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Imperialism and the writing of the self in postcolonial criticism: preliminary notes on the Moroccan self and imperial heritage

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Abstract

Imperial ideology still warrants thorough scrutiny on the part of the postcolonial observer. Though it has been repeatedly dismantled, misrepresentation and exploitation are ubiquitous and atrocities still go viral in the Arab-Muslim world. I claim that there is still a certain discontinuity in the application of the ethos from which the imperial West claims to take its philosophical activity. This paper further argues that the very defect which accompanies imperial ideology is that it fails to conceive of its own contradictions. That some practices have become axiomatic, the writing of the postcolonial identity as a subversion of imperial representations, structures of thought and behavior should become an essential quest for the postcolonial critic. This paper advances the premise that the writing of postcolonial identity as a subversive strategy is essentially a writing of that which imperial ideology silences or fails to see, namely its hegemonic domination and brutality. It is also a writing of that which distinguishes the postcolonial self with its own semic, cultural and interpretive codes. The flaw, as I argue, is that the postcolonial self (i.e. the Moroccan self) is still denigrated in Western media and its writing by its postcolonial critics raises some serious theoretical problems. I ascertain that the postcolonial self is still positioned in the margins of the Western reason, and the postcolonial critic's wish to give voice to identities he/she consciously/unconsciously term 'marginal' is in itself problematic. To define the postcolonial self as being extremely separate/different from the Western self might lead to atavist or monistic conception of the whole matter, and to define it as being essentially different but still dependent on the extreme center might explicitly subjugate it to the same imperial hegemony it wishes to shed. The outcome is that no matter how different his/her writing is the postcolonial critic is interpellated to the same imperial ideology he wishes to subvert.

Key terms: *Morocco, Imperialism, Identity, Subversion.*

There is a certain discontinuity in the application of the ethos from which the imperial West claims to take its philosophical activity. For the candid observer, 'Le bon sens' seems to be the norm to abide by in the metropolitan center. However, it is observed that the imperial Europe's etiquette applies only to its geographical borders and it is not (except for the purpose of denigration or exploitation) extended to societies which dwell behind its geographical horizon. Books such as Oswald Spengler's *The Decay of the West* and Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* demonstrate how imperial ideology is no longer intact especially in the way it treats "Others". We herein refuse to believe what the imperial Europe pronounces via discourse and chose to probe only its practices as a source of knowledge. In *discoure de la methode*, Descartes in its very first sentences announces the following:

Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée (...) cela témoigne que la puissance de bien juger, et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens, ou la raison, est naturellement égale a tous les hommes ; et ainsi que la diversité de nos opinions ne vient pas de ce que les uns sont plus raisonnables que les autres mais seulement de ce que ne conduisons nos pensées par diverses voies, et ne considérons pas les mêmes chose. Car ce n'est pas assez d'avoir l'esprit bon, mai le principal est de l'appliquer bien.¹

This great manuscript of the European mind is believed to be the origin of modern European thought. But has its poetic diction ever been enough, especially when juxtaposed with how atrocious imperial European practices are on the ground? Is this discourse practiced wholly or partially? Three hundred years have gone by after the pronouncement of these ideas and the imperial Europe's conception of 'right' and 'wrong' has obviously gone wrong, especially in the way it treats "Others". The practice of colonialism has been one of its great pitfalls, imperialism is now its begotten son and Euro-centrism is the general drive. It seems that the postcolonial subject is damned to suffer from its inauspicious practices. Descartes further states:

Il est bon de savoir quelque chose des mœurs de divers peuples, afin de juger des nôtres plus sainement , et que nous pensions pas que toute qui est contre nos modes soit ridicule et contre raison, ainsi qu' ont coutume de faire ceux qui n' ont rien vu; mai lorsque on emploie trop de temps à voyager on devient enfin étranger en son pays; et lorsqu'on est

¹ Descartes, Rene *Discoure de la méthode* (France, Le Livre de poche: 1637) 67.

trop curieux des choses qui se pratiquaient aux siècle passés, on demeure ordinairement fort ignorant de celles qui ce pratiquent en celui ici.²

This is what imperial ideology had long failed to fully grasp, or else was too lazy to apply. For its belittling conception of others to cease, it should be informed by a certain objective travel outside the self. For colonial ideology, it obviously takes concerted efforts to break loose from monistic conceptions of the world. It continues to hold firmly on to its monistic ideology without the intent to embrace the duality that is inherent to all things in the world. It still takes pleasure at coercion, but as it grows it betrays structures that echo the contradictions that are inherent to its existence. In order not to generalize or fall in the trap of hasty judgments, the imperial knowledge I aim to expose and dismantle is specific in nature. It is not any knowledge. To be accurate, it is a "knowledge that is produced as the consequence of a particular *practice*. Knowledge whether ideological or scientific is the production of a practice. It is not the reflection of the real in language."³ My critical endeavor here aspires to trace real imperial practices. It thus avoids explaining the world by taking words that exist only in dictionaries or words that do not match with realities on the ground. My critical endeavor will as well avoid ideas that might be inspired by the muses, sick whims or over enthusiastic fervor.

In "Ideology and Ideological States Apparatuses, (notes towards an investigation)" Louis Althusser states that ideology is the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence; he also argues that ideology maintains a material existence and above all interpellates individuals as subjects, and this is what specifically discommodates us in imperial ideology. If it only kept an imaginary sphere which has no exploitative material manifestations, we would not dare to call it into question. In his examination of the capitalist coercion, Louis Althusser seldom refers to ideologies of resistance and we know well that ideology operates well when it encounters no counter dispositions. Being aware of the possible existence of attempts of subversion, the imperial state, in its aim to appear neutral, takes advantage of what Stuart Hall terms the 'free play of civil society' (what Antonio Gramsci also terms 'the manufacture of consent'). This is constituted to appear free to criticize the coercion of imperial ideology, but still with the symbolic and material presence of a consistent, containing capitalist ideological hegemony. That is to

² Descartes, Rene *Discours de la méthode* (France, Le Livre de poche: 1637) 73.

³ Curran, James and Walkerdine, Valerie. *Cultural Studies and Communications* (New York: Arnold Press, 1995) 17.

say, that when counter ideologies are allowed a voice within or outside the imperial state, their voice is usually limited to a repertoire that has been determined by imperial ideologues. Here, we have the right to ask; is our counter discourse effective at all with the existence of the status quo? Can we really bring imperial practices to end knowing that 'truth' nowadays equals power? And if we suppose we succeeded in doing so, what alternative would we introduce in its place?

It might seem daring and somewhat nihilistic to raise such questions at the very outset, but it is nevertheless proven that "we are constituted by the unconscious processes of ideology, [we are] in that position of recognition or suture between ourselves and the signifying chain."⁴ We are, moreover, aware that "the notion of the dominant ideology and the subordinate ideology is an inadequate way of representing the complex interplay of different ideological discourses and formations in any modern developed society"⁵ for it entails an apparent false dilemma. To draw a bead on a postmodern world free of any ideological interpellation is something difficult to conceive at all, and since language is the mediator between us and the world, this implies that human ideological illusions are inescapable. It is therefore venturesome to wish to bring imperial practices to end when the Marxist philosophy with all the symbolic and material strength it had could not accomplish such a task. Capitalism's very power is that it has the means to bypass crisis, justify its deeds and renew itself as it grows. What we propose instead is to "deconstruct the opposition [and] overthrow the hierarchy"⁶ by the introduction of worldviews (particularly the Moroccan self) that have the philosophical (not ethno-philosophical as the west has it) power to teach the imperial West that which it silences, disdains or fails to see. In describing this ideological struggle, Stuart Hall states,

A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rapture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or rearticulating its associations, from the negative to the positive. Often; ideological struggle actually consists of attempting to win some new sets of meanings

⁴ Curran and Walkerdine 21.

⁵ Curran and Walkerdine 24.

⁶ Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1997) 92.

from an existing term or category, of disarticulating it from its place in a signifying structure.⁷

The structures I will dismantle are the result of repetitive and normative material practices which at once beget and beseech subversion. The omnipresent hatred which is still latent to the imperial Europe's structures of thought (what James Baldwin also calls a system of reality) cannot be described only symbolically; it has a certain material existence which most of the time manifests itself in separate but linked events that are too obvious for everyone to see. As of late, while commenting on the intended crashing of the German flight 9525 into the French Alps on March 25, 2015, the Christian televangelist Pat Robertson claimed that the drive behind the crash could be deciphered if Andrea Lubitz, the co-pilot, was a Muslim, assuming fallaciously that Muslims are always the cause of terror, which is the same false premise that sustained America's devastating war in Iraq in 2003. In a second incident in the USA, three Muslim American students were shot to death in the residual complex of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on February 11, 2015. Despite the seriousness of the incident, it received insufficient media coverage. The murderer was Graig Stephen; his murder is said to be a hate-motivated crime. However, it was neither conceived of as a terrorist attack nor condemned by Western Media specialists and politicians. Although separate in time and place, these two events reveal the perspectivist ideology which is inherent in the imperial discourse. The general mood is this: Arab Muslims are harshly to blame when issues of terrorism are at hand, and are gratingly to neglect when their rights are violated within America or elsewhere. This could be attributed to the lack of a Muslim voice representing comparable power to that of the imperial center.

To boot, upon her visit to Morocco April 12, 2010, and upon collecting data for her 'reality' show *The Price of Beauty*⁸, the presenter Jessica Simpson could not interpret the Moroccan culture from a lens that understands difference and hence she was not able to translate the Moroccan culture from a broader intercultural stand. This show frames Moroccans within the same old Orientalist effigies, depicting at the show's very outset only images of snake charmers, veiled women, and camels. The show procreates the

⁷ Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation and Ideology", in *Cultural Studies and Communications* Ed. James Curran and Valerie Walkerdine (New York: Arnold Press, 1995) 31.

⁸ The television show is directed by Tony Croll, presented by Jessica Simpson, and produced by RDF in the United States of America.

same role that the Royal Geographical Society and The East India Company once had played depicting the Orient as the land of the barbaric, nourishing Europe's desire to project its modern self against the Orient which is most of the time seen as a its cultural Other. In turn, *Hideous Kinky*, a film produced in 1998, reproduces the image of Moroccans as begrime citizens, revivifying George Orwell's use of the same degenerate terms to delineate Moroccans in his essay "Marrakech". Similarly, in such a racist manner, Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* (1917) denigrated Moroccans and spoke of "oriental neglect", "ignorance" and "sexual imprisonment" as being inherent to the Moroccan culture while jaunting around Morocco in the early twentieth century. Edith Wharton writes:

*There are few points of contact between the occidental open mind and beings imprisoned in a conception of sexual and domestic life based on slave-service and incessant espionage. Those languid women on their muslin cushions toil not, neither do they spin. The Moroccan lady knows little of cooking, needlework or any household arts.*⁹

It should be clear by now that the imperial West, now led by Donald Trump's fascist ideology, is unable to conceive of its own pitfalls with regard to how it represents and treats "Others". What particularly interests us is the subversion of this ubiquitous imperial ideology on the part of the post-colonial Moroccan intellectuals. The decentering which we aim at takes the following definition as a base:

*To [decenter] is to take apart, to undo, in order to seek out and display the assumptions of a text. In particular, [decentering] involves the dismantling of hierarchical binary conceptual oppositions such as man/woman, black/white, reality/appearance, nature/culture, reason/madness etc. that serve to guarantee the status and power of truth-claims by excluding and devaluing the 'inferior' part of the binary.*¹⁰

What has for so long been thought of as the "inferior part of the binary" has to voice itself in response to the part of his identity that has been silenced.

The way Edith Wharton (the above quoted orientalist) jaunted to Morocco to describe its people as being feeble-minded and degenerate, inflicting a colonial ideology attests to this ever-present Eurocentric outlook. Would not it be more fruitful if Edith Wharton directed criticism to the ills of her own land? We know that America, Wharton's homeland,

⁹ Wharton, Edith. *In Morocco*, (New York: The Scribner Press, 1920) 93.

¹⁰ Barker, Chris. *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, (London: Sage, 2004) 47.

has an Amish¹¹ society of one million 'slow-witted' citizens who are still stuck, up to the present moment, in the centuries-old sixteenth century thought; such a society utilizes neither cars nor phones. It disdains modern education and hates electricity. Such people, I argue, implore E. Wharton's indict, not the already colonized Moroccans who dwell thousands of miles away. E. Wharton could have even denigrated the racist whites of the 1920s or the atrocious Ku Klux Klan ideology which once wished to obliterate African Americans from the face of earth. She could even have denigrated the imperial American ideology whereby the US military fed The First World War and the Vietnam War instead of aspersing the already colonized Moroccans of 1920s, hence sustaining French colonialism. That Wharton is an American novelist who sustained the French mission is in itself a topic worth of investigation, for how could both America and France be distant in space but still be linked in their imperial orientations in the name of their ideological state apparatuses?

The very defect which accompanies imperial ideology is that it fails to conceive of its own pitfalls. It stays silent to its shortcomings and cannot go beyond the centuries-old logic of binary opposites; 'us' and 'them'. It cannot thus conceive of Colonialism/imperialism as being a defect of European thought and behavior and even if it happened to acknowledge its atrocities it would never take the action to heal the wounds of those it subjugated. Not to generalize, Eurocentric writings such as those of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington fail to be critical of the history of orientalism and the colonial atrocities that succeeded it. Evidently, the academic left in Europe is critical of such imperial thoughts and practices but still in Europe and America "overall the left [is] a relatively small minority"¹² and the writers from the ex-colonies form a variety which is not limited to one ideological direction with regard to its conception of imperialism.

The necessity of this reminder indicates the continuing existence of some deeply flawed political scholarship in cultural studies, which fails to connect its own analyses effectively to the global, historical structures of colonization, decolonization and re-colonization.

¹² Dinning, Micheal. *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (Verso: London, 2004) 129.

Without careful historical work focusing on this issue, cultural studies will never escape its complicity with 'western centrism'.¹³

The imperial effigies are still reproduced in the metropolitan center. They are still perspectivist, self-protective and silent to imperial heritage, which is now life-threatening in the wake of the rise of Donald Trump and in need of a much more hard-and-fast criticism. The imperial lens found for instance in the writings of Edith Wharton, Bernard Lewis¹⁴, Samuel Huntington and Waters Malcolm grounds its analysis on binary opposites. Samuel Huntington, establishing polarities, would confidently claim the following:

Two worlds: us and them. While one world expectations appear at the end of major conflicts, the tendency to think in terms of two worlds recurs throughout human history. People are always tempted to divide people into us, and them, the in-group and the other group, our civilization and those barbarians (...) Muslims have divided the world into Dar Al-Islam and Dar al-Harb.¹⁵

Samuel Huntington describes a subject he knows little about and thus fails to conceive of the world beyond this very predatory-like worldview which is inflicted by the capitalist structures of thought. Beyond Europe, there dwell worldviews which do not find pleasure

¹³ Morley, David and Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (Routledge: USA and Canada, 1996) 11.

¹⁴ In "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (1990) Bernard Lewis puts his argument against Muslims in the following pattern. 1. Muslims from their early beginnings had a "mood of hatred" for the Western people who they considers to be "the enemies of god" or "the unbelievers" 2. In the past, Muslims were a great civilization, but now they are backward and ruled by those (westerners) who they used to consider as inferiors.3. Because of Globalization, Muslims are invaded by ways and styles of life that are foreign, and strange to their culture, which they find difficult to assimilate. 4. As a result of globalization and the secular views of the west, Muslims reject and accuse the west for tyranny, exploitation, sexism, and imperialism. 5. The west should except Muslim rage and violence. Bernard Lewis is obviously xenophobic and too silent to imperial atrocity exploitation.

¹⁵ Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1996) 32.

at exploiting the weak and uttering hateful speech or designative language. One reader would claim that violence had always been practiced by different ethnicities and groups throughout history. Still, wars that were fought using swords and catapults cannot in any way be compared to the amount of violence pursued by imperial Europe.

For instance, the body of imperial literature on Morocco proper bears witness to such an ubiquitous ideology of belittling. Imperial imagination is present in Bernard Newman's *Morocco Today* (1953), Walter Haris' *Morocco that Was* (1905), Cunningham Graham's *MOGREB-EL-ACKSA*, George Orwell's *Marrakech*, Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* (1917) and E. Freud's *Hideous Kinky* (1992). It also exists in the manuscripts of great anthologists such as Paul Rabinoux's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1980). These writings are nourished by an interpretive code that takes from Western biased tools of analysis that cannot be fully applied to the Moroccan context, for they lack a certain intercultural stand. In "Marrakech", for instance, George Orwell dares to put Moroccans at a level so dangerously distinct in the diction it uses for the purpose of descriptive criticism. At the very outset Orwell wonders "[whether Moroccans are] merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects?"¹⁶ In Morocco, he adds "the human beings have brown skins [and] their poverty is simply not noticed."¹⁷ He wants to say that Moroccans lack needs and that it never shows in their daily posture. But is not this spirituality a power? Is not it a quality that the greedy colonists lacked in the colonies? "Clouds of flies" is the term that George Orwell specifically uses to describe the Moroccan children. He seems to denigrate colonialism but his diction is in fact twofold; he fluffily denigrates colonialism but with a style that is informed by orientalism. George Orwell observes that "what is strange about [Moroccan] people is their invisibility," and that "this kind of thing makes one's blood boil."¹⁸ By the end, Orwell echoes an idea which is significant to the thread we endeavor to sew, he states:

But there is one thought which every white man (and in this connection it doesn't matter two pence if he calls himself a Socialist) thinks when he sees a black army marching past.

¹⁶ Orwell, George "Marrakech" (London: Christmas, 1939) 1.

¹⁷ Orwell, 2.

¹⁸Orwell, 1.

*'How much longer can we go on kidding these people? How long before they tum their guns in the other direction?'*¹⁹

George Orwell's "Marrakech" (1939) attests to the height of colonial exploitation in the colonies. The essay entails the absurdity of the whole colonial situation but still bears witness to the possibility of a counter discourse from the part of the colonized.

At this stage, for it to fulfill logical validity, my criticism of imperial ideology in literature ought to be juxtaposed with counter discourse. This means that we "must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded."²⁰ Plainly, the history of the imperial Europe has many hidden tales to recount; namely tales of fraudulent logic and atrocity that are further nourished by an inherent drive to culturally miss-frame and subjugate Others. When it comes to its behavior toward its "Others" (i.e. Moroccans) Imperial Europe has for so long substituted valid logic for the socially constructed "truths". Accurate decentering of this imperial/neocolonial fabric cannot be possible without the examination of the very contradictory history it has itself made, the incessant imperial structures of feelings it has itself established and the subversion it has so far received. Like Orwell's *Marrakech*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* is a macrocosm of the post-colonial experience in Antigua under the British imperial rule. The imperialists were brutish as they took the land and deluded the language leaving Antigua with orphans only. Jamaica Kincaid writes:

*What I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one made orphans; no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue.*²¹

¹⁹ Orwell, 3.

²⁰ Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 66.

²¹ Kincaid, Jamaica. "A Small Place" in *The Post Colonial Studies Reader* Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 94.

In *Yurugu: an African Centered Critique of European Thought and Behavior*, Marimba Ani dismantles imperialism in a way that transcends most its past subversions. Imperialism, Marimba Ani would argue, has an inherent tendency toward competitiveness and aggression which are deeply rooted in what she calls a European isolating concept of the self and thus thought and behavior. Marimba Ani writes:

*The determining factor in the European Behavior towards those outside her culture is the driving power theme that dominates her ideology. It underlies their fanatical rationalism,(...) their obsession with the material and the technical, and their imperialist expansion. The cultural other becomes the most extreme manifestation of this power drive and a necessary component of the European worldview.*²²

Imperialism is then ready to be atrocious when it treats non-Europeans.²³ In the era of colonialism in Morocco, imperial ideology concealed its very economic interests and most of the time claimed the opposite of truth. It operated in ways that were not amply recognizable to Moroccans. Beneath its very deceitful ethical premise (the noble civilizing mission) rested an invalid logic that was sustained by an array of Orientalist mythologies. The depth with which Abdallah Laroui examines the history of Morocco in *The History of the Maghreb: An Interpretive Essay* reveals this systematic subjugation of Morocco since the early nineteenth century. The defeat of Isli in 1844, the treaty of Tangier in 1844, and Lala Maghnia in 1845 marked the early discursive establishments of colonialism. Europe's systematic historical study and political subjugation of Morocco rendered Moroccans manageable to its imperial eyes, but at the same time France divorced the history of Moroccans from its past realities. Examples of imperial exploitation as detailed by Abdallah Laroui included the issuing of The Warnier Law in 1873 which allowed any colonist the right to call for an auction and buy any infinitesimal Moroccan lands they lay their hands on. Colonists in Morocco were agents of destruction of both the land and culture, and their imperialism was to begin at the end of their mission. "It was at the end not the beginning of the colonial period that the cliché — "a scattering of tribes killing each other" — became a reality, for such a state of affairs was the aim and purpose of

²² Ani, Marimba. *Yurugu, an African Centered Critique of European Thought and Behavior* (Washington DC: Nkonimfo Publications, 1994) 431.

²³ Cases in point are the dropping of the atomic Bomb on Japan in 1945 killing 70.000 people, the atrocities of the French colonials in Morocco, Algeria and other parts of Africa, and the worst of all is the use of Africans as objects of scientific experiments as in The Tuskegee Experiment (1932-1972) which is known to very few people.

colonialism, not its cause."²⁴ Colonialists attacked not only the land but the very spirit of the people who inhabited it, denigrating their language and religion thus giving it a normative primitive character. Although Morocco obtained its independence, what really occurred after the famous Aix-les-Bains²⁵ was camouflaged defeat. This defeat is made plain by Abdallah El Aroui's in *The History of the Maghreb: an Interpretive Essay*. Moroccans did fall into many of the pitfalls that their nationalist thinkers warned them against and such pitfalls led to the continuity of the colonial ideology in administrative terms:

*This was the very essence of the colonial process to destroy indigenous society and then to accept individuals one by one into a new society organized by and for foreigners. In other words, the foreigners, after destroying most of the society's functions, were kind enough to let it die in peace.*²⁶

The worst death is the death of culture²⁷. Moroccans whose families were directly influenced by the illusory prestige left by the French colonists, speak a 'language' that the rest of their fellow citizens cannot fully understand; they throw French words in their daily speech and at times you sense that they have no real mastery of their mother tongue: a linguistic hybridity which is probably found only in the postcolonial states. It is now no wonder that in private and public institutions, they still make you read reports

²⁴ Laroui, Abdallah. *The History of The Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*. Trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977) 339.

²⁵ A conference was held in Aix-Les-Bains in France in August 27, 1955. It discussed the situation of Morocco after the burst of armed resistance. The decisions it came up with did not satisfy the national movement back in Morocco, for they thought it solely served the French interests in Morocco. Abdelkarim El Khatabi denigrated its members so harshly and claimed that they only served their interests and those of the French colonists. In a lecture in Casablanca in 1970, Allal El Fasi claimed that this conference helped France to corrupt the Moroccan independence and maintain its economic interests in the long run; this occurs particularly in Allal El Fassi's book *الديمقراطية وكفاح الشعب المغربي من أجلها*

²⁶ Laroui, Abdallah. *The History of The Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*. Trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977) 340.

²⁷ Culture here refers to "the best that is thought and said."

and at times sign economic contracts that are written in French. The colonial era also left us with this “get-rich-quick middle class [which] shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe but is caricature.”²⁸ The postcolonial self is to this day chained to its ex-colonizers’ economy and language. It finds itself in no man’s land, torn between two worlds, and as it navigates between the two codes, it loses all sense of direction. It has been taught that part of being modern is to cling to superficial, prestigious European rituals. It seldom reads great modern accounts, nor effects a serious quest for valuable knowledge to come to terms with the philosophy behind European modernity.

Additionally, what should interest us is that the colonial past still informs Europe’s imperial present. The still deployed divide-and-rule policy in the Arab world is proof enough. We learnt that imperialism is the last stage of capitalism. This means that it is inherently coercive and as it grows in capital, it will still nourish fields as diverse as history, culture and politics. The representation of Europe’s Others, namely Moroccans in the case of this research is believed to be axiomatic unless a serious critique/writing of comparable power is done to deconstruct its constant unfolding. The imperialism ideology we wish to decenter “interpellates individuals as subjects”²⁹ manifesting itself materially in contemporary ideological and material practices (i.e. Negative representations, the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Mali under different pretexts; one of which is the war on terror). Such ideological and material interpellation is dangerous in the sense that it does not allow the imperial writers and politicians to conceive of their denigrating orientalist practices. Thus, they cannot take a critical stand against the way they represent and treat the cultures that reside beyond their geographical and ideological purview.

Arabs (Moroccans included) in the European mindset are essentially the same wherever they happen to be. This claim is to be discarded, for it entails a generalization. This is a

²⁸ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth* (Australia, Penguin Books: 1967) 141.

²⁹ Althusser, Louis “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)” in *Mapping Ideology*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek (Verso:London New York, Verso. 1994) 78.

claim that Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Jack Shaheen, Gayatri Spivak, Ania Loomba have for so long dismantled, yet it still stretches. To decenter the debate and bring the metropolitan center to a much more intercultural view of the world, the burden is upon the shoulder of the young Moroccan scholars to speak for the Moroccan people in order to subvert this ubiquitous imperial ideology; First, by transcending its very thought (fallacious logic) and behavior (historical practice), by knowing its very scientific base of development, and finally by bringing it to a much more pluralist/intercultural debate over the cultures left in the periphery.

Young Maghrebis have been taking a passionate interest in the experience of nineteenth century Europe but fall asleep if the subject is the medieval Maghreb. Why do the words "time lag", "colonization", "blocked evolution" "unequal development" matter? (...) Who is responsible? God, geography or men? What each of us wants to know now is how to get out of ourselves, how to escape from our mountains and sand dunes, how to define ourselves in terms of ourselves and not someone else; how to stop being exiled in spirit. That alone is the revolution and it remains to be fought.³⁰

Laroui implies that young Maghrebis have to take interest in national culture and history instead of being interpellated to matters that do not matter. Indeed, we sense that unlike the tragic influence of colonialism/imperialism at the economic level, its cultural influence on postcolonial subjects is less apparent and it did not receive sufficient examination. Accurate study of postcolonial literature written specifically by exilic and native postcolonial Moroccan writers would render the understanding of this influence and its very subversion more comprehensible, for the sense of local history and shared regional consciousness are now established in postcolonial literature as de-centering strategies.

When we look back at the miserable circumstances in the age of colonialists and those after their departure, we cannot indeed conceal our feelings of wonder and woe. Now that they had left, what did we make of ourselves after their departure? We again tell them their history; the history they themselves made up and above all planned for. They bashed the natives, exploited the land and people and just left. The land is now left to its own lies; the lies of its own making. Atrocities in the colonies made sense when the land

³⁰ Laroui, Abdallah. *The History of The Maghrib: An Interpretive Essay*. Trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977) 345.

was stunted by the colonists but now Arabs murder each other with neither a sense of guilt nor shame. "Who is to blame? God, geography, or people?" Laroui astoundingly asks. Do we think at all? Are not we still exiled in mind and spirit? This very exile is what we need to shed and in the neocolonial states still this is the very first-and-last war that needs to be fought.

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