two themes. The corpus will consist of texts drawn from the poet's two flagship collections: *Timitar* "Signs" and *Izmuln* "Scars". The cognitive model (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) will be utilized as the conceptual framework of analysis, enabling us to address the following questions:

How is Amazigh identity represented in this poetry?

How does the poet metaphorically express his suffering and resistance?

These are the two questions that my presentation will attempt to answer, drawing on various works developed within the framework of cognitive semantics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

#### **Keywords**

Amazigh Identity, Azaykou, Poetry, Resistance, Suffering

#### **Bio**

Mohamed Sguenfle is a researcher and teacher at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir, Morocco, and co-founder of the LISS Laboratory (Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Social Sciences). His research centers on linguistic, cultural, and territorial identities, with a focus on the Amazigh identity in Morocco. Key areas of study include the sociolinguistic dynamics of Morocco, efforts to revitalize the Amazigh language, and the cognitive approach to metaphor in Amazigh. Recent publications include *Communiquer, persuader, contraindre. Les sociétés humaines au défi de la crise sanitaire planétaire* (2022) and the article "Le cyber-militantisme amazighe. Pour une visibilité d'une identité officiellement reconnue" (2022).

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### **Scripting Linguistic Justice: Children's Lifemaps as a Moroccan "Other-Archive"**

**Adeli Block, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA**

#### **Abstract**

In this paper, I examine script and writing practices after Tamazight officialization and standardization in the broader linguistic landscape of Morocco. Drawing on over 300 lifemaps (García-Sánchez 2014), whereby

students in Tamazight classes in public elementary schools draw the places they frequent and label them, I consider script contact (contact between scripts) and the emergent ways students in southeast and southwest Morocco are expressing themselves multimodally with their entire semiotic repertoire. Similar to translanguaging (Otheguy et. al 2015) that recognizes peoples' full linguistic repertoire without reifying named (colonial) languages, the lifemaps demonstrate the ways in which young students "trans-script." For example, elementary school students utilize several scripts (Neo-Tifinagh, Latin, and Arabic), write Arabic words with Tifinagh script, write Tamazight words with Arabic script, and muddle script directionality. I aim to take the aesthetics of scripts and children's drawings seriously as an instantiation of linguistic justice (Baker-Bell 2020) that recognizes multiple ways of being "correct" as students are being interpellated as multiscrptal and multilingual citizens in the Moroccan social imaginary. Crucially, I contend that these lifemaps, with their distinctive aesthetics, function as an "other-archive" (El Guabli 2023) that documents a history enmeshed in loss and silence against the backdrop of layers of colonialism. Building on incisive scholarship that investigates script in action (Jaffe 1999, Choksi 2021), this paper explores the intersection of art, lifeworlds, and language education as vehicles for social change.

### **Keywords**

Lifemaps, Multilingualism, Multiscrptal Writing, Linguistic Justice, Language Education

### **Bio**

Adeli Block (she/they) is a PhD Candidate in linguistic anthropology at the University of Michigan and has lived, studied, and worked in Morocco for over four years. Their research concerns the social consequences of language policy change after Tamazight became an official language in 2011. Adeli graduated from the University of Texas at Austin as an Arabic

Flagship Scholar, majoring in Middle Eastern languages and cultures and geography. Adeli grew up in Northern Virginia in the DC Metropolitan area.

## Panel 1B. Women Writing, Gender, and the Body – part 1

**Breaking Taboos about Moroccan Women: Zainab Fasiki and Leila Slimani**

**Rocío Velasco de Castro**, University of Extremadura, Badajoz, Spain

### Abstract

In recent years, Leila Slimani (*Paroles d'honneur*, 2017) and Zainab Fasiki (*Hshouma*, 2019) have emerged as two of the most committed and internationally renowned voices of Moroccan feminism. The main objectives of this paper are to offer a comparative study of both works, to point out their similarities and divergences in terms of the linguistic and aesthetic resources used, and to highlight their relevance in terms of raising awareness of the need to fight for equality between men and women in contemporary Morocco.

### Keywords

Moroccan Activism, Graphic Novel, Feminism, Zainab Fasiki, Leila Slimani

### Bio

Rocío Velasco de Castro received her BA in Arab Philology from the University of Seville, her Masters in Contemporary History from the National Distance Education University, and her Ph.D. in Arab Philology from the University of Seville. She is a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Extremadura. Her main field is the Contemporary History of the Arab World, with a special focus on Moroccan feminism and its relationship to activism through graphic novels.

**The ‘Trans’ in Moroccan Realist Arabic Literature: Transgressing Borders and Genders in Fatiha Mourshid’s *Lust Unbounded* (2019)**

**Zineb Rabouj**, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco, and University of Padua, Italy

### Abstract

Transgressing borders does not necessarily require a physical movement from one place to another. Transgression can be intangible in many cases as in moving from one religion to another or from one gender identity to another. This paper aims to study Fatiha Mourshid’s *In ĩtaq Raġba* (*Lust Unbounded* 2019) which brings together these two forms of abstract and physical transgression. Through the protagonist Azdine, who has eventually turned into Aziza, the writer puts into question many elements of both the Moroccan public and domestic spheres shedding light mainly, but not only, on homophobia. By presenting the coming-out of Azdine through letters he sends to his son, she captures the appalling effects that such act might have on a young successful man who has been made to believe that his father had run with another woman, leaving him and his mother behind. Non-heterosexual gender identity in the Moroccan society is still socially, culturally and even legally criminalized. The present paper shall discuss the way this ground-breaking narrative negotiates the gender identity crisis of a sexual minority who still endures an entrenched marginalisation in Morocco. Through tracking Azdine/Aziza’s journey through the Atlantic and his/her settlement in Canada, it also ponders on the alternative realities that allow members of the Moroccan queer community to reconcile with their bodies and challenge the Moroccan hegemonic discourse. Through postcolonial-feminist lenses, I investigate the idea of ‘the west as shelter’ for diverse gender, religious and political Moroccan minorities. I deploy the concept of *transgression* developed by Fatima Mernissi in my analysis of both the gender and the diaspora dimension of this narrative. I also attempt to use



this notion to approach the intrepid choice of Fatiha Mourshid to write about such a controversial thematic, especially that she opts for Arabic as a writing language.

### **Keywords**

Transgression, Diaspora, Sexual Minority, Postcolonial Realist Literature, Moroccan Women Literature

### **Bio**

Zineb Rabouj is a PhD student at the University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Morocco. She is also affiliated to the university of Padua in Italy in which she is doing a joint Doctorate. Her dissertation is entitled “Moroccan-American Literary Encounters: Images of America in Moroccan Postcolonial Women Literature (1991-2022).” She has been also a visiting scholar at the university of Pavia, where she has conducted research in the department of Political Sciences. Her research interests include comparative literature, feminist literature, postcolonial studies, and American studies. She is also interested in diverse gender issues in Morocco and the MENA region in general. She has coordinated a Danish project on Female Rap and Resistance in the MENA. She also belongs to the center for the transnational studies of the US at the university of Illinois where she has been a virtual resident. She is currently in her last year of PhD.

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### **Gendering Leila Abouzeid's *The Last Chapter* through Rights, Religion and Identity Nexus**

**Amrita Basu Roy Chowdhury, Lady Brabourne College, Kolkata, India**

### **Abstract**

Suellen Diaconoff in her *Myth of the Silent Woman* published in 2009

discusses how Moroccan women writers contribute to the emerging national debate on democracy and help to create new public spaces of discourse and participation. She further elaborates that the first novel usually ascribed to a Moroccan woman, Halima Ben Haddou was published in 1982, whereas the first novel by a man named Abdelkader Chatt came out in 1932. This half-century gap between the initial ventures into literary writing by the two sexes leads us to understand the multifaceted interplay of history, politics, and tradition that ensued their different educational and social statuses in Morocco. Since Morocco's independence from French colonial rule, women writers are endeavouring to situate their resourceful productivity within the larger context of men's writing. Unfortunately, they are still struggling in a society that compels them to perform the traditional gender roles. Although more women are receiving education in contemporary Morocco, the messages the State promotes seems to be androcentric and henceforth, women writers attempt to constantly challenge Morocco's education system through their writings.

Leila Abouzeid, a leading Moroccan woman writer primarily writing in Arabic instead of French, has been promulgating women's education through her stimulating, semi-autobiographical novel *The Last Chapter* (2003). She has been the pioneering Moroccan woman writer to have her works published in English-language translation. In her novel *The Last Chapter*, Leila Abouzeid places her protagonist in the background of Islam, modernity and Morocco's postcolonial political upheaval. Chronicling Aisha's life from adolescence to adulthood to the present, her story is articulated through a series of memories, anecdotes, and glimpses of the past which are intensely connected to Morocco—its politics, populaces, traditions, religion, and other institutions like marriage. Man-woman relationships are powerfully manifested in the narrative through Aisha's upsetting romantic experiences. In *The Last Chapter*, there are merely two girls in Aisha's classroom of forty-two students. Out of those two, Aisha graduated. The misogyny existing in real life Morocco is represented through this novel. The workplace

corruption, the struggle for women's fundamental rights, the conflict between Islamic and Western values are all interweaved in this narrative. The researcher aims to investigate how the narrative voices in *The Last Chapter* question the patriarchal ideology prevalent in Morocco and also raise the issue of identity crisis. The researcher also attempts to bring forth how barely women are educated, and a majority of them cannot even read, while most men are literate in Morocco through a gendered reading of *The Last Chapter*. For this particular study the researcher employs qualitative content analysis method.

### **Keywords**

Women Writing, Gender, Education, Marriage, Muslim, Identity Crisis

### **Bio**

Amrita Basu Roy Chowdhury completed her graduation with Honours in English Literature from Women's Christian College, Kolkata. She then obtained Master of Arts degree in Comparative Literature and Master of Philosophy degree in Women's Studies and Doctor of Philosophy from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Her PhD thesis is on the topic 'Construction of Gender in Bengali Print Advertisement, 1991-2010'. She has been the recipient of the prestigious Junior Research Fellowship of the University Grants Commission, India. Her research interests include areas like media-culture-society, socio-cultural construction of gender, genesis of Women's Studies and women's movement in India and international context, cross cultural literary transaction and qualitative research methodology.

Dr. Basu Roy Chowdhury is presently engaged as the State Aided College Teacher at the Dept. of Women's Studies, Lady Brabourne College, Kolkata where she has been teaching Women's Studies since 2017. She is also associated with the Dept. of Adult, Continuing Education & Extension of Jadavpur University, Kolkata as a Guest Lecturer since 2020 where she teaches the post graduate students of Mass Communication. She has

presented her research work at various national and international conferences and published in a number of journals like Economic and Political Weekly, IUP Journal of Organizational Behaviour, Research Scholar, Newsletter of School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University and also contributed chapters in edited volumes published by Routledge, Newman Publication, AUTHORS Press, and Victorious Publishers and so on. Dr. Basu Roy Chowdhury has been the recipient of Feminist Theory Workshop International Travel Award, Duke University 2018, Michael and Madonna Marsden Travel Grant 2023 from the Popular Culture Endowment Fund, Jim Sack Travel Award 2023, CAITY Travel Award 2024. Beside academic activities, she spends her time providing free education to the school goers belonging to the marginalized groups. Her hobbies include singing, travelling and culinary experimentations.

## Panel 2A. Capturing Morocco in Motion: Cinema and Visual Arts

### The Role of Cinema in Social and Political Change in Morocco: Between Creative Challenges and Realization Constraints

Abdellah Sardaoui, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco

#### Abstract

Moroccan cinema has played a pivotal role in giving voice to social and political issues, profoundly impacting the country's public discourse and social and political movements. Despite the constraints and necessary discussions that ensued, particularly in the face of daunting challenges such as self-censorship and institutional censorship, affecting film content, distribution, and reception, Moroccan cinema has persevered as a catalyst for change.

This paper delves into the transformative power of Moroccan cinema through the lens of selected works that have challenged a harsh socio-political reality that was taboo to address during years of repression and tyranny. The paper focuses on the impact of censorship in all its forms on the production and reception of these films, which have been instrumental in promoting freedom of expression and defending the values of change and dignity.

Through a close analysis of films\* by Hicham Lasri (1977), Nabil Ayouch (1969), and Fayzal Boulifa (1985), renowned for their exploration of sensitive social and political issues, the paper examines the content of these works, their historical and social contexts, their political discourse, and their approach to susceptible and significant topics. The paper also explores the impact of self-censorship and institutional censorship on the distribution and reception of these films within and outside Morocco.

The paper highlights the significant role of such films in social and political

change, their influence on public opinion, and their ability to open up discussions on social and political issues that have shaped a considerable period in modern Moroccan history. These films reflect moments of social breakdown (gender/religion/poverty/exploitation/class/deprivation...) and political oppression (oppression/imprisonment/torture/terrorism/starvation/humiliation...). They possess a steadfast creative power that reflects the director's critical vision of society and politics, intensifying their exploration in opposition to the prevalence of films that do not shed light on their country's history, its rightful claims, and its struggles, nor offer a review that disrupts the stagnant and champions a future free from oppression or constriction.

\*Films to be analysed: *C'est eux les chiens* (2013) and *Headbang Lullaby* (2017) by Hicham Lasri; *Much Loved* (2015) and *Haut et Fort* (2021) by Nabil Ayouch; *The damned don't cry* (2022) by Fayzal Boulifa

#### Keywords

Censorship, Moroccan Cinema, Hicham Lasri, Nabil Ayouch, Fayzal Boulifa, Film Reception, Film Circulation

#### Bio

Abdellah Sardaoui holds the position of Associate Professor at ENSAD (Higher National School of Art and Design) within Hassan II University in Casablanca, where he serves as the coordinator of the Cinema Department. Additionally, he fulfils a teaching role at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra and Mohammed V University in Rabat. An active participant in scholarly initiatives, he co-established the Moroccan Association for Academic Research in Cinema in 2022. His scholarly pursuits encompass research areas such as Moroccan Cinema and the Analysis of Cinematic Discourse, among others.

## From the *Halqa* to the Wave: Future Memories of Contemporary Morocco

**Claudia Esposito, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA**

### Abstract

This paper takes its title from the 2024 documentary *Mémoire Future* by Mujah Maraini Melehi, the daughter of Moroccan artist Mohamed Melehi (1936-2020) and Italian writer and art historian Toni Maraini, to analyze the notion of ‘future memory’ through the works of Melehi and Maraini. Maraini, an art historian who dedicated a significant part of her life to the study of Moroccan cultural production, and Melehi one of Morocco’s most prolific artists, draw on a vast range of artistic forms and spaces to advocate for what they conceived of as socially engaged art. From Maraini’s work on the myriad forms of aural storytelling of the *halqa* to Melehi’s painted flames for Palestine, to their interventionist work in public spaces (notably, in Marrakech and Asilah), both explicitly underscore the imbrication of local forms of artistic expression, Amazigh arts, and Western-style practices in the making of a modern Moroccan aesthetic. This paper investigates the imbrication of what is often ossified as ‘tradition and modernity’ in light of the complex temporality present in contemporary Moroccan cultural production (for instance, I suggest that the *halqa* is as much of the future as it is of the past and conversely, the wave – Melehi’s ‘signature’ image – is as much past as it is future). I explore how Maraini and Melehi’s connections to the High Atlas Mountains, to Rome, and to Palestine, point to multi-directional histories and geographies and to memory as performative (Rothberg) and of the future. As such, this paper seeks to bring to light a Moroccan aesthetics that is both well-established and still in the making (in particular in the works of artists such as Mahi Binebine and Safaa Erruas, among others).

### Keywords

Mujah Maraini Melehi, Future Memory, *Halqa*, Multi-Directional Histories and Geographies

### Bio

Claudia Esposito is Associate Professor of French in the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures, at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Her research focuses on Postcolonial literatures, Mediterranean Studies, and Franco-Maghrebi cultural production. She is the author of *The Narrative Mediterranean: Beyond France and the Maghreb* (2013) and of numerous articles on literature, film and the visual arts in the journals *Studies in French Cinema*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Arab Studies Journal*, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, *The French Review*, and *Expressions Maghrébines*, among others. She has recently held invited visiting positions at Brown University (2021), as a Fulbright Scholar at Università degli Studi Roma Tre (2022) and Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata (2024).

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### Writing Spaces. Toni Maraini Semantic and Emotional Cartographies

**Arianna Jakubowski, Independent researcher, EMAM – Équipe du Monde Arabe et Méditerranée, Tours, France**

### Abstract

Antonella “Toni” Maraini (Tokyo 1941) literary production (critical essays, articles, poetries, prose) maps out the geographical, historical and semantic itineraries of the members of the so-called “School of Casablanca” (1960s-1980s) alongside artists, poets, directors Mohammed Melehi, Abdellatif Laabi, Mohamed Chebaa, Mostafa Nissaboury, Ahmed Cherkaoui, to name a few; its development, their research activity across Morocco, in particular



within the cities of Casablanca, Marrakech, Rabat, and Tangier, including territories beyond its borders (France, Italy, Algeria). Given her work as critic, curator, and translator, other than writer herself, Maraini's voice stands out among the other collections about Maghreb's contemporary art history, as the group's only reporter. Hence, the study of her archives can return the most comprehensive, detailed landscapes of its copious activity. If we do agree with a certain geographical construct according to which maps constitute one kind, indeed multiple forms, of language (Cerutti, 2020)— adopted by the branch of so-called 'Semantic and emotional cartography', then, we might also work on the other way around, translating Maraini's literary archives, and written collections as the verbal description of semantic, sensible cartographies, spatial events, artistic projects, collective visions, designed through a variety of media, and by a multitude of protagonists throughout this densely populated period of art history. The starting point for rethinking the very perspective through which one approaches *an-other-territory* is to be found in the concept of 'geographical disorder' described by Maraini in the short story '*Al-Ghorba o le confessioni di una esule*'. Here her own personal condition of *extraneousness*, in contrast with the complexity of the conditions of *forced exile* (whether for socio-economical, or political reasons), guide the author to outline three categories of action and thought, that ultimately shape her literary and personal posture, to exercise the constant elusion of any forced and fetishist attempt of *description* and *decryption*, carried out by many celebrated Western authors, to explain, understand, interpret, or even just *picture* otherness. These 'states of being' describe both the author's personal relationships, thus, *the relational coordinates* through which she arranges herself in correlation to others, and the territory indigenously inhabited, *the elsewhere*, as well as the focal point of her writing. In this sense, Maraini's writing is precious because it is intimate, and because it makes intimacy the window through which one can open complex dialogues around concepts such as belonging, identity, self-expression, thus undermining the intrinsic

violence contained in a certain foreign and alienating literary gaze (whether in prose, academic, or cartographic). Moreover, this traversal of territories starting from the recollection of events and personal remembrances, together with their visual and literary rendering, indeed resulting from the interweaving of intimate relationships and events, bring the writer closer to a Sufi posture a specific way of relating to space, where conceptual, spiritual, as well as physical, geographical, military, and colonial boundaries, in their various forms, are converted into a conception of space and place as intangible qualities (Esmaeili, Sinclair, 2023).

Maraini practices a form of literature capable of creating experiential moments of space, where the '*memoria ardente*' (*burning memory*, Maraini 2000) of what has been lived allows the outsider to come closer to *someone else's elsewhere* through the intimate mediation of the writer's praxis, and her personal emotional experience. Thus, guarding that 'attention, coexistence and precariousness' that are fundamental to learning how to co-habit with others, before attempting to 'read' or 'write' them: «Non si trattava soltanto di poesia. Si trattava di imparare a vivere, conoscere e agire essendo ospite in terra altrui e accettando quello che questo comporta in termini di attenzione, convivenza e precarietà. E nello stesso tempo, si trattava di assumere la scelta di estraneità come totale adesione all'esistenza stessa» (Maraini 2000).

### Keywords

Toni Maraini, School of Casablanca, Extraneousness, Intimacy, Co-Habitation,

### Bio

Arianna Jakubowski is a researcher and art curator based in Milan. After graduating in Philosophy (Università degli Studi di Milano), and later on in Visual Cultures and Curatorial Practices (Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milan), she started collaborating across institutions, academics departments

and creative collectives, including projects with: EMAM (Équipe du Monde Arabe et Méditerranée, CITES, Université de Tours); SAVVY Contemporary (Berlin); Archive Books (Berlin, Milan, Dakar); Turner Prize Oscar Murillo (London/Colombia); Yuta Hirai and Nippon AWAKES Institute (Tokyo, Fukushima, Japan). Her research and practice sit across the intersections between geography, architecture and aesthetics, specifically in the analysis of common possibilities of framing cities, landscapes and territories as relational, semantic and artistic narratives. She is a member of Casablanca-based music label Astrofever Records, and hosts “Acousmatics”, a bimonthly radio show on Radio Alhara, dedicated to the studies and experimentations in the field of the philosophy of music and sound.

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### Visual Routes: Negotiating Home in Diasporic Moroccan Cinema

**Said Chemlal**, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco

#### Abstract

This contribution aspires to explore narratives of return in diasporic Moroccan cinema, which is imbued with journeys heaving with an intricate interplay between the homeland and the host lands. Most of diasporic filmmakers are, in one way or another, preoccupied with their countries of origin; they are here and there, or best neither here nor there. Since these directors are living in ‘in-between positions’, their narratives are inscribed within a status of interstitiality; they are both local and global and often keep referring to the homeland and the host lands at the same time. That is why diasporic films are usually obsessed with their directors’ countries of origin, as well as those of their residence. I argue that the majority of diasporic film directors are either explicitly or implicitly preoccupied with narratives that play on the interstitiality and in-betweenness of the diasporic subject. Their filmic productions reflect (on) the filmmakers’ personal interaction with both

the motherland and the host land. While some diasporic films celebrate the country of origin as the final destination, where the characters aspire to stay permanently, others prefer to identify with the host land, to which the protagonists return out of conviction. Meanwhile, other films opt for a ‘negotiating interaction’ with the homeland; that is, the character keeps physically and psychologically shuttling between the motherland and the host land. This means that journeys within diasporic Moroccan cinema are intriguingly discursive. All the selected films will be analysed from postcolonial and transnational approaches.

#### Keywords

Home, Identity, Return, Journey and Journeying, Transnational Identifications

#### Bio

Said Chemlal is a professor of English and Film Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Dhar El Mahraz, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco. He earned his Ph.D. degree from the same university (2019) with a dissertation on Moroccan women’s cinema. He is the co-editor of a special issue of *The Moroccan Cultural Studies Journal* on Moroccan cinema (November 2017). Chemlal widely publishes on Moroccan cinema in Arabic. His articles in English have been published in *The Journal of North African Studies*, *Journal of African Cinemas*, and *Studies in European Cinema*. His interests include film studies, cultural studies, Amazigh culture, gender, racism, and urban space.

## Panel 2B. Writing Trauma, Resistance, and Reconciliation

### Archiving the Unarchivable: On the Historical Turn in Contemporary Moroccan Fiction

Ahmed Benali, Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tetouan, Morocco

#### Abstract

Historical fiction has long been recognized as a powerful tool for reimagining and reinterpreting the past. In the context of postcolonial societies, such as Morocco, where histories have often been silenced or distorted, the genre takes on added significance as a means of reclaiming agency and asserting alternative narratives. Many scholars have highlighted the importance of fiction in confronting historical amnesia and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of the past. In recent years, there has been a notable resurgence of historical fiction in Moroccan literature, signalling a deliberate turn towards engaging with the past as a means of confronting and reconciling with historical traumas. By examining the recent works of contemporary Moroccan novelists, this article aims to shed light on how these narratives function as acts of archival recovery, offering counter narratives to dominant historical discourses and contributing to the process of cultural repair and collective healing. At the outset, this paper offers a state-of-the-art review of Moroccan historical fiction, mapping its early traces, thematic trends and conceptual trajectories with a special focus on works dealing with tragic past episodes which have been subject to archival loss, historical silence and cultural amnesia. Subsequently, The analysis will be structured around the key themes of 1) captivity and slavery, 2) war, famine, and displacement, 3) revolt and dissent. In conclusion, this article aims to contribute to the emerging critical discourse on Moroccan historical fiction by highlighting the ways in which authors recontextualize, reconfigure and reclaim historical narratives to address the legacies of colonialism as

well as the intricacies of postcolonialism. In this sense, the article argues that historical fiction offers a platform to address the silences and gaps in the historical record, giving voice to the voiceless. Through their reparative readings of history, Moroccan authors are not only reclaiming the past but also shaping the future trajectory of the nation's collective memory.

#### Keywords

Historical Fiction, Reparative History, Cultural Reconciliation, Collective Memory, Archival Recovery

#### Bio

Ahmed N. Benali is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Abdelmalek Essaadi University, in Tetouan. He previously completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Hassan II University in Casablanca. For his doctoral studies, Benali is currently working on contemporary Moroccan historical fiction. His research interests lie at the intersection of history, memory and fiction with a special focus on the importance of counternarratives in the configuration of cultural imaginaries and historical memories in postcolonial Morocco.

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### Resisting the Epistemic Violence: Writing Trauma, Subalternity, and Postcoloniality in Morocco

Ismail Frouini, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco

#### Abstract

Following Morocco's independence in 1956 – or the so-called postcolonial Morocco – a notoriously dark period of unrest, turmoil, known as the “Years of Lead” (1956-1999), witnessed many transitional social and economic events that have shaped the nation's history. The modus operandi of the

Moroccan regime during this period was characterized by the coercive 'discipline and punish' dynamics, state abuse of power, torture, disappearance, and arbitrary imprisonment of dissidents (El Guabli, 2014; 2018 and Orlando, 2009 & 2011). In response, dissidents, activists, writers, university professors, and students, called for dismantling the shackles of (neo)colonialism, social injustice, and state repression. Their calls were met with violence, coercion, imprisonment, torture, and trauma. Despite their active participation in (re)constructing and narrating the nation, dissidents have been excluded from the official historiographical discourse. This paper aims to (re)write the unsaid Moroccan history of trauma, subalternity and postcoloniality from the perspective of political dissidents who witnessed the unspeakable trauma of the "Years of Lead". It is premised on the analysis of Abdellatif Laabi's *The Bottom of the Jar*, Fatna El Bouih's *Talk of Darkness*, Aziz BineBine's *Tazmamart: 18 Years in Morocco's Secret Prison*, Kadija Merouazi's *Sirat al-Ramad (Memory of Ash)*. Drawing on postcolonial and subaltern studies, this paper proposes a rereading of history from the perspective of these subaltern(ised) political prisoners. It assigns them agency to 'strategically essentialise' their subjectivities to narrate and rewrite the hidden history of the national trauma. By retrospectively 'speaking truth to power' in their post-imprisonment 'resistance literature,' these political prisoners, as this paper argues, have interrogated the premises of postcolonialism as (as in Robert Young's) 'an emancipatory project'. Moreover, they have exposed the lacunae of the incomplete postcolonial project in/of Morocco. Finally, these post-imprisonment narratives articulate the unsaid history of trauma, dissidence, and subalternity, which resist the 'epistemic violence' exerted by official discourses on Morocco's postcolonial conditions.

### Keywords

Moroccan Cultural Studies, Epistemic Violence, Subalternity, Prison Writings, Trauma, Resistance

### Bio

Ismail Frouini holds a Ph.D. in Applied Language and Cultural Studies. He is an Assistant Professor of English, Literature, and Cultural Studies at Hassan II University, Morocco. His research focuses on Moroccan 'Resistance Literature', Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Subaltern Studies, Amazigh Studies and Gender Studies.

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## Is Reconciliation Possible? Moroccan Prison Narratives and Historical Memory

Angelika Palmegiani, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

### Abstract

Moroccan prison literature emerged prominently after the Years of Lead (*sanawāt al-raṣāṣ*), a period marked by state repression and human rights abuses under King Hassan II's rule from the 1960s to the late 1990s. During this time, numerous political dissidents were imprisoned, tortured, and silenced. Their autobiographical accounts, most of which were written post-release, offer insights into the realities of political imprisonment. These narratives are not merely personal testimonies but are infused with a collective memory that challenges the official historical discourse. This paper aims to explore the relationship between trauma, historical memory, and narrative as reflected in Moroccan prison literature. Focusing on autobiographical works by former political detainees, the study examines how these narratives serve as powerful tools for rewriting and reclaiming Morocco's national history.

The study will begin by defining the characteristics of prison narratives in general and Moroccan prison literature in particular. This will be followed by a diachronic analysis of the most significant works in the genre, aiming to reconstruct the social and political conditions that facilitated the emergence



of these narratives after years of silence. The study will then proceed to a detailed analysis of three specific works: *Kāna wa aḥawātuhā* (Kāna and Her Sisters, 1986) by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Šāwī (1950), *al-‘Arīs* (The Groom, 1998) by Šalāḥ al-Wadī (1952), and *Min al-Šḥīrāt ilā Tazmāmārt. Taḍkirat ḍahāb wa iyāb ilā al-ġaḥīm* (From Skhirat to Tazmamart: A Round-Trip Ticket to Hell, 2001) by Muḥammad al-Rāīs (1938-2010). These works have been selected for their ability to highlight different ways the protagonists (who are also the authors) relate to the physical and psychological trauma experienced during their imprisonment, thus showcasing diverse modes of rewriting lived experiences. After analyzing the three texts, the paper will assess whether writing can indeed serve as a means for the self to reconcile with its past. Through the process of narrative creation, authors can process their trauma, reclaim their agency, and contribute to a collective memory that challenges official histories and fosters a deeper understanding of Morocco’s past. At the same time, considering the current political and social conditions in Morocco, it is crucial to examine whether these works have truly contributed to increased freedom of speech and expression, thereby breaking the silence around a significant period in Morocco’s post-colonial history and stimulating a more open debate on various aspects of Moroccan political and social life. Alternatively, the publication and circulation of prison narratives, some of which were initially written in French and English and later translated into Arabic, especially from the late 1990s onwards, may have inadvertently supported the political strategy of the new regime. This approach aimed to demonstrate openness and promote democratization by reconciling with a problematic past. This raises the question of whether the dissemination of these memories is partly functional to a political strategy aimed at signaling a new era by distancing from a history of violence and repression. This is evidenced not only by the circulation of these works but also by the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2004. However, this purported openness may coexist with ongoing social and political control, particularly in the wake of events such as the 2003

Casablanca bombings, the various protests that preceded and prepared for the emergence of the February 20th Movement, and the subsequent incidents that followed.

### Keywords

Years of Lead, Trauma, Prison Literature, Reconciliation, Literature and the State

### Bio

Angelika Palmegiani PhD at Mohammed V University (Rabat) Department of Arabic Language and Literatures – Comparative Studies/Translation Studies. She holds the position of Adjunct Professor at Università del Salento (Lecce) and she fulfils a teaching role at Mohammed V University in Rabat where she teaches Theory and Practise of Literary Translation. Her primary research areas include modern and contemporary Arabic literature and translation studies. She has published articles in academic journals in Italian, English, and Arabic, focusing on these subjects.

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**Poetry as Testimony: Re-Writing Political and Feminist Memory Through Saida Menebhi’s *Poèmes, lettres et écrits de prison* (1978)**

**Ana González Navarro, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy**

### Abstract

In the transition from the 20th to the 21st first century the Moroccan cultural scene experienced a literary boom of prison writings that exposed the repression that characterized the time known as the Years of Lead (c. 1965-1999), during the reign of King Hassan II. Some of these works appeared in the end of the 1970s but were censored until the change of the century, when Mohamed VI ascended to the throne. With the new king, some

measures were implemented to establish a distance with his father's violent past, but they were perceived as purely symbolic because no structural changes were introduced, and there were no real consequences for the perpetrators of violence. In the absence of a real reparation process, prison writings served as testimonies, constituting an alternative to claim justice, to testify and to register the abuses, allowing victims to initiate a reparation process.

One of the first prison writings published was by a woman: *Poèmes, lettres et écrits de prison*, by Saida Menebhi, that includes a series of poems she wrote during her time in prison. Menebhi died in 1977 after a hunger strike so, in a way, her poems act as a testimony, where she registers the consequences that imprisonment had on her and exposes the political ideas that led to her imprisonment. Therefore, her poems can be considered "as a political act that aims to instigate sociopolitical change" (Hachad 2019, 67). The aim of this paper is to analyze the mechanisms put in place in Menebhi's poems to act as testimony and to what extent they contribute to re-write social memory. We consider that examining prison writings by women, and specially, the outspoken poems of Menebhi can constitute a way to reconfigure social memory by bringing women's experience in the movement of political prisoners to the centre and examining the political and feminist ideas of this social activist in Morocco in the 1970s.

### **Keywords**

Years of Lead, Saida Menebhi, Women Writings, Prison Literature, Poetry, Social Memory

### **Bio**

Ana González Navarro is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie post-doc research fellow at Sapienza University of Rome with the project *Reconstructing social memory through Moroccan women's writing: female prison literature between the 1970s and the 2010s*. She collaborates with the research

groups IEXCUL (Autonomous University of Madrid) and IXBILIA (University of Seville). She is part of the research projects "Heterotopies in the imaginaries of the relations between Spain and Morocco" and "Memory of feminist political activism during the Years of Lead in Morocco (1970-1980)". Her research deals with Moroccan contemporary literature from a gender and postcolonial perspective and with cultural expressions by women and feminist discourses in Arab contexts. Her work has been disseminated in several national and international conferences and has resulted in chapters and articles. She holds a PhD in Human Sciences, in the specialty of Arab and Islamic Studies, from the Autonomous University of Madrid.

## Panel 3A. Geographies of Identity Negotiation

### Engaged Amazigh Poetry in Meteor Airlines' *Agdal*: Reviving Tradition and Addressing Global Environmental Issues

**Ikbale Bouziane, Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco**

#### Abstract

Meteor Airlines' 2024 album *Agdal* revitalizes traditional Amazigh poetry through the innovative genre of Amazigh Rock. This project integrates the cultural heritage of pre-Saharan Amazigh oasis communities into global environmental discourse, emphasizing the preservation of nomadic and pastoral practices. The album signifies a shift in Morocco's cultural industry from commercial success to the preservation and archival of cultural traditions. By merging traditional poetry with contemporary musical expressions, *Agdal* transcends national boundaries, contributing to the broader global dialogue on ecological and cultural sustainability. This article examines the role of contemporary Amazigh musical production in maintaining historical memory, cultural resilience, and environmental awareness at the transnational level.

#### Keywords

Amazigh Rock, Cultural Traditions, Environmental Awareness, Transnationality, Music

#### Bio

Ikbale Bouziane (she/her) is a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at Ibn Zohr University, Morocco. Her research explores the dynamics of youth culture, interfaith memory, and cultural preservation in Morocco, with a specific focus on the collective memory of Amazigh Generation Z individuals in pre-Saharan communities. By examining Muslim-Jewish encounters, Ikbale

challenges prevailing narratives and seeks to reclaim indigenous stories about native Jews in the region. Passionate about the poetics and politics of oral traditions, she engages deeply with the cultural expressions of marginalized Amazigh Moroccan communities. Collaborating with local associations, Ikbale works on establishing an archive of oral literature and micro-histories, addressing themes such as resistance, racism, climate change, women's rights, and tribal rivalries. Her work aims to advance scholarship and promote social change within Morocco's diverse cultural landscape.

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### An Indigenous Approach to Image Negotiation in Moroccan Sahara Desert Tourism

**Mokhtar Boubia, Dartmouth College, Hanover (NH), USA**

#### Abstract

By 1918, the French colonial administration, already a well-established authority in Morocco, meticulously crafted a powerful and ambitious tourism project targeting European and American tourists. After completing much of the necessary infrastructure, including roads, railroads, and hotels, the colonial authorities crafted an exotic narrative about Morocco, intertwining reality and imagination (present and past) to emphasize the dream-like experience travelers should expect. The French resident general invited explorers, travel writers, artists, and tourism agents to create and present this narrative to prospective visitors. He provided the language for it and imposed it on various sectors, such as education, urban design, art, and the media. Consequently, Morocco's image was sustained within colonial linguistics and narratology, which continued to shape and maintain it. This paper addresses the issues of "image" and "image negotiation" in Sahara Desert tourism, specifically how the image of the Sahara was

created and disseminated in tourism literature since 1918 when the French colonial administration formally established tourism in Morocco. It also explores how local Indigenous communities learned about this image, negotiated it, and responded to it.

The image crafted during this period has endured for many decades. It remains prevalent in contemporary tourism literature and academic circles, highlighting the need to revisit its context, genesis, and effects.

The paper examines four phases in the development of the tourism narrative, as told by local providers and tour guide communities:

- 1) The arrival of new “Irumiyen” (Europeans) and stories of rediscovery and reencounter.
- 2) The relocation of hostel owners (Aubergists) outside villages and the reasons behind this move.
- 3) The Ghalqa (theatrics) stage is characterized by Orientalizing tourism experiences and vocabularies.
- 4) Tourism providers’ attempts to break away from the theatrics of tourism (Ghalqa) and implement a new approach focused on Amazigh Indigenous identity awareness, which seemed revolutionary when it first began.

The stories illustrating these phases are outcomes of an extensive academic search conducted using tribal Indigenous methodologies. Finally, his paper highlights the remarkable resilience of southeastern Sahara Desert tourism, which continues to grow as the largest industry in the world. It underscores the crucial role of tourism as the only viable socio-economic activity for sustaining a living in an environment plagued by drought and marginalization.

### **Keywords**

Tourism, Image Negotiation, Sahara Desert, Colonial Imaginaries, Indigenous Methodologies, Environmental Sustainability

### **Bio**

Mokhtar Bouba is a Moroccan scholar with a Ph.D. in leadership studies and education from Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire, USA. His work has focused on Indigenous education and methodologies, as well as issues of “image negotiation in Moroccan Sahara Desert tourism.” Dr. Bouba is an Indigenous methodologist, an artist, and educator. He has written and lectured about the Amazigh current issues in North Africa, language and culture, intercultural education, tourism, and the arts. Dr. Bouba is working on two book projects, one in English and one in Arabic, about image negotiation in Sahara Desert tourism and the ethics and politics of travel and representation. He teaches “Politics of Travel in a Globalized World,” “Unpacking your Study Abroad Experience,” and courses at Dartmouth College. He also teaches Arabic language courses at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth College.

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**Between Black Morocco and the Black Atlantic: Leila Lalami’s *The Moor’s Account* and the Geography of Diaspora**

**Vaughn Rasberry, Stanford University, Stanford (CA), USA**

### **Abstract**

Following the publication of Paul Gilroy’s watershed study *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1994), scholarship on the African diaspora has tended to marginalize, if not occlude, continental Africa from its purview. Objecting to Afrocentric paradigms that romanticize precolonial Africa, or that position Africa as the diaspora’s “motherland,” Gilroy’s study offered a model of diaspora study that substituted notions of an original homeland with a conception of Black mobility, hybridity, and a counterculture of modernity. But the ironic effect of this influential move, as many critics have noted, is that it tended to omit Africa from diaspora study altogether. Consequently, numerous scholars have sought, with mixed results, to reinsert the continent into African diaspora coordinates. Others have argued for comparative



models that study the Black Atlantic alongside the Trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean worlds – yet these efforts, too, have managed only limited influence. Taking stock of these debates, this paper reads Moroccan novelist Leila Lalami's 2015 novel *The Moor's Account* as a literary case study of the promise and pitfalls of a comparative and global model of African diaspora study – one that synthesizes the entwined but very different histories of the Atlantic and Saharan worlds. In reading Lalami's text, I focus on the prism of language – especially the vexed language politics of the contemporary Maghreb – as exemplary of the methodological issues that foreclose productive possibilities in comparative study.

Indeed, contemporary literary production across linguistic and national traditions is reimagining the geography of diaspora, and novels such as *The Moor's Account* highlight the conceptual promise and peril of such efforts. Yet as I argue that in this paper, the effort to knit together parallel histories of the African diaspora is constrained by the linguistic and cultural politics specific to these historical contexts. In its riveting, interwoven narrative of the Saharan and Atlantic worlds – or what I'm calling here Black Morocco and the Black Atlantic – *The Moor's Account* appears to supply the perfect ingredients for this historical conjuncture. But closer inspection reveals silences, ambiguities, and asymmetries within the text that obscure the histories of the *internal* African diaspora and ironically perpetuate the dominance of the Atlantic paradigm. Language and language politics, I contend, remain the key to understanding this problem at the heart of African Diaspora Studies.

### **Keywords**

Black Atlantic, African Diaspora, Leila Lalami, Black Morocco

### **Bio**

Vaughn Rasberry is Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education at Stanford University, where is also Associate Professor of English and

African and African American Studies. He is the author of *Race and the Totalitarian Century: Geopolitics in the Black Literary Imagination* (Harvard UP, 2016), winner of an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and the Ralph Bunche Prize from the American Political Science Association. His research and teaching focus on African diaspora literature, politics of language and translation, and philosophical theories of modernity.

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## **The Representations of Moroccan Imazighen's Identity in Travelers' Narratives**

**Maryeme Ouchen, Ibn Zohr University, Agadir, Morocco**

### **Abstract**

The representations of Africa at large and Morocco in particular was a focal issue in western travelers' narratives who had already visited the "dark continent". In line with this, literature is vast with travelers' work on Moroccan Imazighen who are represented as savage, primitive and uncivilised creatures (Chénier 1738; Brooke 1831 ; Amicis 1882 ; Maurice le Glay 1921). Such travel writings make western readers believe they are real and authentic because they narrate true stories of lived experiences of travelers; yet nearly all of them cultivate wide terrains of racism and colonial ideologies. Most of these literary journey narrations spread discourses that legitimate the colonial agenda and the humanitarian intervention of the white saviour and selfless character towards the savage and primitive figure in dire need. They justify the colonial exploitation of the African sources and authorize slavery in Africa pretending that their main mission is to civilize this continent (Essed 1996). This said, the main objective of this paper is to delve into a set of European travel writings on Moroccan people and more specifically Moroccan Imazighen. The purpose is to provide a deep interpretation of the wide range of representations prevailing in such

travelogues from a critical discourse analysis perspective.

### Keywords

Representations, Travelogues, Moroccan Imazighen

### Bio

Maryeme Ouchen is an associate professor at the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Humanities- Ait Melloul, Ibn Zohr University- Agadir- Morocco. She is a full member of LILDAS laboratory. She is an active researcher in the field of cultural studies with a series of publications, such as “Resistance of the minority Other and their Coexistence within the dominant group”, “The Representation of “Otherness” in Moroccan Arabic Proverbs and Jokes”, “Proverbs as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in Morocco: The case of Ain Taoujdade”, to name but a few. She has also participated in a number of national and international conferences where she presented remarkable talk such as “Resistance to Ideological Forces: The case of humour”, “Covid 19 and Gender differences at the University”, “Voicing the silenced Narratives, the case of Jokes” among other ones.

## Panel 3B. History between Fiction and Memory

### Aly El Hammamy: Fragments of a Forgotten Maghreb

**Chakib Ararou**, IREMAM – Institut de Recherches et d’Études sur les Mondes Arabes et Musulmans, Aix-Marseille University, France

### Abstract

This contribution will focus on Algerian novelist Aly El Hammamy’s sole novel *Idris. A North African Novel*, published in French in Cairo in 1949, and set in Northern Morocco during the 1920s Rif War. El Hammamy, who took up arms in the ranks of the Riffian army during this colonial conflict, takes inspiration from his own experience in Morocco to depict the raise of awareness of the colonized in the region during the first decades of French-Spanish protectorate. This Bildungsroman’s protagonist Idris, born in an Amazigh-speaking rural community, is sent to Tetouan and then to Fez’s Qarawiyyin to study, crossing language and class boundaries and discovering Morocco’s social and cultural stratification under colonial rule, before joining a group of Maghrebi decolonial students in Paris and then discovering the Mashriq and its bubbling cultural and political scene. I will briefly evoke Hammamy’s own itinerary, that bares many resemblances with his character’s. The gist of my analysis will focus on the aesthetics of the novel. I will draw parallels with contemporary Moroccan narratives in Arabic (notably Abdelmajid Benjelloun’s *Valley of Blood* [1947], published in the same context of Panmaghrebi cairene activism) and in French (Ahmed Sefrioui’s *Amber Beads* [1949]). I will shed light on the formal resemblances between these works, mainly in terms of ethnographic description and didacticism, before showing how El Hammamy’s narrative strategies diverge from what Ian Campbell called the domination of the authoritarian master narrator in early modern Moroccan literature to encompass a much broader and comprehensive landscape of Moroccan society to his novel, including a

wide range of sociotypes and completing the internal vision of the Moroccan colonial problem with a detailed depiction of the Moroccan and Maghrebi diasporas' activism, both in Europe and in Mashriq.

### Keywords

Algerian literature, Francophone Maghrebi Literature, Rif War, Transnational Activism, Pan-Maghrebism

### Bio

Chakib Ararou is a former student of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris. Graduated in French Modern Literature, Translation and Arabic, Chakib is currently finishing a PhD dissertation about the Moroccan literary field and the Mashriq (writings, publishing and meditations) under the direction of Prof Richard Jacquemond, Aix-Marseille University (2019 – ongoing).

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### Abdelfattah Kilito and the Politics of Memory

**Manuela Ceballos, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA**

### Abstract

In Abdelfattah Kilito (Rabat, 1945)'s *La langue d'Adam et autres essais*, the Moroccan author posits an intrinsic connection between speaking and forgetting. He states, in reference to Adam, the first prophet of Islam, "*parler ne peut se faire que sur le fond de l'oubli*" (Kilito, 1996). The written word, too, can have a tenuous relationship to memory: in the book's final essay, "Sacrifier un livre," Kilito tells the story of the jurist Abū Zakariyā—which is originally compiled in 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Bādisī's *Maqsad*—who, in his death bed, asks for one of his books to be "drowned" (submerged in water), hoping that it will be erased from memory. This paper explores the relationship between the use of language and memory in Kilito's work. It claims that this

link between what is spoken/written and what is forgotten refers also to historical writing, and to what is obliterated/excluded from "official" histories.

### Keywords

Abdelfattah Kilito, Language, Writing, Memory, Official Histories

### Bio

Manuela Ceballos is Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her research brings together methods and theories from a variety of academic disciplines to the study of Sufism and Christian sainthood in early modern North Africa and Iberia. She recently completed a book-length annotated translation of Moroccan author and literary critic Abdelfattah Kilito's *La langue d'Adam et autres essais* into Spanish, which has been published as *La lengua de Adán y otros relatos* (Sílabas, 2023) and was co-editor, with Alison Vacca and Antoine Borrut, of the forthcoming volume *Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World* (Brepols, 2024). She recently completed a monograph titled *Between Dung and Blood: Ritual Purity, Sainthood, and Power in the early modern Western Mediterranean*, a project for which she received an NEH fellowship in the academic year 2023–2024.

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### Echoes and Erasures: The Politics of Memory in *The Game of Forgetting*

**Jonas Elbousty, Yale University, New Haven (CT), USA**

### Abstract

This paper explores how this "novelistic text" draws on the politics of memory as a means of dealing with traumatic colonial and postcolonial experiences. Drawing from the theoretical perspectives of Paul Ricoeur and

Pierre Nora, the article explores three different themes – memories of mother and childhood, multiplicity and unreliability of narrators, and recollections of colonialism and independence – to examine how memory functions in Berrada’s novel. In *The Game of Forgetting*, the ambiguity surrounding the attribution of memories—who said what and how—underscores memory’s role as a contentious yet potent mechanism in the construction of narrative and identity. This paper argues that Berrada’s exploration of memory not only enriches the understanding of postcolonial dynamics but also contributes significantly to the discourse on memory in world literature.

### Keywords

Mohammed Berrada, Memory, Trauma, Postcoloniality

### Bio

Jonas Elbousty holds an MPhil and a PhD from Columbia University. He is an academic, writer, and literary critic and translator. He teaches in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University where he served as the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations for seven years. He is currently the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Council on Middle East Studies and oversees the Yale Summer Study Abroad Program in Rabat, Morocco. He is the author or co-author of eight books, including *Faces* (Georgetown University Press, 2024), *Reading Mohamed Choukri’s Narratives* (Routledge, 2024), *The Screams of War* (Seagull Books, 2024), *Tales of Tangier* (Yale University Press, 2023), *Aswat Mu’asira: Short Stories* (Georgetown University Press, 2023), *Media Arabic* (Routledge, 2021), *Arabic Literary Reader* (Routledge 2014), *Vitality and Dynamism: Interstitial Dialogues of Language, Politics, and Religion in Morocco’s Literary Tradition* (Leiden University Press, 2014). His work has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *ArabLit*, *ArabLit Quarterly*, *Asheville Poetry Review*,

*Banipal*, *Prospectus*, *Sekka*, *Journal of North African Studies*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Comparative Literature*, *Journal of New Jersey Poets*, *World Literature Today*, among other publications. He is the book series editor of *the Cultural Production on the Middle East and North Africa*, and editor in chief of *the Journal on Maghrebi Studies*. Elbousty has received many awards, including the Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Commander of the French National Order of Merit), 2020 Poorvu Family Award for excellence in teaching at Yale University, Special Commendation for contributions to education from the State of Massachusetts Senate, and research fellowships.

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**Abdelkébir Khatibi’s Palimpsestic F(r)iction: Re-writing Morocco through Jean Genet**

**Joanne Brueton, University of London Institute in Paris, France**

### Abstract

The Moroccan poet and postcolonial thinker, Abdelkébir Khatibi, met the French writer Jean Genet in July 1974 at Rabat-Salé airport. Galvanised by the poetics of this heterotopic encounter – which captured the importance of travel, borders, and intercultural mobility for Khatibi’s decolonial project – Khatibi and Genet would go on to have five years of critical exchange about Israel-Palestine, Franco-Maghrebi imperial relations, and the need to understand the self through the other. These conversations shaped several key notions Khatibi brought to francophone postcolonial studies. Namely, Genet as an archetypal ‘étranger professionnel’: a foreigner among foreigners; a traveller of the mind; and a writer whose mother tongue was *textual*, not *lingual*, bound more to its literary genealogy than to a geo-cultural origin or worldview (1987: 136).

In this paper, I explore how Khatibi’s dialogue with a canonical French figure



like Genet allows him to re-write the terms of inclusion in the language and literature of the colonizer. Genet's dissidence, his solidarity with Third World revolutionaries, and his negation of classicism as a source of mastery, prompted Khatibi to rethink the Manichean world of domination critiqued by anticolonialists like Memmi or Fanon. Instead, Khatibi draws on Genet to present writing and reading in French as a form of praxis that exercises cosmopolitanism, generating a transcultural encounter between France and Morocco that transcends ethnolinguistic nationalisms. Building on Glissant (1996), Gauvin (2013), and Lionnet (2017), this talk contextualises Khatibi's decolonisation of Moroccan literature amidst a wider turn in francophone writing to appropriate, pastiche, and rehouse canonical French authors. It will concentrate on two of Khatibi's texts from a 2002 colloquium on Genet in Rabat, and an unknown letter Genet sent to Khatibi about the classical Greek allegory of Diogenes and Alexander, which is then reworked in *Le même livre* (1985) and *Figures de l'étranger dans la littérature française* (1987). My claim is that Khatibi's palimpsestic poetics stage a desire to re-write Morocco's relationship to French cultural imperialism: his palimpsestic f(r)ictions generating a critical method where mimesis and reverberation counter the fiction of Western epistemic domination.

### Keywords

Abdelkébir Khatibi, Jean Genet, Colonial Language, Cultural Imperialism, French Language, Transcultural Encounters

### Bio

Joanne Brueton is Associate Professor and Chair of French Studies at the University of London Institute in Paris. She holds a PhD in French from University College London, and a BA in Modern and Medieval Languages from the University of Cambridge. She has published widely on Genet's

explorations of North-South politics: a monograph entitled *Geometry in Jean Genet: Shaping the Subject* (Legenda: 2022); articles on vertical travel and imperialism (*Studies in Travel Writing*, 2021); exoticism (*MHRA*, 2019); Palestine and the Global South (*Artl@s Bulletin*, 2019); his iconoclastic view of exile, nomadism and migration (*Performance Research*, 2018). She has also published on Moroccan decolonial thinkers from the *Souffles* generation, Abdelkébir Khatibi, and Abdellah Taïa (*CFC*, forthcoming 2024; *RELIEF*, 2020); fictions of hospitality in Amos Gitai's theatre (*Francosphères*, 2023); queer realism in Leïla Slimani and Anne Garréta (*Australian Journal of French Studies*, 2021); 'Third World' Theatre in Kateb Yacine, Césaire, and Genet (*Cambridge University Press*, 2024); and Mohammed Mbougar Sarr's palimpsestic fictions (*Brill*, 2024). She is currently writing a book entitled *Decolonial Palimpsests*.

## Roundtable I

### Writing Fiction in North Africa Today: Novels, Writers, and Literary Awards\*

A Talk with the Novelists **Tareq Bakkari**, **Amira Ghenim**, **Saïd Khatibi**, and **Abdelmajid Sebbata**



الجائزة العالمية للرواية العربية  
INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR ARABIC FICTION

\*This panel is in Arabic. Translation to English will be provided. The panel is organized with the generous support of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF).

### Bios

**Tareq Bakkari** is a Moroccan novelist born in Missouri, eastern Morocco, in 1988. He is currently a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Arts, Languages, and Arts at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra. Bakkari also graduated from the Higher School of Teachers in Meknes (2011) and the Center for Training Education Inspectors in Rabat (2022). His novel *نوميديا* (Numidia, 2015), published by Dar Al-Adab in Beirut, was shortlisted for the IPAF in 2016 and won the Prix du Maroc du Livre in the same year. In 2017, he released the novel *مرايا الجنرال* (Mirrors of the General), followed by *القاتل الأشقر* (The Blond Assassin), published by Dar Al-Adab in 2019, which won the Moroccan Youth Book Award in 2020. Additionally, he was honored by King Mohammed VI of Morocco with the National Order of Merit, Knight Grade. Bakkari has participated in numerous book fairs and literary events

both nationally and internationally, including in Morocco, Abu Dhabi, Tunis, Cairo, Sharjah, and Paris.

**Saïd Khatibi** is an Algerian writer who studied in Algeria and France. He has worked in journalism since 2006 and has published various translations, including a collection of Kateb Yacine's poetry, an anthology of Algerian short stories originally written in French, and a contribution to *The Encyclopedia of African Cinema*. To date, Khatibi has published four novels. He has received awards such as the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, the Arab Journalism Award, and the Ibn Battuta Prize for Travel Literature, and has been shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF). His novels have been translated into six languages.

**Amira Ghenim** is a Tunisian academic and novelist. She teaches Linguistics and Translation at the University of Sousse. In 2024 she has been awarded the Prix du roman arabe (Fondation Jean-Luc Lagardère and Institute du monde arabe, Paris). She published the novels *نازلة دار الأكابر* (A Calamity of Noble Houses, 2020, translated to Italian, French, and English), *الملف الأصفر* (The Yellow Folder, 2023, forthcoming in the Italian translation), and *تراب سخون* (Hot Sand, 2024).

**Abdelmajid Sebbata** is a Moroccan writer, blogger, and translator, born in Rabat in 1989. He graduated in Civil Engineering in 2014 and later, in 2022, earned a degree in editorial translation (Arabic, French, and English) from the École Supérieure Roi Fahd de Traduction in Tangier. Sebbata has contributed articles and reportage to several Arabic periodicals and media platforms. To date, he has published three novels: *خلف جدار العشق* (Behind the Wall of Passion, 2015), *ساعة الصفر* (Hour Zero, 2017), which won the Prix du Maroc du Livre in 2018, and *الملف ٤٢* (Folder 42, 2020), shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) in 2021 and translated into English in 2024 (*The Secrets of Folder 42*, Banipal Books). Additionally, he has translated works by Michel Bussi, Milan Kundera, and others into Arabic.

## Day II - Tor Vergata University of Rome

### Keynote speech II

#### Moroccan Thought in the New Arab Critique

**Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab**, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, UAE

##### Bio

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab is Associate Professor of philosophy at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She is the author of *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia University Press, 2010), which will appear shortly in a second edition with a new introduction; and *Enlightenment on the Eve of Revolution. The Egyptian and Syrian Debates* (Columbia University Press, 2019). Both have been translated into Arabic. The Arabic version of *Contemporary Arab Thought* has won the prestigious Sheikh Zayed Book Award in 2013. Kassab is also the current Chair of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences Board of Trustees.

## Panel 4A. Remembering History: Places and Persons

### Al-Qayrawiyyīn Library in Fez: History, Paths, Models

**Valentina Sagaria Rossi**, Tor Vergata University of Rome, Italy

##### Abstract

The University of al-Qarawiyyīn is considered the first university in the world. Originally a mosque, it expanded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century to become a university. It was founded by a Muslim woman named Fāṭima al-Fihri in the year 859, debunking the myth that Muslim women were subjugated.

Al-Qarawiyyīn University went on to become an important center for education and one of the first Islamic and most prestigious universities. Alumni included the Andalusian scholar, poet and philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabī in 12<sup>th</sup> century, the North African historian and economist, Ibn Khaldūn in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and Leo Africanus, the renowned author and traveler of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Its impressive library boasts more than 4,000 rare books and ancient Arabic manuscripts dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

The presentation will cover the stages of its existence, highlight its most valuable manuscripts, and attempt to draw a connection with the cultural life of Fez and contemporary Morocco.

##### Keywords

al-Qarawiyyīn Library, Fez, Manuscripts, Book Heritage

##### Bio

Valentina Sagaria Rossi is currently Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. For over thirty years she has been curator of the Department of Middle Eastern Manuscripts of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. She dedicated her research and publications to the study of the transmission of classical Arabic texts

(works on *amthāl*, dictionaries, lexicographies) and on the Arabic manuscript tradition, with particular reference to the Yemeni one. In 2012, she authored, alongside François Déroche, the completely revised and updated Italian edition of *Codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe*. She coordinated research projects on Italian collections of Arabic manuscripts, and in particular since 2018 she is collaborating with the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, NJ) to the evolution of ZMT (Zaydi Manuscript Tradition) in Italian collections.

From 2021 to 2023, she was a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton).

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## Rethinking Moroccan Intellectual History through the life of al-Hasan al-Yusi (d. 1691)

**Justin Stearns**, New York University Abu Dhabi, UAE

### Abstract

In the politically turbulent landscape of seventeenth-century Morocco we find a number of prominent and prolific scholars who authored works still read today. None of them, however, enjoyed the reputation of the Amazigh scholar al-Hasan al-Yusi (d. 1691), who authored works in the fields of theology, jurisprudence, logic, and literature, and who wrote two famous public letters to the powerful 'Alawite sultan Moulay Isma'il (d. 1727), criticizing him for the excesses of his policies. Al-Yusi's life and career are an excellent window onto the far west of the Muslim World in the early modern period, reflecting its dynamism and independence as a political and scholarly center in its own right. This talk will provide the reader with an introduction and overview of the intellectual, cultural, and social dimensions of early modern Morocco through the career of its most important writer. Al-Yusi's career challenges our received understandings of Morocco's

intellectual history, not only because he largely wrote, studied, and taught in rural Sufi lodges, but also because of the degree to which he challenged established opinion.

### Keywords

al-Hasan al-Yusi, Early Modern Morocco, Intellectual History, Political Criticism

### Bio

Justin Stearns received his BA in English and History from Dartmouth College in 1998 and his PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University in 2007. He is a Full Professor of Arab Crossroads Studies at New York University Abu Dhabi. His research interests focus on the intersection of law, science, and theology in the pre-modern Muslim Middle East. His first book was a comparative intellectual history of Muslim and Christian understanding of contagion, especially in the context of the plague, entitled *Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Pre-Modern Islamic and Christian Thought in the Western Mediterranean* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). His book on the social status of the natural sciences in early modern Morocco, entitled *Revealed Sciences: The Natural Sciences in Islam in Early Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press), was published in 2021, and the first volume of his edition and translation of al-Yusi's (d. 1102/1691) *Discourses* appeared with the Library of Arabic Literature in 2020. He has published numerous articles and book chapters on Islamic Law and Medicine, the History of the Natural Sciences in the Islamic World, and the Historiography of al-Andalus.

## Re-writing Moroccan Literary History: The Empire Does Not Always Write Back

**Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain**

### Abstract

Moroccan literature, or at least the history of Moroccan literature, was born in 1937. That year, the Moroccan polymath 'Abd Allah Kannun published in Tetouan *al-Nubugh al-maghribi fi al-adab al-'arabi* (Moroccan Genius in Arabic Literature), a work that has often been considered, since the time of its publication, the first literary history of Morocco. Interestingly, *Al-Nubugh al-maghribi* was immediately banned from circulation in the French Protectorate zone. However, at the same time the authorities of the Spanish Protectorate commissioned a Spanish translation of Kannun's book, published in 1939 as *El genio marroquí en la literatura árabe* by Spanish colonial institutions in Tetouan. Moreover, under the aegis of the Spanish Protectorate was also published another history of Moroccan literature directly in Spanish, *Breve historia de la literatura marroquí* (1951) by Mohammad Ibn Azzuz Hakim. Since colonial intricated times, when Moroccan literature could only be, but exclusively Arabic, Moroccan scholars have been addressing the complex nature of Moroccan literature(s) and the place of Amazigh, French and Spanish literatures within the national canon. I will pay attention to how, since Kannun, Moroccan literary historians have been re-writing the literary history of Morocco until nowadays, tackling the peculiar case of the Spanish Protectorate as well.

### Keywords

Literary History of Morocco, Spanish Protectorate, Colonial Cultural Policies, Multilingual Literature

### Bio

**Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla** is since 2006 professor at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Between 2002-2006 was director of Escuela de Traductores de Toledo (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha). He is the author of *Al sur de Tánger. Un viaje a las culturas de Marruecos* (2022) y *La literatura marroquí contemporánea* (2006) and co-editor of books such as *New Geographies: Texts and Contexts in Modern Arabic Literature* (2018). In 2012 was member of the judging panel of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. Has translated Moroccan authors such as Abdallah Laroui and Rachid Nini. He is also director of the series of Arab authors translated into Spanish *Memorias del Mediterráneo*, published by Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterráneo. He has published articles in journals such as *Journal of Arabic Literature*, *Al-Andalus/Magreb*, *Oriente Moderno*, *Middle Eastern Literatures*, *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*, *Journal of North African Studies*, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, *Arab Studies Journal* or *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*.

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## From the Self to the Collectivity: The Role of the Autobiographical Dimension in Hassan Aourid's Project of Reshaping Moroccan Identity

**Ines Peta, University of Bologna, Italy**

### Abstract

In Hassan Aourid's (b. 1962) novels the autobiographical dimension is very evident. In *Sīrat ḥimār* (2014), for example, the protagonist's transformation into a donkey and the vicissitudes he experienced before resuming his human form are a clear allegory of his rise to power and his subsequent fall, thanks to which he can rediscover himself. In *Rabī' Qurṭuba* (2017) the character of Bāškwāl, the intelligent, cultured and sensitive companion of the



caliph al-Hakam b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 976), a victim of the caliph's envy and inability to be indebted to a subordinate, clearly represents the author. *Rawā' Makka* (2019) is a declared autobiographical novel, in which the author places particular emphasis on the path that allowed him to reconcile rationality and spirituality. In all his novels, however, the autobiographical dimension acquires a collective scope, becoming a symbol of the bestiality of power, the marginalization of minorities and the challenges of coexistence. The aim of this contribution is to highlight, through a linguistic analysis of some selected texts, how this passage from the Self to the Collectivity is functional to Aourid's project of reshaping the Moroccan (and, more generally, North African) identity, acting as a bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

### Keywords

Hassan Aourid, Autobiographical Novel, Collective Identity

### Bio

Ines Peta is Associate Professor in Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Bologna. She graduated in Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (2005) and held a PhD in Philosophy, Sciences and Culture in Late Antiquity, Middle Ages and Humanistic Age from the University of Salerno and in Lettres-philosophie from Saint-Joseph University of Beirut (2010). She participated in several research projects in teams promoted by the Oasis International Foundation (2014, 2015, 2017). She is currently Bologna's team PI of the EU-granted project (NextGenerationEU — PRIN 2022) *Environmental Anomalies & Political Legitimacy in Global Eurasia, 12th-14th century*. She is particularly interested in religious lexicon, especially theological, philosophical and mystical. She has worked on Muslim-Christian polemical literature, the theological and philosophical thought of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and, more recently, that of Ahmad Amīn (d. 1954).

## Panel 4B. Philosophy and “Other Thought”

### Delimiting the Borders between the Cultural and the Political in Moroccan Nationalism: The Case of the Political Party

Hamza Salih, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

#### Abstract

The appearance of Moroccan political parties in the 1930s was one of the main manifestations of nationalism as a prevailing thought against foreign intrusion during the colonial era. In fact, the traditional intellectual elite of the nineteenth century and the educated youth of the colonial era constituted the seeds of this transformation from an elitist reformism, essentially religious, to a national movement with a general political character. However, the political character of Moroccan nationalism and Moroccan political parties is still questionable. This paper begins by revisiting the concept of nationalism in the Moroccan context by arguing that the form of liberalism Moroccan nationalists used is but another form of Salafism shrouded in modern political concepts and structures. That is, Moroccan nationalist political struggle took cultural forms which predated the emergence and development of nationalism and political activism, and so due to the novel historical circumstances after 1930, like The Berber *Dahir* and the defeat of rural military resistance, Moroccan reformist movement underwent a remarkable metamorphosis into a social and political organisation which would give rise later to a more politically mature structure, that of the political party. This paper moves to study this latter and look for the remnants of the tribal, social and religious organisation prior to its birth. It argues that Moroccan political institutions during the colonial era duplicate the structures and discourses of the traditional religious institutions, namely the *zawāyā*. Although nationalist religious reformism took the form of fighting such institutions, the Moroccan political party as an 'urban phenomenon' was

centrally founded to decry the *zawāyā* as a ‘rural phenomenon,’ and by extension devaluing the rural centrality in military resistance of the coloniser. Finally, this paper questions the nationalist political practice and the possibility of political pluralism. It postulates that the break-up of the *Comité d’action* in 1937 into the National Party (*al-Hizb al-Wattani*) led by Al-Fassi and the national movement (*al-Haraka al-Qawmiya*) led by Ouazzani challenges the possibility of transcending the centrality of tribal and personal affiliations (the metaphor of kinship and citizenship) in Moroccan political practice.

### Keywords

Political Parties in Morocco, Moroccan Nationalism, Salafism, *Zawāyā*, Rurality, Urbanity, Political Pluralism

### Bio

Hamza Salih is a professor of literary and cultural studies at department of English of the ENS (Ecole Normale Supérieure), Mohammed V University - Rabat. In 2018, he got his PhD degree in cultural studies at Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco. In 2017/2018, he benefitted from a Fulbright Joint Doctoral Co-supervision and completed the program successfully. He conducted studies and library research at Towson University, Maryland, USA. He participated in many international conferences and delivered lectures in many countries, including Morocco, USA, UK, Germany and Turkey. He works and publishes on issues related to culture and Moroccan history of thought.

## Philosophy, but why? Notes from a Lahbabi’s Autobiographical Essay

**Francesco Patrone**, University of Perugia, Italy, and Catholic University of Lyon, France

### Abstract

Moroccan philosopher and man of letters, Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi (Fès, 1923 – Rabat, 1993) was nominated as a Nobel prize candidate for Literature in 1987. His thought arises from the very beginning from a singular and original question, which could be considered the typical *philosophical* question: “Why to devote your entire life to philosophy?”. Moving from this question, we can try to enlighten Lahbabi’s philosophical proposal. Firstly, we will consider *De l’être à la personne. Essai de personnalisme réaliste* (1954), his PhD dissertation, which he discussed at the Faculté des Lettres of the Sorbonne University in Paris, to become the first moroccan *docteur ès lettres*. Lahbabi’s philosophy was completely focused on person and human dignity as main issues: moving from a *realist personalism*, his thought evolved in a *muslim personalism* (1964) and then he tried to think about post-colonialism as a main topic. Then we will consider an autobiographical essay by Lahbabi, *Philosophie à la mesure des tiersmondistes* (1979), and we will try to enlighten the origin of his thought. In this essay, the philosopher traces his life as a young adult and he focus on his moving from Morocco to France: as an exile, he found in the philosophy a way to try to escape from his bad condition, to answer at his existential questions as a human being *entre-deux*, in-between two countries and two continents. He chooses philosophy *par vocation* and he can think about philosophy’s role as a concrete solution in humans’ existential crisis: how to think a *vrai humanisme*? How to find a philosophy which cares about *personal* problems?

## Keywords

Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi, Philosophy, Human Dignity, Muslim Personalism, Humanism

## Bio

Francesco Patrone is a PhD student in Human Sciences at the University of Perugia, Italy, in co- direction with the Catholic University of Lyon. He obtained his BA and MA at the University of Genoa and he's the author of essays which have been published in reviews and books. His PhD dissertation is focused on the philosophical roots and sources of Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi's *De l'être à la personne. Essai de personnalisme réaliste* (1954).

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## Tattoos or the Interior Distance: Reading Abdelkébir Khatibi's *La Blessure du nom propre*

**Redouane Khamar**, New Jersey City University, Jersey City (NJ), USA

## Abstract

In the context of colonization, the colonized feels the need to rehabilitate his identity. This need comes from the fact that the colonizer, by imposing his power, reduces the colonized to the state of an inferior being. Franz Fanon revolts against the asymmetrical relationship caused by colonization. In his *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon urges oppressed men to return to their "precolonial culture" where they can find their meaning and salvation. But Fanon's call is unrealistic and utopian, because men cannot only live in the past. Humans cannot negate their present, because this last is also part of their identity. With the *linguistic turn* in the sixties, Derrida's theory of the sign sheds a new light on being. In his work *Of Grammatology*, the philosopher demonstrates that the sign always calls for another. In other

words, each "trace" brings to mind another one. The logic (or the poetic) of "traces" shows that identity is a *différance*. Thus, identity is obtained because of the interaction between the present and the past (in philosophical terms: the ontic and the ontological). Unlike Fanon, Derrida approaches the text as a metaphor, and not as a literality.

It is in this direction that we need to read Khatibi's essays: *La Blessure du nom propre* and *Maghreb Pluriel*. More than any other Moroccan writer, Khatibi rewrites Moroccan identity, at a time when North Africans sought, by all means, to rehabilitate their languages and identities. North African intellectuals wanted to show that their culture is as universal as any other culture.

In my paper, I would like to show that Khatibi's goal was to reveal the creative movement that Berber women achieve through their tattoos. Therefore, seen as a marginal form of expression, tattoos appear as a text where material and tattooing interact to create art. Khatibi rehabilitates culture and he was able to show relationships between signs. He gives life and meaning to what seemed to be lifeless and meaningless.

## Keywords

Abdelkébir Khatibi, Coloniality, Derrida, *Différance*, Berber Women, Tattoos

## Bio

Redouane Khamar earned his bachelor's degree, from the University of Ibn Tofail, Morocco, and his Master's Degree in French Studies from California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). Before joining New Jersey City University (NJCU), he was a lecturer of French and Arabic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he earned his second master's degree in French literature, and his Ph. D. in Francophone Studies. His research sheds a new light on Culture, Bilingualism, and Text Theory. He published an article on Driss Chraïbi "la Cohabitation avec le père dans *Le Passé simple*". He also published an article on Fouad Laroui "Fouad

Laroui ou l'Outre-cloture dans *Une Année chez les Français*". He is working on turning his dissertation "Khatibi ou la poetique du texte reflechissant" into a book.

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### Abdessalam Benabdelali's Approach to *Pensée-autre*: Deconstructing Metaphysics in Moroccan Thought

**Juan A. Macías-Amoretti, University of Granada, Spain**

#### Abstract

In recent years, there has been some progress in dealing with postcolonial theory and contemporary Arab thought, especially in Morocco. The analysis presented in this paper is set in the very framework of Maghribi postcolonial theory, regarding the methodological and ontological particularities of Moroccan intellectuals in the light of Khatibian concept of 'pensée-outre'. In order to analyse the causes of possible neglecting of important decolonial approaches in the fields of philosophy and language, important attempts to break the hegemony of mainstream postcolonial narratives in Morocco must be highlighted, such as the deconstructivist perspective on Arabic language and translation by the Moroccan thinker Abdessalam Benabdelali [b. 1945]. As a main hypothesis, this article proposes that, beyond the fact that he writes exclusively in Arabic, and to a Maghribi and Arab audience, it is his anti-metaphysic stand that make his ideas and intellectual approach to postcoloniality quite paradoxically 'unnoticed' by the mainstream scholarly on postcolonial and subaltern studies. To Khatibi, the decolonization task of the *pensée-outre* in the Maghrib and the Arab World consists in the deconstruction of logo-centrism and ethnocentrism, and this 'unnoticed' and yet critical intellectual position opens the ground for a self-critique that could eventually lead to an epistemological self-decolonization. In this sense, when analysing the works of Abdessalam Benabdelali, it is possible to find

out that this anti-essentialist position becomes anti-metaphysic when it comes to the very material fields of culture, language and translation in the Maghrib.

#### Keywords

Abdessalam Benabdelali, Postcolonial Theory in the Maghreb, Deconstructivism, Anti-Metaphysics

#### Bio

**Juan A. Macías-Amoretti** is an Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Granada, where he lectures in Contemporary Arab Thought, Contemporary History of the Arab World, and Contemporary Arab Philosophy and Islamic Discourse in graduate and postgraduate studies. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the research group Contemporary Arab Studies at the UGR and has been Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter (2022-2023), and Affiliated Research fellow at the Jacques Berque Centre in Rabat (2012-2016). Principal investigator of the research project *Ideology, text and discourse: narratives of social change in North Africa* (Ref. FFI2016-76307-R) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy (2016-2019), Amoretti's research interests are focused on contemporary political thought and philosophy, democracy and intellectual discourse analysis in the Maghreb. His publications include: (ed.) *Dámqrata. Una antología árabe de la democracia en el Norte de África* (Comares, 2022); *(Dis)continuidades árabes. Discursos e imaginarios en un contexto de cambios* (Comares, 2015); *Entre la fe y la razón: los caminos del pensamiento político en Marruecos* (Alcalá, 2008); "The case method in the teaching of contemporary Arab political thought" (2022); "Narratives of social change in the Maghreb: ideology, discourse, democracy" (2018); "Political Islam in Morocco: from Islamic ethics to political power" (2017), "Le Maroc en perspective: pensée et conceptualisation politique dans *Min dīwān al-siyāsa*

de Abdallah Laroui” (2015); “Islam and democracy in contemporary Moroccan thought: the political readings of ‘Abd al-Salām Yāsīn and Muhammad ‘Ābid al-Ŷābrī” (2009).

## Panel 5A. Theology and Gender Engagement

### Reforming Identity: Nationalism, *Sharī‘a*, and Jurisprudential Innovation in Morocco

Serena Fraiese, University of Salerno, Italy

#### Abstract

This article examines Morocco’s evolving legal and ideological framework, focusing on the interplay between Islamic jurisprudence (*sharī‘a*) and state governance (*siyāsa*) in the context of modernity and national identity. The hypothesis posits that Morocco’s integration of modern legal frameworks within an Islamic foundation exemplifies an adaptive model that resists static views of Islamic law, fostering a dynamic identity within Arab-Muslim societies.

Moving beyond Weberian analysis, this study draws on the theoretical contributions of Muslim scholars such as Mohammed Abdel Al Jabri and Abdallah Laroui, whose work on modernity, rationality, and post-colonial identity informs the framework. By employing a qualitative analysis of legal texts, historical records, and Moroccan intellectual discourses, the study uses the *sharī‘a-siyāsa* dialectic as a theoretical base to trace Morocco’s legal and societal shifts. This framework underscores how Islamic jurisprudence remains deeply rooted in tradition while responding to contemporary governance needs.

The findings reveal Morocco’s strategic use of legal reform to bridge religious heritage with modern statehood, shaping a national identity attuned to both Islamic and globalized influences. This case positions Morocco as a pivotal model for understanding Islamic legal reform and identity formation within a globalized, post-colonial Muslim context.



## Keywords

Morocco, National Identity, Islamic Jurisprudence, Tradition and Modernity, *iṣlāḥ*, Reason, Cultural Heritage, *Turāth*

## Bio

Serena Fraiese is a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Salerno, specializing in the interdisciplinary fields of Digital Governance, Cybersecurity, and Digital Sovereignty in the MENA region. Her work provides fresh insights into contemporary policy and governance, bridging the interplay between tradition and digital transformation. As an adjunct professor, she has taught courses in International Law, International Human Rights Law, International Relations, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, and Institutions of French-speaking Countries. Serena earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” with a thesis titled *The Role of Tradition (turāth) in Gender and Sexuality Theories in Morocco: A Debate for Contemporary Social Policy* – an in-depth analysis of tradition’s influence on gender and sexuality discourse in Morocco. Her current publication, *Integrating Digital Twins in Morocco: Can Innovation and Tradition Align?*, co-authored with Prof. Francesco Amoretti (University of Salerno) and Abdessamad Rhalimi, PhD (Euromed University of Fez), is under peer review. From 2005 to 2016, she served in key managerial roles with international NGOs in conflict and disaster-affected regions, gaining invaluable experience in high-stakes coordination, security management, and educational initiatives.

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## Reading Qur’an in Contemporary Morocco: Between the *Usuli* Paradigm and the Interpretive Turn

**Azzedine Azzimani**, Trinity College, Hartford (CT), USA

## Abstract

While Moroccan intellectuals outside the traditional schools refer to Qur’an in their works, it is rare when they engage with it directly. In the last decade, one can witness a shift in the Moroccan intellectual discourses in which the Qur’an is at the center of interest. I refer here to works of prominent scholars who engaged readings of the Quran such as Al-jabiri, Laroui, Lamrabet and Taha Abderrahman.

In my work I highlight cases of Moroccan public intellectuals, writers and activists, and their engagement with the Qurān as one of the foundational sources of the Islamic discursive tradition. I look into the *usuli paradigm* as the dominant paradigm in the Moroccan Qur’anic exegesis. I notice an *interpretive turn* in the Moroccan Qur’anic discourses in the last decade. While each of the scholars I work with emphasize different epistemological choices in dealing with issues of author, text and (con)text, they all engage critically with the usuli paradigm, and consider the centrality of the reader.

Situating my analysis within the context of conflict of interpretations, I argue that what enabled this interpretive turn is not only structural dynamics related to

change in the religious policies, but mainly Moroccan intellectuals’ new understanding of their role as interpreters of the Qur’an who speak to distinct readers and interpretive communities. At the heart of this interpretive turn is an understanding that new readers require new reading of the text and new interpretive practices influenced by both local experiences and global forces. While I observe conflict of interpretations, I also observe ongoing moments of dialogue and negotiations between different interpretive approaches around issues of identity, ethics and gender politics.

## Keywords

*Usuli* paradigm, Discursive tradition, Interpretive turn, Text, Context

## Bio

Azzedine Azzimani is Senior Lecturer of Arabic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. His early research explored the idea of public sphere in the Turkish context. Central to his work is an investigation into how reading practices become public, and the process through which discursive networks of meaning are embodied and articulated by distinct interpretive communities. Azzedine is undertaking a new project focused on Qur'anic reading and interpretive practices in contemporary Morocco. His research underscores the contributions of Moroccan public intellectuals, writers, and activists in their engagement with the Qur'an.

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## Mohammed 'Abid al-Jabri and Asma Lamrabet Discuss the Women's Issue: A Reading of Certain Concepts from the Qur'an

**Mariangela Laviano, PISAI – Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Pontifical Lateran University, Rome, Italy**

## Abstract

Both Moroccan, but from different eras, Mohammed 'Abid al-Jabri (1935-2010) and Asma Lamrabet (1961 -) approached the female question from their own perspective. Al-Jabri, a well-known intellectual, expounds on the subject in depth in the third volume of his Qur'anic Commentary, the *Fahm al-Qur'an al-hakim. al-Tafsir al-waqi' hasab tartib al-nuzul* ('The Understanding of the Qur'an. A clear exegesis based on the order of revelation, 2008-2009') beginning with a presentation of the Prophet's women and proposing an interpretation of the *surat al-Nisa'* (4). Lamrabet, a feminist writer and leading exponent of Moroccan feminism dedicates several works to the issue of gender, stating that the theoretical basis of 'Islamic feminism' rejects the idea that women's rights are foreign to Islam and imported from the West, as these are grounded in the Qur'an itself and in the reinterpretation of certain parts of the sacred Text that originally

offered women protection and emancipation.

Al-Jabri, in commenting on *surat al-Nisa'* (4), which according to the chronological order of his *tafsir* is number 97, proposes a critical reading of Q. 4, 1, the verse underlying gender equality, as well as rereading, in the light of the context of Muhammad's time, the practice of polygamy (*ta'addud al-zawġāt*), the question of inheritance (*al-irāṭ*) and the Qur'anic concept of the authority of the spouse (*qiwāma*), issues with a strong 'tribal' imprint. Al-Jabri also opens a focus on temporary marriage (*zawāġ al-mut'a*) widely in use in the Shī'ī world.

These same issues (gender equality, polygamy, inheritance, and the authority of the bridegroom) are analyzed by Lamrabet and constitute, along with other questions, the essential points, particularly complicated and controversial, that would need to be overcome, clarified, or resolved to arrive at the consideration of gender equality that characterizes Islam. The methodology I propose is a critical-comparative one and aims to highlight the enormous contribution of the thought of these two figures in Moroccan society.

## Keywords

Mohammed 'Abid al-Jabri, Asma Lamrabet, Woman Question, Islamic Feminism, Gender Equality

## Bio

Mariangela Laviano is Visiting Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI, Rome). She is also an Associate Professor of Arabic at the Pontifical Lateran University (PUL, Rome). Her teaching and research focus on modern and contemporary Qur'anic exegesis, with a particular emphasis on gender studies, and on interreligious relations in the Mediterranean, particularly focusing on interreligious dialogue in Morocco, where she resided for an extended

period. She is Researcher in the *Pluriel* University platform for research on Islam. Since 2018, she has been collaborating with the Institut Catholique de la Méditerranée in Marseille, contributing to the “Maison de la Sagesse” seminary, and, since 2023, to the “RTmed Mediterranean Theological Network” at the same Institution. She serves on the editorial board of PISAI’s journal, *Études Arabes*. In 2021, she obtained her PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies at PISAI with a dissertation titled “Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Ġābirī: from the critique of Arabic reason to Qur’anic exegesis. Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness”. She also holds a master’s degree in Intermediterranean Mediation: Economic, Investment and Intercultural Integration from the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice and a degree in Oriental Languages and Civilisations from the University of Naples “L’Orientale”.

## **Asma Lamrabet’s theology: Navigating Islam, gender equality and decolonial**

**Sara Borrillo, University of Naples “L’Orientale”, Italy**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the thought of Asma Lamrabet (b. 1960), one of the most representative contemporary figures of the field of Islamic feminism, both in Morocco and globally. On the basis of numerous conversations and interviews carried out in Morocco with Asma Lamrabet between 2008 and 2018, as well as the study of documental sources, the paper firstly analyses four phases of the biographical, intellectual, and public trajectory of the author, and secondly her methods and the main contents of her work. Beyond her official religious function in her country for ten years, Lamrabet’s discourse potential resides in the relevant role she has had and still could have in bridging modernist and traditionalist thinking of religion and society, by promoting gender equality within the Islamic paradigm in Morocco, in Muslim-majority countries, and among the Islamic diaspora.

### **Keywords**

Asma Lamrabet, Gender Equality, Modernity, Traditionalism

### **Bio**

Sara Borrillo is Associate Professor of History of Islamic countries at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” where she is the Principal Investigator of the ERC Starting Grant project “MEGAMAPS – Mapping Emerging Gender Activism in the Mediterranean Arab Public Space” (2024-2029). In 2022-2024 she has been Assistant Professor at the Tor Vergata University of Rome and in 2021 she has been the laureate of the Gender Chair of the French GIS-Institute du Genre at University Sorbonne Paris 1-Panthéon. In 2014 she obtained a PhD in Middle Eastern studies at University of Naples

“L’Orientale”, where she also has served as post-doctoral fellow researcher (2015-2019). Her research interests are mainly focused on history of women’s movements, gender politics and Islam, secular and Islamic feminisms, new female religious authorities, and the interplay between art and activism in socio-political transformations after the 2010/2011 uprisings in North Africa (particularly in Morocco and Tunisia). She authored the book *Feminisms and Islam in Morocco. Women secular activists, theologians, and preachers* (in Italian. ESI, 2017); several journal’s articles such as “After the Covid, Inchallah. Investigating, lags and challenges of WPS (Women, Peace and Security) Agenda implementation in Morocco” (Interdisciplinary Political Studies, 2022) and “Returning the megaphone to the people. Activism as a new performance for egalitarian citizenship and social empowerment in post-2011 Morocco” (*The British Journal for Middle Eastern Studies*, 2021); and book chapters, such as “Asma Lamrabet’s Theology: Navigating Islam, Gender Equality and Decolonial Thought”, in *Contemporary Moroccan Thought. On Philosophy, Theology, Society and Culture*, (Brill, 2024, forthcoming) and “Women’s Movements and the Recognition of Gender Equality in the Constitution-Making Process in Morocco and Tunisia (2011-2014)”, in *Women as Constitution Makers: Case Studies from the New Democratic Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

## Panel 5B. Transnational and Multilingual Morocco

### *Larabi’s Ox: Stories of Morocco* (1992) by Tony Ardizzone: Negotiating One’s Subjectivity

Elisabetta Marino, Tor Vergata University of Rome, Italy

#### Abstract

As well as being an academic, Chicago-born Tony Ardizzone is one of the most prominent American writers of Sicilian origin. In 1985 he travelled to Morocco and settled in Rabat, where he taught at Mohammed V University. As he has elucidated in more than one interview, he had no intention of writing about Morocco, even though, during his stay, he kept a diary. He travelled to Morocco a second time, in 1988, and, when he came back, he decided to weave some of the stories he had already started to draft into one collection of fourteen interlaced pieces, entitled *Larabi’s Ox: Stories of Morocco*, re-issued in 2018 as *The Arab’s Ox* to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the book publication.

As this paper sets out to demonstrate, by setting the collection in a foreign territory at the crossroads (between Europe, Africa, and the Arab world), by choosing American characters (not just Italian Americans) who are struggling to balance their identity in a country whose mores they do not fully understand, Ardizzone aims to cast light on the difficulties and the negotiations each person of ethnic origin has to grapple with, in his/her path of recognition in America.

#### Keywords

Tony Ardizzone, Travel Writing, Short Stories, Italian-American Writers

## Bio

Elisabetta Marino is Full Professor English literature at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. She is the author of four monographs: a volume on the figure of Tamerlane in British and American literature (2000); an introduction to British Bangladeshi literature (2005); a study on the relationship between Mary Shelley and Italy (2011); an analysis of the Romantic dramas on a mythological subject (2016). In 2006 she published the first Italian translation of poems by Maria Mazziotti Gillan. Between 2001 and 2023 she edited/co-edited fifteen collections of essays and a Special Forum of Journal of Transnational American Studies (2012). In 2022, she co-edited a special issue of De-Genere. Journal of Postcolonial, Literary and Gender Studies (March 2022), and she acted as guest editor for a special issue of Journal of American Studies of Turkey (JAST) focused on Italian American material culture (released in 2023). She has translated *Parkwater* by Ellen Wood, for the first time in Italy.

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## Memory and Autobiography of Spanish Travellers in Morocco (1860-1900): Cristóbal Benítez and José María Murga

**Lidia Fernández Fonfría, University of Salamanca, Spain**

## Abstract

Travel literature is an abundant genre in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe due to a confluence of factors. Firstly, the colonial expansion in Africa, in which the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) was of great importance, in which the great European powers met to discuss the problems involved in colonial expansion in Africa and to resolve its distribution. Secondly, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, various scientific societies proliferated, which inevitably led to an important scientific and cultural development, including the Royal Geographic Society of London (1830), the Geographical Society of Paris

(1821) and the Royal Geographical Society of Madrid (1876). In addition, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the development of steamships, railways and trams and the modernisation of the cities, the possibilities for travel increased, as did the number of travellers to this area. It was therefore a context in which political-military and scientific-cultural interventions were amalgamated. While it is true that the great European powers such as Britain and France focused on Egypt and the Middle East, Spain found its ‘domestic Orient’ in Morocco. The images of Morocco in travel literature are varied and abundant, not only according to the periods in which they were written, but also because of the nature of the testimonies, in which it is inevitable to consider the ideology, cultural background and personal interests of the authors. For this reason, this paper analyses the testimony of two Spanish travellers, José María Murga y Benítez and Cristóbal Benítez, who travelled through Morocco between 1860 and 1900, whose importance lies in the fact that the purpose of their journey was neither scientific, nor military, nor political, but rather that they travelled driven by a taste for adventure and a desire for discovery. Thus, their first-person accounts provide an insight into the reality they visited and got to know, while at the same time involving the reader in their discoveries throughout their personal and geographical journey. It is a direct and complicit communication with the reader through which the latter is a participant in the evolution of the traveller's identity in contact with another cultural identity, in this case Moroccan, throughout the journey.

These two memories are therefore fundamental for understanding the vision of two Spanish travellers with no specific purpose other than their desire for adventure, and they provide first-hand knowledge of the Moroccan reality of the pre-colonial period.

## Keywords

Morocco, Spanish travellers, Cristóbal Benítez, José María Murga, Memories



## Bio

Assistant Professor in the Arab and Islamic Studies Department at the University of Salamanca and PhD in Arab and Islamic Studies from the same university. She specialises mainly in the teaching of the Arabic language, on the one hand, and the history of Morocco, on the other. She has dealt with different thematic aspects such as the expansion of the Islamic conquest in the Islamic West, the political-religious discourse of post-colonial Morocco, the history of the Toledo School of Translators and the didactics of the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language.

As for her scientific output, she has published nearly twenty publications, including the coordination and editing of two volumes on the sources of the Islamic conquest published by the Royal Academy of History. She is currently part of the coordinated research project 'Transits and transformations in the Maghrebi space and population (MAGNA II)' (MICIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and FEDER), directed by Miguel Ángel Manzano Rodríguez and Helena de Felipe.

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## Morocco in Argentina: Ethnographical Poetics and International Politics

**Monika Raič, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany**

### Abstract

In the foundation of modern Argentina Morocco plays an often-overlooked but important role. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (who was not only president of Argentina (1868-1874) but also an influential 19th-century intellectual and who is considered a great prose writer) travelled to Morocco during his *Viajes por Europa, África y América*. In this travelogue, published in 1849, he not merely recounts his journeys but uses it as a platform to engage with the broader poetics, politics, philosophy, and history of the

regions he visits. His observations and reflections on Morocco are particularly significant, as they served as a template for policy makings during his presidency and beyond.

Roughly 100 years later, the Argentine journalist and novelist Roberto Arlt travels to Tangier and Tétouan, a sojourn he had not intended during his time as a correspondent for the newspaper *El Mundo* in Spain (1935-36) but has seen as necessary after being introduced to the important Arabic influence in the history of Andalusia by the Spanish writer Blas Infante (*Ideal andaluz*, 1915). During his approximately 5 weeklong stay in Morocco, Arlt writes the *Aguafuertes africanas* (African etchings), providing the readers of his newspaper a rich insight of the Moroccan socio-political dynamics, cultural practices, philosophical, and religious underpinnings of the time. With my paper I intent to contribute to the idea of *Re-Writing Morocco* through the lense of the Argentine Roberto Arlt. I will specifically analyse his texts *Aguafuertes africanas* (1936) which were accompanied by photographs he took with his Kodak camera. Both texts and photographs address directly his readership in Argentina, explaining the organization and structure of social and urban space in Tangier and Tétouan. While Arlt reports his observations and impressions, large parts of the insights described could only be gained by talking to Moroccan locals who were part of the society and thus were able to provide him with what he could not see or understand. While his Spanish contacts (probably provided by Blas Infante) introduce him to the way Europeans, international spies and entrepreneurs live in Morocco, contacts like the usher at a cinema permit him a different insight and a broader understanding of Morocco's complex identity. In my paper I trace these nameless Moroccan women and man who have not only informed Arlt, but thousands of readers in Buenos Aires about both the regional culture but also about the international importance of Morocco few years before the outburst of WWII.

## Keywords

Roberto Arlt, Argentinian Literature, Travel Literature, Transcultural Encounters

## Bio

Monika Raič is a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the department for Romance languages and literatures at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Following her dissertation *Weltliteratur in kosmopolitischer Absicht (World Literature with a Cosmopolitan Purpose)* in which she studied the travels to “the Orient” of Gustave Flaubert, Maxime Du Camp and Roberto Arlt, she is now working on her second book entitled *Politics of Loneliness – Problems of Recognition*. This project is situated at the intersection of the history of emotions and political philosophy. It analyses, from a post-colonial and Latin American standpoint, the poetics of literary and cultural representations that problematize loneliness as an individual and collective phenomenon.

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## Translating for and from Morocco: Examining Literary Translations from Arabic into French Produced in Morocco in the Past Decade

Clara Défachel, University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK

## Abstract

While literary translation flows from Arabic into French have received sustained academic attention in the past decades, highlighting amongst other trends the relative marginality of Arabic-language Maghrebi fiction available in French translation, such studies have primarily considered translations published in Paris and the Global North (Abdelsalam and Jacquemond, 2021). In this paper, I propose to shift this focus on translated literature away from France to explore which titles get translated into French in Morocco. Which genres, authors, and topics are considered worthy of the

financial risk that translations represent for Moroccan publishers, and how do the latter navigate national or international funding streams to make these translations possible locally? Taken collectively, what image do these translations produce of (translated) Arabic-language Maghrebi literature, as opposed to the one created in France?

Drawing on recent research in translator studies (Vassallo, 2022), I will address these questions by focusing on publishers, translators and authors’ agency in shaping perceptions of the Moroccan literary field through literary translation. My analysis will primarily rely on interviews with Moroccan publishers, translators, and local and foreign cultural policymakers, alongside a reading of selected titles from the catalogue of Moroccan publishers engaged in Arabic-into-French translation of Moroccan fiction, such as Virgule Editions. The last section of my paper will further zoom out from France by discussing its findings in relation to and connection with literary translations from Arabic into French produced in Tunisia and Algeria in the past decade.

## Keywords

Translation, Literature in French, Sociology of Literature, Cultural Policymakers, Publishing Industry

## Bio

Clara Défachel is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of St Andrews, with co-supervision in translation studies at the University of Stirling and in cultural policy at the University of Aberdeen. Her doctoral project, tentatively entitled ‘Producing literary translations in the Maghreb in the 21st century: literature, cooperation, and Francophonie’ is funded by the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council.

## Panel 6A. Writing Multiple Identities through Travel Narratives

### Moroccan African Religious Diplomacy: Prospects and Challenges

**Mohamed Lazrak**, École Normale Supérieure de Fès, Morocco

#### Abstract

Morocco has developed, over the last two decades, an unparalleled policy of exporting its experience of being the hub for moderate Islam, to several African countries, such policy falls within an ambitious geostrategic vision that aims at strengthening the Kingdom's political and economic influence on the African continent. Some aspects of Morocco's new religious policy in Africa are embodied in several initiatives launched so far for the purpose of enhancing the Moroccan-African cooperation in the religious sphere. Therefore, this article is an attempt to shed light on: First, the milestones of this religious diplomacy towards Africa by exploring the tools that help Morocco achieve its geostrategic goals. Second, the challenges as well as threats facing this strategy especially those coming from political and ideological rivals like Algeria and Iran. Third, this article will tackle the political benefits of this strategy on both the medium and long term.

#### Keywords

Religious Diplomacy, Morocco and Africa, Sufism

#### Bio

Mohammed Lazrak is an Assistant Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS), Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, located in Fez, Morocco. With a strong academic background and a passion for interdisciplinary research, Mohammed's expertise lies at the intersection of religious diplomacy, education, cultural studies, and literary studies.

Throughout his career, he has dedicated himself to advancing knowledge and fostering critical discourse in these fields. His research interests encompass a wide range of topics, including the role of religious diplomacy in international relations, the dynamics of educational policy and practice, the exploration of cultural identities and intercultural communication, and the analysis of literary texts and narratives. Mohammed's scholarly contributions have been widely recognized and appreciated within academic circles, and he has published extensively on various aspects of his research interests. His work reflects a deep commitment to rigorous scholarship, intellectual curiosity, and a desire to engage with pressing issues facing contemporary society. As an Assistant Professor at ENS, Mohammed plays a vital role in shaping the academic landscape and mentoring the next generation of scholars. His dedication to teaching, research, and community engagement underscores his belief in the transformative power of education and scholarship to effect positive change in society. In addition to his academic pursuits, Mohammed is actively involved in professional networks and collaborative initiatives that seek to promote dialogue, understanding, and cooperation across diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic contexts. Through his interdisciplinary approach and commitment to excellence, Mohammed continues to make valuable contributions to scholarship and intellectual discourse in his areas of expertise.

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### Ibn Battuta – an Interreligious Traveler?

**Vedran Obućina**, Centre for Interreligious Dialogue, Rijeka, Croatia

#### Abstract

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Battuta is a world famous Maghribi traveller, explorer, and scholar who travelled more than any other adventurer in the pre-modern times. His travelogues were read far and wide. Still today, they

form an interesting text but even more so, they are in the background of many imageries about different world areas.

By examining his accounts “A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and Marvels of Travelling” (also known as *The Rihla*), and further commentaries on Ibn Battuta, with a special emphasis on his travels between 1349 and 1354 in Maghrib and Sahel, this paper focuses on Ibn Battuta’s encounters and understandings of other cultures, religions, and denominations.

While crossing today’s Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali, Ibn Battuta described political, economic, and social conditions, with always particular interest in religious matters. He writes with a crucial dialogue-awareness, as he wants to learn and gain new knowledge wherever he travels. At the same time, he gives us an unprecedented picture of pre-modern Maghrib and Sahel.

By examining his writings, this paper finds traits of interreligious dialogue and understanding of differences in Maghrib and Sahel, and accentuates his approach in documenting cultural and religious history of Maghrib, whether orthodox or mystical. Such an approach may serve for intercultural and interreligious connections between peoples and nations of Maghrib and Sahel today.

### Keywords

Ibn Battuta, Interreligious Dialogue, Pre-Modern Maghreb and Sahel, Religious History of the Maghreb

### Bio

Vedran Obućina is a political scientist and theologian from Croatia. He holds an MA in Political Science and Theology. He defended his PhD at the University of Regensburg in Germany. His academic work is based on religion and politics, with a focus on the peacebuilding possibilities of religious institutions around the world. He applies his knowledge and

expertise at a worldwide level and has worked in various capacities Chulalongkorn University, in Thailand, and as the IEP Ambassador. He is the Fellow and Trainer of Kaiciid Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.

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### Re-writing Morocco through Auto-ethnography in two Moroccan Ambassadorial Travel Narratives

**Hajar Berghabi**, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco  
**Saad Boulahnane**, Hassan I University, Settat, Morocco

### Abstract

Ab This paper aims at investigating two ambassadorial travel narratives written by Mohamed Attaher Ben AbdRahman El Fassi and Driss Jaadi during the nineteenth century, which was considered as a very critical moment in the history of travel narratives because it was a period of what James Moriss calls “high imperialism”. Morocco went through many defeats and Europe was invading the world. Their ambassadorial travel narratives are respectively the following: *Al Rihla al Ibriziyaila Diyar al Injaliziya* (1860), *Ithaf al Akhiyar Bigharaib al Akhbar* (1876). The article addresses how these Moroccan travelers sent for ambassadorial missions represent what Mary Louise Pratt calls “auto-ethnographic expression” or “autoethnography” in their narratives. In other words, this paper is meant to analyze Morocco and the Moroccan society through what it was and/or was not at that time. By going to Britain, exploring, and showing interest in the different features of development in that country, the Moroccan travelers were able write narratives full of instances of comparisons, translation and deep reflections on their society. Time, space, and other dynamics of the encounters played a crucial role in the formation of these narratives about the self and the world. Establishing a binary opposition which is a characteristic of auto-

ethnography revealed many aspects of the social, cultural, economic, religious, and historical period of time that Morocco was going through. Thus, their ambassadorial travel narratives could be seen as historical documents that rewrite the history of Morocco from a different perspective and using a different tool.

### Keywords

Morocco, History, Ambassadorial Travel Narratives, Auto-Ethnography, Transcultural Encounters

### Bio

Hajar Berghabi is a doctorate holder in Language and English literature, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Dhar Mehraz, Fez. She is currently an assistant professor of English composition and rhetoric at Al Akhawayn University, School of Social Sciences, Art and Humanities, Ifrane. She has been involved in many academic activities, national and international conferences, study days, workshops, and trainings related to various areas of research. She is also a CELTA holder from the International House of Izmir. Hajar Berghabi shows interest in different disciplines of research, such as travel writing, cultural studies, education, and Gender Issues.

Saad Boulahnane is a Professor of English at Hassan I University, Settat, Morocco, and currently serves as the Head of the Department of Transversal Skills and Foreign Languages. A former Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA), Dr. Boulahnane has extensive experience in teaching and academic editing with Q1 journals on education and Islamic studies. He has published research in international journals and has participated in international conferences, with research interests in critical discourse analysis, media studies, and travel writing.

## Panel 6B. Women writing, gender, and the body – part 2

### Navigating Gender and Identity: Moroccan Women Writers' Perspectives

Jihane Haddouchi, University of Caen, France

### Abstract

This presentation sheds light on Moroccan women writers' influential role in the evolution of the Moroccan literary landscape. Through the lens of women's writings, this presentation examines how their work challenges existing traditional premises and gender norms. By exploring themes of gender, identity, and culture, Moroccan women writers depict women's nuanced realities in Morocco. This presentation will analyze Laila Lalami's *Hope and Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) and Najat El Hachmi's *The Last Patriarch* (2008) to examine how women's narratives resist to patriarchal established norms in the Moroccan society. These two books depict the struggles of Moroccan women as they navigate and challenge oppressive patriarchal structures. Through migration and personal resistance, the characters seek to gain agency. The novels explore themes of gender, immigration, and identity crisis, highlighting the multifaceted experiences of these women.

Laila Lalami's novel tells the story of four Moroccans willing to migrate to Europe and the challenges they face, both in their origin and host countries. The author addresses gender issues, social injustice and immigrants' ambiguous state as they experience feelings of alienation and detachment. Laila Lalami emphasizes women's agency and resilience as they navigate a male-biased society. Similarly, El Hachmi's "The Last Patriarch" portrays female resistance through the novel's protagonist who struggles against her father's authority. She tackles the hardships of women to gain independence in a patriarchal society, the clash between modernity and tradition and the



quest for self-identity. These two books reflect the socio-cultural transformations in the contemporary Moroccan society, and the position of women at the intersection of immigration journeys and the changes of the Moroccan society.

This presentation highlights the powerful impact of Moroccan women's writings in translating women's realities. By focusing on the works of Laila Lalami and Najat El Hachmi, this study will highlight the critical role of women writers in challenging and reshaping cultural narratives and social norms.

### **Keywords**

Women writings, Gender, Laila Lalami, Najat El Hachmi

### **Bio**

I am a third-year PhD student in French literature at the University of Caen Normandy, where I am a member of the Laboratory LASLAR EA 4256 (Lettres, Arts du spectacle, Langues Romanes). My research, supervised by Anne Schneider, focuses on the theme of triple alterity and identity trajectories of minorities (women and homosexuals) in Francophone, Anglophone, and Arabophone literature from the Maghreb from 1985 to 2022.

I hold two master's degrees: one in Moroccan Cultural Studies from the University Mohammed Ben Abdellah in Fès, titled "Patriarchy, the Rhetoric of Sexual Purity and Virginity as Impediments to Women's Freedom: Moroccan, Turkish and Tunisian Films as Case Studies," and another in Migration Studies from the University Côte d'Azur in Nice, France, titled "North African Women's Migration Experience between Empowerment and Disempowerment."

I have actively engaged with the academic community by participating in numerous upcoming international conferences. I will present my work on Abdellah Taïa's exploration of otherness and sexuality in Francophone

migration literature at the 38th World Congress of CIEF in Moncton, Canada (June 24-30, 2024). At the EQELLES international symposium (June 19-21, 2024), I will discuss gender identity and feminism in Nina Bouraoui's works. Additionally, I will present on Leïla Slimani's revelation of Moroccan women's voices at the "Écrits de femmes au cœur des francophonies" conference in Spain (October 24-25, 2024).

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### **Diasporic Space and Moroccan Women Literature: Revisiting Identity through Self-Writing**

**Mimoune Daoudi**, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, and Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco

### **Abstract**

The diversity of contemporary European and American society provides the context that enables Moroccan immigrant women writers to bring to the fore issues of female identity interwoven with the problem of the plight of immigrants in the West. These writers engage in an actively critical process of demystifying and subverting stereotypes generated by the traditional society. Rather than being marginalized by womanhood, Moroccan immigrant writers bring to the center stage of their work the Moroccan immigrant woman to problematize patriarchal traditional references of Moroccan society. It is only through the confrontation and the rejection of the images imposed on them from the outside that their protagonists will be able to forge their own identity and break free from confining traditions. Their work promotes a new feminist social writing in which Moroccan women's roles are redefined.

Najat Elhachmi, Najat Benarbia, and Wafa Hallam among many others epitomize a stream of emerging voices that attempt to subvert the assumptions of patriarchal discourse and write its history from the vantage

point of the subaltern. Indeed, Moroccan women writers problematize social dynamics of the postcolonial era in Morocco. They try to raise consciousness and create public awareness in relation to established social disadvantages. They denounce a patriarchal scheme that relegates women to a secondary and dependent position within the patterns of social organization.

### Keywords

Identity, Emancipation, Women immigrant writers, Belongingness, Space

### Bio

Mimoune Daoudi is a professor of cultural studies at the university of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Fez. He is a fellow researcher at the Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. He is member founder of the research laboratory: Discourse, Creativity, Society and Religions. He is head of Translation Unit at the Center for Researches in Human and Social Sciences, Oujda ([www.cerhso.com](http://www.cerhso.com)). He is interested in Cultural Studies, Migrant Literature, the Digital Turn in Religions. He published two books and a number of articles, among which "Moroccan Diaspora Literature and the Quest for Alternative Identities" (2023) and "Space and Identity in Contemporary Moroccan Diaspora Literature" (2014).

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## The Importance of the Feminist Thought of Fatima Mernissi in the (Re-)Writing of the Transcultural Approach to Feminism

**Kaouther Karoui**, University of Münster, Germany

### Abstract

Paying tribute to the plurality and diversity of Moroccan engaged literature by honoring prominent Moroccan scholars should not be done without

highlighting the contribution of one of the most important representatives of feminist thought in the Maghrib-Morocco, Fatima Mernissi (d. 2015). Mernissi's feminist thought, and writing continues to make a crucial contribution today, not only within the local and national borders of Morocco, but her feminist thought transcends the geographical boundaries of belonging, identity and cultural tradition. Mernissi's thought strives for pluralism and plurality; it demands recognition and seeks visibility. Her feminism deconstructs myths, stereotypes and clichés to create a transnational feminism, a borderless feminism and a decolonial feminism. I argue that it is within her secular and Islamic feminist approaches that most of the reception of Mernissi's thought on feminism has essentially occurred. It is this joint use of secular and Islamic thought at different stages of her intellectual career, which is evident in her scholarly books, that constitutes what I identified as Mernissi's transcultural approach. But this transcultural approach is not only present in her scholarly books, but also in her feminist novels.

The aim of this paper is therefore to shed light on Mernissi's feminist novels. Her works of fiction are fundamental to what I understand as Mernissi's avant-garde contribution to the movement of transnational and decolonial feminism. My working method in this paper is interpretive. I use Mernissi's feminist novels to understand and analyze her critique of what I call myth(s). By myth I mean the falsifiable, elaborate, structural narrative and categorical representation of culture and thought. The Myth is constructed and formed with prejudice and monolithic representation; it is forged in the sphere of the unthought.

Following on from this, in this paper I analyze Mernissi's strategies of myths deconstruction; I present first *the myth of an essential Arab-Muslim identity* which she deconstructs by pointing out that Muslim culture(s) transcends the identity of Arab; Muslim culture(s) is pluralistic and exceeds the Arab nationalist ideology. Second, *the myth of the subordination and inferiority of Muslim women*, which Mernissi seeks to deconstruct by revealing the

emblematic figure of *Scheherazade* to show her intellectual and revolutionary capacities, which contradict the framework of orientalism that confine Scheherazade to an exotic cultural product. By decolonizing Scheherazade from the stereotype representation of orientalism, Mernissi decolonizes Muslim women from the clichés of ignorant, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized beings. Third, *the myth of the Harem* as a symbol of local sexism and the subordination of women is what Mernissi sets out to deconstruct, and she does so through the narrative of her experience as a child born in the Harem in Fès. Mernissi presents a different appearance of the Harem, one that contradicts the orientalist Harem representation of submissive women. Contrary, the women who live in the Harem of Fès, her mother and her aunts, are not subservient, but seek freedom and emancipation, and encourage the child Mernissi to escape the wall of Harm through education as a crucial component of women's liberation. Last but not least, *the myth of borders* is deconstructed by Mernissi as she presents the mystical poem written by the Persian Sufi Farid al- Din Attar (d. 1221) entitled *The Conference of the Birds*. Through this poem, Mernissi presents her concept of transgression of boundaries (*hudud*), which I interpret within a transnational feminist perspective, through which I understand Mernissi's quest for a feminist solidarity between the Global South and the Global North. Thus, my interpretation and understanding of the deconstruction of myths in Mernissi's feminist novels, her critique of orientalism, and her dissolution of geographical and cultural boundaries is interesting because I understand that Mernissi is involved in initiating the current theories of borderless feminism by Chandra Mohanty and decolonial feminism by Françoise Vergès, contributing to the reframing of pluralist feminist thought.

### Keywords

Feminist Thought, Myths Deconstruction, Feminist Solidarity, Borderless

Feminism, Decolonial Feminism, Pluralism

### Bio

Kaouter Karoui holds a master's degree in philosophy from the Institut Supérieur des Sciences Humaines in Tunis. She worked on the DFG-funded research project "Diversity, Power and Justice: Transcultural Perspective" at the University of Kassel and the University of Koblenz-Landau from 2016 to 2019. During the same years, she participated in scientific activities within the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) within the project "Transformation - Culture - Gender" between the University of Lüneburg and the University of Manouba in Tunis. From 2019 to 2022, she was a research assistant at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Münster. From September 2022 to September 2023, she was a fellow of the Cluster of Excellence Religion and Politics at the University of Münster. In October 2023 she received her PhD in Philosophy with a dissertation entitled *Theorising Justice in Contemporary Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Transcultural Approach with Fatima Mernissi and Mohammed Arkoun*, which has already been published. She currently holds the position of Equal Opportunities Officer at the Cluster of Excellence Religion and Politics at the University of Münster, while continuing her intellectual activities and research on decolonial and transnational feminism.

## Keynote speech III (in absentia)

### The Researcher's Patience and the Historian's Neutrality: Rewriting Morocco's History?

**Sonja Hegasy**, ZMO – Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany

#### Bio

Sonja Hegasy is Deputy Director of the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin. She studied Arabic and Islamic Studies at Columbia University and completed her doctorate in political science at FU Berlin. Her research and publications focus on modern Arab intellectual thought, civil society and social mobilization, as well as the politics of memory in post-conflict societies. Sonja Hegasy has been active in introducing the work of contemporary Moroccan philosopher Mohamed Abed al-Jabiri in Germany. In 2019–2021, she held the professorship for Postcolonial Studies at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin. In 2023, she was a Senior Fellow at ICAS in Delhi. She is appointed as Fellow of the Thomas Mann House in Los Angeles in 2025.

## Roundtable II and Book Launch

### Moroccan Thought in the Arab World and Beyond\*

Launch of the volume *Contemporary Moroccan Thought: On Philosophy, Theology, Society, and Culture*, ed. M. Hashas (Brill, 2025, pp. 800).

With **Francesca M. Corrao**, Elizabeth S. Kassab, Shamil Jeppie, Hamza Salih, Juan A. Macias-Amoretti, Sara Borrillo, Brahim El Guabli, the Editor



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\*This event is sponsored by Brill Publishers.

#### Bios

**Francesca Maria Corrao** is Professor of Arabic Language and Culture at the Department of Political Sciences of the Luiss University (Rome), and Director of the master's degree program in Institutions and Economies of the Middle Eastern Countries (MISLAM). Corrao has published more than 30 books and 100 articles in the fields of Mediterranean studies, poetry and the history of the Arab world, culture and identity, intercultural dialogue, human rights, and gender studies. Her most recent works include: *Letteratura araba: Dall'epoca preislamica all'età postclassica*, 2 vols (*Arabic Literature: From Pre-Islamic Times to the Present*, edited with Monica Ruocco, 2 vols.,

2024); *States, Actors and Geo-political Drivers in the Mediterranean* (ed. with Riccardo Redaelli, 2021); *Islam, State and Modernity. Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri and the Future of the Arab World*, ed. with Zaid Eyadat, and Mohammed Hashas, 2018); and *Islam, Religion, and Politics* (2015).

**Shamil Jeppie** teaches in the History Department at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He studied in Cape Town and Princeton and held a post-doctoral fellowship at Oxford University. He was recently a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and at the I Tatti in Firenze. His forthcoming book is on the history of the Arabic book in north-west Africa. His work is focused on the collections in and around Timbuktu, He has also worked on the Sudan and South Africa. He is a member of the Académie du Royaume du Maroc.