

Migration *as* Popular¹ Culture

Keywords: Morocco, popular culture, migration, stratification, queue, talk, music, press.

Introduction

In their attempt to understand the mechanisms underlying the phenomenal emigration of young people from ‘developing’ to Western ‘developed’ countries, scholars of migration; sociologists, social economists, geographers and journalists often situate this phenomenon in an economic-political framework, hence the dominance of macro and micro economic discourses in migration theory. Whilst the majority of these analyses remain very useful, they tend to however downplay symbolic dimensions of migration and limit therefore our understanding of its mechanisms in the twenty-first century. This paper attempts to explore symbolic migratory dimensions further by enquiring into the relationship between emigration as a social phenomenon in Morocco and Moroccan popular culture. The paper will argue using empirical evidence that emigration in Morocco is not only a social phenomenon, but also a pervasive part of the make up of its popular culture. The paper will begin by a brief critical introduction to Moroccan popular culture, then move on to explore, using evidence from fieldwork, a range of spheres from Moroccan popular

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There’s a linguistic and cultural distinction between the use of the word ‘popular’ in English language and that used in Moroccan Dareja. In the latter, a ‘popular’ person does not necessarily have to be ‘successful’ to be popular; but someone who is accepted as being *from*, *of* and *for* the people. In the Moroccan sense of the word, the linguistic sign ‘popular’ connotes meanings of belonging, modesty and humility. To illustrate this linguistic difference even more, here’s an example from an incident as told by a former Moroccan trade unionist:

Omar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan politician and trade unionist who had been assassinated in 1975, was once giving a speech in a trade union meeting when he stopped to ask a worker sitting not far from him for some of the water he had in his glass. The worker went out of the meeting room, washed the glass and filled it up with fresh water and brought it back to Omar. Omar was infuriated by the worker’s action. He lifted the glass in front of all the workers present in the meeting and smashed it against the floor and screamed: ‘What is the difference between you and me?’. He wanted to drink from the same glass as the worker, smudged and dirty as the glass looked. He wanted to prove he wasn’t only fighting for the rights of the workers present, but that he was one *of* them, *for* them and *from* them— a ‘popular’ man.

culture that have been permeated by the phenomenon of migration. For methodological reasons I will explicate later in this discussion, I have chosen specific spheres from Moroccan popular culture to be the object of this study. The paper will especially concentrate on the following popular cultural spaces: popular jokes as a form of social communicative interaction, popular sayings, popular music, talk *of* and *about* migration as a non-institutional public space, the queue and the popular press.

Moroccan Popular Culture: A Critical Introduction.

It is crucial to remind the reader from the very beginning of this discussion that it is not my intention in this paper to write an *exposé* about the history or sociology of the complex structure—that is Moroccan popular culture. For, this would necessitate a whole book, if not a whole cultural project, which could take years of painstaking laborious work to complete. Rather, my intentions, as I pointed out in the introduction to this paper, are far more modest. Here, I am more concerned with describing and exploring the different ways in which the social phenomenon of migration in Morocco has permeated certain spheres of Moroccan popular culture. However, before engaging with this task, I think it necessary to map out, although briefly, some of the problematic issues facing Moroccan popular culture. This, one hopes, will help familiarise the reader with the cultural space that is the object of the paper.

According to Abbass Al-Jirari, the dean of Moroccan *Adab* 'literature', Moroccan culture has three constituents that fall into three main categories. a) The Berber Heritage, which was present in Morocco centuries before the coming of Islam and which, as Al-Jirari puts it: 'still beats in the hearts and flows in them with liveliness.' (Al-Jirari, 1999: 159-160) b) The Arab Heritage, with its Eastern, Andalucian and African characteristics. A source, which al-Jirari argues has enriched, strengthened and opened new perspectives for the Berber heritage and c) the outside currants, the European part, the French, the Spanish and the Portuguese. These, Al-Jirari asserts have had both positive and negative effects on Moroccan culture. (Al-Jirari: 1999) Al- Jirari excludes Moroccan Jewish heritage and its contribution to Moroccan popular culture. Jews, although a small minority in Moroccan society, have lived in Morocco for more than two thousand years—before the coming of Arabs or Islam. Their contribution to Moroccan culture, especially music and artisan craftsmanship was invaluable and must not be neither ignored nor excluded. A thorough understanding of the make up of Moroccan popular culture is only possible through a critical historico-structural analysis that explores the structure of each *constituent* element, then studies that part of the whole that is the product of these very different elements' interaction, interference and coexistence. This project could not succeed, nor could it win any credibility were it to exclude, alienate or suppress any constituent or *contributing* element, for whatever ideological reasons, for this would defeat the whole point of this intellectual exercise.

Discourses of unity and reconciliation in Moroccan popular culture

‘The slogan of a national culture is a bourgeois...fraud’
(Cited in Sparks, 1992: 26)

The late King of Morocco, Hassan II, often began his televised royal *discours* by the now Moroccan popular phrase: ‘*Shaabia al Aziz*’, which translates into ‘my dear people’. The word ‘*Shaab*’, which means people, is here used in an abstract and absolute form that renders it entirely unrealistic, if not meaningless, for there is in fact no *Shaab* as such, but different social groups, living in different areas, with different tastes, languages and interests. This possessive unifying use of the word *shaab*, which appears to be innocent at the surface, is part of the workings of a discourse through which feelings of unity, harmony, reconciliation and stability are constructed. The subject of Moroccan ‘popular’ culture should be approached with similar caution for there’s in fact no such thing as *a* Moroccan culture or *a* Moroccan popular culture *per se*, what we have is a confluence of currents representing different voices, some dominant, others subordinate. Hence, to speak of Moroccan popular culture in a general fashion is to mask the particularities of the very voices heard or unheard that make up Moroccan popular culture, and conceal thereafter the dialectics of power relations at work within Moroccan society. As Abdassamad Belkbir observed in his article ‘*on the meaning of popular culture*’:

‘What is considered popular culture in the *Rif* [northern part of Morocco] has no relation with popular culture in *Sous*, [south Berber Morocco] *Jbala*, [mountainous area in the north of Morocco] Fez or in the East of Morocco... What unites us nationally is not popular culture but religion, the modern state and institutions linked to it such as political parties, trade unions...etc. (Bel Kbir, 92: 17)

Discourses of unity and reconciliation mask difference and competing antagonistic forces inherent in Moroccan society that are ceaselessly engaged in a struggle over legitimacy and power. There are, and this has to be said, antagonistic elements at play *within* Moroccan popular culture *per se*. Moroccan society is stratified into *different* popular cultures. We have the popular culture of the *Aroubi* ‘derogatory, of Arab descent, also meaning, peasant, irrational and mostly uneducated’, the *Fessi*—the elitist who appreciates Andalusian music and Knowledge and unlike the *Aroubi* only fills his glass of Moroccan tea half way. We have the Berber or *Shelh*, who is the native of Morocco and the modern—usually a Francophile who consumes mainly French culture. The *Berber* appreciates *Berber* music; the *Aroubi* likes the *Shaabi*, ‘a genre of popular Moroccan music’. The modern appreciates western pop music and maybe some Egyptian classics. The stratification of tastes in Moroccan popular culture into those of the *Aroubi*, *Shelh*, *Fessi* and modern reflects power relations within Moroccan society. The *Aroubi* and the *Shelh*’s ‘popular’ tastes are seen as inferior to those of the *Fessi* who appreciates Andalusian music and the ‘modern’ who reads Balzac, speaks with a Parisian accent, maybe listens to jazz and tunes to TV5 for a round of News. These stratified categories are problematically complex for they are not fixed; they overlap and can even be contradictory. However, I could venture to say with a degree of certainty that it is the modern and his newly adopted culture that emerges as the hero—a living proof of the success of French colonial social engineering in Morocco.

The prominent annual Agadir conference, which takes Moroccan ‘popular’ culture as the object of its study, attracts intellectuals from all parts of the country. The *ensemble* of papers emanating from this conference plays, I have no qualms, a conspicuous role in the

storing and writing of Moroccan 'popular' cultural history. Be it that of Berber women's poetry or the interpreting of *Amazigh* folk dance, it is all a grand exercise from which Moroccan popular culture will undoubtedly benefit. However, looking closely at the conference's logo *'Unity in Diversity'*, one soon finds that there reigns a discourse in an undisturbed tranquillity. The questions we should ponder here are:

a) Who speaks *for* and *about* Moroccan popular culture? b) Who speaks for the *Shaabi* person 'popular', the *fellah* 'peasant'? And finally, why should intellectuals *play* the role of uniting and cementing what is diverse when they could instead work towards unearthing the mechanics of power dialectics inherent to discourses of unity they are ceaselessly pushed to fabricate? I do not intend to engage with these questions on this occasion, for I do not wish to stray from the objective of the chapter. Engaging with these questions necessitates far more space, and this as I write is becoming scarce. The purpose from raising these questions however is deliberate. It is to provide the reader with a *readerly* text that will engage them in a critical and deeper reading of the complex problematic that is Moroccan culture and not a made up celebrated reading thereof. Suffices it to say, that discursive discourses of unity and reconciliation imbedded in conceptualisations of Moroccan popular culture are built from above and not from the base of Moroccan society. Most of Moroccan intellectuals who take it as their legitimate role to speak *for* the 'popular' man or woman are educated men and women from the middle classes who have unfortunately little in common with the base of Moroccan society.

What is 'popular' in Morocco is outside ruling mechanisms and its different apparatuses. '*Dareja*', for example, the 'spoken Moroccan dialect', is outside French and literary Arabic and is thus outside official language. Many voices that constitute Moroccan popular culture remain unheard and thus become subordinate in a culture structure that has mainly been led and dominated by an authoritarian *makhzen*², its apparatuses and the western global forces with which it allies. Who speaks for the Berber and her subordinate culture? Who speaks for *Jbala* 'tribes living in north Morocco' and their culture? Who speaks for the *Sahraouis* 'Moroccans living in the Sahara' and their culture? Why aren't there any Berber films on Moroccan television? Why aren't there any *Jbala* or *Sahraoui* films? Because of these elements one could venture to say that the 'popular' in Moroccan popular culture is not at all 'popular'. What we have is a 'pseudo-popular' culture that speaks not its voice but the voice of the centre, its ideas and choices. It is the *Makhzen* and its apparatuses that have control over the means of production in Morocco and it is none but the *makhzen* and its apparatuses that have control over cultural production. As Belkbir remarks:

The culture that prevails in any society is mostly the culture of the groups that rule this society economically and institutionally...in our era those who prevail economically and socially are in possession of strong and efficient means through which they communicate their culture. This makes it difficult for others to struggle against its influences. Therefore popular culture is nothing but the official culture. ...If scrutinised, a lot of a what we consider as popular in culture from ideas, sayings, architecture, music, dance...will appear to have its origin not in popular culture per se, but aristocratic or other ruling cultures. (Belkbir, 1999: 16)

Centuries of authoritarian rule in Morocco—the repressive politics of the *makhzen*, colonialism, capitalism, the indifference of Moroccan intellectuals, not to mention the

² *Al-Makhzen*: In his book *Les Origines Sociales et Culturelles du Nationalisme Marocain* (1997: 81, Maspero) Abdallah Laroui distinguishes between two meanings of the *Makhzen*. The first in its wider sense constitutes, besides the official apparatuses of the official state, of social groups such as the *Shurafaa*, *al-Murabitin*, *al-Ulama*, heads of the *Zawyas*, army tribes and all those who mediate between the Sultan and his *raeya* 'people'. The second meaning of the *makhzen* is far more limited as it consists of official apparatuses of the state such as the army and the bureaucracy '*al-idara al-amaa*', which function under the authority of the Sultan.

role of Moroccan media, have all contributed in a way or another to the reification and alienation of Moroccan popular culture. Using Islam as an ideological tool, the *makhzen* has historically demonised all that is outside religious symbols as profane. What lied outside religious Islamic symbols was considered by the *makhzen* and its apparatuses to be *fitna* (unbelief), *Shagab* (mischief), *fassa'ad* (corruption), *seeba* (rebellion), and *bida'* heresy. (See Gassous, 1988: 34) What was outside the Makhzen and its authority was considered by the latter to be outside the rule of Islam. This was seen as *fitna* and *fitna* according to the *makhzen* was 'worse than murder' (*ibid.*) This use of Islam as an ideological tool led to the denaturalisation of local cultural practices, but has in the meantime empowered and legitimised the existence of the makhzen as a ruling power in Morocco. As an example, the *Alawite* 'present ruling dynasty' and the Makhzen saw *Maraboutism* 'a Berber popular religious practise' as a threat to their hegemony. As Mohammed Chtatou observed:

'Maraboutism became so popular and so well established that it threatened legitimate political institutions – such as the Sultan and the makhzen'.
(Chtatou, 1996: 63)

Colonialism saw nothing in the *difference* of Moroccan popular culture but regress and irrationality. No sooner had the French colonialists settled in Morocco than they began their programme of brain washing. Their questionable *telos* was to efface an irrational local culture with its different particularities and replace it with a culture, they purported was blessed with a higher form of rationality, one from which both the colonised and their local culture were to benefit. Colonialism, be it that of the French, the Spanish or Portuguese has played a big role in the de-legitimisation and alienation of Moroccan popular culture. After 'independence', and with the advent of capitalism, a big part of Moroccan popular culture had turned into commodified products, mere promotion goods for market consumption, ready to feed the tourist industry. Moroccan popular culture had transformed into, as Moroccan sociologist Mohamed Gassous put it: 'live ontological museums of the different'. (Gassous, 1988: 48).

The demise of Moroccan popular culture is also a direct product of the Moroccan intellectual's indifference. Many leading Moroccan intellectuals consider popular culture to be subordinate, unconscious and not worth studying. Ben Shakroun, the author of '*Culture Marocaine Populaire*', supports this view:

'The profane culture has rarely interested Moroccan researchers; a lot of folkloric and anthropological themes have been rejected and underestimated. It is only relatively recently that from time to time we see some profound studies in specialised Journals.' (Ben Shakroun 1980: 53)

Still in the same vein, and more recently, al-Meskini Assghir, a Moroccan playwright and essayist, commented:

'Scientific and practical interest in popular culture has not yet found the encouragement, nor any care at the level of scientific specialisation in our scientific milieu. (Assghir, 2000: 7)

On another level, it is crucial to note that Moroccan media, especially television, is ceaselessly dwarfed by cheap imports from the United States, Egypt, Brazil and Mexico that make up more than 60% of Moroccan television programming. (Talal, 2000:

161) In Morocco, there are no 'popular' Moroccan soaps or series as such. The most popular soaps are South American, American and Egyptian. *Ezmeralda*, and *Marie zabelle*, both Mexican soaps and the American soap *Top Model* all of which are broadcast in 2M, the second and most popular Moroccan channel, are by far the most popular soaps among Moroccan audiences. Besides, there are no national programmes that cater for the cultural needs of the Moroccan child. The latter consumes mainly western-made programmes. This has created a complex situation—a confluence where, to use an analogy, Western and Egyptian popular culture represent the stronger and dominant current and where Moroccan popular culture represents the weaker current and therefore the subordinate culture.

Moroccan media have been critiqued for what Gassous refers to as the 'idiotisation' of popular culture, a view commonly shared by a young Moroccan viewer who remarked: 'Most of Moroccan made programmes deal with the viewer as a thing, not a human being. They undermine the intelligence of the Moroccan viewer. They show programmes that ridicule the *Shelh* and the *Aroubi* and play on this passé stereotypical conflict by making fun of both [...] in the meantime they present us with well made programmes like *Friends*, *X-Files*, *Baywatch* and others. It is like moving from ice to boiling hot water, there's no transitional phase.' [Adil, Focus group: 1999]

Migration and Popular Jokes

As I set out to collect data on Moroccan popular culture, I have been careful not to confuse or mix popular culture that speaks discourses of the centre—and the one that emanates from and speaks for the base of Moroccan society—the Moroccan popular culture *proper*. As such I have intentionally selected spheres from Moroccan popular culture that are nearer to the essence of the 'popular'. I have intentionally chosen to give examples from Moroccan 'popular' jokes, for this is a non-censored sphere that emanates from and is popular among the base of Moroccan society.

Moroccan people appreciate a good joke. For them, it is good way of socialising. Brahim, a taxi driver and serial joke teller, tells me 'it is a way of forgetting the problems of life' 'people who joke' he adds 'are happier and live longer.' In areas of Morocco like Marrakech people are known to tell jokes in an unconscious and spontaneous manner where at times the telling of jokes moves beyond the managed eventfulness of the social occasion to become an ordinary part of everyday talk. I once witnessed an occasion in Marrakech where a Marrakshi woman was attempting to bargain a sheep-head salesman down on a head she liked. The woman agreed to buy it, but as she opened its mouth, for a final check, there was no tongue—the most expensive and delicate part of the head. 'Where's the tongue?' Asked the woman who felt she was being swindled. 'Oh! That poor sheep, he was dump!' replied the man with a grin on his face.

While collecting jokes on migration in Morocco, I came across people who insisted, in a friendly fashion of course, to tell me other jokes they knew that had nothing to do with migration. The majority of these were of a sexual content, and a number of them were about al-*Joumani*, an ex-member of the Moroccan government whose stupidity made him the symbol of idiocy in Moroccan popular culture. Others reflect the stratification of Moroccan society as they often include the *Aroubi* 'derogatory, peasant, uncultured'; the *Shelh* 'Berber', the *Fessi* 'Moroccan from the city of Fez' and the *Mdini* 'the modern who lives in the big city'. A teacher asked a Fessi pupil, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' 'A pilot', replied the Fessi pupil. He then asked an Aroubi pupil, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' 'I want to be a Fessi, sir', replied the Aroubi pupil.

Before I introduce the reader to the Moroccan jokes I selected on migration, I think it essential for the sake of comprehension to explicate the socio-cultural significance of two *Dareja* words: *Harrag* and *Loorak*; a task without which, I'm afraid the reader will not get the jokes. The first word is *Harrag*, literally meaning 'burner'. The latter has become a very common and recurrent word in everyday talk in Moroccan popular culture. People I asked gave two interpretations of the word. According to one group a 'burner' is someone who burns his passport and all his identity cards before emigrating illegally to a western country, so as if caught, his or her identity would not be revealed. The other group traces the etymology of the word to an historical event in 711 A.D when Tarik Ibn Zayad, a Berber soldier, burnt all his fleet as he approached Spain, so as his army would have no choice but to fight to conquer Spain. At the famous rock of Gibraltar, Ibn Zayad delivered his famous speech: 'the enemy is in front of you and the sea is behind you, where is there to run?' To *burn* in Moroccan popular *talk* refers to a one way journey where one attempts to enter a western country illegally.

The other commonly used word in migration-related jokes and also in ordinary daily inter-actional conversations in Moroccan popular culture is the word *Loorak*, meaning papers. To live without 'papers' in the West is to live there illegally. The word has a dual meaning. The majority of Moroccans who become legal residents in different western countries be it in Europe or the United States do so through the status of marriage to either a European citizen in the case of Europe, or An American citizen in the case of the United States. When these émigrés return to Morocco for holidays, their spouses are often satirically referred to as the 'papers'. A western woman walking with a Moroccan émigré is seen as his 'papers' and not just his wife.

I have been careful not to include too many jokes for fear I get carried away and end up writing a thesis on the sociological and cultural significance of the Moroccan joke. Not that it would not make a good study, but the essence from this paper is to examine how the phenomenon of migration has pervaded many spheres of Moroccan popular culture, the sphere of jokes being one of them. These are five examples of migration-related jokes from Moroccan popular culture.

- 1- A young *zmagri* 'émigré' was strolling along the beach with his western wife when she tripped and fell on the sand. A young boy approached the husband who was contemplating the sea and said 'your papers have dropped sir, would you care to pick them up?
- 2- After the building of the Great Mosque of Hassan II, an architectural wonder and the second biggest mosque in the world, was finally completed, the King of Morocco offered to give it to the Americans as a token of friendship. All efforts were put by the Americans to remove the Minaret from the ground, but it just would not budge. As the Mosque was built on the sea, the Americans sent their experts to find out what was happening under the water. To their shock they found thousands of young Moroccan burners holding on to the base of the Minaret. They all wanted to *burn* to the States.
- 3- An American scientist from NASA was sent by the American government to explore how the Moroccan brain functions. In his laboratory, the scientist took the brain of a young Moroccan and placed it into the head of an American. He then placed the latter's into the Moroccan's head. The Moroccan with the American's brain stayed in Morocco, where the American with the Moroccan man's brain was taken back to the States. One year after the experiment, the scientist decided to check on the two young men. In Morocco, the Moroccan with the American's brain had become a successful businessman with successful projects all over the country. Back in the States, the American with the Moroccan's brain had been reported missing. When they finally found him he was sitting by the port in New York looking rather sad. When they asked him what he was doing there, he said: 'I want to *burn* to Italy.'
- 4- Two young Moroccan 'burners' were about to drown, while crossing illegally from Tangier to Spain, when their small boat had capsized. Luckily a British Navy ship was passing by. The young Moroccans fighting for their lives caught sight of the ship and screamed, hoping to be heard

by an English marine officer. 'Luh Kanba' (throw the rope!) shouted one of the drowning men 'What?' replied the English officer, rather coldly. 'Luh Kanba!' Repeated the young drowning Moroccan. 'What?' asked the English officer again. Then, the Moroccan asked the English officer: Do you speak English? 'Yes'! Replied the English. 'Then, Luh Kanba' screamed the drowning Moroccan in Moroccan.

- 5- An American, Japanese, Italian and a Moroccan man were in the plane on their way to Paris. They entered a competition where each had to dispense of an object to prove their wealth and superiority. The American took a stack of \$100 bills and threw it off the plane. The Japanese took his latest hi-tech laptop and threw it outside the window. The Italian who had nothing valuable on him looked around, spotted the Moroccan, then took him and threw him off the plane. When the American and the Japanese asked the Italian to justify his act, he said: 'we have too many of them in Italy!'

Adapting the morphological approach developed by Propp (1986) in his analysis of the folk tale, one could illustrate in the case of narratives inherent to many Moroccan popular migration-related jokes that the young Moroccan whose prime desire is to flee his country often performs the function of the 'victim'. Morocco—often described as a big prison, from which many young people are trying to escape, could in turn function as metaphor for the 'villain'. The West in these narratives often enjoys a double morphological function; it functions as the 'hero' and the 'helper' concomitantly, thus the drowning young Moroccan's cry for the English man's saving rope. This makes the West and the westerner not only the helper, but also the hero of the narrative. What is conspicuous in these jokes is the inferiority of Morocco and the Moroccan vis-à-vis the West and the Westerner. The Moroccan, as the joke of the plane illustrates, is someone that could be dispensed of. He is irrelevant, undesired and worthless. This is reinforced by the NASA experiment that uncovers the dysfunctional deficiency of the Moroccan brain.

Popular sayings

There are two frequently used contradictory sayings about migration in everyday talk in Morocco. The oldest and most frequently used of the two is: 'I'd rather the tar of my country than the honey of countries.' The second popular saying, which is relatively new and is commonly used among young Moroccans from the working class is: 'I'd rather a *requin* 'French for shark' or *Maroccain* 'French for Moroccan'. The first saying is rather universal. It is a way of saying 'there's no place like home'. It stems from the collective wisdom of those who had experienced *Ghorba* (estrangement) abroad and had found through experience that living in Morocco, regardless of its disadvantages, is far better an option than facing the problems that life throws at immigrants in exile. The second saying however is paradoxically shocking and reinforces complex and problematic issues of belonging and identity. Let me paraphrase the saying so its meaning becomes clearer to the reader. To say I'd rather a *requin* or *Maroccain* is almost the same thing as saying: a shark would rather eat me than live in Morocco.

Migration and Popular Music

There are literally hundreds of songs in Moroccan popular music that deal with the theme of migration. These could be found in the *Shaabi*, a genre of music literally meaning 'popular'; and songs made by many 'popular' Moroccan bands like El-Messnawa, Nass

Al-Ghiwan, Al-Mshahb, Tagadda and many others. *Gnawa* ‘genre of trance music’, *shikhat*, *Shaabi*, *Jarra*, *Ahwash*, *al-Ala*, *Aattarab al-Andalouisi*, *a Dacca al-Murrakuchiya*, *al-Malhoun*, *Al-aita*, *Ray* (an Algerian import), *Jbala*, *Shrawa*...etc, are all different genres of Moroccan popular music, which emanate from different geographic locations of Morocco, and which all enjoy different artistic and aesthetic particularities. Within these genres of Moroccan popular music there are those, which we could classify as traditional, such as *al-Malhoun*, *al-Ala*, or *Attarab al-Andalouisi*. These genres have originated from Andalusia and its most popular orchestras perform mainly in Fez—the heart of Andalusian music. Andalusian music uses *Darija* and Arabic poetry that adopts *all-Gharam* ‘love’ as its central theme. Andalusian music’s emphasis on the aesthetic makes it nonchalantly indifferent to socio-political and cultural change in Moroccan society. Other Moroccan popular music played by progressive and anti-establishment bands like Nass Al-Ghiwan, and Al-Mshahb, however, has always mirrored socio-political and cultural change in Moroccan society. Nass al-Ghiwan, for example, whose live performances are a mix of theatre and popular poetry, are extremely popular among the base of Moroccan society because of their moral and political engagement. Thus their powerful and memorable lyrics: ‘we live the life of a fly on the *btana*’ a ‘*Darija* word for a rotting and smelly sheep’s skin’. And lyrics such as: ‘what is the difference between you, you, you and me?’ for which members of the band were jailed. *Ahwash* and other genres of Berber music that are accompanied by dance fall into the category of the folkloric, where emphasis lies more on costume and dance calligraphy than on lyrics. This form of music is more celebratory and it must be said that pressures from the *makhzen* played a major role in the standardisation and reification thereof. One could venture to say that Moroccan popular music is stratified into traditional, folkloric and progressive genres and it is largely the latter that engages with social phenomena such as migration and other social issues and not the former.

Rai music, it is important to add, is an Algerian product that has lately been so popular among Moroccan listeners, especially those from the working class, that it is now accepted as part of a collective *Maghrebi* popular taste. *Rai* singers such as Shab Khalid, Shab Mami, Shaba Nassira, and others have all dealt with the issue of *Ghorba* ‘estrangement’ and exile in their songs.

During the fieldwork in Morocco, I collected and studied a number of songs from Moroccan popular music that deal directly with the phenomena of migration, *burning* and *Ghorba*. To illustrate how the phenomenon of migration pervaded Moroccan popular music, I will give examples from lyrics belonging to five different popular songs. I will also include the complete lyrics of a song made by unprofessional young musicians from a poor area of Casablanca (*Hai al-Olfa*).

One could infer from listening and studying a number of popular songs dealing with the subject of migration that the treatment thereof varies according to musicians’ experiences, their socio-political engagements or disengagement. The songs, which adopt *Ghorba* as their central theme do not necessarily engage with or treat the issue of migration as such. These songs are usually products of the musician’s subjective experience—a product of estrangement and alienation. In other words, these songs fail to form a *readerly* text that allows for some kind of engagement with the phenomena. Popular songs, which adopt *ghorba* as its central theme, rely on catharsis and not social engagement. The theme of *Ghorba* is very common in Moroccan and Algerian popular songs, especially those sang by *Rai* musicians living in exile, mainly France. The word ‘*Ghorba*’ finds its origin in the Arabic word *Gharib*, meaning strange. *Ghorba* is a diasporic melancholic condition caused by feelings of estrangement and alienation commonly felt by Diasporas living in exile. Thus lyrics by Shab Mami, the famous Algerian *Rai* musician in exile: ‘I’m in

ghorba mahmoom', meaning: I am in estrangement anxious; and the popular lyrics of the Moroccan singer, Fath Allah al-Mghari. '*al -ghorba...I am bewildered, when do I go back to my country.*' There is a myriad of songs congruent with such treatment of migration. Other popular songs, on the other hand, go beyond the subjective to engage with migration's causes and implications. A good example of this sort of engagement is inherent in lyrics by a popular Moroccan band called El-Messnawa who sing 'Children, Oh children why have you deserted the *blad*? 'Beloved country'.

We have lyrics by the female artist Shaba Sabira in a song titled: 'why burn to Spain? The journey is expensive and dangerous, I'm better off in my country. Life is ending.' and also Batma's lyrics, (Nas Al- Ghiwan's leading singer) where he too warns the *burners*: 'the waves are rough; the fish is waiting for its food, and you in the boat, the boat? The *Mrekb* (tiny boat), where are you going? Where are you going? These lyrics represent a fraction of Moroccan popular music, which has clearly moved beyond the subjective, as is the case, with songs on *ghorba* to attach itself to a social engaging role.

Nas Al-Ghiwan's 'popular' lyrics: 'Are we ourselves, oh my heart I doubt it' take us into a secondary stratum of analysis where physical migration becomes secondary in the face perhaps of a far critical condition—that of mental emigration. To doubt one's being is to doubt one's identity, social consciousness and *raison d'être*. It is a powerful question that questions, if not expose a false consciousness, a dormant self in need of awakening. Are we ourselves? Is a question that perhaps pre-empts the essence of another problematic, another migration—mental emigration. This theme is dealt with by another Moroccan popular and revolutionary band called 'Gill Gillalla' who sings in a song called 'the wind of yesterday':

*'The wind of yesterday did not blow you,
How could the wind of today blow you?'*

'The wind' symbolises colonialism. Yesterday's wind is an analogy for coercive imperialism. The latter, the Moroccan fought courageously regardless of its military might. Yet, the Moroccan has, according to Gill Gillala, been blown by, succumbed and surrendered to a different kind of wind, the wind of today. The wind of ideas sawed by the system of colonialism. Its ideas have become rooted and deeply imbedded in the social consciousness of the Moroccan he became dependent. (See Sabir, 1990: 23-24) The Moroccan becomes a mental emigrant, an expansion of the ideas and the mental geography of the West.

The phenomenon of migration has also permeated music and lyrics written by unprofessional young musicians, who play their music in streets, or the *Derb* 'a meeting place also meaning the corner of the street' often accompanied with friends. I recorded this song as three young Moroccans played it in the corner of their street—a meeting point for young people of the *Oifa*.

*This song is dedicated to all the burners out there
No Jobs, nothing to do
A burner fought the waves,
Nearly lost his life,
The waves took him away
And the fluka (small boat) saved his life, Oh yeah!
Abroad, he started thieving,
Met a Gawreya (western woman), who saved his life,
And he got his papers, oh yeah!
No life, No religion, No religion, No life
Burning is my destiny, oh yeah*

The young Moroccan from *Olfa* who wrote the song had tried to *burn* but was caught by the Moroccan police and was imprisoned for 48 hours. He sang the song in *Darija* as his two friends played the guitar. The song treats a subject, which has become part of the collective consciousness of the young poor Moroccan—*Burning* or to emigrate illegally to the West. The song emulates the hope of millions of young Moroccans, who are convinced the West has so much to offer them than Morocco. The story of the heroic ‘burner’, who fights the treacherous waves of the sea and makes it to the other side, has become ingrained in the collective folkloric imagination of young Moroccans from the working class. ‘My destiny is burning’ is a statement that carries severe implications. It means, at least for the person who’d written the song that Morocco as a country offers its young no hope at all.

Talk *of* and *about* migration as popular culture

Talk is like a structural midden, a refuse heap in which bits and oddments of all the ways of framing activity in culture are to be found.
(Erving Goffman)

Talk *of* and *about* migration, emigration, immigration, *burning*, emigrants, immigrants, visas, émigrés, embassies, queues, traffickers, the West...etc constitutes a pervasive part of ordinary communicative interpersonal interactions among young people in Morocco. I’m not referring to ‘*public, institutional* talk’, (Scannell, 1991: 7) that is manifest in radio and television programmes. Broadcasting talk, as we learn from Paddy Scannell, is not ordinary per se, but is managed and organised for us so it appears as such. I’m rather referring to non-institutional talk *of* and *about* migration as it happens in non-institutional spaces such as *rass a derb*, (the corner of the street) ‘a popular meeting-point for young Moroccans from working class *quarter*’, cafés, queues, homes and other spheres.

Talk *of* and *about* migration in the old Medina of Casablanca

It was summer in Morocco and many Moroccan émigrés had come home from different western countries to spend the summer holiday with their relatives. Talk *of* and *about* the émigrés, their spouses, cars, and other material possessions, as I learned from fieldwork in the Old Medina, a poor borough near the port of Casablanca was unavoidable. Many young people from old Medina have emigrated or burned to Europe. Some of them have become legends and therefore objects of talk in this working class area of Casablanca. ‘*Hassan burned to Italy and after three months he came back with a car and his papers. He managed to take all his brothers and sisters back with him to Italy. They’re all living there now. He is what I call a man.*’ Said Murad, a young Moroccan from Old Medina.

There were times where talk *of* the émigrés altered to become talk *about* the émigrés. In other words ordinary *talk* transformed into *gossip*. As a young Moroccan from Old Medina confirmed ‘*sometimes you can not help but talk about the zmagrias*’ (émigrés) *wives, how good looking or ugly they are. We also talk about how changed some of the people we know become.*’ Arrivals of émigrés become the talk of the street. From the car, clothes, presents, to the appearance of the émigré, all is scrutinised—all becomes an object of gossip. In the old *Medina*, talk *of* and *about* burning is inescapable. As a young Moroccan from Old Medina commented ‘There are young people here who wake up and go to bed talking about *burning*.’

New words emanating from ordinary daily conversational interactions about emigration are ceaselessly enriching the popular *Darija* vocabulary. This has created a new *speak*, which finds its origins in French, English, Spanish and Arabic. These are some of the migration-related words recently incorporated into Moroccan popular *Darija*:

New <i>Darija</i> word	Meaning
Hreg	From the Arabic word <i>harik</i> , meaning burning. In Moroccan <i>Darija</i> , it means to emigrate illegally
Harrag	Burner, an illegal emigrant.
Lourak	From the Arabic word <i>awrak</i> , meaning papers. In Moroccan <i>Darija</i> , it is used to refer to legal documents, which allow one to be a legal resident in a western country.
Dock	This English word is incorporated into Moroccan <i>Darija</i> and is commonly used among young Moroccans from the old Medina. It is the place from where the burning takes place.
Watchman	This English word is now commonly used among burners and young people in old Medina.
Kwan	From the French word <i>coin</i> , meaning corner. A place where one hides in wait for an opportunity to <i>burn</i> .
Contonaire	French for container, a hiding place many illegal emigrants use to migrate illegally to western countries.
Tarrack	From the Arabic word <i>tarrak</i> , the person responsible for closing containers.
Lhah	A <i>Darija</i> word meaning ‘there’. To burn ‘there’ is to burn to the West.
Hatt	A <i>Darija</i> word meaning to land. It is a synonym for burn or emigrate illegally.
Meeka:	A <i>Darija</i> word, meaning plastic bag. In the popular culture of the old Medina it is a plastic bag where the burner carries food for his journey.
Speciale	French for special, a police station in the port that deals only with illegal emigrants.
Zmagri:	A <i>Darija</i> word from the French émigré. Plural: <i>Zmagria</i>

These words constitute a new *Darija* vocabulary that has become a pervasive part of ordinary communicative interactions among young Moroccans in the old Medina and is now spreading to many parts of Casablanca. Different areas of Morocco have adopted different vocabularies of words related to migration. In north Morocco for example where many people are fluent in Spanish, more Spanish words have been incorporated into daily conversations about migration.

Talk of and about migration outside the French and Italian embassies.

Queues outside western embassies provide a rich popular cultural space where talk *of* and *about* migration takes place spontaneously. The narratives I am about to introduce are part of my fieldwork diary. They describe talk, people and happenings as they unfold in this rich, yet taken-for-granted, popular cultural space—the queue.

Outside the Italian Embassy

I got there at 10 am. There were about 300 people, almost all of them engaged in some sort of talk. Those in the queue had formed sporadic small groups. As the Sun was strong, some men and women took refuge under the shade of trees. There were boys selling single cigarettes, and others selling cake. There were young children; boys and girls in their teens running about, some women had brought their toddlers with them and placed them under the trees. There were middle aged people and people in their 60s and over. ‘Mohammad got a visa last week, he just phoned me from the boat, said a woman in her 50’s to a group of people who appeared to take the news with great joy. ‘We will all meet in the plane in shaa Allah’ (god willing). Said a man in his 30s. There was laughter. Two things bring together all the people I am observing, they are all Moroccan and they all want to leave Morocco. Everyone is carrying a file with them where they have all carefully placed the necessary documents needed to apply for the visa. ‘Murad got the visa he’s left’ said a man to two other men who had come to shake his hands. ‘It’s good for him’. ‘God has blessed him’. Said one after the other.

‘What happens if they (Italians) refuse to give you a visa? Would other European countries refuse us entry?’ asked one of the two men.

‘I do not really know’, replied the man with the good news.

A big Italian man makes his way to the embassy door accompanied by a young attractive Moroccan woman. The whole queue, among them those who had been queuing since three o’clock in the morning looked in despair as the girl makes her way in quite effortlessly. There was an angry incomprehensible murmur, but no real protest. In Morocco, it is accepted that those with money do not queue; only Poor Moroccans queue and most of them queue in vain. There’s a great camaraderie between those waiting to apply for the visa, those that had come to keep them company, those who had been refused a visa and those who had already got a visa. They don’t only share *talk* about migrating, they also share the same *hum* ‘big problem’ or *humum* (plural of *hum*), besides they are ‘popular’ people in the Moroccan sociological sense of the word. They represent the working class of Morocco—the Moroccan people proper.

Said, a Moroccan in his early 40’s and whose job is to liaise between the Italian embassy and Moroccans queuing for visas, has proven to be, both in the English and Moroccan sense of the word, a very ‘popular’ person. He is followed everywhere like the Messiah—constantly smothered by confused and frustrated people from the queue. ‘Hold

on, hold on, I can only speak to one person at a time. I cannot speak to all of you at once, where is that young woman who was angry with me a while ago? I got her file. She got a visa.' There was no response. At least twenty people from all ages are following Said. They turn when he turns, they stop when he stops, they talk when he talks, they shout when he shouts. Said was handling the situation quite well until he erupted before all: 'let me tell you something, things are changing; there are no jobs in Italy. There are hundreds of Moroccans in Italy, who sleep in the streets, hundreds who make a living washing cars in the streets. I am telling you, there are no jobs left.' I am not sure whether Said truly cared for his people, or if he was simply trying to dishearten people waiting in the queue so as to make the Italians' job easier. A young man with short black curly hair and a half buttoned shirt that revealed an expensive gold chain arose to challenge Said: 'That is not true', he said quite loudly so others could hear him. 'There are jobs in Italy if you look for them. I have my own business in Italy, some of my employees are Italian.' Said did not answer, but moved his head to and fro as sign of disapproval. Another man did. He had a beard and what Moroccans call a *Dinar*, a dark patch in the forehead that appears as a result of years of praying. 'Does saying this make you feel proud,' he charged at the young Moroccan? 'What happens if all young Moroccans like you left the country? Look at you, do you think the little vulgar gold chain you're wearing makes you superior. Morocco is better than Italy'. 'You do not know what you are talking about, replied the young Moroccan in a rather defeated voice.' The quarrel disintegrated and with it the crowd who had perhaps thought this the beginning of a fight, only to follow Said as he started to make conversation with an old Moroccan peasant.

'I won't get your dossier until you tell me where you come from.' Demanded Said, teasing an old peasant wearing a traditional Moroccan *Jellaba*. The old peasant had been pestering Said for a while. Everyone around 'Said' and a lot of those queuing waited rather impatiently for the peasant's answer. There was a long pause, and then the peasant looking sheepishly at Said uttered 'Ben Meskin'. This had sent everyone into stitches. (Ben Meskin is a Moroccan Aroubi tribe notorious for immigrants who generally make their money in Italy selling carpets and watches in beaches or in the street). Said too exploded with laughter, slapped the old man's head then held it with his two hands and kissed it violently. Said's action triggered yet another hysterical fit of laughter, after which he held the old man's hand and said: 'Now, I'll go and fetch your dossier.'" Said and perhaps all the people in the queue knew exactly where the old man had come from; his clothes were a give away. It was the confirmation they enjoyed.

A small street separated the Italian embassy and the queue from The Centre for English language. I stood outside the Centre on two occasions when students were out and made the following observations: Outside the centre gathered young Moroccans in very small cliques where a Parisian French accent prevailed, an indication that these young Moroccans belonged to the middle and upper classes of Moroccan society. They wore very fashionable western 'gear', Nike trainers, Calvin Cline, Armani and Lacoste T-shirts. Some of the girls wore fashionable torn blue Jeans others wore skirts. Parents and *chauffeurs* pulled their cars outside the college to pick them up. The cars matched the expensive clothes and the French accent; there was a stream of BMW's, Golf, Mercedes, 4x4, and others. What I found striking was the fact that these young people were nonchalantly indifferent to the world of the queue, its people, the police and the dramas as they unfold only four metres away from them. Perhaps they did not care, or maybe they see these queues so often they lost their attractiveness. Not one person I was observing turned to look at the queue or the people in it. It's as if the queue was not there

Migration *talk* outside the French Embassy

The French embassy is only 15 minutes walk from where I am staying in Casablanca. It was 4 a.m. when I got there. No one was queuing by the embassy, but as I walked a hundred yards towards the *Amala* Park, I came across a gathering of about a 150 people, if not more. There was a man with a list in his hand shouting: 'you have to register with me first before you queue by the embassy. The queue will start here and we will then move you so you could queue beside the embassy at 6.30.' There was already a queue forming in the park. I joined the queue like everyone else. Some men and women, who must have been queuing since last night, were still sleeping on the grass. Except for those who were still asleep and a young boy who sat on a bench, almost everyone else was talking. Groups of two, three, four and five people had formed where everyone engaged in some sort of talk. The group ahead of me was made of five students who had applied for visas to go and study in French universities. I heard one of them say: 'The English are much better; they do everything on the same day. They do not make you wait like the French.' On the bench to my left a man in his 40's was talking to a girl in her early twenties. I overheard him say to her: 'the Spanish are the purist racists I have ever met. They hate Arabs.'

At exactly 5.30 a.m. the man with the register asked everyone to stand and form a proper queue. I had already been in the queue. A man whose age I could not tell as his face was covered with a towel was laying on a bench some five metres away from where I stood. He wore an old beige suite, which I could see was falling into bits because of incessant use. The registrar's shouting had woken him up. At this stage he was calling up names loudly and allocating numbers to each one of them. Indifferent to the people around him, the man with the pink towel on his face began to scratch his groin. This he did for about three minutes, and then with one of his eyes, he took a peep at what was taking place before him. He dragged his body out of the bench in a very lazy fashion to reveal a burned face and a bushy dirty looking brown moustache. He then faced us with a pair of amazed lazy eyes he was struggling to open. Looking at the people in the queue before him, he uttered almost in disbelief: 'is this the army?' He was a homeless alcoholic. I was almost at the end of the queue; there were only about 10 men or so behind me. It was exactly 6.30 a.m. Talk was fragmented, and it was not possible to follow every conversation in the queue. I concentrated on the conversation that took place between the person who was ahead of me, a small man in his very late thirties, who looked to me as if he were a primary or secondary school teacher. He carried a cultured Arabic magazine and put his arguments rather coherently. The man behind me was a small businessman whose face was covered with scar burns. He wore glasses. The man standing behind him was tall, strong and rather well dressed. This was a part of the conversation that took place between them:

Teacher: 'something has to be done about this waiting business.'

The businessman: 'They used to have a separate place that dealt with people going on a business trip, they stopped that now.'

Teacher: 'It must not be like this for anyone; it is unjust. What if westerners were to queue like this?'

Businessman: 'That will not happen. It's impossible. They are organised people we are not. It's all about organisation. I have been all around; the English are the most organised.'

Tall man: 'The English won't give you a glass of water if you were dying of thirst.'

Businessman: 'How do you know that?'

Tall man: 'they are ...they do not like us.'

Businessman: 'That's not true, you should not judge them if you have not been to their country. They are very civilised people.'

Tall man: 'I tell you what, of all European countries. Italians are the best, they like Moroccans. They are a little bit like us, same blood do you understand?'

French Embassy Day 2

People have been queuing here since 2 o'clock in the morning. The prevalent talk is about organisation, disorganisation and visa requirements 'to them (the French) we are like insects. They do not care whether we sleep rough or be struck by the sun. They do not care. To them we are nothing.' Said a man in the queue. 'It is our ones (meaning the Moroccan government) who need to put pressure on the French to make the process humane for us. They too are responsible', replied a man queuing next to him.

As I queued with latecomers, I relaxed my ears, as Moroccans say, and started listening to people's conversations: 'If someone looks for something in our country, they'll find it.' Said a man with a long beard, who seemed to be in his middle thirties. I felt like asking him, why are you then queuing here? But that would have been a methodological mistake. I am registering and describing ordinary talk about migration as it unfolds in queues, my intrusion would have altered the course of what is said by disturbing its ordinariness. 'People are dying here', replied a man who had heard him. (Dying here is not to be understood in the literal sense of the word. In this case, dying in popular *Dareja* refers to living in Morocco without a job or a future. It has nothing to do with death as such.)

Again most of the talk is about visa and its requirements. 'I was here since 4 a.m., why don't you queue like the rest of us?' shouted a man angrily as people started to jump the queue. I move from the queue and stand under a tree, facing the French embassy door, which, without exaggeration, looked like the door to heaven. I do not know what the door to heaven looks like. But, this must be close. The queue is more than a hundred and fifty meters long. There are four Moroccan policemen by the door, two in each side of it. At the door stood an arrogant looking French man in a uniform. He hardly talked. He stood firmly looking down at *Les miserables* from his dark sunglasses, jostling to enter his 'paradise'. From time to time, he physically pushed people away from the door. This made him look superior.

It's about 10 a.m. Two *Garraba* 'Traditional water salesmen in red traditional Moroccan costumes' roam the place with their black sheep skin water-containers in their backs. Ringing their brass-bells to attract people's attention, they fill in their brass pots with water from time to time and spill it on the floor, as if this would make people thirsty. Maybe it does. You could hear young boys selling single cigarettes shouting: 'Marlboro, Marquis, Winston.' I realised after queuing for three days outside different western embassies that queuing had given rise to new opportunities for the jobless. Be it the cake boy, the cigarettes boy, the water salesman, not to mention the information men, whom I'll describe later, everyone seems to be making a living of the queue. There were people who made a living out of the queues by selling pieces of information to the illiterate and the confused. There were also people who made good money queuing overnight for other people. This I nearly forgot to mention. I sat beside an information salesman who from time to time shouted: 'information, information, all kinds of information, majeur, mineur, etudiant!' These mostly young, well-dressed Moroccans who had created unofficial jobs out of nothing are referred to a *Hassrafa*. 'Are you educated? Have you got a bank account?' Asked an information man. No, replied a girl to both questions. 'Don't waist your time', replied the information man; an information for which he demanded no money. 'No body wants to live here anymore; this is a nice country, but its people are difficult. I left this country a long time, left my job, family and everything. I went to France. Look at me now selling bits of information in the street.' Said the information man to himself, as if he had gone mad.

'How much money do I need in my bank account before the French could accept my *'demande'* asked a girl. 'You need to have 5000 Dirhams in your bank account; your manager has to write an official letter to confirm it. He must provide you with a letter confirming the date of your holiday, otherwise they won't give you anything'. 'Information, information, student visa, working visa, *mineur*, *majeur*, all sorts of information', shouted the information man.

The Queue, the queuers, cultural distance and modernity

The *queue* is not a Moroccan *thing*; it is a product of modernity. After living in England for more than ten years, I must confess, I have not only learnt to queue, but I have also developed an aggressive disposition towards queue jumpers—I like to call this disposition queue rage. The mere detection on my part of anyone, man or woman (with the exception of the elderly, pregnant women and handicapped people) hinting at or trying to jump the queue would instantly transform me from the gentle person I think I am to a monster, a hulk, a destructive machine. My rage is even more monstrous if I detect that the *jumper* is rich or a member of the police. I would protest ruthlessly, often in aggressive, uncontrollable outbursts of raging abuse, for I see such an act as an unpardonable infringement and a violation of my civil rights; it is undemocratic, uncivilised—it is wrong. This is how I feel about the queue and queuing after living in England for 10 years. In Morocco, however, this is a right often abused, be it while waiting for the bus, in the bank, the cinema, or at the *boulonger*, French for the baker's, no one seems to like to queue. Six years ago, an incident outside a 'popular' cinema in Morocco that remains as vivid in my mind as if it had happened yesterday, taught me a cultural lesson I will never forget. The cinema was hitherto showing a newly released American film called *Homeboy* starring Mickey Rourke. The cinema had its iron shutters shut. Against them jostled more than 300 hundred desperate young Moroccans, like cattle, pushing and shoving, waiting for eight o'clock to arrive—the time when the shutters opened. But before eight o'clock that evening the people who worked inside the cinema, openly let their friends in. They walked through us and in they went into the cinema, nonchalantly. The passivity and inertia of the people behind the shutters disturbed me; not one of them dared to protest. My friend Khalid who lives in the old Medina and who could see I was outraged advised me not to complain. But, the 'queue rage' syndrome took over and I began to shout uncontrollably at the queue jumpers: 'you have to queue, who do you think you are, you!' Before I knew it three stocky, well-built men jumped from over the cinema shutters and started to throw punches and kicks at us. No one came to our rescue, au contraire, others joined in. I was quite lucky my friend had taken all the bad punches; he had a nosebleed and a bruised face. As for me, I learned although violently, that in Morocco the queue and *queuing* remain alien concepts.

The queue is a colonial imposition that reflects the power of modernity; its dynamics constitute a taken-for-granted cultural space of everyday Moroccan culture that is ceaselessly displaced by its encounters with this alien other. Queues outside the French, Italian, and American embassies divulge a dual cultural structure that is intrinsically contradictory. On the one hand, we have the rationalised world of the queue as an institutional, bureaucratised product of modernity. On the other hand we have the world of the 'queuers', which accommodates non-modern, non-institutionalised cultural particularities that are inherently Moroccan. These are manifest in the closeness of cultural distance, the sociability and the intimacy shared

by queuing Moroccans. Attempting to bridge the gulf between these two-world structures are native intermediaries, as it is in the case of Said in the Italian embassy and the registrar and *information* men outside the French embassy.

The queuers are largely confused, frustrated, overtired and ill-informed, most of all they feel displaced, unwanted, and humiliated by the 'other'. What the queue epitomises is the shock of modernity. This shock is manifest in the queuers' lostness, chaos and disorganisation. The iron bars that separate queuers from the glances of the pitiful passers-by and those nonchalantly indifferent to their world embody Weber's disenchanted iron cage. The queuers are trapped; that's how I felt. I felt trapped with them. Extraordinarily, in their entrapment the queuers joked, shared food, blankets and talked incessantly. They were sociable and intimate at the same time, a combination, which Georg Simmel would consider a contradiction.

The queue outside western embassies is an often-taken-for-granted dual cultural space that exhumes contradictions between two-world structures, namely the world of the queue and the world of the queuers, it also unveils the stratification of Moroccan society. The world of the queue is rationalised, bureaucratic and alienating. The world of the *queuers* manages, in its entrapment and confusion, to be both intimate and sociable.

Migration and The Moroccan Daily Press

Could we speak of a 'popular' press in a country with a population of 30 million, where illiteracy reaches over 65%, where the daily newspaper circulation does not exceed 350.000, and where most newspapers are still funded and affiliated to political parties? Judging by way of comparison by the model of the British press and its historical evolution, the answer would shortly be no. In his article, 'Popular Journalism: theories and practice', Colin Sparks conceptualises 'the popular' press as one in which the 'immediate issues of daily life are given priority over those concerns traditionally ascribed to the 'public sphere'. The structure of 'the popular' in modern journalism', he adds, 'is thus one which is massively and systematically 'depoliticised'. (Sparks, 1988a, 1992b: 39) While this remains true of the press in Britain as well as in many western societies, it is not entirely true of the press in Morocco. The political economy of the press in Morocco is the product of a cultural history, the particularities of which are specific to Morocco. What we are dealing with here is two different structures that developed in different spatio-temporalities and which are the products of different historical conditions. As such Conceptualisations of 'the popular' as described by Sparks may not necessarily fit in with what is conceived to be a 'popular' press in Morocco; a country which has not experienced the industrial revolution, and where the commercial press is still in its infancy. Before the Moroccan socialist party 'Union Socialiste Des Forces populaires' formed the government of 1997, their paper—the *Socialist Union*, which hitherto had the biggest circulation in the country, was considered by the majority to be the paper of the *shaab* 'people'. It was 'popular' because it was politicised. It exposed the regime and fought for the rights of the 'popular' man and woman, and this was in the Moroccan linguistic sense of the word what made it 'popular'. Those who read *al-Alam*, however, a right wing paper that hitherto supported the previous unpopular government, were looked upon as both traditionalists and traitors of the *shaab*, hence its 'unpopularity' among the base of Moroccan society.

Another cultural problematic distinction, which adds to the complexity and intricacy of the word ‘popular’ here, is the stratification of the Moroccan press into Arabic, French and since ten years, *Berber* newspapers. Underlying this stratification are differences in socio-cultural and political orientations imbedded in the power structure of Moroccan society. A paper that is ‘popular’ for the Berber may not be ‘popular’ for the Moroccan Francophile or the Arab and so forth. Moroccan newspapers written in French like *L’Opinion*, with a daily circulation of 20.000 and *Le Matin*, with a daily circulation of 5.000 are ‘unpopular’ among the populace, not merely because they are costly, but also because they are written in French, the bourgeois language *par excellence*.

As I was doing fieldwork in Morocco, I made a habit out of reading four National Moroccan Newspapers on a daily basis: *Al-Ahdad al-Maghribiya*, *Assabah*, *Al-Ittihad al-Ishiraki*, and *Al-Alam*. What soon became apparent was that migration-related stories made good news in Moroccan newspapers. Be it the imprisonment of illegal emigrants, missing boats, the deaths of emigrants or case studies of the life of immigrants abroad, these are topics that made headlines on a daily basis. Below is an example drawn from a 10-day period, from the 4th of August 2001 till the 13th of August 2001, which illustrates how the phenomenon of migration has inhabited the Moroccan ‘popular’ press.

Newspaper	Date	Article Headline
Al-ahdat	04-08-2001	Imprisonment of two illegal emigrant traffickers
Al-ahdat	05-08-2001	180 Moroccan illegal emigrants are caught
Al-alam	06-08-2001	34% of Moroccans Living in Spain have entered the country illegally
Al-alam	06-08-2001	Imprisonment of 13 Moroccan illegal emigrants 30 miles from Motrel
Assabah	06-08-2001	A boat: Stop the death of young Moroccans in the straight
Assabah	06-08-2001	Hundreds of Moroccans gather near the Belgian embassy to protest...
Al-ahdat	07-08-2001	Imprisonment of 51 Moroccan and Tunisian illegal emigrants by Italian..
Al-ittihad	07-08-2001	The Death of Immigrants: a socio-demographic study
Al-alam	07-08-2001	The children of Moroccan immigrants abroad
Al-ahdat	08-08-2001	The story of an illegal emigrant trafficker
Al-alam	08-08-2001	All is indifferent to the enslavement of Moroccan emigrants
Al-ahdat	09-08-2001	Imprisonment of 23 Moroccan illegal emigrants in Kaponegro
Assabah	09-08-2001	Crowding and pushing in front of western embassies
Al-ahdat	10-08-2001	87 Moroccan illegal emigrants are caught entering Spain in circus trucks
Al-ahdat	10-08-2001	11 Moroccan illegal emigrants drown in obscure circumstances
Assabah	11-08-2001	Loss of a boat carrying 30 Moroccan illegal emigrants
Al-alam	11-08-2001	The Moroccan consulate forbids Moroccan immigrants living in the West to name their children names not befitting the Moroccan Islamic tradition
Al-Ittihad	12-08-2001	Violence among Moroccan immigrants living abroad
Al-Alam	13-08-2001	A young Moroccan dies as a result of assault by Spanish police

As the table shows, news *of* and *about* migration is not scarce. They are covered on a daily basis and do treat a wide range of migration-related topics. Daily reports on deaths, imprisonment, missing boats, deportations have become a pervasive part of the *dailiness*, not only of news reporting, but also of the readers. Some 500 young Moroccan illegal emigrants are reported dead each year, either by drowning, suffocation or other means—a percentage of at least one death per day.

Furthermore, daily exposure to these stories generates more talk *of* and *about* migration. This transfers the phenomenon of migration from one public space to

another, from the space of the popular press to the space of popular non-institutional talk *of* and *about* migration.

Conclusions

In this discussion, I have attempted to prove, using empirical evidence from fieldwork in Morocco, that migration is not merely a social phenomenon in Morocco, but also a pervasive part of its popular culture. I began this discussion by critiquing discourses of unity and reconciliation in Moroccan culture often manufactured by the *Makhzen* and its apparatuses. I argued that discourses of unity in Moroccan culture suppress difference and conceal dialectics of power relations inherent in Moroccan society. Giving examples from specific spheres of Moroccan popular culture, namely, popular jokes, popular sayings, popular music, non-institutional public *talk* and the popular press, I have demonstrated the different ways in which these spaces have been inhabited by the phenomenon of migration.

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