Strategies of Resistance in the Dramatic Texts of North African Women

A Body of Words

Laura Chakravarty Box

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Preface

The word is the shadow double of the photographic image. Where the image is frozen, the word can move. The word is a shadow with arms and legs: it can walk through walls.

On my wall is an image. It is a photograph of two people, Moroccans, standing on a street in Rabat. They are embracing each other and smiling gleefully at the camera. One is a director, the other an actor. They are both women. They are the future of Moroccan theatre, and they are fixed in time by the image. Their words, however, move through me to you, across the boundaries of time and space, of language and culture. Their words shatter the confines of the photograph and escape the pretty prison of image.

We, and they, are surrounded by the pernicious and paralyzing photographic product; we reach for each other with our word-bodies through the stiff, two-dimensional walls of frozen time.

Object to subject: our audacity makes me delirious with joy.

Chapter One
Introduction

The field of world theatre studies in the U.S. underwent of a kind of global awakening in the 1970s. Thanks to pioneers like Earle Ernst, James R.Brandon, and Leonard Pronko, the American awareness of Far East and Southeast Asian performance forms was stronger than it had been at any time since the 1910s, when W.B.Yeats and Ezra Pound began their engagement with the Japanese *noh* dramas. American and European artists had just emerged from the social upheavals of the 1960s. This had the effect of opening theatres to new kinds of experiments and expanding definitions of performance. The second wave of feminism was in full swing, as was the gay rights movement, and each gave rise to theatrical endeavors. As the nation moved into the 1980s and 1990s, people became more conscious of performance forms from Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Native Americas, Eastern Europe, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. Americans consumed these artistic products avidly, used them to give their own dramas fresh perspectives, and increasingly included them in their theatre history texts.

Two regions whose performance forms did not receive much attention from American theatre scholars, however, were the Middle East and North Africa. Perhaps this is because of the fact that during the late 1970s and early 1980s, while Americans were becoming increasingly aware of the theatrical possibilities inherent in cross-cultural encounter, their government was having troubled relations with the OPEC nations and an embarrassing and highly publicized hostage crisis situation in Iran. Moreover, Arab nations, particularly those in the Levant, were distressed by U.S. recognition and support of Israel. U.S. relations with the Middle East have deteriorated further since the 1980s when the U.S. first supported the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran. Subsequently, the U.S. has conducted two ground wars, an embargo, and a bombardment of Iraq in support of Kuwait's oil fields and a so-called regime change. None of these events have offered much hope of mutual understanding, much less widespread cultural exchange, between the U.S. and the Middle East, of which North Africa is perceived to be a part.

Ironically, tensions in the Middle East and North Africa have given rise to waves of Arab, Berber (Amazigh) and Iranian immigration to the U.S. These vocal new populations are steadily lobbying for recognition and respect, and so are beginning the process of educating the rest of the American people about their diverse cultures, lifestyles, values, and belief systems. There has never been a better time for Americans to study Arab, Persian, Middle Eastern and North African arts. Scholars have an

unprecedented opportunity to conduct new research about these regions that have until now been underrepresented in theatre and performance studies.

To this end, the present study offers a broad introduction to one aspect of contemporary theatrical production in North Africa: the dramatic texts produced by women in the Maghreb, the western region of North Africa formerly colonized by the French that includes the now independent countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Since women's performance in the Maghreb has its roots in oral composer-performer traditions, it is necessary to consider not only the written texts around which this study is based, but also the fact of the Maghrebian female body as a public body, in performance, within a social context. Writing, for Maghrebian dramatists, often goes hand-in-hand with performing, and so this study reflects on the inter-play among three elements: the image (what the spectator sees or wishes to see), the female body in theatrical space (who may be the object of the image, its creator, or both), and the literature, a 'body of words' created by women to stand for them in place of, or beside, their physical body. Hence, the study considers the lives of Maghrebian women playwrights and creatorperformers as well as their texts, and so offers sociological, as well as literary, analyses of their circumstances.

The study asserts that Maghrebian women dramatists have created, within their body of words, strategies of resistance to the pressures placed upon them as writers, performers, and women by their societies. These strategies produce insights, not only into the literary production of these dramatists, but into their societies as well. Gaining momentum, they move from reaction to action as they become stronger in exercising their agency. Just as women have the unique power to change the world by giving birth to a child, their creation of each new artistic work holds the possibility of social transformation. It is the connection between the lives of Maghrebian women and the texts of these artists, who are also living their lives as Maghrebian women, which is the heart of this study's inquiry.

THE IMAGE AND THE WORD

From this study's inception, photographs have framed my encounter with women of the Maghreb, often creating a meeting that existed only in the privileged space of my imagination. There is a problem with images. Images are easy: nice, neat packages with manageable boundaries, no obvious ambiguities, and room for the looker's imagination to work its comforting constructions.

Words, on the other hand, disturb. They hit-and-run, smashing boundaries and creating ambiguities as the message is encoded and decoded and deciphered and interpreted. Gaps appear in our constructions. We are no longer comfortable, and long for the safety of the image.

Somewhere between the image and the word is the performer. Manipulator of the word, the performer creates an image that hits-and-runs, just as her words do. The object of the frozen image becomes the subject of the moving one. The performer must work in the present: film, for all of its wonders, is a series of frozen images strung together to create an illusion of movement. This is why film and video recordings of live performances are never satisfying. They return the performing subject to object-hood.

Much of my work consists of marking the tension between photographic images of Maghrebian women, the words they say and write, and the performances they create. Photographs are as good a place to begin as any, for, as we shall see, even as they are fixed by the camera's eye, its objects are sometimes able to subvert the image to their own uses through the act of performance.

Malek Alloula's *The Colonial Harem*, for example, is a pictorial introduction to the notion of the colonized female body as a contested landscape (1986, 126). The volume consists of two elements: facsimiles of tourist and pornographic picture postcards manufactured for French consumption during the French occupation of Algeria, and Alloula's explication of them. Post-colonial studies have made much of the fact that, by selecting the post-cards and arranging them in a certain order, Alloula has manufactured a product for further pornographic consumption. The images, framed by scholarly inquiry, still coerce the (now almost certainly deceased) colonized female subjects. Alloula's text has been criticized as "re-eroticising" (Lazreg 1994, 191), and his agenda is certainly suspect. Continuing, and academically sanctioned, publication of the photographs perpetuates the colonizing gaze that created them. Yet they continue to be useful in providing a clear, visceral paradigm for the inscription of gender performance on a living body. If read another way, they also point to the ways the subjects themselves have manipulated the image.

It is important to remember that the women pictured in the Alloula collection were *actors*—they helped to create the fantasy that was being packaged for French consumption. They were agents of the image, one that was degrading to Algerian women, but that also protected private lives from the prying eye of the colonizers' cameras. If the original aim of the postcards was to penetrate the 'harem'—a colonialist fantasy of Algerian private life—it ultimately failed. The relationship of the postcards' subjects to the viewer is that of prostitute to customer. The subject is commodified, but the subject also has at least partial control over the commodity. Since the 'scenes and types' portrayed have little or no relation to reality, it can be argued that they are cheap theatrical tricks, and that their consumers are dupes. To paint the subjects as victims robs them of the agency they had.

I purchased several such postcards, called *'scènes et types,'* from a Paris flea-market in 1997. One, a modest picture of a veiled Algerian woman, had been mailed to Paris from Algiers in 1918 and bore an inscription that clearly revealed the preoccupations of the sender:

> My dear René, I am sending you several specimens of women of the country. It is in the category of the veiled ones (like this one here) that the beautiful girls are found, but they very rarely lift their veil; they consider that indecent exposure…. Your friend…. (Mefgryf[?] 1918)

The women in the Alloula photographs were paid for posing; their images were not stolen from them. Marc Garanger's infamous government identification photographs, published by him in 1982 and 1983, and republished with intervening text in a photo-essay on colonialism by Carole Naggar, are another case entirely. These pictures, taken some time in the early 1960s, are portraits of Algerian women, unveiled publicly and by force for what was possibly the first time in their adult lives. Many of the women are probably still

alive today. As in Alloula's presentation, the aim of Naggar's article is scholarly, but this time the image is indeed stolen. Naggar correctly calls the forced unveiling and image-taking a double rape (1990, 4). She does not, however, problematize the re-publication of the image that proliferates the act of violence. Alloula and Garanger[1] have created a dilemma for scholars who choose Algerian women as their subjects. There is unconscious ethnocentrism in the following comment about Garanger's subjects from Naggar's essay: "Pushed from behind, they enter the twentieth century in its most frightening aspect: they are identified so they can be controlled, supervised, repressed" (8). While this demonstrates sympathy for the survivors of photographic rape, it also presumes that they were living in some timeless, featureless, un-evolved place until the moment they were photographed and denies their participation, however involuntary, in the event itself.

The subjects of the Garanger photographs refuse the project of objectification. As agents, they turn the power of the image back upon itself and mutely testify against their oppressors. Their refusal de-legitimates any further use of the image, including the present one, and de-stabilizes the image as a tool for analysis. As such, the image alienates, forcing the spectator to continually question her motive for looking. Unwillingly, the subjects have become performing bodies.

In order to consider the (now formerly) colonized woman as a *willing* performing body in theatrical space, we must first examine the notion of 'theatre' as it is distinct from that of 'performance.' Many human activities have been identified as performance: dance, music, religious rituals, courtship practices, sporting events, political campaigns, conversations, revolutions, and even the production of an individuated personality can all be justified as performative behavior. Theatre is a kind of performance, the rules of which vary from culture to culture and from place to place. It differs from other performances in its manner of selecting the visions to be presented, in the conventions by which it is governed, and most importantly, in its distribution of power. In the European tradition, theatrical endeavors are most often hierarchical, and actors are usually at the bottom of the hierarchy. Hence, as performing bodies, they risk much, but have little real power in the business of re-presentation. The performer best achieves agency when the vision she supports is her own.

Why does a performing body perform? What compels a human being to abandon the relative anonymity of a limited social sphere and step into the privileged, contested and "liminal" (Turner 1969, 95–96) space of the theatre? Why does a writer step out of the protective space she has created with her words, risking notoriety in order to perform them? And once her body becomes, notoriously, a performing body, why is it then at once both revered and suspect?

The business of theatrical endeavor is that of re-presentation. An actor does not step into the theatrical space (any space that is set apart and designated for theatrical work) in order to simply act as herself. She does so in order to present a selected, heightened vision of self: her vision or someone else's, someone else's self or her own. This envisioned selfhood, this carefully selected, crafted characterization, is launched into the theatrical space, where it lives a brief life of brilliant intensity. During this life, it is variously at odds or in harmony with other such visions and re-presentations: those of the other actors occupying the space, the director, the playwright or poet, the designers—any of whom may be the actor herself. What makes the work of the creator-performer different from that of all the other above-mentioned theatre-workers is that it is her body

that is exposed to the gaze of the audience, her self that may be conflated with the envisioned self of the character, and her mind that is identified as the originating site of the vision itself. In order to be a performing body, she must de-acculturate herself, acquiring the new "body techniques" of the culture of actors: "a repertoire of signs, attitudes, 'authenticity effects'" (Pavis 1992, 9–10). Thus, as a performing body, she adapts herself to the project of re-producing culture—or subverting it.

The performing body, because of its ability to change its shape and to speak the unspeakable within the permissive, and sometimes mystical, ground of the performance space, has always been suspect. A performing female body, as Algerian playwright Fatima Gallaire has noted, is doubly transgressive (Gallaire 1997). Playwrights who perform their own work, like Fatima Chebchoub of Morocco, Fadela Assous, Hawa Djabali and Nacèra Bouabdallah of Algeria, and Raja Ben Ammar and Souad Ben Slimane of Tunisia; and performance artists, like Houria Niati of Algeria, actually place their transgressive bodies within the space of the playing ground, at once risking and exploiting the social marginalization that comes with such an act. Playwrights who do not perform, like Gallaire and her compatriots Assia Djebar, Myriam Ben and Latifa Ben Mansour, as well as Moroccan playwright Leïla Houari, create a body fashioned out of words that functions in place of their own, and that speaks for them. Used this way, the text, itself a body, can pass through walls and protect its creator from corporeal harm.

A performing female body's presentation of self, her re-presentation that is also a performance, refuses the 'reality' in which her subjectivity has been trapped: social discourses about her that do not include her in the conversation. She is at once the sign for 'female' and a refusal of the sign. Acts of performance speak to the impossibility of re-presentation, of the copy (Butler 1993, 52) while re-inscribing that impossibility on the face of the project of culture. Refusal of the sign makes a space for renewal in the lives of performing bodies as they collectively re-create their history.

Whether she is a publicly performing body or not, the Maghrebian creator of performance texts inhabits multiple and shifting margins of gender, ethnicity, citizenship, and language in her performance of self-as-artist. As she self-consciously crosses and re-crosses these boundaries, she gains the ability to speak unbearable truths that is the provenance of all such "liminal tricksters" (Phelan 1997, 16). In at least one case, the truth that has emerged from such an act of telling is so painful that most directors are afraid to stage it as written (Gallaire 1997). In Gallaire's play, *Princesses* (1988a; 1988b; 1991a; 1991b; 1996c), the protagonist is beaten to death onstage by a group of old women because she refuses to convert her French husband to Islam. It is precisely in the dis-ease engendered by such a truth, namely that women collude in the perpetuation of cycles of violence that oppress them, that a fruitful dialogue about this issue may be opened.

THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is a survey of contemporary plays and performance pieces by Maghrebian women, and constitutes a preliminary inquiry into the production of performance texts by women in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the North African diaspora in Europe. The study considers sixty-five plays and performance pieces by twenty-eight authors and

three collectives. Of the sixty-five works, thirty-nine were accessible to me in the original language as published or unpublished written texts. Six were available only in their English translations, or had to be translated for me because I do not speak the original language. The remaining twenty plays and performance pieces were approached through live performances, video, descriptions by the play-wright, descriptions by someone other than the playwright, and in one case, direct participation. Two new translations were commissioned, one from Tunisian Dialectal Arabic (Ben Ammar 1984) and the other from Kabylian Tamazight (Merabti 1999), an Algerian member of the language family spoken by the Imazighen.[2] Prior to 2000, thirteen of the plays had been translated into English: two plays by Fatima Gallaire (1988b; 1995; 1996c), four by Denise Bonal (1984; 1988b; 1994; 1996) and one by Leïla Sebbar (1996b) are available through Ubu Repertory Theatre Publications; one Gallaire play is translated in the doctoral dissertation of Deborah Folaron (Gallaire 1999), and four of Hélène Cixous' works (1979; 1986a; 1994a; 1994b) are available in published translations. An unpublished translation of one of Gallaire's plays (1991b) was commissioned from Meredith Oakes by the Royal Court Theatre in London, and it serves as an alternative to the Ubu Repertory version of the same work.[3]

The original languages of the works in this study include Arabic colloquial dialects, Contemporary Standard Arabic, Tamazight, French, Spanish, Italian, and English, and were written by women residing in North Africa, France, Belgium, and England. Theatrical forms used are full-length plays, one-act plays, one-woman shows, collage pieces, puppet shows for young audiences, and contemporary renderings of *halqa*, a traditional form of audience-interactive, open-air performance conducted in the space created by a circle or demi-circle of spectators (Chebchoub 1997b). Within these forms, some of the pieces employ dance, song, recitation, painting and sculpture. The genres of the works, in both realistic and non-realistic styles, include classical tragedy, farce, comedy, drama, political satire, theatre for development, and text collages. All of the pieces were written during or after 1960.

The women who created this body of work are of Arab, Amazigh, European, or mixed ethnicity, and were born both inside and outside the Maghreb. Those residing in Europe are variously immigrants, refugees, no mads, and exiles. Their target audiences are North African, European or international; are comprised of adults, children, or both; are popular, bourgeois, elite, and/or academic. The writers have one thing in common: they were all living in the year 2000, when the study was completed.

One question arose very quickly as the study progressed: how does one analyze such a broad body of work? Patterns emerged, and certain overwhelming concerns of the subject authors recurred. The most important of these was how to address the cycles of violence to which both individual women and entire nations are subject and in which both individuals and nations participate. I found certain strategies in these works that began to suggest solutions to the problems of violence against women and nations. Through the vehicle of what I have identified as the 'body of words,' women are beginning to confront the issues that confound not only countries in crisis like Algeria, but the malaise of the so called First World as well.

This book is constructed in stages, designed to present the breadth of the material logically and contextually. First, it brings its subject plays, performance texts, and their authors to the attention of an English-language readership as a literary and theatrical

movement. Second, it places the works into their context in the region's social and political history—partic ularly that of colonization, independence, and gender relations—its litera tures, and its theatrical production. Third, it identifies the predominant themes chosen by the subject authors and the rhetorical strategies they have used to address them, and analyzes the themes and strategies in their literary and social contexts.

Chapter two discusses the context for the plays and performance texts. It briefly reviews the history of theatre in North Africa and the Middle East, discusses the place of drama in Maghrebian literature, and provides an overview of modern dramatic literature in each of the countries under discussion. Chapter three considers the general role of women in North African society and examines women's creative production in North Africa in both performance modes and literature. It discusses the liminal status of women as performers and playwrights in contemporary North Africa.

Since space does not permit a thorough study on all twenty-eight women, chapter four provides an introduction to the most important subject authors in the study and the genres in which they work. Chapter five discusses the predominant themes in their work as a network of relationships, the individual interacting with family, social institutions, official institutions and the world at large, with the forces of time and space cutting across these relationships. Chapter six introduces the issues that compel them to write: both concerns that belong primarily to women, such as domestic violence and cruelty, sequestration, illiteracy, and inequity, and problems that concern everyone, like national violence, bureaucratic paralysis, religious hypocrisy, governmental corruption, and the changes in the family and social structures. Chapter six then identifies the rhetorical strategies they use to address the problems they tackle: resisting or subverting the hierarchy, becoming mobile, ridiculing oppressors, interrogating memory, staging performances by women for women, staging cooperation between women as agents, and manipulating the margin, Chapter seven, the conclusion, summarizes the findings of the study and discusses their significance, suggesting areas for further research.

The two appendices provide additional material in support of the study. Appendix A is a list of all of the works cited in the study, their language of origin, the birthplace of their authors, and the year of publication or performance, if any. Appendix B is a 'who's who' of prominent contemporary North African women in theatre and performance: playwrights, performance artists, actors, musicians, dancers, and directors.

The primary sources for the study were the performance texts themselves, as well as interviews made in North Africa and Europe with play-wrights, performance artists, and people with related expertise. Not all authors in this study were available for interview, nor were all interviews conducted with authors. In addition to the interviews and texts, written descriptions were provided by Fatima Chebchoub for *halqat* composed in Arabic and Tamazight, languages I do not speak (Chebchoub 1997a). I was able to view only four live performances (Fadili 1997; Assad 1997a; Chebchoub 1998; Cixous 2000). One performance was approached through the medium of video (Assous 1995). Supporting these sources were reviews, programs, posters, and other descriptive materials, mostly in French, given to me by my subjects or culled from libraries and centers of documentation in Morocco, Tunisia, England, and France.

The form of this study was inspired by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins' *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), a work on colonialism and its relationship to the production of performance. Gilbert and Tompkins have identified a

number of the strategies that are used by colonized and formerly colonized artists to destabilize hegemony and disrupt the canon of the colonizer. Although plays by North African artists are absent from their work, many of the trends that they have distinguished do fit the performances and texts by the women in this study.[4] Foremost among these are distinct uses of the body in time and space: traditional (pre-colonial) dance and music forms within the theatre format, politicized use of the physical space and costuming, non-linear temporal narratives; uses of language: storytelling techniques, pluri-lingual text and intertextuality, counter-hegemonic readings of history; and, finally, uses of distinctly indigenous ritual. There are also clear examples of the (formerly) colonized 'writing back'—sending their re-presentations of the imperial hegemony back into its gaze.

I am also indebted to performance studies scholars Peggy Phelan and Guillermo Gómez-Peña—to Phelan for her insights on sex, gender and performing bodies, and to Gómez-Peña for his reflections on border-crossings. Similarly, I have relied upon Rosi Braidotti to help me deal with the issues of nomadism and exile. For analyses of colonialism in North Africa, I looked to Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon. Fatima Mernissi, Marnia Lazreg, Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, Susan Schaefer Davis and Leïla Ahmed have provided the basis for an understanding of the complex and multiple discourses on women and gender in the region. M.E.Combs-Schilling, Monia Hejaiej, Deborah Kapchan, Roger Joseph, Terri Brint Joseph, Abdellah Hammoudi and Philip Schuyler have done excellent ethnologies of traditional performing arts. Karin van Nieuwkerk's treatise on female performers in Egypt, *'A Trade Like Any Other'* (1995) is particularly helpful, as she examines in detail the social marginalization of her subjects. The doctoral dissertations of Abdullah Ali al-Magaleh (1988), Elias George Agel (1982), Lutfi Abdul-rahman Fazio (1985), and Sabah M. Alsafar (1991) have been very helpful in sorting out the history of Arab theatre and performance. A series of conversations and debates I had with Jan Berkowitz Gross of Grinnell College (1998) sparked the archeological process that resulted in my analysis of the various versions of Fatima Gallaire's play, *Princesses*. The study has also been shaped by the many discussions I have had, on and off the record, with Fatima Chebchoub and Latifa Toujani. While the insights contained herein owe much to these scholars, the weaknesses remain my own.

The study was conducted in 1997, over a six-month period in urban centers in Tunisia, Morocco, France, and England. Except for the Djmaa al-Fna in Marrakech, exposure to traditional performance modes was minimal. This was appropriate, as this study is not an ethnology of traditional performance *per se*. Its aim was to study contemporary women's performance in the context of theatre and performance art, most of which is conducted in urban areas and at universities. As mentioned above, opportunities to view live performances were few, as women have few opportunities to perform their own works in North Africa. This is also true of North African women working in France.

My method of inquiry was qualitative, and highly opportunistic. Since this is one of the first studies of its kind in English, I could not be certain of what I would find once I arrived in the region. Indeed, many of my subjects do not know about each other. Often, I would find a particularly knowledgeable source who would help me identify others, or a script by someone new to the study in a bookstore or an archive. I relied heavily on personal introductions and an extensive correspondence network on the internet and by post.

Interviews were constructed individually, since not all subjects are engaged in the same kind of work. Hence, my findings complement the texts and are highly subjective. The study is preliminary, not comprehensive. Chief among the obstacles to the study was my lack of either Arabic or Tamazight. I have had to approach all texts in those languages through translations and/or descriptions. Moreover, since my spoken French is not of native fluency, I generally scripted my interviews and recorded them on audio-cassettes for accuracy. Where this was not possible, I kept handwritten notes.

Because this is the first research study on North African women's dramatic literature and performance texts in English, it is important to place the texts in their context as much as possible. That is why the study takes a broad approach and defines trends within the literature as a body. Without a framework, these plays/performance texts cannot be critiqued as literature or as theatre unless one uses a standard that ignores their specificity. These plays are *not* Western dramatic literature, although many of them use Western theatrical conventions and are written in a Western language, French. They have elements in common that are particular to their status as products of North African culture, history, and sociology, and that distinguish them from strictly Western literary products. A work written in French by an Algerian-born playwright who resides in France, for example, has the same kind of liminal literary status as a work by an African American from the period just after the abolishment of slavery in the U.S.

This study takes on another task, examining the additional particularity of North African texts by women only. This is perhaps premature, and would have been better timed by following broad, English-language studies of general North African theatre and performance, both contemporary and historical. Such studies do exist in French, however, and in that sense the present study addresses a lack in both languages. Very few of the older French-language studies of the 1960s through the early 1990s mention women at all, and when they do, it is usually female actors they discuss (Chakroun 1963; Roth 1967; Berrada 1969; Mettrop 1969; Ben Halima 1974; Mrah 1976; Minai 1979; el Houssi 1982; Thiry 1983; Baffet 1985; Badry 1987; B'chir 1993; Déjeux 1993; Siagh 1994; B'chir 1995).[5] One notable exception is Mohamed Aziza's Tunisian study, *Formes traditionelles du spectacle*, which devotes two pages to the traditional, all-female "Woman in the Green Shawl" plays (1975, 78–79). These resemble the Moroccan form of the *halqat moulat sserr* (Chebchoub 1997b), not in content, but by virtue of the fact that they are played by women for women only. Aziza also mentions the *oumouk tangou*, a festival performance that is played by young girls in front of a gender-mixed audience (1975, 28–29).

The lack of women in these theatre studies is not entirely due to neglect or disinterest. Women on stage present a profound problem for North African cultures to this day, as they have until recently in many other parts of the world. The role of the female actor is therefore downplayed by authors of historical and contemporary performance studies out of consideration for their readers' potential sense of modesty or discomfort. As for the other aspects of theatre production, women are latecomers to the scene. As I noted earlier, the oldest play in this study dates from 1960. Fortunately, the subject of women in North African performance is now being addressed by several authors at once. The journal *Algérie Littérature/Action*, published in Paris routinely reviews plays and performances, as well as visual arts, by Algerian women, and Fatima Chebchoub has

recently discussed, in French, the historical and contemporary role of women in Moroccan performance (1994).

More fortunate still is that anthropologists, ethnographers and literature scholars are well ahead of theatre scholars in this regard. I have already mentioned van Nieuwkerk's landmark *'A Trade Like Any Other'* (1995). Deborah Folaron has completed a dissertation in English that discusses six Maghrebian playwrights, including Fatima Gallaire, from a translation studies perspective (1999). Monia Hejaiej has published *Behind Closed Doors* (1996), a study that considers the storytelling practices of Beldi women in Tunis, including members of her own extended family. In "Hybrid Genres, Performed Subjectivities" (1995) and *Gender on the Market* (1996), Deborah Kapchan discusses the recent trend of women's marketplace oratory in Morocco. In "Moroccan Female Performers Defining the Social Body" (1994) she talks about the body politics of the *cheikhat*, female singer-dancers who are also often prostitutes, and without whom no Moroccan social gathering is complete (87).

Philip Schuyler mentions the participation of women in the *rwais* performances of the Imazighen of southwest Morocco in his ethnomusicological study, "Berber Professional Musicians in Performance" (1984). Marnia Lazreg, in her powerful study about the effects of colonization and neo-colonization on Algerian women, *The Eloquence of Silence* (1994), presents the poignant case of the renowned dancers of the Ouled Nail, whose art was so degraded by the French occupiers that they have ceased to dance in public altogether (29–33). In *The Rose and the Thorn* (1987), Roger Joseph and Terri Brint Joseph talk about the *izran*, rhyming couplets devised and publicly performed by young Amazigh women of the Rif, and Terri Brint Joseph discusses them again in "Poetry as a Strategy of Power" (1993). For the performers, these constitute a method of commenting on, complaining about, and changing their lives.

If Gilbert and Tompkins gave the study its form, Fatima Mernissi, herself a Moroccan, gave it its methodology. Mernissi encourages the use of a qualitative interviewing technique (1989, 16). There are many differences between her situation and mine, of course. Mernissi is a compatriot to her subjects, and a polyglot (Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, English and quite possibly Tamazight). She is justifiably famous, and trusted by many Moroccan women as a symbol of female power and prestige. I am a foreigner, speak only English and French—there was no reason for my subjects to trust me (although many inexplicably did). Her subjects were rural-dwellers, mine urban. Hers were illiterate, mine were hyper-literate. Nevertheless, I was heartened by her faith in the uses of the subjective, and by the mistakes she admits to having made along the way (1989, 19). No research can render the Other perfectly; there is only interpretation and the imperfect analogy.

Mernissi spent fourteen years (1970–1984) collecting over one hundred interviews with Moroccan women subjects, most of whom were/are illiterate. She crossed class boundaries to do this. She is a child of the bourgeoisie, but reminds us that her escape from illiteracy was narrow nonetheless. She and I differ on the question of 'reality:' she believes that there is a central reality to the lives of the women she has interviewed, and that her work gets closer to it than, say, a government survey (1989, 18). I cannot fault her opinion about surveys, but I am doubtful of a single reality, even in the context of the life of a single subject. What is perhaps most helpful about Mernissi's work is that she

insists that there is room in scholarship for passion and that it is antithetical to anger (Dwyer 1991, 115).

Mernissi's passion recalls Luce Irigaray's *jouissance*. Both move out from the Self to touch the Other. Both are affirmative. Both can collapse into narcissism (the worm in the apple):

> How, then, can there be love, or pleasure of the other? Except by speaking to oneself about it?…. Brushing against the Other as limit, but reappropriating him/her to oneself in the figures, the carvings, the signifiers, the letters of love…. Speaking to oneself about it with the Other in discourse, in order to speak love to oneself. (Irigaray 1985, 103)

Mernissi has been accused of just such narcissism by Marnia Lazreg, an Algerian feminist sociologist, because Mernissi, literate and elite, mediates the voices of illiterate women (Lazreg 1988, n106). While I appreciate this danger, I think Lazreg's judgment is excessively harsh. If Mernissi is to work, she must do so from her own location—there is no other. The only alternative is to succumb to a self-reductive, post-modern paralysis that is its own kind of narcissism.

A greater danger than narcissism, to my mind, is the transparent interviewer. The Russian constructivists built theatre sets that frankly revealed their constructed-ness. An interview should be made along the same lines. One should be able to 'hear' the conversation. If the interviewer disappears, the reader may be seduced into believing that there is no intervention. Peggy Phelan's analysis of Jennie Livingston's film, *Paris is Burning*, remarks upon the "relative claims" to "realness" that are made by the documentary medium, by the invisibility of the interviewer, and by the drag performers who are the film's subjects (Phelan 1993, 103–105). She talks about her own frustrated desire for the film to be a "real" representation of the story it tells, so that she can get on with discussing the subjects without dealing with their filmic re-presentation: "In framing the mimicry of all identity, Livingston's film documents the impossibility of securing the authentic view of anyone or anything" (107). Both the film's relative success and its simultaneous difficulty are for Phelan tied to its relative opacity.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulates the crisis wherein the radical Western intellectual "is either caught in a deliberate choice of subalternity, granting to the oppressed either that very expressive subjectivity that s/he criticizes or, instead, a total unrepresentability" (Guha and Spivak 1988, 17). She argues for a "unified consciousness of the subaltern" that "must inhabit the strategy" of the historians she is addressing, and contends that the "situated subject" of post-modern discourse is "anti-humanist" and "micrologized" (19). In other words, she asserts that a theory whereby a subaltern subject is deemed to be unique in her condition, set apart by intractable difference, precludes any kind of generalization about the condition of that subaltern as a member of a category. Such theory thus reifies the condition of the subaltern, because if categories cannot be constituted, then the historian is relieved of any responsibility to react to them.

Spivak's argument is compelling, but flawed. Its weakness, leaving aside the evident dangers of an essentialized "unified consciousness," is the either/or articulation of expressive subjectivity and total unrepresentability. Certainly, if one requires of re-presentation a faithful copy, the project is doomed to failure. However, it is precisely the

post-modern acknowledgment of the de-centeredness of the copy performed by the subject that allows the discourse to continue. The irony here is that the paralyzing paradox—the inability of the copy to be 'real'—permits the subject to move:

> [I]f there is an occupation and reversal of the master's discourse, it will come from many quarters, and the resignifying practices will converge in ways that scramble the self-replicating presumptions of reason's mastery. For if the copies speak, if what is merely material begins to signify, the scenography of reason is rocked by the crisis on which it was always built. (Butler 1993, 52)

It is evident that there are tensions in this study caused by my need to faithfully re-present my subjects in an academic forum. Additionally, I am subject to the crisis of any American scholar whose studies approach the constructed categories of 'North Africa,' the 'Middle East,' the 'Arab world,' the 'Muslim world,' or the 'Orient.' I must deal with the traumatized encounter of my culture with these tropes, and the enduring, durable and distorted images that this encounter has produced.[6]

Pavis defines culture as a "signifying system…thanks to which a society or a group understands itself in its relationship to the world" (1992, 8–9). Two cultures create a dialogue in which the lines of communication are based, as with language, on agreed-upon constructions of Otherness. In what would seem to be a paradox, the more acrimonious the dialogue, the more need there is for an agreed-upon Other, a third party who becomes the landscape upon which the battle is conducted.

The construction of the female body as a cultural landscape/repository/artifact/object is not unique to North Africa's dialogue with Europe, and lately the U.S. Rather, it is the constructed, unchanging feminine principle that pre-figures and enables the project of culture itself. In order for North Africa to be constructed by Western imaginations as an unchanging, feminized Other, a background against which the dynamic project of Western progress is carried out, 'woman,' in North Africa and elsewhere, must signify the immobile principle that permits the masculine principle of the Self to move and to 'develop.'

This contested-ness of the female body resides in its function as a territory that may be controlled by competing masculine agents, in this case the colonizer and the colonized. As a contested territory, the female body is thus permitted no agency of its own by the agents of power. A woman attempting agency is subversive because she, by definition, disrupts the project of culture. In francophone North Africa (although again, not uniquely) this disruption is regarded as a harbinger of chaos *[fitna],* and is associated not only with gender but also with sexuality. As a body-object, a woman cannot be separated from her sexual 'nature,' which must perform itself in strictly controlled ways in order not to invoke *fitna*. The mark of 'difference' between the West and North Africa lies not in the necessitated control of women's bodies, but in the form that the control takes.

Knowing is a dangerous business, because it is easy to forget that to 'know' something is to build it from the ground up. Often, for scholars, knowing is a function of building in an acceptable style, according to received codes. Knowledge has a pedigree that links it to 'truths' that have always already been constituted as true. Edward Said gives a chilling critique of Western knowledge as it bolsters imperialism:

> A new dialectic emerges from this project. What is required of the Oriental expert is no longer simply "understanding": now the Orient must be made to perform, its power must be enlisted on the side of "our" values, civilization, interests, goals. Knowledge of the Orient is directly translated into activity….(1979, 238)

James Clifford points out that Said is ambivalent on the subject of knowledge, arguing in some places "that all knowledge is both powerful and fictional" and in others for "an old-fashioned existential realism" (1988, 259), one that privileges, presumably, the knowledge of the subject. I maintain that such ambivalence is not careless, but necessary. We cannot *know*. We can only *think* we know, and yet we *need* to know. Hélène Cixous speaks to this need in theatrical terms that invoke, for me disturbingly, the discourse of the veil:

> We live in front of the paper curtain, and often even as curtains. But what is important to us, what wounds us, what makes us feel we are characters in an immense adventure, is what happens behind the curtain. And behind the curtain is the naked stage. We need this nakedness. (1989, 121)

Yes, we do, but the risk is that in our Self-centeredness, we will force nakedness on the Other and remain ourselves fully clothed. Worse yet, we will miss the opportunity to experience Other ways of knowing, ways that may hold keys to the redemption of our malaise of the Self.

Chaïbia Tallal, a Moroccan painter, provides an example of an alternative knowledge, a situated knowledge filled with resilience and *jouissance*. She is a 'naïve' painter: that is, no one taught her 'how' to do it. She is, or at least was at the beginning of her career, illiterate. She is one of Mernissi's interview subjects. Her work, and her words as mediated by Mernissi, are an excellent argument for the authority of the subject:

> You must understand, it's important, not being afraid to be different…. I was always fascinated by animals…. I also love birds, very much. But it was not this love that disturbed people. It's the fact that I covered myself with flowers. My family tried to stop that. They hit me. I ran away. I vanished into haystacks. You do not know what it is like to hide in a haystack when the fresh rain falls down. You find all that in my painting. (Tallal 1990, 329–330)

Mernissi's hyper-literacy and elite status have not in the slightest reduced the power of Tallal's testimony. Rather, they have made Tallal's situated knowledge available to people who are not familiar with Moroccan painters, and who do not have access to Tallal directly.

PROBLEMS OF CATEGORIZATION

Researching Maghrebi women's performance texts provides some singular challenges for a scholar with a theatre background working in English. Most world theatre and film texts written in English include no material on so-called Arab or 'Middle Eastern' theatre and cinema, or if anything they mention Egypt's theatre and cinema, Turkey's shadow puppets, and, if they are very thorough, the Shi'ite *ta'ziye* of Iran. The present study addresses this neglect, calling the attention of anglophone theatre and literature scholars to the the contemporary body of work created by women in the Maghreb.

For a study of this kind, the problems of categorization are legion. First, terminology must be defined. Second, questions of identity must be addressed: language, residence/ethnicity/citizenship, religion and the subjects' attitude toward the study's theoretical bias—in this case, Western feminism. Third, the fact of text translation and its inevitable distortions must be taken into account.

Once these preliminary issues are addressed, the works must be categorized, and as we will see, this body of work defies the neat creation of boundaries. When we do find them and understand them, are the works to be classified as products of the so-called "Arab world," of Africa, of Europe, or of the post-colonial construct, *francophonie*? At this point, the study becomes, of necessity, interdisciplinary. Add to these difficulties the unfortunate Western prejudice that the representative arts do not co-exist with Islam, or that if they do, women do not take part in their creation, and the field becomes truly murky.

The history of Maghrebian North Africa fosters a tolerance for ambiguity. Like its most ancient cities, Fez and Tunis, the region is layered and crisscrossed with cultures, languages and customs. Even its name is an example of how difficult it is to categorize: *maghreb,* in Arabic, simply means 'a point, west of one's present location, where the sun sets.' Among North African speakers of Arabic, *al-maghreb* refers only to Morocco. For people in the Arab-speaking world outside of North Africa, *al-maghreb* usually refers to Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, but may also contain Mauritania and Libya. Egypt, although part of North Africa, usually stands alone as *al-misr*. Everything else in the so-called Arab world is *al-mashreq*. So, the designation 'Maghreb' becomes a perfect example of a moving standpoint. A place is 'Maghreb' only when it stands to the west of one's own location.

For speakers of European languages, the use of the word 'Maghreb' is both ridiculous and absolutely necessary. Incorrect as a geographical marker, it forces one into absurd statements about 'the West' (Europe and America) in comparison to 'the West' (Maghreb, the western region of the Arabic speaking world). Yet, there is no other word that signifies 'Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia (and maybe Libya and Mauritania), but not Egypt.' By convention, 'Maghreb' has come to mean 'that part of North Africa formerly colonized by France,' and that is how it is used in this work.

The ambiguity of 'Maghreb' as a sign speaks to the impossibility of making neat scientific categories in order to study it. In a sense, 'Maghreb' has been constructed as a large field of permission, by people inside and outside of its geographical and psychic borders, to explore questions of identity and Otherness. Thus, 'Maghreb' is ripe for

fruitful de-construction; this work crosses and re-crosses the boundaries of ‘Maghreb’ and of the other categories it constitutes, ever mindful that what has been made can and must be unmade.

Another term that could use some unmaking, at least with regards to the Middle East and North Africa, is ‘theatre.’ This study necessarily tackles the issue of ‘Middle Eastern/North African/Arab theatre’—an unlikely juxtaposition for many students of theatre in the West—and the questions that arise when it is raised. Does such a thing exist? Does it have a tradition? Is it indigenous? Is it authentic? Is it really theatre? If American scholars were to apply these queries to the theatre/performance history of another region with a similarly complex set of cultural, linguistic, religious and civil codes, the United States, the question would seem preposterous. Of course an authentic American theatre exists. Or rather, a number of American theatre traditions exist, and all are valid. That many American, European, Middle Eastern, North African and Arab scholars spend tremendous energy and time justifying (or denying) the existence of an authentic theatre tradition in the Middle East, North Africa and the so-called Arab and Muslim worlds says something quite troubling about how the question of authenticity regarding those populations and cultures has been framed.

The notion of authenticity serves as a tool of exclusion when we approach arts not our own. It is married to the uses of power. We demand authenticity when examining two types of art: works in our own past and works by Others. In these cases, what is required is a lack of both dynamism and hybridity. Historical works are fixed in time, and the lens of power filters and interprets them for us. Arts by Others are also regarded through the lens, their authenticity determined in direct proportion to their static nature and their purity. In other words, for a contemporary, Other art to be authentic, it must be traditional and unchanging, as well as entirely unlike our own.

This view presents something of a conundrum for arts from the so-called Third World seeking validation in the West. If they resemble Western arts, they are likely to be labeled non-traditional, inauthentic, and derivative. If they meet the criteria for authenticity, then the label reads ‘folklore,’ ‘craft,’ or ‘primitive.’ This is especially true of arts that have been subjected to a period of colonial rule by a Western power. As such arts emerge from subjugation, their creators may find it very difficult to determine the roots of their work, having internalized the colonizer’s criteria for its authentication, or, as Gilbert and Tompkins put it, “The vexed question of authenticity has special significance in heterogeneous nations where varied cultural groups vie for recognition and political representation” (1996, 260).

Just as the application of the word ‘authentic’ is linked to power, so is the application of the word ‘theatre.’ ‘Theatre’ comes from a Greek word root—*theatron*—the “seeing place” of Greek auditorium architecture (Brockett 1991, 35), but it has come to mean many things that are not at all what the Greeks had in mind. If ‘theatre’ is defined as only those entertainments that find their origin in the City Dionysia, then we must eliminate *kabuki* and *Death of a Salesman* as theatrical products, among many others. This study will explore the discourse of theatre and authenticity as these concepts apply to, and have been applied to, the Maghreb.

The relationship between power and one’s choice of words extends to entire languages in the Maghreb. North Africa is a pluri-lingual terrain, problematic in the sense that communication is not transparent, but full of possibilities for women’s presentations of

the Self. The tool of the *plurilangue* is auto-translation, which produces productive slippages in meaning: "We cannot simply translate a linguistic text into another; rather we confront and communicate heterogeneous cultures and situations of enunciation that are separated in space and time" (Pavis 1992, 136).

Francophone North Africa is not as complex in its linguistic situation as, for example, India, where the language of the former colonizer is often the only avenue for mutual intelligibility between members of different language groups. Nevertheless, the tensions between French, Arabic, and Tamazight—a group of languages spoken by the Imazighen with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility (Bentahila 1983, 1)—produce a play of power that affects the reception of a work as well as the reputation of its author. Arabic was brought to the region by invaders, and so, much later, was French. In the Maghreb, as elsewhere, the language in which an artist chooses to write or perform allows her receptors to make assumptions about ethnicity, religious and political affiliation, and class, making writing and speaking complicated projects.

Classical Arabic is a literary language. It is not spoken, except in religious and poetic contexts. The Arabic-speaking world shares a lingua franca, *fousha* [Modern Standard Arabic], that is heard in news broadcasts, academic conferences, and other situations where mutual intelligibility between speakers of the four major dialects of Arabic (Maghrebian, Egyptian, Levantine, and Peninsular) is required. *Fousha* sounds stilted in regular conversation, and so is truly unsuitable for realistic dramatic dialogue. In the Maghreb, spoken Arabics tend to diverge due to their expo sure to differing Tamazights. Post-independence, Arab-identified, nationalist projects, moreover, have pushed the countries of the Maghreb to adopt standardized Arabic as the national language (Bentahila 1983, 3), pushing Tamazight speakers into the margin. Until recently, Tamazight had no script of its own. An ancient script, *tifignah*, is being revived, but in the meantime writers who wish to use Tamazight as their medium have been forced to transliterate, and to choose between the Arabic and Roman alphabets. A complex conversation about orality and literacy in artistic production has evolved due to this complexity.

French, the former colonial language, while associated with pain and oppression, has become a tongue of convenience for many in the Maghreb. It is still the language of instruction in many post-secondary institutions, although *fousha* is in direct competition. English is also a teaching medium, but it comes in at a distant third. Tamazight is not even in the race, except in the region of Kabylia, Algeria, where a renaissance of Amazigh culture is taking place.

For Maghrebian artists, bilingualism is synonymous with liminality, whereas literacy, particularly in French, indicates class. Writers, particularly Algerians, who choose French are sometimes charged with being culturally traitorous for not writing in Arabic. This produces discomfort in those who are not able to write in Arabic, or simply find French to be a better medium for their individual expression, which cannot, of course, be separated from the forces that shape them as artists. Jean Déjeux calls this expression "wounded writing" (1992, 8–11), and it is best exemplified by Abdelkebir Khatibi:

> Bi-langue? My luck, my own individual abyss and my lovely amnesiac energy. An energy that I don't experience as a deficiency, curiously enough. Rather, it's my third ear. Had I experienced some kind of

> breakdown, I liked to think I would have grown up in the dissociation peculiar to any unique language. That's why I admire the gravity of the blind man's gestures and the desperate impossible love the deaf man has for language. (1990, 5)

The concept of *l'écriture feminine* [writing the body], promulgated by the French feminists, can be carried to new levels when applied to North Africa. Not only do North African woman playwrights write the body—that is to say write from the location of the female corpus—but they write *a* body, one that will represent them to the public. These playwrights are beginning to create 'bodies' of words in order to enter the contested (and liminal) space of theatrical imagination on their own behalf. Theatrical space is a battle of re-presentations, each one vying to be taken for truth, Just as a woman actor uses her body in order to construct a presentation of self, the woman writer uses words. The difference is that the woman actor may not have agency, whereas the woman writer attains not only agency, but metaphorical, if not literal, social mobility.

Gallaire and Assous work in French with occasional interpolations in Algerian Arabic. Gallaire and MacDougall provided a glossary of Arabic terms for *You Have Come Back* when it was published in the United States (1988b, 221). Farida Benlyazid's Moroccan film, *Bab al-Samaa Maftouh*, was written in French, but filmed in Moroccan Arabic (Benlyazid 1990, 297). Assia Djebar and Walid Carn's 1960 play, *Rouge l'aube* (1969) was performed in Arabic and published in French (Déjeux 1984, 11). The writers' choices of language have depended on the target audience, as well as political and biographical factors and the availability of publication resources in North Africa and France. Auto-translation, with various degrees of permeability, has become a valuable tool for these artists, both to bring the complexities of the *pluri-langue* into sharp relief, and to reach the widest possible audience.

Women in the Maghreb do not have a monolithic view of how their societies should conduct themselves. North African women have a heritage of plurality. They are of Arab, Amazigh, and European heritage; they are Muslim, Christian, Jewish and irreligious; they are traditional and 'progressive,' rich and poor, urban and rural. They speak Tamazight, Arabic and a host of European languages. They live both inside the region and out of it. Some inside wish to leave, and some outside wish to return. One of the few things they all have in common is that their identities are overlapping, and in flux. Because their modes of self-identification and self-expression are so complex, this work can only begin to imagine what Maghrebian women artists envision for the future development of their cultures. The works discussed here would seem to suggest a desire for inclusion in the decision making processes of governmental programs, an end to the brutalization of women by conflicting patriarchal systems, economic independence, and the legitimization of a body of feminine literary, oral and performance production that is centuries old.

There is an anecdote that points up the difficulties presented by the need to categorize people and artistic products with multiple identities. When I was in Tunisia at a major conference on the subject of Maghrebian literature, I purchased a bibliography of Maghrebian literature compiled by the prestigious Coordination des Chercheurs en Littératures Maghrébines under the direction of Charles Bonn and Feriel Kachoukh. I scoured it for female playwrights, and found one listed that I had not already known:

Yasmina Reza, who was listed as Tunisian (Bonn and Kachoukh 1992, 81). Imagine my delight when I returned to the U.S. and many months later looked for Yamina Reza on the internet, discovering that her play, *Art*, had won a Tony! There was only one problem: Yasmina Reza is not Tunisian. I still do not know how she came to be listed in the bibliography. I assume that she had some tenuous connection to Tunisia that caused her to be labeled a Tunisian writer, since the researchers in question are not given to egregious error. For the record, her mother was Hungarian, her father Iranian. Her father was born in Moscow and moved to Paris at the age of three. She herself is French, and resents even the application of the label "of Iranian descent" (Schneider 1998, 14).

I relate this anecdote not to embarrass Charles Bonn and his researchers, but to point out how hard it is to label the identity of a writer or an artist. So many of the criteria used for such categorizations simply do not serve the agenda of the person or work being described. Alec Hargreaves points out, for example, that the works of Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccanborn writer who lives in Morocco and France, were routinely shelved in the Maghrebian literature sections of French bookstores until he won the Prix Goncourt, at which point some Paris bookstores moved him to their 'French literature' sections. Irish ex-patriot Samuel Beckett, however, has always been claimed for French literature in the same institutions (1999, 51). Moreover, how does one categorize someone like Zarina SalahuddinRubenstein, who was born in Tunisia of a Russian mother and a pre-independence Indian father, grew up in a multitude of places and settled in France (*L'Avant scène théâtre* 1983, 24)?

I have made some distinctions between the private and public lives of my subjects regarding identity. I did not ask my subjects about their ethnicity, for example, but if they volunteered the information or if it was in a secondary source, it appears in this work, as does their birthplace. I have been deliberately vague about where they reside, to protect their privacy and in some cases, their safety. In no case did I ask about religion; I discuss Hélène Cixous' Jewishness only because it is a matter of public record and because she seems comfortable doing so (Cixous 1996). Religion thus figures in this study as a social phenomenon, not as a private practice. Overt references to religion in the plays and performance pieces have been noted, where appropriate. The one work in which religion is the central theme, Amina Lhassani's *Nour ou l'appel de Dieu*, a Maghrebization of the Joan of Arc story, is ambiguous about the religious affiliation of its protagonist.

I anticipated that questions regarding identity would be delicate for my subjects. I should have realized that conversing about feminism would be equally difficult. I did ask my interview subjects where they stood with regards to feminism, and the conversation usually became awkward at that point. Their answers ran a spectrum from, "Of course I'm a feminist!" to "That question really doesn't interest me." I have received the impression from my general reading and from these responses that the word feminism is no better defined in North Africa than it is elsewhere, and that there are many different categories of people concerned with the status of women who reject the title of 'feminist,' in North Africa. Thus, just as we have learned to speak of 'feminisms' in the U.S., we must speak of North African feminisms.

One broad category of feminism in North Africa embraces Western feminist praxis theory and is concerned with immediate social change. The researchers at the governmentally-sponsored CREDIF (Centre de Recherches, d'Études, de Documentation et d'lnformation sur la Femme, Tunis), Moroccan scholar Zakya Daoud and Egyptian

scholar and playwright Nawal el Saadawi fall more or less into this category. Another group, of whom Marnia Lazreg and Egyptian scholar Leïla Ahmed are good examples, promotes a specific feminism by and for North African women, and is suspicious of Western feminism as a potential vehicle for neo-colonialism. A third group has taken on the arduous task of making and/or recovering an Islamic feminism. Fatima Mernissi works increasingly in this area.[7] Women move in and out of these categories and sometimes, as is the case with Mernissi, work in more than one category at once. Within the broad outlines of these categories, as is to be expected, is a multiplicity of perspectives.

Even if identity politics were not an issue for this study, the problem of translation would be. Okakura remarks that, "Translation is always a treason, and…can at best be only the reverse side of a brocade—all the threads are there, but not the subtlety of colour and design" (1935, 22–23). What is being translated here is an artistic product. Aesthetic considerations compound the already considerable difficulties of rendering meaning. In fictional literature, one may encounter untranslatable word-play and allusion, delicate changes of tone and style, non-standard dialogic dialects offering peculiar orthography, and particular cultural references requiring massive annotation. In poetry, in addition to the above, there are often alliterations, rhyming and metrical schemes, and rhythmic patterns that do not exist in the target language.

Hardest of all to translate faithfully are those products that exist as both literary text and performance ephemera: the scripts for plays, films, recitations, speeches, and other forms of live performance. They contain all the pitfalls previously mentioned as well as many twists specific to their own genres. Plays may be published in multiple editions corresponding to contributions made by directors, designers, actors, and stage managers of particular productions. They may be translated in a literary fashion that is quite accurate, but absolutely not stage-worthy. Conversely, they may appear in versions that play well, but diverge sharply from the original. We need to devote attention to the spaces between original texts and their translations, and the political and aesthetic possibilities and perils of those spaces, lest they become invisible to the reader/viewer.

This work is interdisciplinary in nature. Like its subjects it migrates, making forays out of theatre and performance studies into francophone literature, translation studies, history, sociology, women's studies, anthropology and ethnology. Such migrations are necessary if the plays are to be understood within their various contexts. Once the contexts are outlined, the study then returns to its primary subjects of analysis: the lives of Maghrebian women dramatists and the diverse strategies of resistance they have created in their texts.

Chapter Two
Context

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: ARABIC+DRAMA?

A great deal of academic energy has gone into the question of whether or not an authentic Arabic drama exists. Almost every study, regardless of its focus, on the subject of Arabic drama, for that is how this theatre is usually labeled, devotes a chapter to this question. As with other areas of this research, the discourse is mired in problems of terminology and of flawed assumptions, made by researchers in and out of the region, as to what might constitute Arabic drama. Perhaps a day will come when this reflex to defend or debunk the juxtaposition of "Arabic+drama" will dissipate, but this study cannot completely avoid the issue.

First, there is the question of "drama" and "theatre." Although many scholars conflate these terms, let us agree for the purpose of argument that "drama" constitutes a written text, suitable for reading or performance. "Theatre," on the other hand, refers to a performance of a text that may or may not be written down, and may or may not contain words—mime, for example, constitutes the theatrical performance of a non-verbal text. Then there is the question of ethnic designations versus religious ones. "Arab" does not equal "Muslim," nor is the opposite true. Hence, when scholars say that Arabic drama did not exist traditionally because of prohibitions in Islam, they are conflating a people and a religion, contributing to confusion in the discourse. There are a number of non-Arab Muslim cultures that engage in theatrical production, with or without drama. Moreover, not all Arabs engaged in theatrical production have been Muslim. In North Africa, the presence of the non-Arab Imazighen further complicates the picture. On the other hand, when scholars make a claim for Arabic drama that reaches back to pharonic Egypt, Phœnicia, or Babylon, they gloss over the specific history of the conjunction of Islam and Arab culture that produced certain kinds of literature and not others; and certain kinds of performance and not others.

The puzzle of "Arabic+drama?" has a key: one must ask a different question, or set of questions. "Arabic+drama?" assumes that in order for the proposed theatre to be legitimate, it must be written down, in literary Arabic. Most scholars, and dramatists, who have pursued this line of questioning have used the Greeks as their model, privileging Aristotle as the codifying authority for drama, and pointing to the *theatron* and its Western descendants as the height of sophistication in theatrical space. Using this yardstick, they then argue for more or less Arab participation in the Greek model. Before moving away from "Arabic+drama?," let us examine some of these arguments.

We are indebted here to Abdullah Ali al-Magaleh, who has provided the most exhaustive summary of the debate to date. In his 1988 dissertation on the work of modern Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim, he devotes a lengthy chapter, which he calls an "authentic introduction to Arabic theatre," to the issue. He finds that the discourse is divided into two camps: "no, but…" and "yes, but…" and further, that these camps are actually quite close together (23). The "no, but…" position maintains that Arabic drama did not exist, but that traditional forms of entertainment did have dramatic elements. The "yes, but…" position concludes that the traditional forms were types of drama, but that they were rudimentary and lacked sophistication.

In his "no, but…" camp, a much larger group than the other, al-Magaleh places H.A.R.Gibb, Jacob Landau, Muhammed Aziza, Denys Johnson-Davies, Mohamed A.al-Khozai, Mahmud Taymur, Muhammed Yusuf Najm, Zaki Tulaymat, Shukri Ayyad, Martha Bellinger, Ismail Izz ad-Din, George Aster, Numan Ashur, Curt Prufer, Sulayman al-Bustani, and his subject Tawfiq al-Hakim. Although he does not explicitly say so, al-Magaleh himself seems to be in this group also. This is in keeping with his assertion that al-Hakim was trying to "originate" Arabic drama. He places Ali Uqlah Arsan, Ahmad al-Wahab, Muhammad Kamal ad-Din, Amin al-Ayyuti, and Yunis Abd al-Hamid in the "yes, but…" position (1988, 26–47).

The objections to an assertion of "Arabic+drama," in al-Magaleh and elsewhere, range from generalizations about "the Arab mentality" to nuanced analyses of how traditional forms of entertainment in the Arab world fell short of or lacked the Aristotelian model. Al-Magaleh quotes Davies, for example: "For reasons largely religious and sociological, the Arabs developed no form of fiction…" (1988, 27). One presumes Davies means fictional literature; even so, the existence of the *Alif Layla wa Layla [One Thousand Nights and a Night]* begs for a reconsideration of this assertion. Elias George Agel states that Arabic drama "suffers" from being caught between "the depth of Arab culture" and "the inability of Arab playwrights to see the relationship between form and content" (1982, 24). This argument will be distressingly familiar to Asian theatre scholars, who have battled for decades the Orientalist notion that the theatres they study are formal, but lack psychological content. Taymur, on the other hand, lists some convincing reasons as to why the Arabs did not translate Greek plays: they disliked translating poetry into prose, they did not care to add foreign literatures to their own considerable body of work, they encountered the Greek theatre at a time when it was out of favor in its culture of origin, and their religious leaders found the pagan elements in Greek drama objectionable (al-Magaleh 1988, 29). It is evident that not all of the voices in this debate have given the question equally careful consideration.

The arguments opposing "Arabic+drama" can be grouped into geographical, psychological, religious, sociological, linguistic, literary, and historical categories. The geographical category contains two issues, the first being that the Arabs were nomadic and thus did not build theatrical spaces. This is the view of al-Hakim himself (al-Magaleh 1988, 41). Kole Omoloso finds it baseless, stating, "To think that playhouses and theatres are necessary for the development of drama in any literature is to put the cart before the horse" (1978, 137). The second argument, related to the first, is presented and dismissed by Agel: Arabs did not develop drama because they were tribal and dramatic characterization requires urbanization. Agel does not argue the premise, which is dubious, but correctly points out that Arabs founded large cities early in their culture

(1982, 18). Mecca and Medina were already in existence in 610 C.E., at the inception of Islam. Arabs took over the city of Damascus in 636 C.E., and Baghdad was founded in the seventh century as well. In North Africa, Fès, Morocco, was founded by the early eighth century, and Cairo, Egypt and Kairouan, Tunisia were founded by the tenth century (ArabNet).

The issues raised in the psychological category of arguments tend to run together, and they are so conflated with assumptions about Arabs and religion that it is difficult to separate them. The psychological arguments are disturbing because they make sweeping generalizations about mentality that verge on racism, sometimes of the internalized variety. Agel again presents and dismisses an assertion: Arabs lack an "analytical mind" and reject the Western sense of time, and thus could not have created drama. To this Agel replies that, "artistic creation is the result of an intuition" and not the "product of a logical standard" (1982, 20). Notice that he does not call into question the notion of Arabs and their alleged lack of an "analytical mind." Similarly, al-Magaleh cites Ismail Izz ad-Din's opinion that "the Arab mentality" has a tendency towards "abstractness," rather than "synthesis" (1988, 31–32). Omosolo mentions a theory in this vein that has been used to explain the "arrested development" of Arabic drama, and here we see the blurring of the line between psychological and religious arguments: Islam is a belief system that does not permit rituals to evolve into entertainments. Omoloso correctly calls this idea "crude" and "racially biased" (1978, 136).

There are more compelling arguments concerning Islam and drama/theatre. First is the question of whether or not Islam permits the conflict required by Aristotelian tragedy. Aster, Prufer, and Izz ad-Din all deny that conflict can exist in Islam (al-Magaleh 1988, 31–33), as does Omoloso (1978, 137). If Allah provides a solution to all problems, the reasoning goes, then conflict is not present. Aziza, al-Magaleh tells us, lists four kinds of conflict that Arab Muslims cannot undergo: the clash of God's will against human initiative, the individual in conflict with society, human autonomy pushing against predestined fate, and existential optimism versus existential pessimism (1988, 24). To this al-Magaleh retorts that Islam does indeed entertain conflicts: those between God and Iblis (Satan) and between man and himself, the soul "prone to evil" fighting with the "righteous" soul (57). Fatalism, he points out, is not the same as inaction (60).

Another difficulty that Islam appears to have with the dramatic arts has to do with the ongoing debate about the nature of acting. Islamic and Arabic language scholars use two different words for "acting," *al-tamthil* [incarnation] and *al-taqlid* [imitation]. If acting constitutes *al-tamthil*, a word al-Magaleh translates as "figural representation" (1988, 49–50), and Lutfi Abdul-rahman Fazio renders as "incarnation" (1985, 13–14), then some Islamic scholars declare that it is forbidden. Mandur asserts that "personification" is an affront to God. *Al-taqlid*, which is generally translated as "imitation," on the other hand, is a less serious matter (al-Magaleh 1988, 49–50). For many religious authorities, a realistic psychological portrayal of a character involves incarnating a human being, and thus is sinful. The portrayal of an obvious stereotype, or an impersonation such as a stand-up comedian might do of a well-known figure, is an imitation and may be accepted, though few religious authorities will applaud it. This may be why presentational techniques, such as narrators and audience address, and stereotyped stock characters are quite common to Arab audiences. As long as the actor stands both inside and outside of

the character he is playing, and a frank admission is made that the production is not in any way 'real,' he stands a better chance of being religiously correct, or at least tolerated.

A final obstacle has stood, historically, between Islam and Arabic drama fashioned on the Greek model. Taymur observes that drama, and by this he means Greek drama, is steeped in pagan mythology. This, he postulates, would have been distasteful to religious Arabs, and so Greek plays were not translated and there was no antique model for the Arabs to follow, should they have desired to do so (al-Magaleh 1988, 28–29). Examination of the entertainment forms Arabs and non-Arab Muslims have adopted shows, however, that Islam does not always stand in the way of pagan mythologies, and that Islamic liturgical drama indulges in incarnation as well as imitation. In Indonesia, for example, the Hindu *Ramayana* epic is routinely enacted by Muslim performers, and the *ta'ziyeh* performances of Shi'ite Muslims, particularly in Iran, arguably attain a degree of incarnation (Fazio 1985, 35).[1]

The geographical arguments against "Arabic+drama" are trivial, the psychological ones ill-considered and perhaps racist, and the religious ones weighty yet inconsistent in their application. This brings us to the sociological argument posed by Landau: Arabic drama failed, in part, because women were not allowed to act in it. Once again, al-Magaleh provides the rebuttal, pointing out that women were forbidden the Western stage for many centuries (1988, 27 and 56–57). Indeed, women did not appear in the theatre about which Aristotle wrote. While it is tempting to point to the absence of women actors as the Achilles heel of Arabic drama, this argument partakes of the same flawed logic that allows Westerners condemn the veiling of Arab Muslim women while encouraging Western women to wear high spiked-heel shoes and corsets, despite their deleterious effects on the body. Al-Hakim perceived that the problem with women on stage in his era was that their characters were engaging in dialogue with male characters to whom they (the characters) were not related. For Muslim believers, this called the morality of both the female actors and their characters into question. He resolved the issue by creating more familial relationships between characters in his plays, so that they could interact with propriety (al-Magaleh 1988, 56–57).

While less contested, the linguistic, literary, and historical arguments opposing "Arabic+drama" are the most persuasive. Both Agel (1982, 21–22) and Omoloso (1978, 136) bring up the issue of Arabic as a kind of "double language." Classical Arabic, the language of the Quran, and *al-fousha* [Modern Standard Arabic] are literary languages. *Al-fousha* is a lingua franca with its origins in Quranic Arabic; it allows speakers of different dialects to communicate in writing, but it is not the native spoken language of any Arabic-speaking region. It is, however, the language of education and publishing. Popular entertainment does not need to meet literary requirements, so it occurs in the languages of the street: Arabic regional dialects, and in the case of North Africa, Tamazight. To create an enduring drama, in the strict sense of the term, Arab playwrights writing in Arabic have had to grapple with this disparity. Agel calls the constructs of classical Arabic "frozen" and "static" (1982, 21–22). Omoloso suggests that formal literary language is a barrier to realism on the stage: a *fellah* [peasant] character, for example, would not talk that way (1978, 136). More importantly, plays enacted in literary Arabic have a restricted and rather elite audience, just as plays in Old, Middle, or Early Modern English have a limited audience in the U.S. Audiences want to hear people who sound like they do; they want to see themselves reflected on the stage.

Taymur's literary and historical theories have been mentioned earlier, but they are of such weight that they merit further examination here. It is his contention that the Arabs were so proud of their literary capabilities that they did not care to import foreign literatures, and when they did, they disliked translating poetry into prose. This is his explanation as to why Greek drama was not translated into Arabic along with Aristotle's *Poetics*. He also posits that the Greek theatre was in decline and disfavor in the West when the Arabs encountered it (al-Magaleh 1988, 29), a view that is shared by Agel (1982, 18). Finally, al-Magaleh tells us that al-Hakim felt that Arab literature did not provide a basis for the acceptance of Greek drama (1988, 41), and that it would have been difficult for Arabs to appreciate Greek drama without knowing how it had been staged.

The "yes, but…" perspective, to which al-Magaleh gives very little space, draws upon two arguments: first, that pre-Islamic Arabs had drama and second, that popular entertainment forms constituted a drama in their own right (1988, 36–38). Unfortunately, the first argument is not supported by much evidence unless one relies upon the ancient Pharonic, Babylonian, and Phœnecian forms, whose Arab-ness is tenuous. The second argument has limited value, if we use the definition of drama proposed earlier: a written text, suitable for reading or performance. There are two cases where dramatic literature produced by Arabs has survived: three plays for the *khayal al-zill* penned by Shems ad-Din Muhammed ibn Danial al-Mosuli (1248–1311 C.E.) are extant (Fazio 1985, 47; Alsafar 1991, 43); and some of the *maqamat* of al-Hamadani (967–1007 C.E.) and al-Hariri (1054–11? C.E.) still exist (Agel 1982, 13). Some Arabs did write dramatic literature, but not in great quantity.

The problem with all of these viewpoints, without exception, is that they rely on Aristotle and literary production as the standard. If indeed Aristotle defines drama for all time, Arabs are still not producing it, and never really have. If dramatic literature is the requirement for a national or cultural heritage of theatrical production, then one may argue that theatre was imported to the Middle East and North Africa upon colonization. I follow Jacques Berque to a certain point on this question:

> It is probable…that, in spite of the universalist definitions of Aristotle, drama constituted, for the Greeks, a thing as specific as poetry was for the ancient Arabs. And when the latter naively proclaim all poetry inconceivable outside of their own language, they refer to a specificity of that genre. (1969, 17)

We diverge, however, when he goes on to say that, "the introduction and the development of theatre, cinema and other spectacular arts remain…a response to well-defined circumstances. The stimulation for these circumstances remains until now principally foreign…" (17). Arabs do have, and always have had, indigenous theatres. "Arabic+drama?" is simply the wrong question. I am not alone in this analysis, nor is it original. Badra B'chir, in her excellent book, *Élements du fait théâtral en Tunisie* (1993), devotes a chapter to debunking the theories mentioned above (101–134), and provides a scientific scheme for analysis of Arab, and by extension, Tunisian, theatre (113–115). Among the high points of this essay are her discussion of the Orientalist agenda in the framing of the discourse (101–114), and her complaint regarding the ambiguity of the definition of 'theatre.' *Halqa* innovator Fatima Chebchoub says that defining the old

forms as "pre-theatrical," as many scholars do, is tantamount to calling their creators "pre-human," and does not hesitate to label this line of thought the "call of colonialism" (1997b).

The question "Arabs+theatrical performance?," elicits a very different answer than "Arabic+drama?." There is no doubt that, while it did not prohibit theatre at all times and in all places, Islam has an uneasy relationship with the figurative and representational arts. So, for that matter, does Christianity. Any hegemony has problems with art that it does not control, and this may be the greatest difference between the Arabs and the Greeks: Greek theatrical art was a vehicle of the State and its religion, whereas Arab theatrical art, for the most part, has had nothing to do with the State until recent times, and supports Islam only sporadically.[2] Nevertheless, Islam is not responsible for a lack of theatre in the so-called Arab world, for no such lack exists. Traditional Arab and Amazigh theatrical performances in North Africa have been ignored because they are ephemeral: out of State control and most often unrecorded. This permits them to be consigned to the academic ghetto of oral transmission and 'folklore.'

ANCIENT AND OLD FORMS OF ARAB (AND AMAZIGH) THEATRE

The Arabs and the Greeks

For the record, the Arabs did have Aristotle's *Poetics*. The great Cordovan Aristotle commentator, Abdul Waleed Muhammed Ibn Rushd, or Averroes as he was known in the West, began translating Aristotle directly from the Greek in 1155 C.E. at the Mohavid court in Marrakech, Morocco (Zahoor; al-Magaleh 1988, 43). Omoloso places the translation of *Poetics* even earlier, circa 820–895 C.E., in the *beit al-hikmah* [house of wisdom] of Caliph al-Mamun, where Arabized Syriacs translated it first into their own language and then into Arabic. He blames these early translators for the rendering of "comedy" as *hija* [satire] and "tragedy" as *ritha* [elegy] (1978, 134–135). Al-Magaleh tells us that Ibn Rushd translated the same aesthetic terms as *hija* and *madih*, "substitut[ing] poetic genres for dramatic terms" (1988, 24). Whether because of a lack of context or a faulty translation, Aristotle's intent was not clear to the Arabs during their medieval period, and his theory had no real bearing on the theatrical work they produced.

Egyptian, Phœnecian, and Babylonian Sources

If Arab theatre did not come from the Greeks, what is its origin? Omoloso points to the pharonic Egyptian liturgical drama contained in *The Book of the Dead* (1978, 132), and Agel similarly cites Egyptian mystery plays and the religious rituals of Babylon and Assyria as precursors to both the Greeks and the Arabs (1982, 10). Brockett dates the Abydos "passion play" of ancient Egypt at 2500–550 B.C.E. (1991, 9). The ethnicity of the ancient Egyptians is in dispute, however, and so it is difficult to make a direct link between ancient Egypt and later North Africa.

Chakib el-Khouri has a fascinating theory about the Gilgamesh epic of ancient Babylon. Not only does he find that it is the source for Arab theatre, but that it is the Arab

origin of the theatre of the absurd (1978, 13). Gilgamesh, the historical king of the Uruk people in what is now Iraq, lived circa 2700 B.C.E. His life inspired legends that were, according to Richard Hooker, first recorded in the Sumerian language at around 2000 B.C.E. The legends coalesced into a long epic, extant on cuneiform tablets written in the Akkadian, Hittite, and Hurrian languages. The Akkadian tablets, though damaged, are the best source for the Gilgamesh epic. Authored by Shin-eqiunninni, whom Hooker claims to be the "oldest known human author we can name by name," the tablets were found in the Ninevah library of Ashurbanipal (King of Assyria, 669–633 B.C.E.) that was destroyed by the Persians in 612 B.C.E.

El-Khouri sees in Gilgamesh a parallel with the pessimism and existential angst that prompted Dadaism, surrealism, and the writings of the Algerian-born playwright, Albert Camus. To him, "Gilgamesh is the pioneer of the rebellion against the injustice of the universe" (1978, 21). More importantly, for our purposes, he draws a direct link between the Gilgamesh epic and the Phœnician plays *Daniel* and *Baal*, which he dates at 1450–1250 B.C.E. (1978, 32–33). The resemblance of the two Phœnician theatrical pieces to the Gilgamesh epic increases the likelihood that the epic was performed. If true, this would offer a source for Arab theatre that pre-dates the Greeks by 1500 years, not to mention its possible implications for Western theatre. The presence of the Phœnicians in North Africa is evidenced by the city of Carthage, in present-day Tunisia, but as with the connection between pharonic and Arab Egypt, the link has been disrupted by cultural dislocations and is not at all clear. Agel finds a more plausible, and more literary, ancient source for Arab theatre in pre-Islamic Arab festivals that involved dramatic recitations of poetic epics, but he does not give a date for these performances (1982, 12).

However obscure the ancient origins of Arab theatre might be, during the medieval period traditional entertainment forms, or what Fazio (1985) calls the "old forms," flourished. These forms, both imported and indigenous, are worth a brief discussion here, as some have a direct bearing on the contemporary theatre of North Africa.

Karagoz and Khayal al-zill

The Turks introduced a two-character puppet show, the *karagoz*, at the beginning of the Ottoman Empire. From the Turkish words *kara* and *goz*, meaning black-eyed, the *karagoz* concerns the adventures of two stock characters: the eponymous protagonist, a country bumpkin, and his adversary, Hadji Wad, a slick, urban con-man. Both characters are manipulated by a single puppeteer, who adapts stories from the *Alif Layla wa Layla* and satirically treats themes of social interest, such as the greed of certain clergy members. Evening performances of *karagoz* and of its companion form *khayal al-zill* are especially popular during Ramadan, and require audience participation (Fazio 1985, 39–40).

Khayal al-zill, the shadow puppet theatre, involves a larger cast of characters. Fazio says that this form developed from the *karagoz*, but contradicts himself when he notes that the first commentary that mentions a shadow play in the Arab world was written in 1171 C.E., prior to the invasion of the Turks (1985, 43–44). Alsafar says that the *khayal al-zill* is probably of Persian origin (1991, 43). As mentioned above, Ibn Danial (1248–1311 C.E.), a playwright and physician who was born in Baghdad and migrated to Egypt, wrote three *babat* [pieces] for the *khayal al-zill* that still exist (Alsafar 1991, 43). *Taif al-*

Khayal [The Spirit of the Shadow] treats the themes of sin and repentance, as well as the marriage of old men to young girls (Fazio 1985, 48 and 218). *Ajib wa Charib [The Amazing and the Strange]* has no plot to speak of. Its title characters, Strange and Amazing, are compared and certain professions are ridiculed (49). In *Al-Mutaiyam [The Infatuated]*, two themes are placed in parallel. A young man engages in illicit and unrequited love, and also in animal contests. Both activities are forbidden to Muslims. The protagonist's bull is killed by that of his rival in love. He holds a party where he and his friends gluttonously feast on the bull's flesh, is visited by the Angel of Death, repents and dies; the play has an unusually serious second act (50–51). Unlike the *karagoz*, the *khayal al-zill* requires a team of puppeteers to manipulate the leather puppets on their sticks. This is usually done by members of a family, with a young girl taking the women's roles. *Khayal al-zill* puppets are not articulated like the shadow puppets of Indonesia (Brockett 1991, 80 illus.), and Thiry notes that in the shadow theatre of Algeria during the colonial period, the character of Satan wore a French officer's uniform (1983, 303)!

Ta'ziyeh

Whether the origin of the Shi'ite *ta'ziyeh* liturgical performance rests inside or outside the Arab world is unknown. It has found its fullest expression in Iran, but to this day, variations of the *ta'ziyeh* performance occur widely in Iraq, Lebanon, the Gulf States, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, the nations of the former Soviet Union, Asia, South America, and North America. The *ta'ziyeh* is a recitation, or re-enactment, of the seventh-century battle that took place at Karbala in present-day Iraq between the Umayyad Caliph, Yazid, and Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. Imam Hussain, the son of the Prophet's cousin Ali and his daughter Fatima, is the figure from whom the Shi'ites derive their hereditary religious authority, and he was defeated at Karbala. *Ta'ziyeh* means "consolation" or "mourning" in Arabic (Alsafar 1991, 44). Yazid's soldiers killed old men, women and children, in addition to the soldiers of the opposition (Omoloso 1978, 136).

Alsafar lists four forms of the *ta'ziyeh;* two involve narration and poetic recitation by a single performer with rhythmic or spoken responses from the spectators, and date from the tenth century C.E. (1991, 46–47). The third is the Iranian form, which he and Fazio agree involves *al-tamthil* (Alsafar 1991, 47; Fazio 1985, 33). The Iranian *ta'ziyeh* is an elaborate, ritualized pageant that lasts for the first nine (Alsafar 1991, 47) or ten (Omoloso 1978, 136) days of Muhrram, the Shi'ite month of mourning. In this performance, dating from eighteenth-century Persia, the male actors wear the symbolic colors of red and green to represent the evil Caliph and the virtuous Imam, respectively, and employ music, props, and live horses as they depict the battle and the subsequent burning of Hussain's camp (Alsafar 1991, 48). The spectators weep, and a narrator collects their tears on a piece of cotton that is used later for healing (Fazio 1985, 33). The fourth form of *ta'ziyeh* listed by Alsafar takes place at Karbala and is called *hark al-khiyam.* This form concentrates on two episodes in the *ta'ziyeh* story, the burning of Hussain's camp and the burial of the bodies of his followers by the virtuous Bani Assad tribe. This is the largest *ta'ziyeh,* with two hundred performers and two hundred thousand spectators. Like the Iranian form, it uses props, costumes, and live horses (49–50).

Sufi Maqamat

A more certainly indigenous form of Arab Islamic theatre is performed by the Sufis of Baghdad. Omoloso places the origin of this practice in the ninth century, when a particular performer would go to the city walls and engage in a critique of the Caliphs in a mock court where he called upon audience members to play the various monarchs throughout history. The Sufi soloist started with the first Caliph and worked his way through to the Abbasids, the unpopular rulers of his day. When he reached this point, the audience members would judge the Abbasids and condemn them to hell. Omoloso classifies the Sufi performance as being of the *maqama* type, discussed below, and says it was "folklore narration," not theatre. (1978, 133–134). Amazingly, Fazio informs us that this practice was ongoing among the Sufi brothers of Baghdad in the 1980s, and that it was performed each Monday and Thursday (1985, 36–37). One wonders if it has survived the bombardments and privations of the Gulf Wars and the paranoia of Saddam Hussein's regime. Fazio calls the practice "semi-dramatic," labels it a morality play, and notes that it employs mimicry and a plot (37).

Al-Samir

This brings us to the secular, indigenous forms of traditional Arab performance. As we have seen, the debate rages on as to whether these forms are sufficiently sophisticated to warrant the label 'theatre.' I certainly believe that they were and are the theatre of the 'Arab world' and should be studied as such. They fulfilled the primary mission of theatre anywhere, which is to reach and serve its audience. Many of them fall under the rubric of *al-samir*, nightly village entertainments comprised of song, dance and story (Alsafar 1991, 41; Badawi 1995, 7). The most important of these is *al-hikaya* [storytelling]. The *hakawati* [storyteller] is central to Arab performance, and remains a common character device in modern Western-influenced Arab plays:

> Since the medieval epoch, the epic storyteller has improvised upon tales and romances to bring past historical legends into active conjunction with present political situations: orally transmitted tales preserved in folk literature readily lend themselves to spontaneous adaptation. Consequently, audiences are accustomed to attributing multiple political and even sexual meanings to lexical double entendres embedded in the storyteller's text. Since performances are ephemeral and therefore virtually beyond the reach of official control, they typically present a range of topical and potentially subversive political allusions. (Slyomovics 1991a, 22)

The *hakawati* acts out his stories of historical and legendary figures from a seated position, using prose with verse interspersed. His audience participates by identifying with the heroes of the story to such a degree that fights will erupt between audience members who support opposite sides during the story of a conflict (Fazio 1985, 23). Slyomovics notes that one of the aims of the *hakawati* is to "praise" or "vilify" a sitting ruler (1991a, 22). Such is the political power of the storytellers that when they attempted to organize, move indoors and charge for performances during the ninth century in

Baghdad, Caliph al-Moatemid forbade it. They finally managed to move indoors in the nineteenth century, except in Morocco, where they remain part of the Maghrebian *halqa* tradition (Alsafar 1991, 38–39).

The *maqama* form is literary in origin. Arab linguists, trying to purify the language, engaged in competitions to use unusual vocabulary in short episodes composed of assonated prose. These competitions, sometimes in the form of a didactic debate, dramatized anecdotes about a fictitious hero with linguistic prowess and a moralistic bent. As noted above, *maqamat* of al-Hariri and al-Hamadani survive from the eleventh century C.E. (Fazio 1985, 30–31; Agel 1982, 13). It is not understood, however, whether these two authors wrote in order to perform themselves, nor is it known how many performers were used in all (Alsafar 1991, 40).

Other forms of note in this category include *al-madih* [praise-giving], *al-muqalid* [imitator], and *al-samajah* [comic sketches]. *Al-madih* involves narration, singing, quick character changes and shifts of accent, and originally took for its theme the lives of the prophets and saints. The form was later secularized, most likely because the clerics felt that each *maddah* [praise-giver] was exaggerating the histories of holy Muslims in order to make a more exciting performance. *Al-madih* could also be political, as evidenced by the tendency of certain sultans to quash it. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Sultan Abdul Hamid forced the praise singers to abandon political content altogether (Fazio 1985, 26–28; Alsafar 1991, 41). Agel calls the *muqalid* an "imitator of didactic and peculiar personalities" (1982, 13), and this form relied on character rather than plot (Alsafar 1991, 41). *Al-samajah*, on the other hand, mocked stereotypes through the medium of comic sketches, and was first mentioned by Ibn Sina (Avicennes, died 1037 C.E.) in his commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* (Alsafar 1991, 42).

Moroccan Court Performances and Rituals

Much of what we know about traditional performance forms in Maghrebian North Africa comes from Morocco. Morocco, due in part to a durable monarchy that persisted throughout the colonial period, has preserved more of its artistic heritage in the area of folklore and performance than either Tunisia or Algeria. This is not to say that Morocco is not a dynamic culture, simply that its governmental priorities are different than either of its sister cultures. Morocco still has venues and personnel devoted to its performance traditions, although some of its performance forms have died out naturally, and others are in danger of extinction due to the extreme rigor of earning one's living as a traditional performer. The biggest such venue, of course, is the Djmaa al-Fna [Gathering of the Dead] in Marrakech. Fueled by both internal and external tourism, the Djmaa al-Fna still hosts nightly open-air *halqa* style performances, weather permitting, of acrobatics, comedy, classical, folk and contemporary music, snake charming, fortune-telling, and storytelling.

Chebchoub has said that each kilometer of Morocco's diagonal measurement has a different heritage (1997b). El-Mniai lists three old performance forms, each promoted by a different Moroccan sultan: the *sultan al-tolba* of Moulay Rachid (1666–1672 C.E.), the *bsat* of Sidi Mohammed ben Abdallah (1757–1790 C.E.) and the *Sidi al-Kafti* of Moulay Youssef (1912–1927 C.E.) (1987, 39–41). Intriguingly, these forms seem to be evidence of a theatre that did support, or at least coexist in harmony with, the State. Moreover, like

the *commedia dell'arte-influenced* court performances of Molière, they blurred the line between elite and popular entertainment. There is strong evidence that the contemporary Moroccan sultanate is held in place by a cluster of powerful, extant, and theatricalized State rituals that date back to the Saadian sultans of the sixteenth century (Combs-Schilling 1989). These in turn are doubled and mirrored in popular village masquerades, also extant (Hammoudi 1988). In light of these, perhaps the existence of a strong court theatre tradition in Morocco is not so surprising.

The *sultan al-tolba* [student king] was created by Moulay Rachid to thank the students of Cheikh al-Lawati for their assistance in bringing him to power. For a week each year, the students were permitted to create a miniature court around a king of students, one of their own number. This topsy-turvy situation was characterized by humor and burlesque performances. The real sultan would visit the student 'court' during this time, bringing presents. At the end of the week, the two sultans, permanent and temporary, would face off on horseback. The student would dismount, symbolically bringing his reign to an end. He would then kiss the monarch's stirrup, and ask for a favor, such as the release of a prisoner, and the sultan was obligated to honor it (el-Mniai 1987, 41).

The *bsat* [carpet] was a concourse of performances that involved the cooperation of a large number of troupes under the direction of a central figure, a kind of master of ceremonies, called Buhu in the north and al-M'siyyah in the south (Ouzri 1997, 21). The *bsat* was a vehicle for performers to present their complaints and concerns to the monarch, who might take part in the proceedings as a performer himself. It incorporated many forms of entertainment, and like the *sultan al-tolba*, the performers could make requests to the sultan at its conclusion. The Sufi religious brotherhoods brought their dances to the *bsat*, which also included *melhoun* singing, regional festival forms, satirical theatre pieces attacking abuses of power by functionaries of the court, *al-masrah al-sufaha* [the theatre of vulgar people], and artisan's theatre. El-Mniai also mentions, but frustratingly, does not elaborate on, a special women's theatre. He does not say if it involved women as spectators, actors, or both. Stock characters abounded in the *bsat* theatricals, and they exemplified certain virtues and vices. The *assat* represented "strength, courage, a taste for adventure," while *al-yahoudi* [the Jew] was the stereotype for "hypocrisy, cupidity, malice," but also "intelligence." *Hdidda* was "self-sacrifice, goodness, love for others," and *al-goul* was "oppression." El-Mniai does not say, but based on the structure of the name and the qualities described, I would venture a guess that the *hdidda* was a maternal female character, played in drag (1987, 39).

Unlike the *sultan al-tolba* and the *bsat*, the *Sidi al-Kafti* did not survive the court that fostered it. This form also took place at the dawning of the French Protectorate (1912 C.E.). It was a form of the *maqama*, performed by a Sufi Brotherhood, and derived its name from one of their saints. At its core was a denunciation of members of the community or of the Brotherhood who had committed offenses. It finished with a trance-inducing dance, the *hadra*, a common feature of Sufi performances in North Africa (el-Mniai 1987, 40). While the *Sidi al-Kafti* has died out, the *stambali* of Sidi Saad is still performed in Tunisia. It is not a court theatre, but shares the feature of trance states with the *Sidi al-Kafti*. The *stambali* is a three-day ritual in which the *arifa* [participants] enter into a possessed state and act out sketches while "incarnat[ing] different characters composing the cosmogeny of the Brotherhood." These Brothers are known for their

"femininity"; in order to channel the characters they impersonate, they place themselves in a state of gender liminality (Aziza 1975, 35).

M.E. Combs-Schilling has formulated a brilliant analysis of the rituals that she believes have bolstered the Moroccan sultanate since the sixteenth century. When Morocco's economy suffered a collapse in the fifteenth century, Morocco was menaced by the growing strength of Western hegemony and threatened by both Iberia and the Ottoman Empire. Seeking to legitimize the power of the throne by establishing a *sharifi* bloodline in the monarchy, members of the Amazigh Banu Wattas family, themselves selfproclaimed *sharifs*, 'discovered' the body of *sharifi* king Idris II (808–838 C.E.), and used this find to establish themselves as a regency over part of the country in 1420. They ruled for one-hundred and thirty years before they were subsumed by the Arab Saadian dynasty in 1550. The Alawite dynasty, also Arab, overthrew the Saadis in 1666 (Combs-Schilling 1989, 131–138), but built upon their monarchic rituals in order to retain cohesion.

The first Saadi Caliph was al-Shaykh, whose victories against the Portuguese invaders helped to re-establish Morocco's preeminence in the gold and sugar trades. He was assassinated by the Ottomans in 1577, but not before he had established intricate and lavish rituals at his court in Marrakech that would allow his line to continue its rule after his death (Combs-Schilling 1989, 141–147). The Saadis established the Moroccan pageant of the Prophet's birthday *[Eid al-Moulid]* at their palace, al-Badi. This festival did not originate in Islamic orthodoxy, but was popularized in the Arab Middle East beginning in the twelfth century. The Saadis took it to new heights, carefully crafting a semiotic link between their family and the Prophet's, so as to reinforce their blood legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. The practice is extant, and commences with a dazzling evening procession of human-sized candles dressed up like brides. At daybreak, the *sharifi* ruler emerges, dressed in white, "bringing the light" of the Prophet's truth with him (157–162). Then the *qasidat* [praise poems] are recited:

> The verbal progression of the poem reproduces the visual progression of the candle procession. It begins with passion for the female, then turns to nobler passion of adoration of the Prophet, which in turn leads to a concentration on the Muslim ruler in the present, Muhammad's descendant. (165–166)

The great Alawite ruler, Moulay Ismail, dismantled al-Badi Palace to build his own astounding palace in Meknès. With its hanging garden and stable for twelve thousand horses, it is so grand that it is sometimes referred to as the "Versailles of Morocco." The horse-bath is a small lake that accommodates one thousand horses at a time. Moulay Ismail probably instituted the practice of the ruler sacrificing on behalf of his people during the rite of the Great Sacrifice *[Eid al-Kebir]*, reflecting and commemorating the sacrifice of Ismail by Ibrahim (Combs-Schilling 1989, 222).[3] In the Quranic story Allah requires Ibrahim to sacrifice his son, Ismail, on a mountaintop. Ibrahim prepares the sacrifice, but at the last moment, Allah saves the boy, substituting a ram for the sacrifice. Each year, the male heads of Muslim households repeat the act of sacrificing a ram, or a male goat, in memory of the great prophet Ibrahim and his son.

Combs-Schilling points out that the opinion of Hagar, Ismail's mother, regarding this event does not appear in the Quran (1989, 240). The female perspective is entirely absent from the story; the mother is left on the plain, not present on the transcendental mountaintop. The patriarch, as he plunges his phallic knife into the vaginal wound of the ram's neck, "engages in 'intercourse' with the divine," and causes the spiritual re-birth of his son in a process free from female contamination (238–239). The Moroccan construction of the Great Sacrifice conflates Ibrahim with the *sharifi* ruler, just as he is conflated with the Prophet on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday. His public sacrifice also associates him with each sacrificing male householder in his kingdom (249).

For Combs-Schilling, the final rite that cements the hierarchy of power in the Kingdom of Morocco is the custom of first marriage. Recall that the candles of the Prophet's birthday evoke the image of a virgin bride being brought to the home of her husband's family. The bride is also tied to the rite of sacrifice; the wedding is not successful unless the groom is able to spill her blood while breaking her hymen during their first sexual encounter. This act, often accompanied by ritualized violence such as the destruction of the bride's headdress (1989, 207), has a public component: her bloody underpants are displayed to the wedding guests.[4] The bride's eyes are rimmed with khol; the sacrificial ram is decorated the same way. The groom, who is referred to as Moulay Sultan or Moulay al-Sharif for the occasion, becomes temporary royalty, and his party forms a miniature court. The act of legitimized intercourse with his wife establishes his authority over her, echoes the Great Sacrifice, and resonates with the procession of the Prophet's birthday (188–193).

The entire cycle, which excludes women from agency, reinforces the hierarchy through a series of powerful signs: the *sharifi* monarch derives his power from his resemblance to Ibrahim and his relationship to the Prophet, who derives his authority from God. Sacrificing male householders derive their authority from their resemblance to the monarch. Monotheism, says Combs-Schilling, constructs women as inherently excluded from transcendence, and in this case, their "public powerlessness" is "culturally embedded" (1989, 266). This conception of the monarchy has been so successful in Morocco that even colonialism could not destroy it (275–309).

Bilmawn

Compare these highly legitimized rituals with the decidedly less official *bilmawn* masquerades recorded and analyzed by Hammoudi. Masquerades take place all over Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, and are both an urban and a rural practice (1988, 15). Hammoudi studied the masquerade of Aït Mizane, an Amazigh village in Morocco's High Atlas (33). Aït Mizane's masquerade is also a feature of the Great Sacrifice, called *tfaska* in the local dialect of Tamazight. The *bilmawn* mythology says that, once upon a time, two men entered a sanctuary where a group of women were staying and raped them. For this offense, they were transformed into inhuman monsters, the *bilmawn*. Now, the *bilmawn* only come into the village at night to ask for food, for fear of frightening children (149–150).

In point of fact, the *bilmawn* masquerade takes place in broad daylight (Hammoudi 1988, 147), but its apparent inversion of the Great Sacrifice that precedes it creates a kind of day-for-night. Children, except for those young enough to still be nursing, are chased

away from the staging areas, and mature men are excluded, forced to do the outdoor chores normally performed by their wives. Thus the very agents the Great Sacrifice valorizes are placed outside of the masquerade. Unmarried men and women are forced to mix and dance together in the *ahwash* segment, where they accompany the figure of Bilmawn, also known as Tamugayt (64), around the village. Married women receive Bilmawn and his band inside their homes, and give him gifts of food in exchange for blessings *[baraka]* for them and protection for their nursing infants. Bilmawn is also associated with fecundity, so his visits are considered especially auspicious (146–149).

The *bilmawn* masquerade consists of four distinct phases, as identified by Hammoudi. The first takes place in the *takhurbisht,* or ablution room, of the mosque. This is the place where, among other things, the dead are prepared for burial. Hammoudi calls this phase the "offstage action." The young men transform themselves, choosing one of their number to play Bilmawn, who wears goat's skins and a goat's head. The rest become the "Slave," whose face is blackened with ashes, and the "Jews," who wear masks. Transformation complete, they burst out of the *takhurbisht* and conduct the second phase, what Hammoudi calls the "tournament of masks," It is during this segment that they invade the homes of the village, at that point occupied only by women (1988, 142–143). Modest women do not customarily receive men outside of their family when their husbands are not home, so this phase constitutes a symbolic rape of the sanctity of the Muslim home that echoes the actual rape narrated in the *bilmawn* myth (148–149).

In the third and fourth phases, the "works and days" and the "revue" segments, Bilmawn and his band perform obscene burlesques of everyday village life and satirize the actions of people in the village over the past year. These segments are interspersed with the second phase, so that the action is not at all linear (Hammoudi 1988, 142). Throughout, Bilmawn and his band are reviled. Hammoudi believes that the Sacrifice and the masquerade have the same founding story: the hierarchy described so eloquently in Combs-Schilling's work (166). Bilmawn is the ultimate marginal: he "is to the human order what the slaves and Jews are to the community: the Other" (143). Women and Jews in Morocco are associated with unorthodox and occult practices and Hammoudi follows Victor Turner in categorizing Bilmawn as "betwixt and between" (153). By establishing the idea that only women deal with him, the ritual reinforces the notion of their unfitness for the project of transcendence. Through an apparent inversion of the rules of spiritual order, that same order is reified. Many members of the community are ashamed of the masquerade and want to abolish it on the grounds that it is pagan, but it, like the rituals that support the monarchy, persists (167).

Djeha

As we have seen in the *bsat* and the masquerade, Arab and Amazigh theatre in North Africa makes use of many stock characters. In Tunisia, for example, there is Boussadia, who wears blackface and a straw hat. He is associated with the Black communities in Tunisia and has been used as the Arlechino figure in Tunisian adaptations of Goldoni (Aziza 1975, 42). Lakdar-Barka mentions a number of stock Algerian characters, including Djeha, Bou Borma, Boucebsi, and Antar al-Hachaichi, but he does not elaborate on the qualities of any other then Djeha (also known as Juha, J'ha and Jeh'a) (1981, 4), who, without a doubt, is the most important and universal. He is an everyman,

beloved of Arabs and Imazighen alike, known throughout the Levant, the Gulf, Egypt and Maghrebian North Africa. Déjeux lists his psychological attributes: He is "naïve," "instinctual," a "non-conformist" driven by the "pleasure principle" without a concern for "the moral value of his acts." He is also a "sage" and a "philosopher." Déjeux says that he "plays the fool…but he's not a fool" (1991, 111). As many of the Djeha stories will attest, he is also a bit of a trickster. My favorite Djeha story comes from Déjeux's collection:

> One day Jeh'a met a friend in a café. They started a conversation. "My sight's failing," said Jeh'a, "and I wear three pairs of glasses." His comrade said to him with an astonished air: "Three pairs of glasses? Why do that?" And Jeh'a responded: "It's very simple: one pair to see distances, and one pair to see close-up." "And the third?," asked his comrade. 'The third? To find the other two." (1991, 118)

Djeha appears regularly in the modern theatre of North Africa. Indeed, he is everywhere.[5] Ali Ahmad Ba-Kathir, born in Java, ethnically Hadramawti, and resident of Cairo, devoted a play to him: *Mismar Juha [Juha's Nail]* (Omoloso 1978, 143). Siagh says that the first Algerian play, meaning the first recognizably Algerian product of the encounter with Western drama, was Allalou's *Djeha* (1994, 77). Algerian Amazigh playwright Kateb Yacine used him as the touchstone for his dramaturgy and his troupe's performance style (Salhi 1998, 75–76). His play, *Intelligence Powder [Poudre d'intelligence]* (1959), is composed of a series of Djeha stories (Baffet 1985, 146), and its central character, Puff-of-Smoke, is both Djeha and a *hakawati*. Puff-of-Smoke has ties to sub-Saharan Africa as well. As a satirical raconteur, he is the cousin of the Jero character in Wole Soyinka's *Jero Plays* (1973). There is an Algerian Djeha play in this study, Ben Mansour's *Trente-trois tours a son turban* (1997), and his influence pervades many of the other plays on the list as well.

Halqa

Of all the old forms, none has had such a profound effect on the modern theatre of North Africa as the *halqa*. Falling into the category of *frajat* [traditional entertainments], it is the type of staging seen in Moroccan outdoor performances as typified by the Djmaa al-Fna. It is a dynamic form, and so qualifies as both traditional and modern, although not at all Westernized. The word *'halqa'* has many meanings: it is a circle and it is the link in a chain. It is the square or rectangular "hole" in the middle of a Moroccan house "from which you can see the sky" (Chebchoub 1997b). Each floor of such a house has an architectural *halqa*, a gallery from which a spectacle taking place in the courtyard can be viewed by women without them having to mix with men. This spatial arrangement has more significance for Western theatre than is immediately apparent. The North African peoples, Arab and Amazigh, controlled large portions of Southern Spain until the fifteenth century, when the Moors were persecuted and expelled, along with the Jews, by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. The Moorish imprint on Spanish architecture was profound, and there is no doubt that this influenced the conceptualization of theatrical space in the seventeenth-century *corrales* [courtyard theatres] of the Spanish Golden

Age. Features such as their courtyard origin, upper-story viewing galleries, and separate gallery for female spectators *[cazuela],* all point to a connection with the concept of *halqa*.[6]

The *halqa* of Moroccan theatre, in contrast to that of architecture, is made of bodies; the spectators themselves define the playing space, usually a circle or a demi-circle. Chebchoub lists three requirements for the *halqa:* a participating public, players who are able to animate the public, and a message that is of interest to the public. Without the public, there is no *halqa*. The form is highly codified, although very little of the code is written down. As one might imagine, the spatial aspects are intriguing, but the content also merits careful consideration. At the heart of the *halqa* aesthetic is a spiral pattern that controls the rhythm and the timing of the piece rather like a pulse. The *halaqi* [performer] spirals out from the center of the circle stopping at a particular spot on the parameter, then moves back to the center. The next time s/he spirals out, s/he stops in a different place. This difference marks the passage of time, and distinguishes one segment of the performance from the next. You will notice that I have suddenly started using gender neutral pronouns to refer to the actors in this form. That is because women have acted in it, at least since the first half of the twentieth century, when Chebchoub's mother, who was a specialist in the *abidaterrma* form of *halqa,* was performing. There is even a special form of *halqa* reserved for women, the *halqa moulat sserr* (Chebchoub 1997b). This form of *halqa* will be discussed later in detail.

It is tempting to draw a link between the *halqa* and the Italian *commedia dell'arte,* but in truth, while the forms are superficially similar, they are fundamentally different. Unlike the *commedia,* the *halqa* is not, essentially, an improvisational form. The text, the timing, and the subject matter are all agreed upon beforehand. Improvisation only occurs in those unpredictable moments when the audience participates, and even then the actors must keep control of the *halqa*. A *halaqi* must be well versed in the art of audience reception and control or s/he will not be successful.[7] The spectators pay according to the performance's worth, not because they have to, but because they are grateful to the players for exposing a social concern. *Halqa* is a theatre of conscience (Chebchoub, 1997b).

Rehearsals happen on the fly: in the actors' homes, on the bus en route to the *souk* [marketplace], or in a café. Signals are arranged between the performers so that they can communicate with each other regarding the details of the performance while it is in progress. Props are borrowed from the members of the audience. This form is totally portable and highly flexible. From four o'clock to six o'clock in the afternoon, the audience is made up primarily of women who are out doing their shopping, with an increase in children when the schools get out at five o'clock. Then the men take over, from six o'clock until about eight, while the women are at home cooking dinner (Chebchoub 1997b).

There are a number of sub-genres that fall under the rubric of *halqa*. *Moulat sserr* has already been mentioned, and it is a strictly indoor type. Chebchoub's mother's form, the *abidaterrma,* can be performed in any venue (a home, a street in the neighborhood, or in the marketplace), and specializes in making people laugh at their own faults. It can involve dance, song and speech. The *madih* you will recognize from earlier parts of this chapter. *Al-smeiri* is a storytelling form, but rather then the *Alif Layla wa Layla,* it takes current events for its inspiration. Again, all venues are possible, and the stories can be

comic or tragic, traditional or contemporary: Princess Diana of England or the Gulf Wars, for example, would be appropriate topics (Chebchoub 1997b). We will return to the discussion of *halqa* when we review Chebchoub's contributions as a playwright. Now, however, we must turn to the encounter of Western theatre and indigenous artists that happened during the colonial period.

WESTERN-STYLE THEATRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Syria and Egypt

The first Western-style plays written in the Middle East after colonization were influenced by European drama, particularly the work of Molière (Agel 1982, 9). This is not surprising. Molière's plays are drenched in the sensibility of the *commedia*, which bears a strong, if superficial, resemblance to many of the old forms of Arab and Amazigh theatre, making them palatable to native audiences. At the same time, they are written in the language of the colonizer, rendering them acceptable to French authorities. The native playwright adapting Molière could produce a French classic, while simultaneously exercising Molière's vast potential for political commentary and subversion. Marun al-Naqqash, a Christian from Lebanon, wrote what is generally agreed to be the first Arabic play of the modern era in 1847. *Al-Bakhil [The Miser]* was of course inspired by Molière's *L'Avare*. Al-Naqqash fused traditional techniques, such as assonated prose *[saja]*, popular songs, *karagoz* and *muqalid* techniques, to his plays in order to keep his audiences interested (Agel 1982, 7; Badawi 1995, 1).

Playwriting in the Western mode was quickly taken up by Syrians and Egyptians, who came to dominate the field. Yakoub Sannu, an Egyptian Jew, followed al-Naqqash into the arena in 1870, starting a theatre movement under the wary eye of Khedive Ismail. He was particularly enthralled by the Italian opera, and like his Lebanese predecessor, used popular songs in his drama. He also used dialectal Arabic (Agel 1982, 8–9; Badawi 1995, 1). Sannu was threatened by members of his audience when he created a play with an ending they disliked—they confused the behavior of a female character with that of the female actor who played the role. The public demanded that Sannu change the ending of *Al-Bint al-Asriah [The Modern Girl]*, and he complied, saving his actor's reputation. This is evidence that the public for this new form persisted in their belief that they had a right to participate in the creation of the play, to such an extent that they changed its denouement (Fazio 1985, 97–98). The first Muslim playwrights of this period were Ahmad abu Kahlil al-Qabani (Syria, 1840?–! 902) and Salama Higazi (Egypt, 1852–1917) (Agel 1982, 9).

Space does not permit a thorough discussion of modern Arabic drama—and here, I do use the term advisedly, as the Aristotelian yardstick may appropriately be applied to these works—outside of the Maghreb. A quick overview of certain key players must suffice. Fortunately, the Egyptian and Syrian dramatic literatures have received ample attention. In broad terms, the history of Arabic drama and performance in the last one hundred and fifty years has been a discourse that pits the aesthetic of Arabic classicism against that of what Alsafar rather boldly calls Arab "neo-classicism": the exploration of and grafting of

the old forms onto the new form introduced by the West (1991, 75). As this new theatre *[al-masrah]* moved away from translation and adaptation of European plays, the theatre became a vehicle for the battle over identity politics.

Due to its valorization of Western values, al-Nadha, the Arabic Renaissance movement of the 1930s, was antithetical to the old forms of performance, and to the maraboutism, or veneration of saints, of the Sufi Brotherhoods (Alsafar 1991, 53–54; Siagh 1994, 79). In North Africa, as nationalist consciousness increased and countries began to struggle towards independence, the old forms were often rejected as dangerous tribalism. Frantz Fanon, the revolutionary psychiatrist from Martinique who involved himself in the Algerian War for Independence to the extent of joining Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN), spoke of the shift that nationalist consciousness causes in the arts, and how it is opposed by the colonizer, whose "specialists do not recognize these new forms and rush to the help of the traditions of the indigenous society. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of the native style" (1961, 242). He asserted that trance and ritual possession drain away the righteous and violent anger of the colonized, and that these practices are, and should be, abandoned during a revolution (57–58).

During and after the independence struggles,[8] a crop of young playwrights started moving back toward the old forms, fusing them to their drama in the "neo-classical movement" to which Alsafar refers. This movement reached its zenith in most Arab countries in the 1960s and went into decline; two exceptions are Morocco and Iraq, where this impetus persisted until the 1980s (1991, 75). Taking North African women's drama and theatre into account, as Alsafar does not, I would say that it is still with us, quite obviously in the work of Chebchoub, Ben Mansour, Drissi, Assous and Gallaire, and more subtly in many of the other plays. The "neo-classical" impulse is in constant, queasy tension with the discourses of pan-Arab nationalism and the Western-inspired projects of modernization and development in the Maghreb.[9]

Badawi tells us that after 1952, Egyptians felt free to draw upon *al-samir* and *al-maqama,* as well as to consider the techniques of the Western avant-garde in their attempts to create a theatre that was truly Egyptian in character (1995, 7). As in so many cultures, the theatre had a respectability problem in Egypt; so much so that Tawfiq al-Hakim hid the fact that he wrote plays from his family (2). One of the brightest lights to emerge from the revolutionary period in Egypt, al-Hakim was educated in Paris and started his career as a playwright by adapting European plays into "dramas of ideas" written in both classical and dialectal Arabic. His *Pygmalion* (1942) weighs the "relative importance" of art and life; at its end the protagonist destroys the statue he has created as well as himself (3). After the ouster of the British and overthrow of King Farouk, al-Hakim turned to political theatre, marrying it to his earlier "drama of ideas." In 1962, he returned to France and began experiments with theatre of the absurd that resulted in his play *Ya Tali al-Shajara [The Tree Climber]* (4).

According to Alsafar, al-Hakim arrived at the idea of a 'poor' theatre before the work of Jerzy Grotowski was well known in North Africa. In his important theoretical treatise, *Our Dramatic Form* (1967), he calls for a simple theatre based in the techniques of *al-hakawati, al-muqalid* and, to a lesser extent, *al-madih*. His vision of the *hakawati* makes that figure a narrator, commentator, introducer, living program and stage manager, while his technique for the *muqalid* calls for the actor to simultaneously stand inside and outside the character, a method that is useful for alienation, as in the Brechtian model.

For al-Hakim, the *madih* corresponded to the chorus in Western adaptations. Unfortunately, he was never able to put his theory into practice (Alsafar 1991, 63–65).

Another playwright of tremendous importance to Egypt in this period was Yusuf Idris, who is known primarily for his 1964 absurdist play *al-Farafir [The Flipflaps]*. In that same year, Idris wrote an article in *al-Kitab*, a Cairo monthly, calling for a return to *al-samir* to provide inspiration for *al-masrah*. He also urged the use of *al-tamasroh*, which Alsafar interprets as "theatricalization of the stage event by both performers and audience," in other words, direct audience participation (1991, 59–60). *Al-Farafir* used the Pirandellan device of metadrama, as defined by Lurana Donnels O' Malley in her article "Plays-Within-Realistic-Plays" (1990, 40). Two characters in a play, a servant, Furfur, and his master, change places after an appeal to their Author. The servant is intelligent, his master stupid. In addition to techniques indebted to exposure to both Brecht and Pirandello, Idris used shadow theatre devices, invited audience participation, and employed a Djeha-like character, Furfur, who functioned like a licensed fool (Alsafar 1991, 60; Badawi 1995, 8). If, as O' Malley suggests, Chekhov and Pirandello used the metadrama as a method of "critiqu[ing] contemporary theatrical practices" (49), is it not possible that Idris, in his quest for a truly Egyptian theatre while under the influence of the Europeans, did likewise?

Idris was not the only one to use the metadrama. In Syria, the technique became a chilling political statement in the hands of Sa'dallah Wannus. Like al-Hakim, Wannus was French-educated, and like that of his Egyptian counterpart, his early work was cerebral and heavy, a drama of ideas. His theory, however, identified the public *[al-jumhur]* as the starting point for and authentic Arab drama, moving away from European influence. After the defeat of Syria by Israel in the Six-Day War,[10] Wannus wrote *Hflat Samar min Ajl Khamsat Huzayran [Soirée for the Fifth of June]* using the metadrama to create a dialogue about the defeat. First produced in Damascus, *Soirée* staged a failure-to-stage the 'play within' that became the vehicle for a discussion about the events of June 1967. There was actually a hidden, third 'play without' in the piece. At the end of the discussion, mock 'officials' planted in the audience by the acting company 'arrested' all the members of the audience for sedition, a terrifying conflation of reality and fiction for people living with the daily threat of such an arrest (Allen 1983, 94–97). One of the strategies of resistance that I have identified in the work of North African women is the technique of staging performances for women by women within a play, not metadrama so much as metaperformance. We also see metaperformance enfolded into play texts in the form of *hakawati* and Djeha devices, collage texts that involve the recitation of well-known literary references within a story line, and religious rituals. Chapters five and six will discuss these in more detail.

Tunisia

Western-style drama in Arabic came to Tunisia from Egypt beginning in 1908, and spread westward to Morocco in subsequent years. Lebanese-Egyptian troupe leader Georges Abyad came to Tunis in 1921, founding the al-Tamthil al-Arabi [The Arab Theatre] before he proceeded west (Thiry 1983, 303). Prior to the admission of female actors, female roles were played by young men. The first female actors in Tunisia, who arrived in the 1910s, were Syrian Christians and Jews, due to the sequestration of Muslim

women of good families during that period. The first Tunisian female actor, Soraya el-Kebira, who died in 1945, was illiterate and learned her roles by ear. Women became important as actors and troupe leaders very quickly: Wassila Sabri was the first (el-Houssi 1982, 67–69), and she was followed by Fadila Khitmi, who founded her troupe in 1929 after a difference of opinion with Al-Tamthil al-Arabi over the production of *al-Hurayim [The Little Harem]*, a translation of the Italian play by Gaston Costa. The play was critical of Islam and treated the themes of polygyny and women's emancipation. The Khitmi Troupe produced *al-Hurayim*, but was forced to close its run by hostile critics. The troupe had four productions before it folded a year later (Ben Halima 1974, 97–98).

The most celebrated woman of the Tunisian theatre in its early period was the Jewish actor Habiba M'sika (1899–1930). M'sika's aunt, Layla Sfez, was a famous singer circa 1915, and her niece followed her into a public performance career. She began as a singer like her aunt, but was soon drawn to the theatre. She had a fabulous success, and was pursued by male admirers all of her short life. It was one of these who killed her; she was burned alive by Ilyahu Mimuni, and the entire country went into mourning (Halfon; Ben Halima 1974, 161–162).[11]

Mettrop identifies Mahmoud Messadi's *al-Sudd [The Barrier]* as the first truly Tunisian play. Written in 1940, and produced in 1950 just as the country was fighting towards independence, "*The Barrier* symbolize[d] all the human effort asked of a people" (1969, 310). After independence, in the 1960s and 1970s, Tunisia underwent a cultural "golden age" under the ministerial leadership of Chedly Klibi. Eager to show a good face to its neighbors, newly liberated Tunisia built cultural *maisons*, art cinemas, festivals and libraries during this period. The 1960s were a time of "cultural development" schemes harnessed to the project of Tunisian nationalism, as State officials realized that the arts, and theatre in particular, were a powerful method for diffusion of information (B'chir 1993, 20, 26 and 39). The focus turned from "cultural development" to "cultural production" in the 1970s, but many of the institutions created just after independence still function, such as the annual theatre week launched in November of 1962 (26 and 39) and the system of municipal theatres in Tunis, Sfax, Kairouan and Kef. Tunisia also developed a certain hostility towards adaptations of European works during this period (Tomiche 1993, 136–137).

The 1970s continued to be good for Tunisian theatre artists, up to a point. In 1977, by B'chir's count, there were eight professional troupes and fifty-five amateur troupes comprised of six-hundred fifteen male actors and ninety-five female actors (1993, 41–42). 1978 saw a lessening of the liberal funding these theatres had enjoyed, a drought that lasted for two years and dealt a serious blow to their operations. B'chir mourns, "The festival at Hammamet and at Carthage had, since its creation, consecrated its opening to a Tunisian theatrical piece; that year folklore replaced theatre!" (45). As the theatres emerged from this crisis, they found themselves faced with censorship commissions. These lessened in 1981 and 1982 only to become worse in 1983 and again in 1986 (53 and 56). The golden age was over. Part of the reason for these upheavals is that the French left in place a bureaucracy-heavy style of governmental administration, and the section of it that oversaw the theatre in Tunisia underwent a huge turnover between 1961 and 1981. The Theatre Service had fifteen different directors during this period, and was housed in twelve successive locations. The national drama school, l'Institut Supèrieure

d'Art Dramatique (ISAD) has undergone periodic closures and changes of director as well (80–81).

Tunisian playwriting received a boost in the 1960s from such writers as Mustfa 1-Farisi, who wrote *al-Fitna [The Secession]*, and Habib Boulares, author of *Murad III*. Performed in 1969, *The Secession* involved an historical-play-within-a-play wherein actors played actors playing the story of the assassination of Caliph Uthman. This work is intriguing for its particular answer to the language question: the outer play was in Tunisian dialect, the inner piece in literary Arabic (Tomiche 1993, 137). More influential still was *Murad III*, in which Boulares presented Ibrahim, a common man of good conscience who revolts against his ruler, Murad III, the historical, and bloody, Bey of Tunis (1699–1702) (Thiry 1983, 305; Mettrop 1969, 312). This play, published in 1968, caused the playwrights of the 1970s to give up "the myth of the king who is naturally good, but whom education and circumstances have made bad" in historical dramas, and to reach for a more populist interpretation of history (Tomiche 1993, 138).

The leading playwright of this movement was Ezzedine al-Madani (born 1938). Like Idris and al-Hakim in Egypt, Kateb Yacine and Abdelkader Alloula in Algeria, and Tayeb Saddiki and Fatima Chebchoub in Morocco, he explored the old forms, particularly *al-halqa* and *al-madih* (Tomiche 1993, 139). He also exploited the interplay of literary and dialectal Arabic. In a 1971 work, *Thawratu Sahibi al-Himar [The Revolt of the Man with the Donkey]*, he used the story of the revolt of the nomadic Amazigh Kharagite (Sunni), Abu Yazid, against the Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty in the first half of the tenth century, to analyze the "mechanism of revolution" (Thiry 1983, 306). He critiqued economic neo-colonialism in *Diwan al-Zang [The Blacks]*, again using an old story, the revolt of Black workers imported to mine saltpeter against their Abbasid masters in ninth-century Iraq. B'chir says, "In the plays of Madani, the people throw themselves into revolts badly prepared without a program for the long term" (1993, 185).

In 1973, al-Madani departed from historical drama to produce *al-Hallag*, a non-realistic piece in which the eponymous protagonist, played by one actor, takes on three distinct personalities, indicated by costume changes: Hallag of Liberty, who visits ministers and princes, Hallag of Secret Thoughts, who revolts against orthodoxy, and Hallag of the People, who founds a worker's union (Thiry 1983, 307–308). He returned to history in 1977 with *Moulay al-Sultan al-Hasan al-Hafsi*, the story of the Hafside empire that was seized by the Turks and the Spanish in the sixteenth century. Once again, he considered the uses and abuses of power, but the remarkable thing about this piece was the way in which he used the interplay of language to make his point. The Sultan, speaking in dialect, the language of the people, mocks delegates and an imam who insist on speaking classical Arabic (309).

Since the 1980s, the situation of artists in Tunisia has become more delicate. Decentralization has led to large festivals in Carthage, Monastir, Kairouan, and Hammamet (Tomiche 1993, 141), but these do not necessarily represent Tunisian theatre well. El-Houssi notes rather acerbically that Hammamet is "the temple of the avant-garde" and that Carthage hosts many international imports (1982, 132–133), while B'chir opines that "[t]he festivals of Hammamet and Carthage are as far from their reality as the loans of the API." The API was a organization created by Prime Minister H. Nouria in the 1970s to promote industrialization. It created fast wealth for some, and enormous debt for the country (1993, 18 and 18n). Censorship is still very much a part of the picture: an

artist who makes an "error" and displeases the State can end up in prison or lose a career, but B'chir notes that the situation is not as bad as in totalitarian regimes where one can simply disappear or be locked up forever (1993, 78–79). She says, "The situation of theatre people is characterized by a juridical fragility, institutional instability and material precariousness" (77).

The 1988–1989 theatre season saw eighteen professional troupes and eight independent troupes perform,[12] but they suffered from a lack of venues and so played out-of-doors or in unconventional spaces (Tomiche 1993, 141). The bureaucracy has created a class of civil-servants-cum-artists who collect their paychecks from the government, and are more likely to produce "diversions" than things that jar the viewer's sensibilities (B'chir 1993, 82). There is also the perceptual problem, shared by the U.S. and other Western nations, that culture is the province of the bourgeoisie (19). B'chir identifies four types of theatre practitioners: those who work for the State, those who are concerned with art for art's sake, those who oppose the State and use their art politically, and the "producer-creators" who walk the line between artistic vision and survival in an environment of censorship. She calls the artists who serve the State "courtesans" who reproduce the "official vision" of the government, play it safe, and do no research. Those concerned with art for its own sake are the "technicians," who are concerned with craft and aesthetics, but not with message (83–85). She labels artists who oppose the State "opposition producer-creator[s]." The examples she gives of this type are Lamine Nahdi's Théâtre Maghreb Arabe, founded in 1974, and Rajah Farhat's Troupe Gafsa. Nahdi's troupe has been harassed by the State, suffering arrests, threats of prison, fines, and revoked visas, is loved by the young and the masses, and is ignored by the universities. Troupe Gafsa has been censored for its political message, and plays abroad what it cannot play at home (91–94).

Between the official vision and the censored oppositional vision, B'chir finds the private "producer-creator" theatre practitioners: Théâtre Phou [Mouth Theatre], Nouveau Théâtre [New Theatre], Théâtre de la Terre [Theatre of the Earth], Théâtre Triangulaire [Triangular Theatre], and more recently, El Teatro. These theatres are primarily concerned with artistic vision, but not in such a way that they risk being shut down. Influenced by the Western avant-garde, they often use texts composed by members of the troupe and produce work known for its quality. They also represent Tunisia in the summer festivals, where "[t]he vision that they present of Tunisian society is tolerated…, but embarrassing to the extent that access to the mass media is denied them" (B'chir 1993, 91). This is also where many of the most influential theatre women are: Raja Ben Ammar is at Phou, Souad Ben Slimane and Zeynab Farhat are at Teatro, Jalila Baccar is at Nouveau, and Néjia el-Ouergi is at Terre. Not surprisingly, these theatres tend to present works that deal with women's issues.

Algeria

Periods in Algerian theatre correspond to the disruptive wars that country has hosted. Both World Wars had a profound effect on the theatre, as did the agonizing War for Independence (1954–1962). Most recently, the post-1992 civil conflict has effectively called a halt to artistic production, since artists in Algeria now risk assassination. World War I put a damper on many of the old forms of entertainment by separating the

generations (Roth 1967, 17). In 1921, Georges Abyad's troupe toured Algeria, and his visit inspired the creation of a new theatre in classical Arabic. This phase, largely derivative of European forms, lasted until 1922, when artists like Allalou and Ksentini, and the impresario Mahieddine Bachtarzi, began to produce sketches *[kalam al-hazl]*, reviews, and farces in dialect. Between 1922 and 1939, fifty plays in dialect were staged, treating such diverse themes as the struggle of native businessmen against the colonizers, mixed marriages, alcoholism, and false Muslims. The first of these plays, as has been mentioned, was Allalou's *Djeha*. In the 1930s the Nadha movement promulgated a revival of classical Arabic, an animosity towards maraboutism, and the creation of a youth theatre tied to the Algerian Muslim Scouts in 1935 (Baffet 1985, 29; Lakdar-Barka 1981, 3; Roth 1967, 21 and 26; Siagh 1994, 77–79).

Algerian theatre under colonialism had respectability problems. Because of this, it had difficulty obtaining personnel, particularly female actors. It also had problems with French censorship, which became aggravated as the theatre became more politicized after World War II, and with funding. There was no infrastructure for training until 1953. Later, after the municipal troupes were subsidized and l'Institut National d'Art Dramatique et Choreographie (INADC) was formed in 1964, young people were actually forced into acting careers due to a lack of other career opportunities, but many of the early pioneers, like Mustpha Kateb, started as amateurs. The years of 1947 to 1954 saw government subsidized Arabic seasons at the Algiers Opera, but in 1954, as Algeria entered into war with its colonizer, the public boycotted the theatre (Salhi 1998, 71 and 82; Roth 1967, 31–38).

The Front de la Liberation Nationale (FLN) formed its own theatre troupe in 1955. It operated in Paris from 1955 until 1958, and then moved to a home base in newly-independent Tunis under the direction of Mustpha Kateb. From there, it toured with its revolutionary plays to Libya, The People's Republic of China, Moscow, Morocco, and Iraq, where the troupe was playing when it learned that Algeria had won independence in 1962 (Tomiche 1993, 141). The socialist wing of the FLN refused the notion that art could be apolitical, and after the revolution was over, this lead to a dichotomous approach to the amateur troupes: they had to perform well, because their art was political and its message critical, but they did not have the luxury of imposing standards having to do with aesthetics. In this atmosphere, two types of theatre were juxtaposed in tension with each other: theatre inspired by and using the old forms, and documentary theatre that partook of the socialist realism imposed by FLN ministry directives (Salhi 1998, 70–71). Assia Djebar's *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn, 1969), written in French in 1960 before the end of the war, is significant for its attempt to embody both these types. This perhaps reflects its dual authorship—she wrote the piece with Walid Carn—but it is not possible to know which impulse belongs to which author, or whether both authors tried to bridge the gap between the two aesthetics simultaneously. *Rouge l'aube* uses a *hakawati* device, but it also engages in didactic discussions of social and political problems.

The new government nationalized the theatre in 1963, forming the Théâtre National Algérien (TNA) (Tomiche 1993, 142). The late 1960s saw a cultural revolution against neo-colonialism. This movement stressed the importance of the amateur theatre, particularly the youth troupes, of which there were more than one-hundred spread over twelve counties. The National Union of Youth was encouraged to produce work that was anti-neo-colonialist, anti-imperialist, and anti-bourgeois (Salhi 1998, 72). At the First

Pan-African Cultural Festival in 1969, *Rouge l'aube* represented Algeria in the theatrical presentations. Walid Carn did the scenic adaptation for the production, an Arabic translation titled *Ihmirar al-fajr* (Djebar and Carn 1970), and Mustapha Kateb directed it (Déjeux 1984, 11; Wake 1995, 399). Déjeux says that Assia Djebar disagreed with the adaptation completely, although he does not say why (1984, 11). Perhaps the subsequent production of the piece on Algerian radio in 1970 gives a clue: it cut all references to women's participation in the liberation struggle (van Houwelingen 1985, 109). If the radio broadcast and the Cultural Festival used the same text, Djebar was no doubt quite disappointed and angry.

In 1970, four regional troupes were created at Oran, Sidi Bel Abbes, Constantine, and Annaba. Two more followed at Bougie and Batna. From 1962 to 1972, thirty-eight plays, half of them written by Algerians in Arabic, were produced on the national stages (Tomiche 1993, 142). Later in the 1970s, there was a movement against negative stereotypes of French people in the National Theatre plays (Salhi, 1998, 72). The government pushed the amateur troupes to disseminate the message of the Boumedienne regime (80). About fifty in number by 1976, they continued to produce plays conceived in socialist realism, such as *The Earth to Those Who Work It*, a piece by the Group for Theatrical Action in Algiers. This play's title also suggests Brechtian influence, as it is a probable reference to the frame story of his play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1957). The Agrarian Revolution of the early 1970s produced a theory of the arts that was articulated at the 1973 seminar on amateur theatre, held in Saïda, where the participants declared that theatre's role in their society was to educate the masses (Mrah 1976, 176–178).

The amateurs had a serious problem, however. They had no repertoire and no authors to produce one, so they turned to experiments with collective creation. In 1970, the Theatre and Culture Group produced one of the typical products of this kind. They workshopped a piece entitled *The Situation of Women in Algeria*, and each time it was shown, in a move that prefigured Augusto Boal, the audience was asked to provide the play's resolution. Of the nationals, only the Théâtre Regional d'Oran (TRO) tried collective creation. It employed two discrete collectives, one for writing and one for staging, and produced *al-Media [The Table]* and *al-Mentouj [The Product]*. The title of the former was inspired by the egalitarianism of the Arthurian Table Round, and the latter was a disquisition on the importance of workers' participation in management (Mrah 1976, 176–178). Salhi notes that in Algeria, the amateur troupes have lasted longer than many of the professional ones, because they have more opportunities to experiment, and calls the TNA an "old structure" (1998, 74). Indeed, the training wing of the TNA, the INADC, failed in its training mission because it did not know how to prepare actors to work in the rural theatre, where artists like Kateb Yacine were more effective (80).

Running in parallel to the socialist theatre movement was an equally strong, but less governmentally sanctioned, movement to mine the old forms for techniques that would help Algeria's theatres address their society's problems. This trend produced three of the most important male Algerian playwrights: Ould Abderhamane Kaki, Kateb Yacine, and Abdelkader Alloula. Kaki was first; he began his experiments with the old forms in 1951, and from 1961 to 1968 brought new life to the *halqa*, the *madih*, and the *qasidat*. The *qasidat* were *chansons de geste*, collections of epic praise poems revolving around a particular hero. He inherited these forms from his uncle, grandmother, and friends who

chanted Bedouin poetry while he was growing up in the Mostaganem quarter of Oran (Lakdar-Barka 1981, 4–7). Kaki wanted to graft the old forms onto the Italianate theatre (Salhi 1998, 88), and used for his text language that was neither workaday nor literary, but came from the oral tradition of the *qasidat*. He used instruments and percussion in his *mise-en-scène* to reinforce the rhythm of the text, drew upon the *halqa* for spatial semiotics and used the *madih* to help him get at Brechtian alienation in a way that was completely different from the realist experiments of the 1970s. He took for his themes legends or history that illustrated the tradition of a great people struggling against adversity, and in this, his vision was as much at the service of the revolution and its aftermath as that of the FLN. His work influenced the later experiments of Tayeb Saddiki in Morocco (Lakdar-Barka 1981, 5–10).

Kateb Yacine, the pride of Algerian Amazigh literature (1929–1989), was born in Constantine. Although he never wrote exclusively in Tamazight, he is beloved of Imazighen everywhere. He shares this affection with Mouloud Mammeri, another playwright and novelist, whose *La Colline oubliée* (1992) was translated from French into Tamazight to become the screenplay for *Tawirt i Ttwattun* (1995), one of the first films to be made in that language (Parvis Poétiques and Malamoud).[13] It is disturbing to note that Tomiche blames the fact that both authors chose to write in French on the colonial disruption of Arabic education (1993, 142). While Arabic education was indeed interrupted, these particular authors chose French because Arabs had suppressed the Amazigh writing system centuries earlier. They had no possibility of publishing or disseminating their work in their native language, Tamazight.[14] In order to get their work to a wider audience, both authors allowed their plays to be translated into dialectal Arabic (142), so their choices were driven neither by neo-colonialist valorization of French as a European language, nor by Amazigh separatism.

During the war, in 1959, Kateb Yacine published his famous theatrical cycle, *Le Cercle des représailles [The Circle of Reprisals]*, in France. The cycle included *Le Cadavre encerclé [The Encircled Cadaver]*, *La Femme sauvage [The Wild Woman]*, also known as *Les Ancêtres redoublent de férocité* [The Ancestors Redouble Their Ferocity], and the aforementioned *Intelligence Powder*. He began his practical theatrical career with Théâtre de la Mer, then became the leader of Action Culturelle des Travaillieurs (ACT) [Workers' Cultural Action]. Under the auspices of these organizations, he undertook the 1971 collective creation of *Mohammed prends ta valise [Mohammed, Take Your Suitcase]*. *Valise*, a dialect piece about the hardships of emigration, reached seventy-thousand people in five months, playing French venues like the Renault factory where immigrant Algerian workers could be reached, and using techniques from *al-halqa*, *al-bsat*, and the Djeha repertoire. He followed *Valise* in 1970 with a play about Western colonialism in Vietnam, *L'Homme aux sandales de caoutchouc [The Man in Rubber Sandals]*. The process of audience-spectator interaction was important to the ACT, and their post-play discussions lasted twice as long as the plays themselves (Parvis Poétiques and Malamoud; Salhi 1998, 73 and 80; Tomiche 1993, 142–143; Déjeux 1993, 112 and 115; Wake 1995, 399).

Salhi says that in 1973, ACT performed for an International Women's Day event. Twelve-hundred women came from the rural areas to see them, and many were inspired to go back to their villages and create theatre (1998, 92). The 1975–1976 season witnessed a change in the Ministry of Labor, whereupon ACT lost its funding, and then

was exiled from its home in Bab el-Oued, a quarter of Algiers, to the town of Sidi Bel Abbes (90). During the lean times, ACT would tour the countryside, performing in exchange for room and board. It became a "frugal" theatre, a theatre that made opportunities out of disaster (77). In 1976, ACT finally became one of the national theatres, the Théâtre Regional de Sidi Bel Abbes, but this was a mixed blessing (75). The FLN set up an organization within the theatre to weed out "undesirables." One report to the party accused the voluntary theatre membership of substance abuse and homosexuality (85). The FLN was suspicious of Kateb Yacine anyway; he had taken criticism for supposedly favoring tribalism in his novel, *Nedjma*, and his early plays. His choice of theatrical languages, first French and later a mixture of dialect and Tamazight, was also controversial (86).

The concept of the Djeha character became central to the ACT and the TR Sidi Bel Abbes under the direction of Kateb Yacine. He appeared in almost every play, and his persona became crucial to the actor's preparation: each actor became Djeha. Salhi says, "With Djeha, a process of intellectual evolution operates in the group's consciousness, helps the members to understand what is beyond the simple theatrical act, and judge the community" (1998, 76). In her book, *Tradition théâtrale et modernité en Algérie*, Roselyne Baffet demures, however, with regard to Kateb Yacine's female characters, who tended to be either tropes of motherhood and heroism, like the ancient Amazigh queen Kahena, or stereotypes of foreign wickedness, such as the European whore (1985, 158–161).

Kateb Yacine's legacy is entwined with that of Abdelkader Alloula. The two worked together in 1971 (el-Hachemi 1997, 98). Brother of the same Malek Alloula who wrote *The Colonial Harem*, Abdelkader Alloula, like Kaki and Kateb Yacine before him, rejected the Aristotelian theatre to make social theatre based on the old forms. He was born in 1939 in Ghazaouet, started acting with the TNA in 1963, and began his playwriting career by adapting the plays of Gogol and Goldoni. He helped to form INADC, and then studied in France from 1967 to 1968. In 1970, he began to write original works, such as *El-Khobza [Bread]* and *Hammam Rabi [God's Baths]*, a work that lodged a protest against opportunism in the FLN. His best known work is a trilogy: *al-Agoual [The Sayings]*, *al-Ajouad [The Generous Ones]* and *al-Litham [The Veil]*. He was the director of the Théâtre Régional d'Oran from 1972 to 1975, when he became the director of the TNA. He retained his post for one year, but was ousted by ministerial authorities because they did not like his agenda. He returned to the TRO, where he was the theatre director from 1978 until his death by assassination on March 10, 1994. He was shot, presumably by fundamentalists, on the street where he lived in Mostaganem, the same quarter that gave rise to Kaki (Achour 1997a, 217–218; Alloula 1997, 11). El-Hachemi gives this elegy: "Those who assassinated Alloula, and many others among Algeria's best children, are nothing but owls blinded by the light he shed" (1997, 101).

Algeria has had a lot of mourning to do since 1992, when the FLN rejected the result of a democratically-held, national election that the Front Islamique de la Salvation (FIS) won. The resulting violence has claimed many against whom either the fundamentalists or the government have a grudge: artists, journalists, professional women, Imazighen, and, incomprehensibly, whole villages full of farmers and shepherds. Among the prominent dead are Azeddine Madjoubi, who was sitting director of the TNA at the time of his death on February 13, 1995, raï singer Cheb Hasni, Amazigh singer Matoub

Lounes, and Amazigh journalist Tahar Djaout, who said, "If you speak out, they will kill you. If you keep silent, they will kill you. So speak out and die" (Bennoune 1995, 190).

The generation of men and women who came to their maturity during the War for Independence is a transitional group with unique characteristics. They are the last generation to have been educated under the old French system, and many received their university degrees in France. Those who were in France during the war were often caught up in the struggle even as students. Some of the men were tortured by the police of the DST (Département de la Sécurité Territoriale).[15] They looked to France for their intellectual formation while simultaneously being subjected to the most heinous cruelty. This is the generation of the FLN, the party that has run the country since independence. In light of the history of the intellectuals who made the FLN, it is little wonder that it is now implicated, along with the FIS, the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armée) and other groups of religious fundamentalists, in the appalling assassinations and massacres that are being perpetrated upon the people of Algeria today.[16] Very little in the way of theatrical production has survived this hellish situation, and exile has become commonplace for artists.

Had the FLN accepted its defeat, the FIS might not have targeted the theatre. In 1990, the FIS won the municipal elections. In Bordj Bou Arreridj, the party proceeded to shut down a local cinema because it supposedly allowed minors to see a Jean-Luc Goddard film. Then, to show that the FIS has nothing against the arts in general, it generously funded the Fourth Annual Maghreb Theatre Festival in that same locale. The festival hosted eleven troupes, including one from Morocco and two from Libya. Ironically, the second prize went to the al-Shua Troupe of Morocco for their play, *In Search of the Man With Two Eyes,* a piece that chronicled the pain of medieval playwright Ibn Danial as he watched the Tarters sack Baghdad, "making the Tigris river foam for forty days with the blood of artists and writers" (Slyomovics 1991b, 182–184).

Morocco

As in Tunisia and Algeria, Morocco was introduced to the Western-style theatre by the Georges Abyad troupe in 1923 and early adaptations of Molière, particularly *Tartuffe,* were popular during the colonial period. In general, the French Protectorate realized that it could not prevent theatre from being produced, and so instead tried to co-opt it. Nevertheless, Moroccan artists did run afoul of the French; Mohammed al-Qorri, a theatre pioneer whom the French labeled an agitator, was exiled and tortured to death. Abdallah Chakroun calls the years between 1924 and 1929 the "golden age" of Moroccan theatre, even though the first original work was not produced until 1927 (1963, 55). A youth troupe was founded in 1928, but in general Moroccan theatre seems to have had a slower start than in its sister States. In 1934, the Protectorate imposed censorship. Chakroun himself founded the National Radiodiffusion Troupe in 1949 with a group of amateurs. Female actors were difficult to find in this period, and most female roles were played by men in drag up until independence. To its credit, Radiodiffusion had a small troupe of Tamazight speakers, as well as regional troupes in Casablanca and Marrakech, and dialect plays were an important part of the repertoire. When television came to Morocco, the radio troupe took on that medium as well (Tomiche 1993, 143–145; Chakroun 1963, 55–59 and 61; Ouzri 1997, 160; Badry 1987, 44).

The national troupe, Troupe al-Maamora, was founded in 1954 by André Voisin and Charles Nugue. After independence, Voisin left the direction of al-Maamora to Ahmed Tayeb al-Alj. Al-Alj addressed the lack of good Moroccan theatre texts by writing or adapting twenty-two pieces for the troupe. It was in al-Maamora that the famous actor, Fatima Regragui, got her start. The first festival of amateur theatre was produced in 1957, and the Centre National d'Art Dramatique opened its doors in 1959. In 1962, King Hassan II, father of the present monarch, inaugurated the Théâtre Mohamed V in Rabat. Aziz Seghrouchni was named director of the building in 1964, and remains so to this day. Tayeb Sadikki was appointed artistic director, but lasted only one season in the post before moving to the Théâtre Municipal in Casablanca (Ouzri 1997, 139 and 158–169; Chakroun 1963, 60; Badry 1987, 45).

A youth group, the Troupe du Petit Masque, was founded in 1969 by Mohammed el-Fassi, and included young actors who would become central to Moroccan theatre, such as Touria Jebrane and Mohammed al-Jem. The group dissolved in 1973. Al-Maamora folded the following year, because the Ministry of Cultural Affairs did not care for the new direction in which they were working. This led to the formation of the Troupe du Théâtre National, including some of the former al-Maamora actors, which was loosely affiliated with Théâtre Mohamed V. It still exists, with Mohammed al-Jem at the helm (Ouzri 1997, 171–180). Al-Jem has become famous for his broad, physical comedy. He is quite remarkable to watch; his gestures make his body look as if it were made of rubber.

The Centre National d'Art Dramatique, like INADC in Algeria and ISAD in Tunisia, had difficulties staying open and maintaining a cohesive arts training vision. It closed in 1974. It was replaced by l'Institut Supèrieure d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturel (ISADAC) in the 1985–1986 season (Ouzri 1997, 103). Unfortunately, ISADAC has taken on more than it can handle, and seems in imminent danger of collapse due to "a profound crisis occurr[ing] between the entire profession, the administration of the Institute, the students and their teachers" (117). ISADAC tries to teach theatre as a science, battling the notion that actors cannot be made, but have to be born with a special talent. The school lacks qualified teachers, and has had to import them from Europe. Even the admissions process is fraught with difficulty. ISADAC requires a high school diploma (baccalaureate in the French system) for entrance, in order to insure that its diploma will carry the same weight as a university degree. This means that the students it recruits have strong literary proficiency, but as we have seen in the U.S., academic credentials do not necessarily make great actors (113 and 117). Initially, all graduates of ISADAC were actively courted for posts in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. This hiring practice continues; many still languish in Ministry jobs without any work to do in the profession for which they have been trained. The one thing ISADAC does not have is its own troupe. Ouzri complains, "It's as if the Institute had been created solely to reinforce the already growing number of administrative functionaries without a precise mission" (121–122).

Far more lively than the national institutions are the independents, like Théâtre d'Aujourd Hui [Today's Theatre], created in 1987 by husband-and-wife team Abdelwahad Ouzri and Touria Jabrane; Masrah Tamanine [Theatre 80], founded by Khedija Assad and her husband Saâd Allah Aziz; and the solo work of journalist-cum-performance-artist Abdelhak Zerouali, who has been working in that genre since the 1960s. There has been a problem distinguishing the amateurs from the professionals. This

was finally addressed at the Fès Colloquium in 1990. Regulations were established; for a theatre to be considered professional now, half of the troupe's membership must have an ISADAC diploma or its equivalent, or have served five years in a professional troupe. Additionally, the troupe's director must be a professional, and the troupe must be recognized by the Ministry. Attention from the administration is not always benign, however. Money is hard to come by, and a subtle form of censorship exists. Shows are usually not closed before they open, but pressure to close a show that has offended can be brought to bear. This creates an atmosphere wherein artists censor themselves. Occasionally, though, the censorship has been more overt (Badry 1987, 45; Ouzri 1997, 129–130 134–135, 159 and 189–193).

Tayeb Saddiki tried to direct al-Alj's *Les Moutons répètent [The Sheep Rehearse]* for the Pan-African Festival in 1969. Because the story concerns a herd of sheep who refuse to be the Eid sacrifice, make a non-aggression pact with the humans, and live in happy co-existence forever after, this whimsical offering was deemed unsuitable and never made it to the Festival (Ouzri 1997, 136). Saddiki, born in 1938, has always been a maverick, training his own professionals when no school was available and bursting onto the post-independence theatre scene so vibrantly that he was dubbed "the Orson Welles of the Arabs" by the Arabic press (Tomiche 1993, 144). He is something of a colorful character. To the serious, if somewhat hackneyed, interview question of "How did you come to the theatre?," he once replied, "In a taxi…" (Minai 1979, 160).

Saddiki, true to his reputation, is an auteur. He writes, acts, directs, paints, and designs for the cinema. He encountered theatre by way of his design interests, since he had intended to become an architect. He has adapted much of the Western canon: the omnipresent Molière, lonesco, Ben Jonson, Gogol, Aristophanes, and Beckett. He has also devoted much of his time to "exhuming forgotten Arabic texts" including the *maqamat* (Refaif 1990, 121–122). Between his translations, adaptations and original texts, he has produced some forty-five plays in Arabic, and has recently started publishing original plays in French (Saddiki 1990, 6). He founded his troupe, Masrah Ennas [People's Theatre] in 1961, and moved it to the Municipal Theatre in Casablanca in 1965. His *halqa* experiments began shortly thereafter. Two of these are of particular interest. *Al-Majthoof* told the story of sixteenth-century poet and *halaqi* Abdul Rahman al-Majthoof. For the 1972 production, *Maqamat Badi al-Zann al-Hamadani*, Saddiki chose ten of the *maqamat* of al-Hamadani from the fifty-four that are extant. He tried to use them to link the past and the present, but staged the piece using Western theatrical conventions (Déjeux 1993, 117). Abdelwahad Ouzri, whose artistry has perhaps fallen under Saddiki's flamboyant shadow upon occasion, could not resist taking this shot at both the auteur and the Ministry, and it neatly sums up the uneasy relationship that all contemporary North African artists have with their State, and vice versa:

> Tayeb Saddiki is in the habit of declaring that he never benefited from any financial contribution from the State; even though that public assertion has every chance of being easily refuted, no minister or administrator has ever had the initiative to do it. Note that the career of a minister in Morocco is sometimes much shorter than that of an artist. (1997, 159)

Chapter Three
North African Women Artists and Their Society

WOMEN AND SOCIETY IN NORTH AFRICA

A prominent sociologist recently wrote, "The clitoris is a penis that is hardly procreative, subversive in the eyes of a patriarchal order that sometimes goes as far as to excise it" (Dialmy 1995, 29). The sociologist, Abdessamad Dialmy, is Moroccan and male. He is also correct in his observation that the clitoris, and by extension, female sexual pleasure that is not linked to procreation, is threatening to the patriarchal order of Islam. Dialmy's work demonstrates that, counter to Western prejudice, men are very much involved in the feminist discourse in North Africa. Dialmy is not obscure; his book was in every bookstore in Rabat in 1997 and from its placement in those stores, one gathers it was selling briskly. So was Zakya Daoud's fat volume (1996) on the history of the North African women's movement. People in North Africa are talking about women in the government and the universities, in the press and in the arts. The question is, what, if any, effect does all this talk have on the lives of women themselves?

In 1978, Lebanese scholar Évelyne Accad defined an Arab women's so cial reality: unwelcome at birth, she is sequestered and deprived of education, her virginity is protected, and her marriage is arranged at the age of thirteen to sixteen, after which she endures as many pregnancies as occur. She often has a co-wife or co-wives, her husband has religious and social sanction to beat her, she may be divorced at will, and her mother-in-law feels free to abuse her (158–159). This analysis, while accurate even today for many women in North Africa, is very general, and it partakes of what Ruth Behar follows Maxine Baca Zinn in calling a "deficiency theory," that is to say, it assumes an inherent lack in the structure being studied (1993, 277). Sociologists in the U.S. have used such deficiency theories to reduce African-American and Latino/a family structure to a formula consisting of violent men and oppressed women. There is a real danger that the same sort of flattening out will occur in analyses of Arab families as well. This section, therefore, presents an introduction to the North African feminist discourse and its more obvious traps, while highlighting some of its nuances.

THE DISCOURSE OF THE VEIL

Perhaps the most widely disseminated discourse on the subject of North African/Western difference is that of the veil. The veil has been a visible marker of the unavailability of North African women to the Western colonizer, and the West's response has been to co-opt the discourse of Western feminism, criticizing the treatment of women in North Africa to justify foreign occupation. Some men and women in North Africa and other parts of the Near and Middle East have responded to this aggression by defending as traditional practices such as the veil, the harem, and polygyny (Mernissi 1987, vii). Leïla Ahmed points out that the veil and the corset both serve to control women's bodies (1982, 244), and Halim Barakat quotes Khalida Sa'id who observes that whether a woman is encouraged to wear the veil or a mini-skirt, it is nevertheless her body that is being objectified and controlled (1985, 35). Mernissi gives an additional insight: in a depressed economy, the veil serves as a "division of labor," discouraging women from replacing men in the job market (1992, 165).

Two important Arabic terms come into play where the control of women's bodies is concerned. *Awra* specifically refers to a women's physical body and imbues it with "negativity and shamefulness" (Ahmed 1989, 43–44), while *fitna* indicates the social chaos of female sexuality out of patriarchal control. In Islam, *fitna* is "anti-divine," "anti-social," and "Satanic" (Mernissi 1987, 11). Veiling and sequestration, ever present in discussions about the status of Arab women, are methods of restricting women's mobility and behavior that have been employed intermittently and with enormous variation by both Western and Eastern cultures. In Egypt, the British Victorians, despite their own problems with female sexuality, read the veil as a sign for Otherness, and adopted a quasi-feminist stance within their "colonial paternalism." They used the language of feminism to render Other men inferior, while simultaneously impeding education for Egyptian girls. The irony is that this colonial domination kept the veil more firmly in place (Ahmed 1992, 150–153 and 235). The French made similar moves in North Africa. They came to regret them during the Algerian War for Independence, when the veil was used as an effective disguise by freedom fighters.

The economies of Morocco and Algeria are currently depressed. Not surprisingly, the veil is more of an issue in those countries than in Tunisia; the Tunisian economy is doing relatively well. This supports Mernissi's assertion about divisions of labor. Moreover, in depressed economies it is harder for young men to marry. "Purity" and "honor" in women become obsessions for men who may look, but not touch, and whose sexual options before wedlock are masturbation, employing a prostitute, or having sexual relations with other men. None of these alternatives are religiously sanctioned. According to the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law, Ali, women possess the "nine parts of desire," that is to say that they embody nine-tenths of the sexual energy in the world, yet no one seems to consider what sexual outlets they might need (Brooks 1995, xii). Charrad notes that the kin-based communities were weakest in Tunisia prior to independence. This may be another reason why Tunisia makes less of an issue of the veil now: Westernization and the visibility of women are less threatening to the social structure (1996, 22). Whatever the root cause, all of this sexual tension creates a great deal of pressure on young people

of both sexes, and fosters an atmosphere of frustration, hostility, and suspicion (Mernissi, 1987, 94–96). It must be stressed that even when the veil is not in use, the pressure exists. These days, it is not uncommon for North African women to wear sunglasses in order to avoid making inadvertent eye-contact with a man who might misinterpret this accident as an invitation. One subject of this study refers to sunglasses as the new veil, and flatly refuses to wear them for that reason.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE

The formal harem tradition was never as common as Westerners suppose. This type of sequestration happened only in the great families, usually urban households, who could afford to do without the labor of the women outside of the home. Ahmed gives an alternative reading to this rarified and sexually segregated society. The system of the harem provided women with easy access to each other across class lines, and a tremendous support network. Predictably, this access made Western men, who did not have similar access to native women, uneasy, and they interpreted it as lesbianism (1982, 524). Malek Alloula's postcards once again serve as a pictorial reference to this misrepresentation; he devotes an entire chapter to the lurid images it inspired (1986, 95–104). More damaging, in my opinion, is the kind of sequestration wherein a young women is simply not allowed to leave her home. As the rural, extended-family system collapses and urban, nuclear families become more common in North Africa, this kind of sequestration has become tantamount to isolation. It was also a common mode of living for North African immigrant women living in Europe before, during, and just after the North African independence struggles. In Morocco and Tunisia, as more women join the workforce, sequestration is increasingly less of an issue, but in Algeria it had a revival in the 1990s as women took to their homes for fear of assault by fundamentalist militants.

Much has been made of the Middle Eastern penchant for dividing space into public and private sectors. Respectable women, traditionally, belonged in private spaces only. Public spaces, and the right to mobility, were reserved for men. Mobile women who inhabited public spaces were considered 'public' women: sexually promiscuous and sinister. A man privileged with mobility could hide his activities from his wife; she might not know his whereabouts or whether or not he had taken another wife or mistress (Davis 1987, 99). The constraints of respectability could be manipulated, however, and making the private public could be a source of power for women. Susan Schaefer Davis cites a case where a woman living in a rural Moroccan village shamed her husband into buying her birth control devices by telling Davis about his reluctance to do so in his presence (175).

Dialmy has engaged in a fascinating linguistic and spatial analysis of the sexualization of space in Islam. He has found a lexical connection in Arabic between the names for parts of the female body and the names for parts of the *medina*, the Arab city, and the *beit*, the Arab home. Like a woman, a house has a mouth, and by association a vagina, that can be penetrated (1995, 36–38):

> But like the mouth of woman, that of the house does not open itself except on the authorization of man, of power. In man's secret thoughts, in their

> richness and truth, woman and house must have a closed, gagged mouth. To open the mouth of one and/or the other is to activate the process of man's destructuralization, of work and of ritual, it is to enter into another, ludic, temporality. (41)

In Dialmy's analysis, the high wall around an Arab city is a "manifestation of the Arabo-Islamic phallus" that finds its echo in the minaret. The wall protects the *medina,* which holds the position of uterus in his schematic. Outside of the wall is the *jihalya,* the world of non-believers and of *fitna* (1995, 53–59). Thus, the "absence of communication with public space, signified by the architecture, expresses a choice, a vision of the proper world in Islam" (13–14). Dialmy's analysis makes it very clear why the performing female body, and the woman of words, particularly non-Arabic words, are Islamically out-of-bounds.

EXTENDED AND NUCLEAR FAMILY STRUCTURES

In the old, extended-family system, a woman married into a family hierarchy, leaving her birth family and assuming a place in the system of her husband's family. Her position in the family corresponded to her husband's; for example, a younger son's wife had less stature than that of an older son's wife, unless the younger son's wife had produced sons and the older son's wife had not. Presiding over the women's section of the hierarchy was the mother-in-law, with whom a woman had perhaps her most complex familial relationship. A woman was expected to be harsh with and overwork her daughter-in-law, but be kind to her daughter, who would need protection from *her* mother-in-law (Djebar 1990b, 86; Davis 1987, 131). This hierarchy of subalterns is the stuff of legends, and some of the plays in this study, particularly those of Gallaire, take it as their theme.

On the other hand, a mother-in-law was traditionally the figure who taught a young woman all the skills she would need to run a house, and in that sense, a daughter-in-law was more like an adopted child. A mother-in-law could also be a friend and collaborator. The primary tension between the two women was the man they had in common: the son. In choosing a bride for her son, a woman was forced to acknowledge his sexuality. This was disruptive both to her household and her relationship with him. It was not unheard of for women to interfere with their son's sexual relations with his wife, and some couples sought privacy by moving out of the family home. Girls assumed household responsibilities very young, at age four to six. In the traditional family, mothers and sons were close, mothers and daughters were closer yet, and fathers were distant from all of their children, particularly girls who could, through their sexuality, be a source of shame. Brothers had authority over their sisters, and sons over their widowed mothers (Davis 1987, 21; Mernissi 1987, 72–73; Davis and Davis 1989, 75–78 and 82; Kapchan 1996, 212–213).

This pattern is now in flux, however, and has been for a long time. It has always been unstable; individual circumstances vary widely. Certain aspects of it apply more to rural women than to urban women, and vice versa. Class also plays an important part: Davis notes that Moroccan women of the elite resemble European women more than they do rural Moroccan women (1987, 6). Working, middle-class women are now subject to the

"second-shift," a problem familiar to women in the U.S. They do their jobs outside the home and then work additional hours to care for their families (Kapchan 1996, 154–155). An educational generation gap has damaged the relationship between women and their daughters. As women receive more education, they discard the old models, leaving their mothers to wonder, "*Ahna 'alash durk?* [What are we good for now?]" (Lazreg, 1994, 180). Furthermore, the image of womanhood is, as always, subject to the needs and manipulations of the State.

NORTH AFRICAN FEMINISMS

Threading through this dynamic, and uncomfortable, period of extreme changes are the North African feminist discourses. North Africa is passing out of a period roughly corresponding to the 'second wave' of feminism in the U.S., a time when we ceased to speak of feminism in the singular. Although the discourses are much too large to map out in detail here, certain of them need to be outlined. First, and least difficult for outsiders to understand, is the praxis discourse. This area of work is devoted to improving the status of women, with a heavy concentration on changing the legislation of the Family Code and rediscovering women's history. It relies heavily on techniques and theories borrowed from Western praxis feminism, and is the source for much of the material on women's status in North Africa that appears in this chapter.

The second feminist discourse is what I will call the indigenous women's movement. This movement, analogous to the womanist movement in the U.S., holds Western feminism in suspicion for its connections to colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and classism. This position, best represented for the Maghreb by Marnia Lazreg, aims its discontents primarily against French feminist and deconstructionist theory. Lazreg feels that the "forms of expression" of Algerian feminists (and by extension other North African women) are trapped between "three overlapping discourses": a male assertion of gender difference, social science studies about the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East, and the academic discourse on women (1988, 82). She believes that the theories of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault are "anti-humanist" and constitute a French response to losing the Algerian War for Independence (99).[1] Cixous, whom she does not mention, also falls into this category. Lazreg argues against theories of difference and for an enlightened intersubjectivity:

> To take intersubjectivity into consideration when studying Algerian women or other Third World women means seeing their lives as meaningful, coherent, and understandable instead of being infused "by us" with doom and sorrow. It means that their lives like "ours" are structured by economic, political, cultural factors. It means that these women, like "us," are engaged in shaping, at times resisting, and even transforming their environment. It means they have their own individuality, they are "for themselves" instead of being "for us." (1988, 98)

Lazreg encourages Algerian women researchers like herself to look to audiences other than U.S. academia, and cautions Western researchers to avoid the "religion/tradition

paradigm" that provides the basis for the material I presented earlier in this section (1988, 84–86 and 101).

The third discourse, that of Islamist feminism, is a conversation taking place within Islam. It is a powerful tug-of-war between moderates, like Mernissi, and the *mitadayyinat* [Islamist women]. Not surprisingly, much of the argument centers around the need for *ziyy al-Islami* [Islamic dress], particularly for women (Badran 1985, 50). Proponents of *ziyy al-Islami* point out that a *hijab* marks a woman as Islamically correct and dignified, worthy of her family's trust. Women who wear the *hijab*, a scarf that covers all of the hair and the neck, can move about without harassment and without being weighed down by more bulky, all-enveloping forms of body-veiling such as the *haïk* or *sefsari* (Medimegh Dargouth 1996, 106). Some Muslim women find the Islamist movement to be an "effective response to the challenges of modernization," while others are afraid that they will be abused and made into pawns for a political agenda. Many Islamist women are convinced that Western women are exploited and misled and that Islam, not the Western feminist discourses, are the answer to this dilemma. In their vision of Islam, there is a division of roles and responsibilities, with women taking the primary responsibility for child care and homemaking before they take on activism or a career. This is an argument for the education of women as well, as an educated woman can better educate her children. It is for this reason that the Islamist movement has taken a leadership role in promoting literacy for women in North Africa (Haddad and Smith 1996, 137–138 and 140–146).

Mernissi rightly points out that "the fundamentalist wave in Muslim societies is about identity." It is also about class and economics. She portrays the fundamentalists as young, educated, newly urbanized middle- and lower-class men who are pitted against unveiled women, also young and educated, but of the urban middle-class. Her economic arguments are compelling. She says that in her native Morocco, international economic dependency has chipped away at the national identity (1996, 163–164). Her analysis fails to take into account, however, the fundamentalist women activists for whom veiling is part of the solution. Fadwa El-Guindi argues that, in Egypt, young college women have opted for a strategy of modesty as part of their activism, "invoking a separate hierarchy" and "initiat[ing] a movement and defin[ing] its premises and its symbols":

> Their Islamic dress, so mystifying and misunderstood in the West, is in fact an anti-consumerist claim for their right to modesty, to control of their own bodies, to sexual space and moral privacy. (1996, 161)

Many feel that the Islamist movement provides a sense of community in the face of Western exploitation (Haddad and Smith 1996, 144). To the extent that this is true, it will continue to be popular in North Africa, and to receive support from women in the communities of that region.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

Legislation that governs the rights of Muslim women in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia is contained primarily in the Family Code of each country. These laws control marriage,

divorce, child custody, and inheritance. In each country, the Family Code was reconsidered after independence. The Code in Morocco, called the *moudouwana*, followed the Maliki tradition of the *sharia* [Quranic law] closely until quite recently. In January 2004, Morocco introduced sweeping revisions to its Family Code. Among the enacted reforms are provisions that make polygyny much more difficult, raise women's legal age for marriage from fifteen to eighteen, and give women the right to initiate divorce and to retain marital assets in the case of divorce, and to keep custody of minor children (Aljazeera.net 2004). Tunisia's Code has suppressed some of the more restrictive aspects of the *sharia*, such as divorce by repudiation and polygyny. Algerian law is ambiguous, falling somewhere between the Moroccan *moudouwana* and the Moroccan and Tunisian reforms (Sebti 1997, 9; Charrad 1996, 21–22). Women who agitate for reforms in the Codes face a battle, because in a social structure based on kinship, where the marital union is potentially much shorter in duration than ties based on the patriline, controlling women is a means of attaining "community cohesion" (Charrad 1996, 20–21). Morocco's case, however, demonstrates just how dynamic the discourse is.

Morocco has a long history of women's subjectivity and activism. The ancient Qaraouine University, located in the city of Fès, was built by Fatima al-Fihria, a Tunisian woman, in the ninth century. Morocco has had female rulers, and rural women in Morocco have been fighting in wars since the fifteenth century. Women, particularly among the Imazighen, participated in the resistance against France from the inception of the Protectorate (Baker 1998, 17–19). The Protectorate's response to the resistance was to institute the Berber Dahir in 1930, a statute designed to set the Arabs and the Imazighen against each other by giving the Imazighen separate governance based on their tribal system. This did not succeed in reducing the rural opposition to France (20).

In the cities, the Salafiya Islamic movement, a nineteenth-century import from Iran, Syria, and Egypt, was calling for an end to maraboutism and extravagant marriage ceremonies, and for the education of girls. This move was designed to counter Westernization and bolster the family in Islam (Baker 1998, 21). Baker points out that the sexually segregated society of Morocco provided spaces where women could meet:

> While [separation of the sexes] prevented women from participating in "men's activities," it also provided separate and autonomous spaces for women. Whenever we focus on these women's spaces we find examples of women's autonomous expression, a sort of underground "invisible feminism." (16)

She cites the existence of women's *souks*, like the one in Al-Hoceima, that are open only to *binet* [unmarried girls/women], divorcées, and widows. Men and women who live with men are not permitted, and indeed, a man disguised as a woman was once caught in the Al-Hoceima *souk*. He was beaten by the women and dragged off to the local *qadi* [judge] (16–17).

In Algeria, where the French presence was at its most oppressive, a few women were able to take advantage of the French educational system. They found, sadly, that this did not give them any status in their colonized nation. They received a poor deal from the "biculturalism inherent in a system that promoted women's self-confidence and self-assertion outside the home but crushed any sign of autonomy within" (Cooke 1996, 141).

The Islamists and the communists each had their own vision of Algerian femininity: the Islamists sought education for women for the sake of their sons, and the communists actually gave lip service to equality between the sexes. The exigencies of the liberation struggle, however, took precedence over any promotion of women's causes (Daoud 1996, 129–134

Tunisia, like Algeria and Morocco, was engaged in a debate about who would control the women's movement, but in this case there was much more to control. The first school for girls was founded in 1900. Women began to call for an end to the practice of veiling in 1924. Habib Bourguiba, head of the Neo-Destourian party for national liberation and first president of liberated Tunisia, denounced unveiling as colonialist in 1929, but led public unveiling ceremonies upon becoming president. Tahar Haddad, a male reformer, spoke out against polygyny, forced marriage, and repudiation in his landmark 1930 work *Notre femme dans la législation islamique et la société [Our Woman in Islamic Legislation and Society]* (Daoud 1996, 45–48). Starting in 1945, many women's organizations sprang up, some tied to the communist parties, but women's issues did not become a part of the nationalist agenda.

Meanwhile, the Islamist movement was promoting education for women on a grand scale. In 1931, Cheikh Mohamed Salah Ben M'rad, of the Islamic university at the great Zitouna mosque, agitated against Haddad's secularist vision. His daughter, Béchira, founded the Société des Dames Musulmanes [Muslim Ladies' Society] and became a political force for the Islamist cause among the elite women of Tunisia. 1943 saw the creation of a female section of the Association des Jeunes Musulmans [Young Muslim's Association], and in 1947 this body founded a school to promote literacy among girls. The school's curriculum was tied to specific Islamic ideas about morality, but also taught women's history (Daoud 1996, 48–53). Up until independence, the secularist reformers, exemplified by Haddad, and the Zitounians, led by the Cheik, battled with each other to control the fate of Tunisia's women.

REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLES

As the countries of the Maghreb acquired independence, female revolutionaries discovered that being a freedom fighter or a university educated intellectual did not protect a woman from being transformed into a trope of culture once independence had been accomplished. The socialist revolution in Algeria that promised women a (Westernized) level playing field after the war reneged when the nationalists realized that a 'liberated' woman was contrary to the Arabicized, constructed "Algerian-ness" necessary to their project of government (Halimi 1990, 297–301). Moreover, the economic stresses of the increasingly young workforce and high unemployment rates forced women out of the workplace under the guise of a return to religious tradition. Paris-educated women of the independence generation also made difficult choices about intermarriage with Europeans, and some of these choices had tragic results (Gallaire 1997).

As the Algerian War for Independence progressed, women were drawn into the struggle in various ways. Their participation crossed socio-eco nomic lines, involving women from both the rural and urban-bourgeois classes. In the cities, their work took on

a performance aspect: the veil became a costume they could manipulate, and the trope of the powerless Algerian native woman so cherished by the colonizer became an effective disguise for women carrying supplies under their veils and bombs in their handbags. Some donned the veil for the first time in their lives, while others, selected for their "European" features, were able to pass, unveiled, for French nationals while carrying out clandestine operations (Lazreg 1994, 121–123; *Battle of Algiers*). There is no doubt that these women and their rural counterparts, using such performance strategies, exercised tremendous control in the course their lives, and those of their male comrades, during the war. When the war ended, Algeria became a textbook for the ways in which nationalist revolutions all over the world have failed to live up to women's expectations. Women were touted as heroines of the liberation in Algeria, but the new nationalism required them to return to their pre-revolutionary roles as keepers of the home. They were most useful to the nation as the preservers of a re-invented, and increasingly monolithic, culture. Some of them supported the idea that women must bear this burden for the greater good of the new Algerian nation. Others rebelled. The post-war stories of the 'Djamilas,' revolutionary women fighters who were jailed, tortured and raped by the French during Algeria's War for Independence, reflect this internal conflict. In 1971, Jamila Buhrayd, one such Algerian national heroine, expressed the view that the nation must come first:

> The young women of Algeria don't have time to discuss the problems of sex right now. We are still in a struggle to make our new country work, to rebuild the destroyed family, to preserve our identity as a nation. In the future, perhaps, we will arrive at a kind of life where men and women relate on a more friendly, equal, and open basis. I hope so. (1977, 261)

Buhrayd planted bombs for the FLN during the Battle of Algiers. She describes herself in the same interview as a mother of three, an ordinary woman who lives a simple life. She feels that her contribution to the nation must be as an exemplar of family values: "the role of heroes is not finished at the end of the battle. It's the way they behave in ordinary life, their day-to-day actions, that is important, for this will influence others. Their lives must be based on ideals" (262). Buhrayd seems to approach the delicate negotiation of her roles as revolutionary icon and ordinary woman from a position of strength. One wonders if the same can be said of Djamila Boupacha.

Boupacha was tortured and raped by the French while being held in prison for her revolutionary activities. Released in 1962 by the Evian Accords, she moved into the Paris home of her lawyer, Gisèle Halimi, a Tunisian Jew. She told Halimi that she did not want to return to Algeria because of her fear that her 'brothers' in the FLN would force her to assume a traditionally feminine role and lifestyle. The FLN contacted Halimi through her colleagues, lawyers who belonged to the FLN themselves, and demanded the return of Boupacha. They threatened to use force, and Boupacha went into hiding in Paris. Halimi was then approached by the Comité Intermovement Auprès des Évacuées (CIMADE), a Protestant organization involved in assisting evacuees, to set up a meeting with Boupacha. Boupacha agreed, and was kidnapped by the FLN from CIMADE offices, locked up, and shipped back to Algiers. In spite of her unremitting work defending the Algerian freedom-fighters, Halimi was denounced by the FLN. Years later. Halimi

encountered Boupacha in Algiers. She was married to a fellow *maquisard,* and was working as a secretary at the Algerian Ministry of Employment. Remarkably, the French feminist/existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir sided with the FLN in this affair, demonstrating a decidedly un-feminist disregard for the wishes of Boupacha herself (Halimi 1990, 297–301). What can be determined from this story is the extent to which the new nationalism of Algeria relied upon the manipulation and control of the images and persons of its national heroines. It also evinces the willingness of movements, both nationalist and feminist, to ignore the agency of the female individual for the purported good of the cause.

The Algerian woman resistance fighters' struggle for recognition mirrored the effort made by the women of Morocco. Moroccan women were inspired by pictures of Algerian and Palestinian women carrying guns, and Algerian refugees were sheltered in the border towns of newly independent Morocco from 1956 to 1962 (Baker 1998, 113 and 249). Just as American women who had played the role of Rosie the Riveter during World War II found themselves confronted by images of Doris Day, June Cleaver, and Betty Crocker during the 1950s, Moroccan women found that both the nationalist and Islamist agendas required them to return to the home and the traditional family hierarchy after Morocco's independence in 1956 (11).

During Morocco's independence war, both urban, nationalist, elite women and the resistance fighters of the rural working class stepped out of their traditional roles in order to free the country. They fought in the 1944 Seige of Fès, when the town was cut off for fifteen days with no water or meat, and then invaded by Senegalese troops brought in by France to force the city to its knees. They died in the 1947 Massacre of Casablanca, again at the hands of Senegalese troops, and in the massacres that followed the strikes and uprisings of 1952. They left their houses when King Mohammed V was exiled in 1953, participating in mass demonstrations. Their contributions, however, were labeled 'natural' extensions of women's work: feeding the men, caring for the wounded and carrying parcels, this last task often involving the transport of arms and ammunition that they could hide under their bulky clothing. Nationalist women, like Malika el-Fassi, the mother of the women's movement in Morocco, kept their gains after the war because of support from King Mohammed V, and his daughter, the dynamic Princess Lalla Aïcha, whose fiery 1947 speech in Tangiers called, in three languages, for the education of women. Resistance women, on the other hand, were often repudiated by the husbands they had worked with precisely because they had been active in the public arena, or they were forced back into sequestration (Baker 1998, 8–11, 24–28, 52, and 58).

WOMEN'S STATUS POST-INDEPENDENCE

Since independence, women in all three countries have found their discourses co-opted and twisted to serve the needs of the new regimes. In Morocco and Algeria, women have had trouble tapping into the benefits granted by their governments to members of the resistance. In Morocco, sixty-thousand *cartes de résistant* [resistance identity cards] were granted in 1959—so many that having one became meaningless. All of the cards were re-evaluated in 1973, to the detriment of many women. Moroccan women often fought alongside their husbands, so when a woman tried to claim her benefits in 1973, her

husband's testimony about her activities was discounted because his family had something to gain if the woman received validation for her card. Moreover, many of the tasks that women did were regarded as supportive, rather than active, no matter how dangerous they were (Baker 1998, 34, 37). Nor did veteran's registration offer much benefit to Algerian women. Like their Moroccan sisters, most were deemed "helpers" instead of fighters, and denied veteran status (Helie-Lucas 1990, 105).

King Mohammed V undermined the Istiqlal liberation party after the war, creating his own palace army, the Forces Armées Royales (FAR), to consolidate his power. He appointed his son, later King Hassan II, head of the FAR. Resistance forces were either absorbed into the FAR or the government bureaucracy, or else they were killed. It was a period of unrest and factionalism, during which the status of women slipped considerably. Touria Chaouia, the first Moroccan woman pilot, was assassinated by members of one such faction, the Black Hand. The solidarity between elite nationalist women, whose movement was based in Fès, and the fighters of the proletariat Istiqlal, based in Casablanca, dissolved. It was in this atmosphere that the Moroccan *moudouwana* was formed. It incorporated few reforms, conserving repudiation, polygyny, patriarchal guardianship of children in case of divorce or widowhood, unequal inheritance for women, and the *wali* guardianship system whereby a woman must ask permission of her male guardian (father, husband, uncle, brother, or son) before taking a job or traveling. No woman was involved in the drafting of the *moudouwana,* which was finally reformed in 2004 (Baker 6, 30, and 32–33).

The Algerian Family Code is also quite close to the *sharia*. Reformers lost ground in 1984, when revisions to the Code were secretly passed, making it more conservative. Polygyny and repudiation are now legal again in Algeria, along with laws denying a woman the right to marry according to her choice, work without the authorization of her *wali,* initiate a divorce except in certain Quranically approved circumstances, or inherit more than half the portion allotted to a man. Since independence, the behavior of women has become a focus for both the Islamists and the nationalists. The FLN harassed women back into their homes in 1962, and those they did not succeed in intimidating were threatened by the FIS thirty years later (Helie Lucas 1990, 109–112). Maria Aimée Helie-Lucas observes:

> During wars of liberation women are not allowed to protest about women's rights. Nor are they allowed to before and after. It is never the right moment. Defending women's rights "now"—this now being any historical moment—is always a betrayal of the people, the nation, the revolution, religion, national identity, cultural roots…(112–113)

The absurdity of this position was highlighted by noted Algerian journalist Fadela M'rabet in 1962:

> But, finally, I have found a spokesman who declares, in Revolution Africaine: "Our problems are complicated but their bases are clear… the young Algerian woman should remain attached to good traditions but rid herself of bad customs and bad traditions…she does not

> confuse…traditional traditionalism with colonial traditionalism!" Good for the young Algerian woman! (1977, 320)

M'rabet refers, of course, to the hypocrisy of the FLN, but Karima Bennoune points out that the FIS also engages in double-speak. The fundamentalists label feminists *hizb Franca* [belonging to the "party of France"], when they themselves were trained by the American CIA in Afghanistan, and are thus *hizb America* (1995, 36).

In Tunisia, manipulation of the women's movement has taken a different turn. Bourguiba went head-to-head with the Zitounans in 1955, just prior to independence, and won. Bourguiba, who had just been released from prison, took the lead of the women's movement, using it to give himself political leverage. Upon attaining the presidency, he dismantled the university of Zitouna, while at the same time creating a vast governmental bureaucracy and outlawing non-governmental organizations. He also did away with the communist parties. His message to women at this time and throughout his presidency was conservative; he did not want women to push too hard for emancipation. At the same time, he took steps to reduce the rate of illiteracy in girls, which sat at twenty-five percent for ages ten to fourteen in 1956. The Family Code was adopted and signed by Lamine Pacha that same year,[2] and it made sweeping reforms to the Maliki system, abolishing forced marriages and polygyny. Civil marriages were instituted in 1958 and repudiation was replaced by juridical divorce available to both men and women. On June 1, 1959, a constitution was ratified that declared all Tunisians, including women, equal in the eyes of law (Daoud 1996, 53–56; Medimegh Dargouth 1996, 98).

In the 1970s, women entered the workforce in large numbers, primarily in factories and textile mills. Bourguiba continued to preach family values: he declared in 1976 that the role of mother was more important for women than that of citizen (Daoud 1996, 67; Medimegh Dargouth 1996, 100). The 1970s also heralded a radicalization of the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamiste [Islamist Tendency Movement] (MTI), with the full participation of women. In 1976, Hend Chalbi, a professor of theology, televised a conference on the theme of women liberated by Islam and the dangers of Occidentalization. This marked the beginning of the *hijab* movement in Tunisia. The MTI derived its strength by arranging strategic political marriages among its ranks. The Islamists held what they called *halqat*, discussion circles where women's secular liberation, the reformed Code, and the government's liberal family planning policies were decried. They demanded political recognition of the MTI as a party and made certain that their women members were in the public eye. The MTI was outlawed in 1981, and its leaders were thrown into prison (Daoud 1996, 74; Medimegh Dargouth 1996, 102–103).

A praxis feminist movement emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. The tremendously influential Club Tahar Haddad flourished during this time, and the journal *Al-Nissa [Women]* published eight numbers between 1985 and 1987. Fatiha Mzali became the Minister of the Family and the Promotion of Women in 1984. She was followed into office by a woman Minister of Health in 1986 and a woman ambassador in 1987 (Daoud 1996, 72–84). Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali staged a bloodless coup in 1987 and replaced Bourguiba as Tunisia's president. This event occasioned a backlash against "excessive laity" and women started to leave the workforce (104). Reforms in the Code, however, continued from 1992 to 1994, granting more autonomy to women, and the school system was revamped to combat sexual stereotyping. Women are now prominent in Tunisian

government and in the Centre de Recherches, d'Études, de Documentation et d'lnformation sur la Femme (CREDIF), founded in 1991 and headed by Soukaina Bouraoui (Daoud 1996, 110, 119–20). The current regime has engaged in repressive policies since 1991, including censorship and control of private citizens. It has "an obsession with security," and intellectuals are "reduced to silence" (Daoud 1996, 121). Some have been 'disappeared.' At the same time, women's causes are being given marked attention. The secularist women's movement has made a devil's bargain: the government supports it and it turns a blind eye to the ruthless subjugation of dissidents, particularly Islamists. The women cannot be blamed for this because just as surely as if they lived in Algeria, their lives and safety are at stake.

Since political representation for women in the Maghreb is subject to the caprices of the State, some women have sought other outlets for their self-expression. The acts of performing, writing, and painting have allowed women to begin to represent themselves through their art, often in isolation, without a direct connection to a political movement. They have become performing and writing bodies on their own behalf, negotiating the margins of language and culture on their own terms.

WOMEN'S CREATIVE PRODUCTION

Singers and Dancers

The performing female body is suspect because of its power. In turn, social suspicion robs it of power. The entire paradox revolves on an axis stretched between shame and desire. Both the colonizer and the colonized in North Africa have found the need to tame the performing female body. When the French arrived in Algeria, they encountered the Nailiyat, a group of women entertainers from the tribe of Ouled Nail whose social organization permitted them great personal freedom. They were at liberty to choose their sexual partners and often were supported by a patron, but they were not prostitutes in the Western sense of the term. The dances for which they were renowned were exquisitely refined, characterized by complex hand gestures. The French turned the Nailiyat into prostitutes, forcing them to dance in scanty clothing (Lazreg 1994, 29–33). The art of the Nailiyat ceased to exist publicly, because it could no longer operate on its own terms. The Nailiyat were especially vulnerable to degradation by the French; as women performing within their own agenda, they were potential agents of chaos for both sides of the colonial power struggle, and had to be controlled.

The *cheikhat* have a tradition of female dance and song performance that persists throughout Morocco and Algeria because it serves patriarchal interests. Kapchan calls these performers, whose title has become synonymous with prostitution, "a metonym for female transgression" (1994, 89). The *cheikhat* are 'public women,' socially exiled, mobile, beyond *hshuma* [shame], with a freedom of speech and gesture not available to respectable women (86–87, 91 and 97). Chebchoub says that kidnapping women into prostitution was not unheard of in Morocco, and for these, becoming a *cheikha* was a promotion in status (1997c, 18).

Cheikhat are indispensable at weddings, *fiançailles* [engagement ceremonies], and other festivals. According to Schuyler, *cheikhat* are singers, drummers, improvisers of

poetry, and preservers of esoteric musical lore (1984, 109). Their songs, which sometimes sound like nonsense to their audiences, and at other times employ dense metaphors, evoke women's magic, another forbidden arena. These women, who often give young men their first sexual experience, also demonstrate for women, through their public performances, the possibility of unfettered female sexuality (Kapchan 1994, 93, 95, and 98). Not surprisingly, their performances are now being co-opted by the television media in Morocco. They have become a folkloric national symbol, "laundered" of their sexuality (102). The singing of the *cheikhat* is characterized by a powerful vocal production similar to that used by Bulgarian female choruses, and call-and-response techniques. Their dances employ rapid movements of the pelvis and hips that are accentuated with a scarf or belt. Many *cheikhat* are corpulent, as the traditional bodyideal for sensuality dictates. That body-ideal is changing, however, in response to a barrage of images from the West.

Van Nieuwkerk reminds us that performers like the *cheikhat* have been considered disreputable in the Middle East and North Africa since the Middle Ages (1995, 5). In her work on the *awalim* and *ghawazi* of Egypt, she noted that nineteenth-century female street performers were forced into prostitution by foreign and domestic interests. They were at some times heavily taxed, and at others exiled from Cairo. "Belly dancing" was a corruption of traditional performance encouraged by the British, just as the French degraded the Nailiyat performances in Algeria (32–37). One of the responses of Egyptian performers to their constant degradation and marginalization was to develop a secret language, an argot known as *sim*. *Sim* is actually a group of such argots employed by performers, homosexuals, and other marginals, both male and female. The *karagoz* has a *sim*, as do the singers and dancers of the streets and nightclubs. *Sim* permits private communication between performers, and helps them to handle delicate social situations (96–97, 101). There is no source that mentions a *sim* in Maghrebian performance, although its importation with the *karagoz* seems likely.

Storytellers

A feature of the North African playwright's textual tool kit is the rich heritage of oral transmission of stories and poems, particularly among women. Webber quotes Fernea, who states that Tunisian women "symbolically intrude into, manipulate and explore" the world of men through the telling of *khurafat*, or fantastical stories, and that during the first half of the twentieth century, storytelling was an escape for respectable women who stayed at home (1991, 311). Tunisian literature scholar Monia Hejaiej has made a study of her own people, the elite Beldi of Tunis, and their tradition of storytelling. The Beldi, like the Fassi of Morocco, have a reputation for refinement. They are associated with a special accent in Arabic and engage only in certain professions; in their stories they emphasize this difference by imitating the "inferior" accents of other peoples (Hejaiej 1996, 28–33). Hejaiej finds that "[t]he tales reflect prevailing moral standards; and yet they display attitudes and explore relationships and practices that are sometimes in total contradiction to social norms," providing their listeners with "subversive possibilities" and "alternative subjectivities" (21). Beldi stories often contain racy jokes that undercut the phallus of masculine power by pointing out male inadequacy (80–84).

Hejaiej sees a link between the illiteracy of women prior to independence and their prodigious storytelling ability; the growing literacy rate has meant a decline in women's storytelling within the home (1996, 11–12). Moreover, Beldi women tell stories only for each other. Hejaiej was only able to collect the stories in her study because she was an insider. Her interviews were punctuated with inquiries of, "*Bint shkun?* [Whose daughter are you?]" (5). The stories themselves are told during the performance of communal daytime tasks or at night, and during celebrations such as weddings, engagements, and circumcisions (13). Each Beldi tale has an opening formula, simple or complex, that creates what Hejaiej has identified as a "metanarrational discourse." She outlines the stages of one such formula, wherein the teller praises the Prophet, establishes her authority in relationship to her audience, declares the tale to be "fabulous, marvelous, enigmatic and strange," and invokes the character of Azuzet al-Stut, a stock character who appears in many of the stories. Azuzet al-Stut is an old woman, a sinister witch who wears a green shawl to fool the unwary into believing she is pious, green being the color most sacred to Muslims. She is mobile and active, and it is by associating herself with this marginal creature, cautiously, that the teller establishes herself as a creative power (15 and 20).

Aziza mentions another Tunisian, woman-centered performance context in which Azuzet al-Stut appears. She is the mistress in the performances of the "Play of the Woman With the Green Shawl" that are played by women for women only. All male characters in this form are played by women in drag, and it takes for its theme the mistreatment of a young woman servant by her evil mistress. The mistress tries to kill her, but her clever mother saves her (1975, 78). We will see this woman-on-woman cruelty repeatedly in both traditional and contemporary performances by North African women; it is a natural extension of the hierarchy of subalterns mentioned earlier.

Poets and Orators

In the Moroccan Rif, among the *tarifit* speaking Amazigh people of Aït Waryaghar and Ibuqquyen, Joseph and Joseph report that teenage women express themselves through the institutionalized creation and performance of poetry. Young women of marriageable age dance before a male public at weddings (1987, 48), performing rhyming couplets [*izri*, pl.*izran*] of their own devising (87). These women, who have been learning to compose poetry from the age of six (90), form the bride's party *[dhiwzirin]*. They enter the performance space in groups of four, dance a shuffling unison dance, recite the *izran* individually, and finish with an undulating dance designed to showcase their sexuality (68–70). The *izran* function as a way for the composers to ridicule aspects of village society, to counteract spells that have been cast at them, to appease or provoke rivals, to chide faithless lovers, and to display their charms to prospective husbands. One such *izri* was designed to discourage an unwanted suitor. It declares that the speaker will launder her headscarf and hang it to dry on a *fades* bush, and tells the listener to take away his sugar. A prospective groom brings sugar to a woman's father to open the negotiations for a marriage contract. The headscarf is the one she will wear to her wedding; the *fades* bush is used to make soap. Using metaphors for purification, the composer publicly rejects her suitor. Since she will not be present at the marriage negotiation, this is her one opportunity to make her wishes known (92–96).[3]

Elsewhere in Morocco, women are engaging in what Kapchan calls marketplace oratory. Linked to the sale of products and services, their performances are inter-textual in nature. Kapchan deals with two such cases: the *madjouba* [disciple of a sufi saint] and the *ashshaba* [herbalist] (1996, 62–63 and 68). Déjeux has listed the *madjoub*, or entranced individual, as one of the many kinds of fool in North African lore (1991, 108). She sells herbs, roots and minerals in the market, a locale that "[i]n an unstable socioeconomic climate…is perceived as an actual site of contagion and sub-version," and that is likely to be kept under government surveillance, pushed away from the town, or destroyed (Kapchan 1996, 12 and 59).

Kapchan's subject *madjouba*, a disciple of Moulay Ibrahim, quotes the sayings of Sidi Abderraman, a misogynist cleric whose proverbs are well known to her audience. She does not cite him, however, but directly assumes the masculine voice that denounces women's magic, thus casting aspersions on her own practice. She simultaneously associates herself with righteousness by quoting memorized religious texts, ironically subverts the texts through her contradictory practice, and publicly voices the private concerns of her clients, providing them with distance from their problems (1996, 62–64). The *ashshaba* also quotes religious texts, but she uses biologically explicit language to refer to such female health issues as menstruation and childbirth in a mixed gathering, clearly a transgressive mode of speech. She justifies her actions by saying that doctors and clerics talk in such a fashion; in this way she stands the paradigm on its head by claiming that her acts have scholarly and religious stature (68). Both the *ashshaba* and the *madjouba*, socially marginalized and dangerously 'public' women, co-opt masculine speech in order to claim masculine authority (71).[4]

Chebchoub claims that the art of the female actor has always existed in Moroccan society, and cites the *dahoukiya* [female clown] and the *moulat sserr*, a special kind of *halaqi* (1994, 17). Women also play an important part in *halqa* performances by being participating audience members. The role of the *moulat sserr* in traditional Moroccan performance is that of go-between for couples about to marry. Always a woman, the *moulat sserr* tactfully investigates the sexual history of the groom, and then gently, in a humorous performance conducted in front of all of the women of the community, initiates the virgin bride into matters sexual. Thus, the *moulat sserr*, through her ability to transgress the barriers between the male and female segments of society, facilitates reconciliation and communication between men and women (Chebchoub 1997b).

WOMEN AND PERFORMANCE: BORDER-WALKING

The relationship of women to cultural, political, or societal development is ambiguous. Since women, in recent history, have seldom been agents in social or political policy-making, development has often happened around them, or through them. The trope of woman-as-cultural-vessel positions women to contain culture, rather than to define it. Women artists, particularly women who perform in public in cultures where this activity has traditionally been forbidden or constrained, seize agency and participate in the project of development obliquely. They often serve to question the direction a given developmental project (such as a post-revolutionary government) has taken. Like a grain

of sand in the proverbial oyster, they irritate in productive ways. Performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña explains how this works:

> The presence of the hybrid denounces the faults, prejudices, and fears manufactured by the self-proclaimed center…. It reminds us that we are not the product of just one culture; that we have multiple and transitional identities; that we contain a multiplicity of voices and selves, some of which may even be contradictory. And it tells us that there is nothing wrong with contradiction. (1996, 12)

In North Africa, particularly in the western region formerly colonized by the French, this irritating, productive contradiction holds tremendous risks for women. These range in severity from being ostracized to being killed, especially in Algeria, where, as we have seen, the violence has become a bloody conversation conducted on and through the bodies of women and other social outsiders. It is not surprising, therefore, that plays by North African women are somewhat difficult to find. The texts that do exist, however, have tremendous literary, historical, and sociological value because they are written from destabilizing positions on the borders of culture. Women tend to write from the outside, looking in.

In spite of the risks, a growing number of women are writing and performing plays, screenplays, and performance texts in francophone North Africa. Except for Algerian writers Assia Djebar, Fatima Gallaire, Hélène Cixous, Denise Bonal, and Leïla Sebbar, virtually all of them are unfamiliar to speakers of English. Their texts are vital to the understanding of the practice of performance by women in North Africa, the treatment of which is usually limited to ethnographic studies of more traditional forms. It is precisely in the uneasy mix of Western and traditional performance forms, and in the unstable field of the post-colonial *pluri-langue*, that feminine dis-ease regarding the direction of post-colonial 'development' in North Africa can be expressed. Judith Butler says of the performance of gender:

> To be female is…a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (1988, 522; original emphasis).

Performance strategies are a powerful coping mechanism. Women who have a particular set of restraints placed on their images and persons may respond by manipulating these images to their advantage, or to lessen seemingly inevitable disadvantages. They may also refuse the imposition altogether, making the project of controlling them less satisfactory for the agents of power.

WOMEN AND WRITING: THE BODY OF WORDS

There is evidence of Middle Eastern women's "oral literature" (Merolla 1996, 15)[5] that dates back to the medieval period, when the *Alif Layla wa Layla* was first written down (Ahmed 1989, 44). The *One-Thousand and One Arabian Nights* and their fictional female teller, Sheherazade, have so permeated the Western imagination that they have recently been made into a mini-series for a major U.S. television network. We have discussed the storytelling mode as performance; now let us acknowledge that it is also literature. It is literature that is in conflict with literacy, perhaps, but it is literature nevertheless. *Alif Layla wa Layla* was *acknowledged* as literature only when written down because, until recently, literacy has been gender-biased in the Middle East. This is not to say that there have not been women of letters: Assia Djebar revives the story of one such figure in her historical novel, *So Vast the Prison [Vaste est la prison]* (1999), that of Tamazight noble Tin Hinan, who preserved the *tifinagh* script from destruction while fleeing into the desert to escape her own (Clerc 1997, 65). In another work, *Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*, she argues for the subversive power of the literate girl-child, however cloistered:

> Her voice, albeit silenced, will circulate. A scrap of paper. A crumpled cloth. A servant girl's hand in the dark. A child, let into the secret. The written word will take flight from the terrace. The blue of heaven is suddenly limitless. The precautions have all been in vain. (Djebar 1985, 3)

Cixous, in a strikingly similar passage, notes that writing can do for the silenced what speaking cannot, even when the speaker is silenced by her own diffidence, "I do not know how to be completely silent: I cheat. I say to myself: 'Write. When you write you speak to no one.' But I am not unaware: if I write to nobody, it always reaches someone." (Cixous 1994d, 99).

Mernissi is of two minds when it comes to North African women's scholarship and writing. In *Dreams of Trespass*, her autobiography, she mentions the *nissayat*, 'who's who' compilations made by Arab historians to detail the accomplishments of women (1995, 128n), but she says in *Doing Daily Battle*, her earlier ethnographic study, "And let no one tell me that 'in our heritage there have always been women scholars.' Our heritage, as I have experienced it as a child, an adolescent and an adult is an obscurantist and mutilating heritage" (1989, 13). Her ambivalence is symptomatic of the double-think to which women's accomplishments are subjected; she is correct on both counts. The *nissayat* allowed certain women into the Arab canon of scholarship, while the production of most was consigned to the ghetto of folklore, because until recently, it languished for want of some masculine hand to write it down.

"Folklore" is one of those nasty words that have come to signal a power differential, particularly in the area of North African literature. Notice how easily Jacqueline Kaye dismisses Amazigh literature by simultaneously invoking folklore and orality in the introduction to her anthology of North African literature:

> I think the division between Arabic and French here is a fair representation of that in current writing, i.e. approaching 50:50. Berber is absent because not written and, alas, the few Berber transcriptions I have seen strike me as whimsical and naïve in a too recognizably folkloric mode. (1992, 7)

Kaye is on the defensive here. Instead of frankly admitting that she does not have the knowledge, qualifications, and resources to include literature in Tamazight in her collection, she attacks "Berber" production for its allegedly "folkloric" nature. Webber, on the other hand, defends folklore in her study of Tunisian *hikayat* [storytelling] in Kelibia:

> I have found folklore to be not a fetter but a potential weapon to be used by people against repression or domination by cultural outsiders. The ambiguity, the multi-vocal nature of aesthetic communication… should be especially useful in studying a postcolonial or minority group where traditionally what one wanted to say to one's own group often was precisely what one wanted to avoid saying to the dominator. (1991, 218)

Maghrebian women, when they became a literate class, were the first to create a francophone literature in North Africa, with French-educated Algerians leading the trend. Disillusioned with the false promise of their tutelage at the hands of the colonizer, they began examining what it meant to be caught between cultures. The first francophone novel, *Jacinthe Noire [Black Hyacinth]*, was written by Margurite Taos Amrouche in 1947. Amrouche, daughter of exiled autobiographer Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche, was a Kabylian Tamazight whose family converted to Christianity and moved to Tunisia in the period before the independence war. Amrouche's novel was followed by Djamila Debèche's *Aziza* in 1955 and Farida Belghoul's *Georgette*! in 1957 (Cooke 1996, 141; Accad 1978, 33 and 49–51; Déjeux 1994, 31). Assia Djebar also began writing in French at the end of this decade, but was criticized for the lack of political commitment in her work during the war (Tahon 1992,41). Accad said in 1978 that North African women writers up to that point were upper-class, educated, and distant from the problems affecting women in the lower classes (159).

Algeria

Arabic literature had a renaissance in Algeria at independence, but the production of francophone works did not diminish. The language of the former colonizer performs a distancing function for dislocated postcolonial subjects, and writers have found it particularly useful for speaking the truths they cannot bring themselves to write in their native language (Déjeux 1992, 6 and 9–10). Of course, scholarship in Europe and the U.S. tends to focus on francophone writing because it is more accessible, and this continues to be an issue in publishing, academia and politics. The mid-1970s produced a large number of woman writers, among them Aïcha Lemsine, whose 1978 *Ciel de porphyre [Sky of Purple Stone]* was attacked for failing to valorize the revolution and for having a male protagonist. Clearly, this was a double standard: male authors like Rachid

Boujedra and Kateb Yacine received no criticism for centering their novels on female characters (Tahon 1992, 42). *Ciel de porphyre* contains a very interesting character type, the *femme traître* [female traitor], Dalila, a battered woman who dances for a living, betrays her neighborhood to the French, causing twelve people to die. Her treachery, an act that serves her interests rather than those of the cause, is her way of obtaining power from a position of powerlessness (Mosteghanami 1985, 142).

Until 1983, when the Société National d'Édition et de Diffusion [National Publishing and Distribution Company] (SNED) was replaced with the Enterprise Nationale de Livre [National Book Enterprise] (ENAL), it was difficult to get a novel published in Algeria. Manuscripts languished for years. Writers continued to publish in Europe, primarily in France, either because they had contracts there or because they had expatriated themselves (Déjeux 1994, 27–28). Publishing in French has obscured the contributions of Kabylian writers, like Fettouma Touati and Mouloud Mammeri, whose "literary space" does not exclude writing in French, but who fail to gain recognition as Imazighen (Merolla 1996, 11 and 140). The current generation of women writers in Algeria is too young to have fought in the war (Déjeux 1994, 28). These women are finally beginning to be able to put down the burden imposed on them by revolutionaries like Fanon, who desired them to create a national literature by putting the interests of the nation ahead of their own (Fanon 1961, 240).

Tunisia and Morocco

In Tunisia and Morocco, writing in Arabic has taken precedence over francophone production (Déjeux 1994, 45 and 51). This is as true for dramatic literature as it is for novels. Women writers have been marginalized in both countries (Tahon 1992, 42). The first francophone novel by a Moroccan woman writer appeared in 1958 when Elissa Chimenti, a Jew from Tangiers, published *Au cœur du harem, roman marocain [In the Heart of the Harem, a Moroccan Novel]*. In Tunisia, novels by women began to appear in 1975. Chebchoub sums up the trend admirably:

> If, during the 1940s and 1950s, families were proud of their pretty, timid, soft and fertile girls, the families of the 1980s and 1990s find themselves prouder of their hardened, courageous, intelligent, active, money-earning and dynamic girls…. We are in the process of attending the birth of a new image of women, measured against a new social project conceived by a generation in the midst of mutation. (1994, 8–9)

Space does not permit a thorough discussion of women's novels in the Maghreb. Nor can we examine poetry and autobiography, two genres at which women have excelled since independence. Fortunately, these wordbodies have not been neglected; I refer you to Merolla (1996), Woodhull (1993), Tahon (1992) and of course Déjeux (1990, 1992, 1993, and 1994), the grandfather of Maghrebian bibliography, as well as to Charles Bonn and his researchers at Université de Paris Nord (1992).

The status of women in North Africa, and the ways in which they react to their circumstances, provide a general framework for the plays we are about to examine. A more immediate context can be found in the lives of the individual authors themselves.

Some of them have been willing to share their lives, as well as their work, with researchers, and it is to this information that the next chapter is devoted.

Chapter Four
Important Woman Playwrights and the Genres in Which They Work

Many difficulties beset the woman who would write or perform in North Africa. Women are open to criticisms that men do not receive, both about their work and their character. Woman artists have developed strategies to move around these obstacles. Perhaps they work with a husband or fiancé, to avoid the stigma of the single female performer and harassment from male colleagues. Some choose to work in areas of the theatre that do not require them to rehearse at night. Many, particularly the Algerians, have left North Africa for Europe, where they can express themselves with more ease and have a less difficult time getting their work published. Others, Tunisians and Moroccans, stay and face the obstacles head-on. Most Algerian artists that I know of are in exile, and some are in hiding. A precious few, remarkably, continue to write and perform in Algeria.

It is a mighty struggle. In 1997, I sat across from a highly placed governmental official in charge of a major theatre who told me, when I asked about women playwrights, that the women of his country "were not doing anything important" and that I should study the men. This is an attitude that prevails, even among some theatre women. I respectfully disagree.

North African women have been writing for the stage since 1960, when Assia Djebar's war play, *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) was first written. Their work constitutes a counter-canon, albeit one of many inconsistencies, that at times complements and at others opposes the prevailing trends in North African theatre. Some of the more prominent playwrights are presented here. In most cases where I did a personal interview, I asked the subject if she wished to say something directly to my readers on a topic I had not broached. I have provided the answers in this chapter. Regrettable exceptions to this rule are Meryem Drissi, whose reply was accidentally cut off of her tape, and Christiane Chaulet Achour and Latifa Toujani, with whom my interviews were much less formal and not cassette-recorded.

TUNISIA

Raja Ben Ammar

Raja Ben Ammar, of Théâtre Phou in Carthage, has a university education in literature, and she says that, at the moment, all the important people in Tunisian theatre have come out of the universities. At the age of seventeen, she went to the Avignon festival, where she won a prize for her performance, and this opened her up to the possibility of world theatre, particularly that of Japan. In spite of her training in the word, her real theatrical interest is in the image. She has a fascination with dance, so her present work is movement-based. She became a playwright of necessity; in order to avoid the censor in Tunisia, theatres perform unpublished pieces of their own devising. Even though she is not trained as a dancer, she works more and more to create with and through her body, a body that ceases to be "forbidden" to her through her work (Ben Ammar 1997).

Ben Ammar's early works, like *Seven Out of Sixteen [Sebe'at min sitat 'achr]* (1984), concerned social problems, but she works with no particular theory or method, other than the regimen imposed by dance. She does stress the need for direct communication with her audience. She has not thought specifically about working as a woman in the theatre, and has worked with men without problems, but finds, upon reflection, that she prefers working with women. Her theatre work has become a family affair in which her husband and younger sister are now involved, and she announces with relish that it has taken over her life. She would like for us to know that, for her, the worldwide company of actors is also a family, one in which she has a need to be recognized. She has family among actors everywhere, and it is this, not nation States, that she believes is important (Ben Ammar 1997).

Souad Ben Slimane

Souad Ben Slimane believes that in order to be a good actor, one must be happy. At last report, she was working with Taoufik Jebali and Zeynab Farhat at El Teatro in Tunis. She is a journalist with *La Presse*, where she does film reviews for the cultural department, as well as an actor and play-wright. She has a passion for cinema. Her interests have caused her to be overextended upon occasion, but she has decided that she cannot live without any of them. She speaks at least four languages: Arabic, Italian, French and English, and she is absolutely irrepressible in all of them. She has acted since the age of twelve, when her brother, who was also an actor at that time, introduced her to an amateur theatre troupe directed by Anton Mettrop in Tunis. She was with the troupe for seven years. She went to cinema school in Paris, and studied journalism at the university in Tunis. She has taken two prizes at Avignon. When her brother left the theatre to become a businessman, he discouraged her from continuing with her acting career, but her mother supported her. She is now in her late thirties, and shows no signs of slowing down (Ben Slimane 1997).

For Ben Slimane, the theatre is tactile. She recalls that her first theatrical experience was olfactory. The cinema has had a profound effect on her stage work, particularly its rhythm, and she creates characters that are "cinema-like." She also refers to the cinema in

her plays. She is intrigued by *film noir* and has used its motifs in her *mise-en-scène,* particularly in *Donni in Dark Room,* a cruel piece where handcuffs and a syringe feature prominently. Much of her work is surreal, and dreaming is an important part of her work as a playwright, but she does not draw directly from her life, preferring to keep a journalist's distance from her characters. She writes more female characters than male, but says that this is coincidental. She does admit that it may be because she acts in her own plays. One of her pieces, *Donni,* is written and played in three languages simultaneously. She mistrusts translation, and agrees with Gilbert and Tompkins (1996, 171–172) that linguistic opacity can be a beneficial experience for a postcolonial audience. As with Ben Ammar, the image and the rhythm have primacy in her work, and the text becomes a vehicle for those elements (Ben Slimane 1997).

Ben Slimane would like to remind us that bad theatre is more damaging than bad cinema. She wants to come to the U.S. to make plays; she feels that creating pieces cross-culturally is better than sending them ready-made. Her goal in such an endeavor would be to convey her Tunisian sensibility rather than having to explain it, and in a Barba-esque cultural barter,[1] receive the particular sensibilities of her American colleagues in exchange.

ALGERIA

Fatima Gallaire

Born in 1944, Fatima Gallaire grew up in a small Algerian village called Al-Arrouch. She describes an idyllic childhood in a paradisiacal setting, and a mother who gave her a regard for the sufferings of those less fortunate than her family. Her parents were not wealthy, but they had livestock and land. There was an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect among the ethnic and religious groups that composed her small village until the beginning of the Algerian War for Independence, which occurred during her pre-adolescence. It is perhaps this environment that accounts for her lack of bitterness and pessimism in the face of the daily horror presently occurring in her native land. She seems to feel that the tide will turn in Algeria and when it does, she will be ready to take her work back to its source. Her *joie de vivre* and her optimism have produced tragedies that ring true; where laughter and light balance pity and fear (Gallaire 1997).

One must not neglect Gallaire's specific status as a women playwright living in the diaspora that has been created by the double disruptions of the Algerian War for Independence and the present crisis in that country. Because of the specific circumstances of her birth and upbringing, Gallaire is truly a francophone voice. "I didn't choose France," she says, "it was she who came looking." As she describes it, the only possible destination for an Algerian of her generation leaving home was Paris, where she studied cinema at the Université de Paris VIII (Fernández-Sánchez 1996, 157). She continues to live and work in France today. Gallaire writes in French because it is the strongest of her two mother tongues; she has more skill writing in French than in Arabic (Gallaire, 1997). She has been writing novels and short stories since 1975, and began to write for the theatre in the late 1980s. Her first target audience is francophone, and it is French. Her

linguistic status in relation to her North African homeland is complex, and contributes to the richness of her choices of theme and genre.

Gallaire inhabits multiple margins and she speaks of them with great affection. Increasingly optimistic about women, and her native and adoptive societies, she regards her own marginalization as an opportunity to evade the blind spots incurred by a Cartesian standpoint. Like her African colleagues, she brandishes the tools of the non-realistic theatre to great effect. However, she has harnessed the classical tragedy to her uses as well. Her body of work is all over the map; performances of her plays span the globe. Living on the margins has made her and her work flexible and enduring. Her plays have survived translation, censorship, directorial license and the turmoil of Algeria and the North African diaspora.

Gallaire has also been identified as a "promising" new writer by critics who fault her for her employment of "melodrama" (Running-Johnson 1994, 336). One presumes that they are referring to an excess of emotion in her work, not to the fact that she employs music and dance in her *mise-enscène*. In fact, both the music and the emotion are there, but it is likely that her critics are displaying discomfort because Gallaire stages what she calls the theatricalization of daily life that occurs in her homeland, but not in her land of residence. She has explained that one of the ways Algerian women. in particular, deal with the suppression of their needs and desires in situations of unequal power is to voice them theatrically. A woman who does not wish for her son to undergo the pain of circumcision, for example, but who cannot prevent the ceremony from taking place, will grieve for the child's discomfort in an extravagant display (Gallaire 1997). Gallaire's choice to render this type of emotive energy authentically on stage has alienated certain of her Western readers and leaves her once again poised uncomfortably, but productively, between cultures. She also inhabits an economic margin created by the realities of theatrical production in France. In spite of the global interest her plays have generated, she is not wealthy, is not often produced in France, and has trouble finding publishers for her prose works. On the other hand, she does receive more recognition for playwriting than almost any of her other North African female colleagues: she has been translated into English, German, Swedish, Russian, Spanish and Uzbek, and *Princesses* won the Arletty prize in 1990 (Liso 1996–1997, 52; Fatima Gallaire 1996, 210).

If Gallaire had been illiterate, she would have been a teller of stories. She expresses mild regret for this lost aspect of orality in her life (Gallaire, 1997). Instead, her love of the written word has lead her to become a writer of tragedy, crafting plays on a grand scale in the tradition of her predecessors from the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. Her tragedies employ many of the devices introduced by the ancient Athenians: a chorus or twin choruses, ritual, music, and dance. Brahimi says that her dramaturgy "is concerned with the relationship between the individual and the community" (1994, 53). Like Sophocles, she is preoccupied with the rapport, often constrained, between the individual and the tribe. Like Euripides, she treats in her plays the connections between individuals as they relate to the community at large.

Gallaire asks us to remember that, if we know her name from its associations with the theatre, we must also realize that she does not have the means to produce her plays. If we wish to know her better, we should read her novels and short stories, and she would be very happy if we would buy them! Direct contact with her readership makes her very happy, even if the response "is not applause" (Gallaire 1997).

Gallaire has expressed the opinion that her theatre cannot change the world, but that it is dangerous because it reflects it, She has no regret that her pieces do not play in Algeria; she feels that theatre is not a priority for her country at present. She herself was not able to obtain a visa to visit her family from 1992 until 1999, a situation that has only recently been remedied. The closest she came to Al-Arrouch during that period was to conduct a frequent and fruitful collaboration with the academic and cultural institutions in Morocco that became a refuge for her longing and her own double identity. In inverse proportion to the anguish of Algeria, her outlook has become more and more optimistic. Bridging the margin is no less of a risk for an author than for the characters she has created. Nevertheless, the external and internal pressures on the social lives of Algerian women are illuminated by Gallaire's deft hand and liminal grace:

> I prefer to be an author who inspires the fear of power rather than to be an author with power. To be an author adored by power, to be an author applauded by power, to be an author who lives well, who doesn't reflect any more and who doesn't critique any more, I don't want that. So I stay in the margin with the marginal ones. I feel good. (Gallaire 1997)

Myriam Ben

Myriam Ben, born Myriam Louise Ben-Haïm and 'christened' Marylise in the colonial records, was born in 1928 in Algiers. This makes her the oldest subject of this study, although not the first to write a play. She is the granddaughter of an Arabo-Andalusian musician who kept the key to the family's ancestral house in Spain in an ebony coffer between a copy of the Bible and a copy of the Quran. The family was chased out of Spain during the reign, so tragic for Jews and Muslims, of Queen Isabella. On her mother's side, she is descended from the tribe of Ben Mochi, Amazigh converts to Judaism who fled from Christian persecution in their native Constantine to found the city of Aïn Beïda, where some, but not all, became Muslims. Her family was proud of its multiple heritages, and she was raised in an atmosphere of tolerance. This idyll ended when she was five, and was sent to a French school where she was harassed for being a native child and forced to forget her Arabic (Achour 1989, 11–14).

Because her colonial government identity card betrayed her family's Jewish origins, she was at risk throughout the Vichy occupation of Algeria during World War II. She was sent to the countryside to live with a Muslim family for the duration. She survived this ordeal only to find herself in peril from the French again in 1956, this time for her resistance activities. She became a rural teacher in 1952—and obtained her pilot's license in 1951—but she was forced to give up her career when the colonial police issued an order for her arrest. She was tried in absentia and condemned to twenty years of forced labor, although the prosecution sought the death penalty. She was never caught, and spent the rest of the war in hiding (Achour 1989, 26–27, 29, and 36–37).

When she went to get her job back after the war, her file had disappeared and a young employee of the Algerian Academy accused her of lying about her teaching diploma and her wartime activities. She threw an empty inkwell at him. It took her two years to re-establish her dossier and salary level, and at that point, a bad case of asthma forced her to

take a leave of absence. She went to France, and did not return for ten years (Achour 1989,40).

During her first sojourn in France, Ben began to write and continued her studies. Simone de Beauvoir helped her to get published. In the period from 1967 to 1974, she published a novel, wrote three plays, obtained a diploma in the Russian language, and wrote a doctoral thesis on "The National Question in the U.S.S.R." She returned home in 1974, where she became the head of the Department of Languages and Human Sciences at the National Institute of Humanities in Boumerdes. She retired from that post in 1985, and published another novel in 1986, *Sabrina, ils t'ont volé ta vie [Sabrina, They've Stolen Your Life]*. She paints, and writes poetry and short stories (Achour 1989, 40–43). Although the plays she wrote in 1967 were not published at that time, recently she has begun to work in the theatre again. A volume of two plays, *Leïla*, written in 1967 (1998b), and *Les Enfants du mendiant [The Beggar's Children]* (1998a), written in 1997, was published in 1998. Unfortunately, life has not permitted her to rest as she has gotten older—she is currently in exile. She has said of her writing:

> I have not sought to exalt an "ideal conception" of man, in opposition to the less commendable actions of other characters. I have not made the choice between virtuous character…and the "bad guys," the prevaricators, the traffickers whose actions are passed over by complacent literatures. I think the author's ethic requires him to refuse all complacent literatures, whatever the cost. (Achour 1989, 84)

Assia Djebar

Rouge l'aube (Djebar and Carn 1969) is the only play that Assia Djebar has ever written, although she mentioned that she was thinking about writing radio plays when I met her in 1997. Djebar is known in the U.S. as a film-maker and a writer of novels. Djebar, whose given name is Fatima-Zohra Imalayène, was born in 1936 in Cherchell, a place she speaks of as a lost Eden, rather the way Gallaire talks about Al-Arrouch. A brilliant student, she was the first Algerian woman to gain admission to the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in Sèvres in 1955. When she began to write, her fiancé, Walid Carn, suggested the pseudonym by which the world now knows her. She wanted to hide the fact that she was writing novels from her parents (Déjeux 1994, 23; Djebar, 1990b, 84 and 89; Ripault 1985).

Djebar produced her first novel, *La Soif [The Mischief]* in 1957. *La Soif*, about the troubled relationship between two women, was considered too personal a work to serve the nationalist cause, as was her second novel, *Les Impatiens [The Impatient Ones]* (1958). Nevertheless, she was the only woman writing during the war (Accad 1978, 33 and 40; Tahon 1992, 40–41). She married Carn in 1958, while he was in hiding from the French. The couple moved to Tunis to join the FLN in its work there. Unfortunately, women in the FLN offices were kept there for ornamental purposes, tokens for the international press, so there was not much for her to do. She went to work on *El-Moudjahid*, the FLN news organ, with Frantz Fanon. She was forced to self-censor her writing, refraining from acting on her feminist sensibilities and conforming to the FLN's image of the politically committed woman. This engagement lasted a year, after which

she moved to Rabat, where she taught at the university until the end of the war in 1962 (Gardenal 1987; Bernhardt; Déjeux 1984, 10; Tahon 1992, 45).

It was in her Rabat period that she created *Rouge l'aube*, and began writing the short stories that would become the *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement [Algerian Women in Their Apartment]* collection that was finally published in 1980. She also wrote the first of her two 'war novels,' *Enfants du nouveau monde [Children of the New World]*, during this time. It was published in 1962, at which time she returned to Algeria. She joined the Faculté des Lettres at the University of Algiers and produced her second novel about the war, *Les Alouettes naïves [The Innocent Larks]*, in 1967 (1997), and the *Poèmes pour l'Algérie heureuse [Poems for a Happy Algeria]* collection in 1969 (Gardenal 1987; Tahon 1992, 43; Déjeux 1984, 11; Déjeux 1994, 36).

Djebar and Carn were divorced in 1975, and in 1980 she married Malek Alloula (Déjeux 1984, 11). After *Poèmes*, she published nothing for twelve years. She was working in an environment hostile to her writing language, French, and was not able to write in *fousha*. She turned to film, where she could work in dialect, and created two full-length features: *La Nouba des femmes de Mont Chenoua [The Story-Songs of the Women of Mount Chenoua]* in 1977 (2001) and *La Zerda ou les chants d'oubli [The Feast, or the Songs of the Forgotten]* in 1982. In the former, she interviewed women from her mother's tribe who had participated in the struggle for independence, while in the latter she juxtaposed documentary footage from the two World Wars with images of Algerian women making music (Makward 1996, 201; Clerc 1997, 12, Bernhardt; Gardenal 1987).

After her hiatus in film, Djebar went back to writing novels in French, embarking on the ambitious quartet of novels that has earned her international recognition: *Fantasia; an Algerian Cavalcade [L'Amour, la fantasia]* (1985); *A Sister to Sheherazade [Ombre Sultan]* (1988); So *Vast the Prison [Vaste est la prison]* (1999), and *Algerian White [Le Blanc de l'Algérie]* (2000). She has returned to a more personal feminism in her writing than the war and nationalist struggles permitted her. In *Fantasia*, she traces her family history during the colonial conquest of the nineteenth century. *A Sister to Sheherazade* is the story of two women married successively to the same man. *So Vast the Prison*, as was previously mentioned, is the story of Tin Hinan, the Tuareg princess who preserved the *tifinagh* script from extinction, and *Algerian White* is a response to the emergence of the FIS in Algeria. She also published *Loin de Médine: Filles d'Ismaël [Far from Madina: Daughters of Ismail]*, another novel about the growing violence in Algeria, in 1991 (Salhi 1999, 82; Makward 1996, 203–204; Déjeux 1994, 30; Gardenal 1987).

Since the quartet, Djebar has published several more novels and a book of short stories, as well as a photo-essay and a work of non-fiction, both about Algeria. Sada Niang is of the opinion that Djebar developed her "feminine" style of writing in response to the binary opposition of the written and the oral that has marked the politics of literature in Algeria (1996, 252 and 257). Djebar's own words seem to support this:

> The danger is certainly there: the woman who can write, that woman risks experimenting with a strange power, the power to be a woman by other means than bearing children…. After all, if Sheherazade had not told stories until dawn, but had written, would she have killed the sultan? (1990a, 70)

Dividing her time between France and the U.S., Djebar fiercely refuses to mourn for Algeria:

> That's precisely what we ask of women in our country, of those who are gifted with words and eloquence: to be criers, to carry a certain level of lyricism to misfortune and disaster. That is their traditional role: a word after the disaster. I don't want to bend to that. No, I will not cry for my friends who have died on Algerian soil. (Van Renterghen 1995, 12)

Leïla Sebbar

Another formidable Algerian woman of letters, Leïla Sebbar, is easily mistaken for a *beur*[2] writer, a French writer of North African origin, because she often takes the situation of immigrant children as her theme (Hargreaves 1991, 5–6). In reality she, like the others in this section, was born and raised in Algeria. Unlike them, she is the child of a mixed marriage, a love match between a French woman and an Algerian man. Shortly after her birth in Aflou in 1944, the family moved to Hennaya, ten kilometers from Tlemcen. Both of her parents were teachers, and her father, while not a militant, was locked up for several months by the French for showing solidarity with the nationalist cause. She had a protected childhood, surrounded by books, but was harassed on the streets for her mixed parentage. She went to graduate school in Aix-en-Provence and Paris, and eventually moved to France permanently. She has been there for more than twenty years, teaching French literature in a high school, and writing for literary reviews and Radio France. Her novels include *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique [The Green Chinaman of Africa]* (1984a), *Parle, mon fils, parle a ta mère [Speak, My Son, Speak to Your Mother]* (1984b), both about immigrant youth; *Fatima ou les algériennes au square [Fatima, or the Algerian Women of the Plaza]* (1981), concerning mixed marriages; and a trilogy (1982–1991) with a recurring female protagonist: *Shérazade, 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts [Scherazade, Missing, Age Seventeen, Brown Curly Hair, Green Eyes]* (1982), *Les Carnets de Schérazade [Scherazade's Notebooks]* (1985), and *Le Fou de Schérazade [Scherazade's Fool]* (1991) (Gaasch 1996, 165; Sebbar 1996a, 165–167; Déjeux 1994, 27 and 30).

Sebbar has said that she is interested in the condition of "anyone, man or woman, who leaves a country and a language for the unknown" (1996a, 168). She remarks that immigrant women rely on their children, especially daughters, to bridge the space between their native and target cultures:

> Invisible in the strange country, more invisible still than in their native land, Maghrebian women who follow their husbands to the country where they work are shut in physically and psychically, they don't know the city, the concrete…. Shut in alone, cut off from their extended family, from the community, from memory…it is silence and night…. Daughters…are the Ones Who Traverse, the ones with the audacity and the liberty to come and go…(169)

She has also said that she writes because she feels abandoned by Algeria and because she has nostalgia for her paternal language, Arabic, a tongue she cannot speak:

> I write because I feel like I am in exile, an exile that displaces my body and soul, even if France is also my country, the country of my mother and my sons, the country of my mother tongue, my writing language, the French language, the only one I have mastered. (167)

Sebbar's first play, *Les Yeux de ma mère* (1992), true to form, is about a young woman, daughter of an immigrant mother, lost in the space between her mother's world and her own.

Hawa Djabali

Since Hawa Djabali was born Eve Boucenna in Créteil, France in 1949, one might think she, too, belongs in the category of immigrant children of Algerian parents (Déjeux 1990, 48). Her life's trajectory, however, has been too complicated to make categorizing her easy. After Algeria's independence war, which she experienced from France "with an ear towards the post radio to follow the news…," her family returned to Algeria and she experienced her parent's country directly for the first time. She found this "return" to a place she had never been healing, and was immediately immersed in the Algerian culture by a group of women who wanted to erase the influence that France had had on her (Djabali 1997a, 219). She was encouraged in her artistic pursuits, and went to the National Conservatory to study theatre, dance, and music. She began broadcasting on Algerian radio at the age of eighteen. She married at nineteen, moved to Constantine, and had three children, but she did not stop performing. She acted in the amateur theatre in Constantine, and started to write plays there, but her early pieces were considered too bold and violent to be presented by her troupe (220).

In 1983, Djabali published *Agave*, a novel that received much critical attention and explored philosophies of war. Déjeux calls it a dense text, and notes with approval that the protagonist is written in the masculine first person (1994, 28). She has written two screenplays, and conducts research in comparative religions and on the oral storytelling traditions in various regions of Algeria. She has also written twelve books for children, one in Arabic, and an historical novel set in Algiers during the Roman and Vandal eras, the manuscript of which was destroyed, against her wishes, in 1986. Since 1989, she has been living in Belgium, and working with the Arab Cultural Center in Brussels. Her Belgian period has been a fruitful one for the theatre. She produced three plays in the 1990s: in 1995, *Sa Naqba Imourou: Giligeamech ou celui qui a vu et touché le fond des choses [Gilgamesh, or He Who Has Seen and Touched the Profundity of Things];* in 1996, *Tamouz ou le manifeste de l'éxil: cinq mille ans de la vie d'une femme [Tamouz or the Manifesto of Exile: Five-thousand years in the life of a woman];* and in 1997, *Le Zajel maure du désir [The Moorish Zajel of Desire]* (Djabali 1997a, 221–224).

She relies on her sense-memory and her fey powers of observation to aid her in creation:

> I record everything I can: I possess a formidable repertory of conversational snatches, of mimicry, of observations. I never know if a man had a moustache nor what dress I was wearing, but I can recall the taste of a sandstorm on my lips from twenty-five years ago, or the terrible smell of the city, yesterday, in the cold. (Djabali and Rezzoug 1997, 227)

Djabali's work is dedicated to writing the women who inhabit her:

> It lives, my writing, the lives of all the women who live in me. No possible distance, no platonic love: they have the smell of the earth; of the rotting old city; they have the smell of fear, they triumph in their laughter, in their defiance, in their survival. I carry them, their voices, inside my breast like the tradition of ancient music, so sure of itself that it can improvise the present. (228)

MOROCCO

Fatima Chebchoub

Fatima Chebchoub has a life story so full that one is tempted to believe she exaggerates it in the telling—and she is quite the storyteller. On the other hand, I have been a guest in her home and observed first-hand the kind of energy of which she is capable. She keeps her private life remarkably free of distractions, and devotes herself to the work of whatever she is up to on that particular day. She is: a *halaqiya*, an actor, a director, a playwright, a screen-writer, a television personality, a singer, a dancer, a *bendir* [frame drum] player, a cultural animator (something of a cross between a master of ceremonies and a standup comedian), a poet, a painter, a seamstress, a makeup and hair artist, and a university professor and literature scholar. She speaks Classical Arabic, dialectal Arabic, Tamazight, French, English, and Spanish. She lives her life non-traditionally and, because of this, her family is apt to call her al-Roumi [the Westerner]. She is an aerobics and fitness fanatic who can trade improvised remarks with traditional street performers. In short, she is a diva in all the best senses of the word, and she does not just straddle the contradictions of her world, she devours them (Chebchoub 1997b).

Chebchoub inherited her facility with words and her comic timing from her Riffian Amazigh father, who had a talent for grim humor, and who died when she was only eight years old. Of him she has said, "He made things funny that were truly wounding." Her enthusiasm, rhythm, dance and love of spectacle came from her Arab mother, a *halaqiya* who passed away in 1998. Her mother, a Fassi from a large extended family, had forty siblings[3] so there was always a celebration of marriage or circumcision going on, complete with storytelling, dancing, singing, and *halqat*. Chebchoub, or Chbchouba, as she is known in the *halqa*, is now in her mid-forties, but passes for a decade younger in strong light. This is not surprising, given her penchant for healthy living. She began her acting career in 1970 in an amateur troupe. The troupe paid her for her services; she believes she may have been the first woman in Morocco to have been paid to act by an amateur troupe. She also began broadcasting on Moroccan radio during the summers, but

had to give it up in order to finish her degree in Classical Arabic at the University of Fès. During her university studies, she taught English and French. After an internship in Paris, awarded to her by the Minister of Culture for her scholastic excellence, she moved to Tetouan, where she continued to teach, and studied fine arts, flamenco, and Spanish. She began to write poetry during this period. In 1978, she returned to Fès, where she earned certificates in Arabic and theatre, and completed a Masters degree in the semiology of theatre in 1985 (Chebchoub 1997b).

In 1986, Chebchoub began to stage *halqa* adaptations of plays. She started with Shakespeare's *Othello,* which she staged at the ancient Roman ruin of Oualili (Volubilis). The entire production cost two-hundred dirham (about twenty-two U.S. dollars) to stage, with costumes made out of sugar sacks and a set constructed of fruit cartons and discarded lumber. She made set pieces out of the actors as well. She tried to stage Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* but failed because her production's timing coincided with her actors' final exams. In 1988, she attempted to stage an adaptation of Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Pygmalion,* but again the production failed, this time due to troupe politics. After that, she began writing her own pieces. To date, she has written ten plays in dialect, including the four we will consider in this study, as well as novels in English and Arabic, and poems in French, Classical Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. In 1991, she began working in film. She has written several short scenarios and one feature-length screenplay. For purposes of American scholarship, however, her most important contribution is her research and practice in the area of *halqa* with her troupe Asays in Meknès, where she is an assistant professor at the Université Moulay Ismail. She has an interesting take on feminism:

> Let's be clear. I am a humanist and if I defend women it is because they have more problems. But I will defend an oppressed man. So I defend women because they are more oppressed. When one is a feminist, one can defend women even if they don't need to be defended. I don't agree. One must defend the oppressed: men, women, and above all, children. (Chebchoub 1993).

Chebchoub mourns the fact that Morocco has become a soccer public, a television public that no longer has time for the theatre. She says that television makes people stupid because its content is so poor. She enjoys working abroad because even in places where people do not understand the text, they receive the message. This seems to be particularly true of her anglophone public—she has played in Canada, Australia, and the U.S. She also has a loyal following among the university crowd. Her working method is very specific. She does not write for particular actors, but she will not play a work until she finds the appropriate actors. If the cast changes during the rehearsal process, she will revise the play to fit the talents of the replacement actor. *Al-Matmora [The Grain Silo]*, for example, was written in 1989 but did not play until 1991. Over the course of its performances, from 1991 to 1997, she revised it twenty-three times. She says that the *halqa* relies so heavily on the actor's body and talents that one actor cannot simply be replaced by another. She says that, in Western theatre, one is surprised by the technology, whereas in the *halqa*, one is surprised by the facility of the actor. In general, she is correct, although the obvious Western exception to this rule in the twentieth century was

the work of Jerzy Grotowski. Each piece is built around a different social problem, and derives its inspiration from a different source. She can start with a story, a song, or a memoir.

Chebchoub asks us to immerse ourselves as much as we can in the theatrical experiences of other peoples, and not to suborn them:

> Each people has its own history, has its own experience. No human experience is finished; it is always ready to receive and to give—even the Western theatre, which thinks of itself as finished. It's not finished, except in a single case: when it finishes the process of its death. (1997b)

She also urges us to try to concentrate on the reality and the image of our own bodies before exploring the concepts of masculinity and femininity, to discover an internal equilibrium and harmony before tracing the map of difference. For those of us interested in the Maghreb, she reminds us that Morocco is a paradise of cultures. Finally, she thanks us for our curiosity and our "ambition to program her into [our] life" (1997b).

Khedija Assad

If Chebchoub is the queen of Moroccan university theatre, Touria Jabrane and Khedija Assad compete for the honor in the independent theatres. I was not able to speak with Jabrane, who acts but does not write; however, I caught up with Assad at the headquarters of her troupe, Theatre 80, in Casablanca. She was touring the premier of her first effort at playwriting, *Costa Y Watan*, at the time. Like Chebchoub, Assad credits much of her acting impulse to her father, who had a facility for impersonation and a sense of humor that helped him in his dealings as a businessman. She grew up without television. The family's entertainment took the form of *soirées*, evenings of performance where members composed and read poetry for each other and where her father improvised characters based on personalities he had met while working abroad. Her father was also adept at *melhoun*, a form of sung poetry particular to Morocco, and Andalusian music. This ambiance, coupled with her passion for hand-crafts, such as dressmaking, house painting and electrical work, sent her in the direction of the theatre (Assad 1997b).

Assad's theatre, founded with her husband, Saâd Allah Aziz, is above all socially engaged; its goal is to get a message to the people, one that touches their daily lives. She has been driven to write by the need for good texts in a country where literature is removed from theatrical life. It took her a long time to develop the courage to write a play, because she says it was too big, too important. The responsibility of the message, of fighting social indifference, weighs on her. She stresses the theatre's duty to respect its public; it must produce quality work, it must innovate. Her theatre is not government subsidized, and she seems to take pride in this. When I asked her if the theatre of Morocco was in crisis she said, "We have a public, thank God, we have a theatre that opens its doors and that people attend, even if they are few…. That's a great pleasure for the theatre. That's not a crisis…" (1997b).

Assad does not believe that women have a difficult time in the theatre. On the contrary, she feels that men are in the tough position because they are responsible for

earning the family's living, although she concedes that societal attitudes can make things hard for women too. For her, women are the columns that hold up the society. Women are always there in her theatre, present in the subject, but she stresses that they are not always victims. She also writes television scenarios, always with the message couched in comic renditions of the human condition in the quotidian. She feels that her Moroccan plays have a message that is universal and immediate. Her message to us is one that should by now sound familiar: she urges us to collaborate with artists from other parts of the world. If we of the theatre can marry the Self and the Other, she believes that we will improve the text, and by extension, the quality of the message (1997b).

FRANCE

There are two important groups of women playwrights in France, besides the Algerians in exile, who are associated with the Maghreb. One group, sometimes called the *beur*, are either the children of immigrants or they immigrated to France or Belgium with their parents as infants. The other group, the *pied-noir*,[4] are people of European ancestry born in Algeria before the War for Independence. Most people in the latter category left Algeria at the end of the war, although a few stayed as citizens of the new Algerian Republic.

The *beur* sensibility produced a cultural movement in France in the late 1970s and early 1980s that was particularly rich in literature, music, film production, and theatrical endeavor. Déjeux notes that *beur* literature often utilizes humor, and differs from the writing of the independence generation writers; "the content, the tone, and the preoccupation of their writing does not descend in a direct and continuous line from what has come to be known as francophone North African literature. Algeria is not their native land…" (1992, 13–14). In 1976, the Troupe la Kahina, named for an Amazigh queen, produced *Pour que ces larmes de nos mères deviennent une légende [So That These Tears of Our Mothers Should Become a Legend]* (Bouraoui 1988, 222). The title is an obviously ironic reference to the image of the mother-heroine so cherished by the Algerian government after the war, contrasted with the reality of the troupe's own immigrant mothers. The movement continued to grow in the *banlieu*[5] environments of large French cities, notably Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles, as the children of immigrants began to refuse the unjust and racist conditions under which their parents had labored. *Beur* artistic products, while rejecting French hegemony, sample anglophone pop-culture sources heavily, identifying strongly with African-American expressions of rage (Hargreaves 1990, 74–75). *Beur* music, in particular, has been influenced by rap, and *rap-raï*[6] fusions are extremely common.

Nacèra Bouabdallah

The most noted female playwright to come out of the *beur* movement is Nacèra Bouabdallah. Born in Sétif, Algeria, she left with her family at the age of four to live in the banlieu of Port du Bouc in Bouches-du-Rhône, France. She has been writing poems since the age of fourteen, and has published a collection of these under the title of *Fragments de cœur [Pieces of the Heart]*. In addition to the play considered in this study,

Binet el-Youm ou les jeunes aujourd'hui [Girls Today] (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985), she has written two others commissioned by the Justice Department about the condition of immigrant youth, both with Henri Talau: *Ce n'est pas la mer à boire [The Sea is Not for Drinking]* (1984), presented at the Avignon OFF festival, and in 1985, *Les Portes de sable [Gates of Sand]* (Bouabdallah 1985, 31; Bouabdallah 1997).

In 1987, Bouabdallah created the Association Femmes Mediation Euro-Méditeranéen [Euro-Mediterranean Women's Mediation Association], an organization that conducts research on women and citizenship, as well as general women's studies, and mediates between women of different cultures in the south of France. With the assistance of a colleague within one of the governmental ministries, she created a conference on the influence of Mediterranean immigrants in France that was notable for the number of women participating. She also made a short film on a Christian religious cult that had taken root in her neighborhood. Her purpose was to point out that the government was, at the time, questioning the legitimacy of orthodox Islamic practices among immigrant communities, and yet was turning a blind eye towards this cult, although its practices were far from orthodox. She staged a meeting on the rights of the individual, and invited rabbis, priests, and imams to view the film. They then discussed the place of the spiritual and its relation to the law in front of two-hundred spectators.

For Bouabdallah, as for so many other women in this study, theatre is about daily life. She loves the theatre of the street, and in the North African tradition, has a special relationship with the work of Molière. She prefers to stage her work in the communities for which it was created, and resists being programmed into large houses in the city centers. She says that "to go from the solitary act of writing to public presentation is to render homage to the whole world, to give everyone the possibility of dreaming, of self-expression." She has struggled with the idea of feminism, and admits wryly, "I became a feminist, but I don't like feminism." She believes that her theatre can make concrete changes, particularly in the area of the law. She feels that the Left and the Right, in France and in Algeria, have betrayed women, and that the "real faces" of both the FIS and the FLN have been revealed by the current wave of violence (Bouabdallah 1997).

Bouabdallah asks us to respect all authors, no matter what their country of origin, to value their culture and mode of expression, and to approach things with courage and a great liberality of heart. She wishes we could break down the barriers between the academic and the quotidian and touch the real lives of people and their problems, coming to an understanding based in generosity.

Denise Bonal

It is difficult to position Denise Bonal in this study, because there is not much personal biographical information available about her. She was born in Algeria, but her family moved to France in 1951, when she was twelve. We may gather from this, and from her name, that she is probably of European ethnicity, but no source makes this completely clear. After the move to France, she began acting immediately, and worked with regional theatres for twenty years. She became a playwright and a teacher during this time. She has received numerous awards for her prolific writing, and served on the governing board of the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques from 1988 to 1991 (Kourilsky and Vidal 1996, 238). Most of Bonal's plays, like those of Hélène Cixous, do not deal

with Algeria directly, although *Family Portrait* (1984) is an exception. She has recently, however, participated as an actor in the collage play, *Algérie en éclats,* a work that is discussed in the next section of this chapter. Although her artistic connection to Algeria is less overt than most in this study, her sense of artistic responsibility is startlingly similar to that of Khedija Assad. She has said that the "disastrous magic of theatre is that when you write, or when you play, lots of information comes to repose in you" (Le Boucher and Dumont 1997, 245).

Hélène Cixous

At a 1996 conference on Algeria at Cornell University, Hélène Cixous spoke movingly of the lack of stability that came of being a Jewish girl-child of mixed ethnicity (Spanish, French, German, and possibly Amazigh) in colonial Algeria, where "the rainbow was always bleu/blanc/rouge: blue/white/red." Of her own move into exile in France, she said, "I did not lose Algeria because I never had it and I never was it. I suffered because it had lost itself." She talked of being encircled by categories (Jew, *pied noir,* colonizer, woman, and later Amazigh) that intersected in such a way that she was both inside and outside, and that shifted with time and circumstance. Cixous was born in Oran in 1937, and left Algeria as it was entering its War for Independence in 1955. She was eighteen years old. Her experience of Algeria has profoundly affected the way in which she lives. She prefers exile, to be the "one who does not enter," because by not choosing a single society in which to take refuge, she opens herself to the realm of possibility. (Cixous, 1996; Sellers 1994, xxvi).

Cixous is well known for her work as a feminist philosopher, having developed the concept of *"l'écriture féminine,"* what anglophone feminists call "writing the body." Both her theoretical work and her plays are known in the U.S., but her connection to Algeria and its possible influence on her work has been underplayed. Woodhull, who notes Cixous' problematic positioning, remarks that Cixous' writing is similar in its "radical bisexuality" to that of Abdelkebir Khatibi. She finds that the problem in the work of both authors is that they connect "the libido of the other" with writing in such a way as to "obscure or even obliterate the difference between various manifestations of intractable difference" (Woodhull 1993, xii and xxiii). In this regard, her concerns echo those of Lazreg. In the world of identity politics, Khatibi and Cixous hold troubled locations: he is an indigenous post-colonial subject, but he is male, while she is a child of the former colonizer, but female, and Jewish. Both have more power to move between subject positions than a writer who is an indigenous post-colonial female subject, and has the weight of cultural exigency pinning her into position.

Nevertheless, Cixous' work has a place in this study, and a coherence with her indigenous compatriots' body of words. She does not address Algeria directly in her plays, which most recently have been created in collaboration with Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil collective, but a sense of Algeria permeates her dramatic writing at a number of levels. The most obvious of these is the *hakawati* device she employs in *L'Indiade* (1987). More subtle are the choices she makes through the theories she has formulated. El-Khouri might see in her non-narrative, spiraling sense of time a connection that goes all the way back to the Gilgamesh epics. Her temporal space, her

slippery language, and her choice to address, more often than not, the question of cultural disruption in her plays all point to her origins in a place where she had no place.

OTHER CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE GENRES

Collage Plays

One of the ways in which theatre companies address the paucity of good texts is to create collage texts out of well-crafted literature of other kinds. Three such pieces were produced in Paris during the 1990s on the theme of Algeria.[7] *Un Couteau dans le Soleil [A Knife in the Sun]*, was created by Kabylian Amazigh actor and director-in-exile Hamida Aït el Hadj (Aït el Hadj and Bennour 1996). Grieved by the 1995 assassination of her friend, Azzedine Medjoubi, the director of the TNA, Aït el Hadj created a story of a theatre company trying to rehearse a play while being threatened by the fundamentalist brother of one of the female actors. She and her co-author, Ferid Bennour, used prose and poetic texts by noted authors such as Cixous and Tahar Djaout around which she wove original dialogue, drawing upon the community of Algerian exiles for her cast. One of her actors fled Algeria because she is a singer of Kabylian songs; not only is she a performer, but she sings in a language officially disapproved of by the government. Another actor left because she dances and practices *karate;* this makes her a target for fundamentalist ire. Aït el Hadj's sister, also an actor, chose to stay behind and at last report, in 1997, was still performing in Algeria (Aït el Hadj 1996, 173–174; Aït el Hadj 1997b; Khelladi 1996, 171).

Aït el-Hadj trained and directed in Russia and France before returning to Algeria to work at the TNA. She left at the onset of the violence, and was working with Mnouchkine and Cixous to get Medjoubi out of Algeria when he was killed. Her perspective as a woman director is interesting; she says she has no trouble directing men, but women directed by another woman feel doubly diminished because of the woman director's subaltern status. When I asked her in 1997 if she thought theatre was important for Algeria at present, she said that people in Algeria could not gather in a theatre building for fear of the bombs. She thinks perhaps television may make an impact, but not live performance. Nevertheless, she persists in her theatre work, in exile, for the love of the art, and "in order not to be silent." She says to us that it is through playwrights that she has come to know America; she respects Americans because of Albee, Williams, Miller, and O'Neill, and that it is a point of pride for a country to have playwrights of such force. She is of the opinion that we must preserve our dramaturgy because through it, we can make connections with other peoples (1997b).

Across town from *Couteau*, the Compagnie l'Amour Fou [Crazy Love Company], was preparing to launch its own collage text in 1997, *Algérie en éclats [Algeria in Splinters]*. The two productions bore a superficial resemblance to one other and shared at least one cast member, someone who left the *Couteau* ensemble to join up with l'Amour Fou. Aït el-Hadj is gracious enough to say that the situation was probably a coincidence (1997b). Indeed, upon careful examination, the pieces are shown to have a shared theme, the trials of a theatre company trying to produce a play under constant threat of terrorism, and a common genre, the collage format, but each handles the issue differently. But for this

remarkable confluence of plays, and for the participation of Denise Bonal, not as a playwright but as an actor, *Algérie en éclats* would not properly belong in this study. *Algérie Littérature/Action* lists Catherine Lévy-Marié as its composer, with input from Kader Kada, a cast member. I have treated it as a Franco-Algerian collective creation because of its ensemble feel, but how much participation the rest of the cast had in its conception is unclear. *Couteau* included texts by seven authors; *Algérie en éclats* boasted twenty-two in its grim celebration of "the joint desire of…the adapter and numerous other people, above all among the young, touched in one way or another by Algeria, to discover a literature, a poetry and a theatre that have been ignored" (Le Boucher and Dumont 1997, 245).

The third collage text under consideration, *Kitman [Secret Love]* (1995), was composed by Christiane Chaulet Achour. Achour, who was born in Algiers in 1946, is a literature scholar of European ancestry who taught at the University of Algiers from 1969 until the onset of the present violence (Achour, 1989; Achour 1997b, 284). This study owes much to her tireless advocacy of North African women's literature. I have rendered *kitman* as "secret love," per Achour's indications in the text, but Hejaiej gives an alternative, and complementary, meaning: *kitman* is a secret especially associated with women, a profound "care of the heart" (1996, 35). Achour's play is the hero's journey of three women, named Zineb, Zeïneb and Zeynouba to indicate that they are aspects of each other. It draws upon as many literary sources as *Algérie en éclats*, but with one critical difference. All the texts enfolded into *Kitman* are by women. She states:

> Why this montage of texts that is fashioned in the anonymity of the ancient tradition but is, above all, the creation of contemporary individuals? Is it not derisory to revisit literature in the midst of the dislocation of our bodies, spirits, and hopes? My response was to write this legend that has permitted me to mix, in the diversity of women's voices—against uniformity—tales and poems, testimonies in recent letters from Algeria, news articles, facts, and statistics. (Achour 1995, 18)

Another alternative to the play of single authorship is the collective creation. The playwright who works most often in this mode is Cixous, whose productions with Théâtre du Soleil are highly collaborative. Soleil has done only one play in its history that addresses Algeria directly, the 1975 production of *L'Age d'or [The Golden Age]*, and that was before Cixous began working with them. They do, however, take social injustice and upheaval as their theme on a regular basis. Cixous collaborated with them in 1997 on *Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil [And Suddenly, Some Nights of Awakening]*, a piece about the plight of Tibet under Chinese rule, and another piece, *Tambours sur la digue [Drums on the Dam]* (Cixous 1999; Cixous 2000), was in production at Soleil in the millennial season. *Beur* theatres have also used the collective creation technique. Troupe la Rose des Sables [The Sand Rose Troupe], a group of young *beur* women, wrote and produced *Les Enfants d'Aïcha [Aïcha's Children]* in 1984, during the same period as Bouabdallah's *Binet el-Youm*.

Adaptation

Yet another way in which North African women create text outside of the boundaries of an ordinary play script is through adaptation and translation. When Algeria erupted in violence, Fadela Assous, an Algerian actor of international stature, adapted and translated Omar Fetmouche's *Al-Besma al-Majrouha [Le Sourire Blessé/The Wounded Smile]* from Arabic into French and toured it throughout the Maghreb and Europe. It is a one-woman show in which she plays several roles, but this is nothing new for Assous, who created all nine of the female roles in *Mohamed, prends ta valise* for Kateb Yacine on three days' notice. She became the head of her own troupe, Lamalif, and was a disciple of Abdelkader Alloula until his assassination in 1995, when she fled Algeria and took *Le Sourire blessé,* a piece that is extremely critical of the Algerian government, on the road (Assous 1995). Recently she has been in hiding, and continues to fear for her life. She is quoted by Victoria Brittain in *The Guardian:* "Where could I perform in Algeria today? Before, there were cultural centres in every town, there were universities. But no one now would risk putting me on…. I cry a lot to myself, thinking that this theatre which has been my life is lost" (1995).

Performance Art

When the image takes precedence over the word, it becomes the text itself. Performance art, a genre that privileges the image within the performance space, has a very small practice among Maghrebian women, but it is growing in significance. Houria Niati, an Algerian painter who now lives in the U.K., uses her monumental canvases as a backdrop for performances of her poetry, which is written in French, translated into English, and then read in Arabic in a manner reminiscent of Beckett's self-translated plays. Unfortunately, copies of her poetic text and the Andalusian music with which she accompanies the performance were not available when the piece was shown in the U.S., and she did not accompany the exhibit as it toured the country (program for "Forces of Change" 1994, 8–9).

In her autobiography, *Dreams of Trespass,* Moroccan feminist sociologist Fatima Mernissi expressed her childhood longing to join the theatre (1995, 110–111). I discovered that, once, she actually tried it. Fatima Chebchoub, Fatima Mernissi, and Latifa Toujani, a plastic and performance artist who works for the Moroccan Ministry of Cultural Affairs, staged a performance piece called *Al-Saïda al-Horra [Lady Free-Woman]* in 1990. The piece concerned the history of one of the *"sultanes oubliées"* [forgotten queens of Islam], whom Mernissi had discussed in her book of the same title (Mernissi 1990, 32–36). Saïda al-Horra was a powerful ruler of Andalusian descent who governed the Tetouan region of Morocco in the sixteenth century, and eventually married the king of the country.

The piece labored under a load of misunderstandings: Toujani, for whom this piece was the beginning of a career in performance, wanted an art installation; Chebchoub, who was already working in the theatre, wanted a play; and Mernissi simply wanted to bring her book to life. Despite their differences, the piece was presented in Saïda al-Horra's hometown of Chefchaouen, in an historic building her father had constructed. The venue

was then re-dedicated as an art gallery in her name. Toujani's creation, it is the first art gallery to have been named after a woman in Morocco. Toujani was, as might be expected, in charge of the visual aspects of the production. She based the images around a scroll she made out of a facsimile of Saïda al-Horra's marriage contract. Mernissi provided the dramatugy, and Chebchoub the staging. Mernissi, who was supposed to play the queen, backed out at the last moment. Perhaps she discovered that the reality of public performance is very different from the sequestered *soirées* of her harem childhood. Toujani stepped into the role. To this day, she insists that the piece was a "performance," but not a play, and is adamant about not being an actor (Toujani 1997a).

Since *Al-Saïda al-Horra*, Toujani has produced three other performance art pieces. In *Haïk Salaam [Peace Veil]* she re-created Calypso, seanymph and daughter of the legendary King Atlas, whose body is said to have become the great mountain range of Morocco. Calypso wove a girdle for Odysseus, her lover, to protect him from drowning. It was her parting gift, a generous gesture considering he was leaving her island to return to his wife (Hunter). In Toujani's performance this garment became, by metamorphosis, the veil, at once a sign for the feminine and a harbinger of peace. *Haïk Salaam* was presented at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing at the NGO forum (program for "Haïk Salaam" 1995).

Toujani's third performance was an installation work about the history of the Kasbah Oudaïa, a walled section of Rabat that has a magnificent gate. Much of Toujani's work involves door and gate images. Unfortunately, she told me that the American woman scholar who made a video of the performance never sent her the tape, so there is no record of it. In 1997, while I was in Rabat, Toujani and I began work on a performance piece called *Un Fax en dix metres des Nations Unies [A Fax in Ten Meters From The United Nations]*. The piece concerned the absurdity of the NGO application process, and involved ten actual meters of un-translated, English-language, faxed material from the UN that had spooled off of Toujani's thermal-style fax machine.

Solo Performance

Because of North Africa's long tradition of solo performance, the one-actor show is quite common and women seem to find it congenial. As we have seen, Chebchoub, Assous, Niati, and Toujani all engage in this type of work. and Gallaire in particular has written a number of pieces for a single woman actor. Two more women deserve mention in this area. Fatiha Berezak, who was born in 1947 in Béni-Saf, Algeria, is a poet, dancer, and former junior basketball star who has been creating solo performances in her adopted country, France, since 1979. Using her poetry as a base, she began to create shows around the idea of "Maghrebian opera" or *gouwal:* a text with music as a background. She employed a five-piece ensemble of traditional musicians, and added dance and pantomime to her recitation of the text. Her first piece, *Il y a plus de Fatma, PLUS [There is More Than Fatma, MORE],* created in 1979, urged French audiences to look beyond the stereotype of the "Fatma," or faceless Maghrebian woman. Her 1983 piece, *Le Regard aquarel [The Watercolor Gaze],* tells the story of a boy who is driven to violence by starvation. It was published as two volumes of poetry in 1985 and 1988, and gave her the central metaphor for her work (Garonnaire 1997, 5; Berezak 1997a, 200–202). She calls the process of her spectacles, and her way of seeing, a "watercolor gaze" (Berezak

1997a, 197): she blends different performance modes to create new ways of seeing, much the way an impressionist makes the eye see images freshly by rendering their essential elements as spots of color on a canvas.

In 1985, Berezak wrote a blistering critique of the *Code de Famille* [Family Code], calling it the "*Code d'Infamie* [Code of Infamy]," a pun in French. She was upbraided for using the word "sperm" in her show. She replied, "I have had had two children, I know what it is. I can talk about it!" She says she does not set out to shock people, but it happens, nevertheless (Berezak 1997a, 201). In 1997, for a show titled *Le Conference des concierges [The Conference of the Concierges]*, she added Kabylian Tamazight to her other performance languages: dialectal Arabic, French, and English. She does not write in Kabyle—it is translated for her. Certain things, she says, particularly memories, come out in specific languages. Once her texts are written, she often improvises around them in performance. She asserts, "I take risks, because I uncover things, because when there are new texts, I speak them and uncover the *mise-en-scène*" (198). She views the world of academics with humor, and shows true reluctance to allow the written word to be the final one: "When university people ask me for a text, then I write a humorous piece, I don't take them seriously. Ah, university people! They love the texts. I come, I play my text, and it becomes another thing. Me, I'm not a university person…" (201).

Also notable in the arena of solo performance is Moroccan television personality Hanane Fadili. When I saw her show at the Théâtre Mohammed V in Rabat in 1997, she had just begun to work with a live audience. In the show, which she wrote, *Telle est Hanane [Such is Hanane]*, she performed sketches in Arabic, French, English, and Spanish. Her rapid character changes involve startling mimicry (she does a convincing impersonation of the singer Khaled). Although most of the text was lost on me, her physical characterizations were enough to demonstrate that, in many of the sketches, she was dealing with difficult social issues and striking her audience's collective nerve.

Theatre for Young Audiences

One final performance genre remains to be discussed. It is the theatre for young audiences (TYA), an area that deserves much more consideration than is possible in this study. I was fortunate to meet Meryem Drissi, of the Moroccan puppet troupe Elfanous, a graduate of ISADAC who has devoted her work to outreach, entertainment, and education for children. Drissi came to TYA of necessity. After her graduation from ISADAC, when she tried to work with other adult actors in plays for adults, she found that she could not do so without being harassed by her male colleagues. It was impossible for her to rehearse at night and to play certain roles without risking her safety and her reputation. In a stroke of ingenuity, she affiliated with Elfanous, which tours the schools and rehearses during daytime hours. Her fiancé, Driss Snoussi, is also with the troupe, and this gives her an added measure of security. She began by learning to manipulate marionettes behind the scenes, but eventually became the troupe's *hakawati*, a role for which she is admirably trained (Drissi 1997).

The troupe's method combines improvised collective creation with techniques borrowed from the *karagoz* and the *halqa*. Its pieces are educational, and involve improvised *halqa*-style interaction with the children to convey messages about values such as tolerance. Drissi informed me proudly that the troupe can do its texts in three

different languages—dialectal Arabic, classical Arabic, and French—on demand. She has also been involved in a summer-camp program for orphans, where she helps them to express themselves by teaching them puppet-making and manipulation techniques. Her need to get away from the toxic environment of theatre for adult audiences has become a passion. She seems to have found her calling, and it obviously suits her. She expresses the same sense of responsibility towards the audience that we have heard from so many of the other women in this study:

> To get people out of their houses and away from the television, to make them come and pay for a ticket, at twenty or even fifty dirams, and enter into the spectacle…you must not do stupidities for that public. To bring them out for nothing at all, it isn't kind. (Drissi 1997)

Chapter Five
Predominant Themes in North African Women's Dramatic Literature

TRANSLATION AND ITS IMPACT ON TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Before beginning the task of identifying and categorizing the predominant themes and issues in North African women's dramatic literature, a discussion of translation is in order. This will also introduce a play that serves as a touchstone for many of the ideas contained in the body of work as a whole, Fatima Gallaire's aforementioned *Princesses*, originally titled *Ah! vous êtes venues…là où il y a quelques tombes* (Gallaire 1988a; Gallaire 1988b; Gallaire 1991a; Gallaire 1991b; Gallaire 1996c). Reliance upon translations is a delicate matter. It is also an absolute necessity for even the most erudite of scholars. At some point, most academics find themselves in the position of using a second party's translation of a work by a third party, and praying that the party of the second part is as addicted to accuracy as they believe themselves to be. A simple word-for-word translation will not do, even between languages as closely related as French and English. Sometimes, one simply cannot get there from *içi*.

The phenomenon of *Princesses* in translation offers the rich, if perverse field of drama translation studies a fresh and contemporary perspective. Gallaire wrote the play in the mid-1980s. It received its first public reading in 1986, and now exists in two French printings, an American translation that has been twice anthologized, and an unpublished British translation. Translations into German, Russian, and Uzbek have also been made. The Russian version has not been performed. It was created solely for the purpose of aiding the Uzbeki translator, who did not speak French (Gallaire 1997).

Princesses is the tragic story, in two acts, of a middle-aged Muslim woman, herself called Princesse, who returns, after a twenty-year absence, to her natal village in Algeria during the period just after the War for Independence. In the interim, she has settled in France with her non-Muslim French husband and borne two children, twins. Her estranged father has died, three months prior to her return, and she has come to pay her respects. In the first act, she greets her former nurse, Nounou, and a host of female friends from her childhood. They gossip and giggle and eat couscous and dance in a colorful and spectacular scene. Entwined throughout, however, are warnings from a series of marginalized characters: a madwoman, two ancient slaves, a crippled man, and Nounou herself. Some very poor women, who constitute a kind of chorus within the

chorus of Princesse's friends (Gross 1998), complain about the grinding poverty of their lives. These dark moments foreshadow the tragedy.

In the second act, the elder women of the village arrive. They enter Princesse's house veiled and robed in dark colors, like a flock of crows, and refuse the hospitality of the host. They begin to interrogate Princesse about her life in France. It becomes clear that they are present in order to judge her, and furthermore, are there on behalf of her deceased father. He has bequeathed his fortune to the village elders in exchange for this service, and they are building a mosque with the proceeds. They try her for the sin of not having converted her husband to Islam, and they beat her and her supporters to death with clubs onstage. Their frenzy is halted by male elders who proceed, in a final tableau, to pray over Princesse's corpse.

This discussion refers to five texts of Gallaire's play. Because of the complexity of its publication history, they are reviewed briefly here. First was the 1988 publication of Gallaire's original version in French, titled *Ah, vous êtes venues…là ou il y a quelques tombes* (Gallaire 1988a). This was followed by an annotated reprint in 1991, in which the text of the play remained exactly the same, but the title was changed to *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a). The reprint coincided with the play's first full staging in France. In the U.S. in 1988, UBU Repertory Company anthologized Jill MacDougall's English-language translation of the play in conjunction with its world premiere production, which was conducted in English (Gallaire 1988b). This version, the "American" translation, was anthologized by UBU again in 1996 (Gallaire 1996c). It is titled *You Have Come Back,* and the text is substantially the same in both anthologies. The last text cited here is the unpublished English language translation made by Meredith Oakes. This version, the "British" translation, received a staged reading at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1995, under the title of *Princesses, or Ah! You've come…to where there are some graves* (Gallaire 1991b).

Jill MacDougall's American translation of *Princesses* demonstrates strong choices on the part of the translator. *Princesses* is a rich, brutal, and difficult play. As mentioned in chapter one, most directors who have staged it have modified the ending, which is fraught with conceptual and technical difficulties. Many, including the producers of the Uzbeki production, have found the female-on-female violence inconceivable (Gallaire 1997). Others, like Jean-Pierre Vincent, have shied away from the staging problems of multiple-actor fight choreography (Vincent 1997). Whatever the reason, there is no record of a staging that matches Gallaire's original vision.

Many of MacDougall's artistic choices appear to have been in collaboration with Françoise Kourilsky, the director of the world premiere production in New York, and they pertain to length. Gallaire herself has commented that many critics find the play, and its original title, too long (Gallaire 1988a, 7). MacDougall shifted dialogue from one character to another in order to cut long passages and eliminate the need for a large cast. Similarly, her text is the first to suggest a doubling scheme, a casting choice that was repeated in the French and British productions (Gross 1998). Had Gallaire herself suggested that scheme, it could have been interpreted as a comment on the cyclical nature of domestic and cultural violence.[1] Initiated by MacDougall and Kourilsky, however, it is a simple theatrical economy.

There is nothing wrong with cutting a play. UBU Repertory is well aware of the notoriously short attention span of American audiences. However, a published, translated,

post-production text that cuts large parts of the original is a substantially different play, and should be labeled as such. Among the things missing from the MacDougall script are: a trunk of books Princesse drags onstage at the beginning of the play as part of her luggage and her caretaker's amazement that she has gotten it through customs (Gallaire 1991a, 13), an ironic reference to the dangers of being killed on the road by strangers (17), a discussion of a hunger strike in support of Ben Bella, independent Algeria's first president, that Princesse engaged in with her friends in high-school (56), a mention of Princesse's life as an intellectual (55), and a reference to a battered woman who takes birth-control pills in secret in order to avoid bearing the children of a violent man (39).[2]

MacDougall has also eliminated part of one of the central metaphors of the play. In the first act, Princesse and one of her friends remark that they have both borne twins (Gallaire 1991a, 34). In the second act, Princesse recollects that one of her accusers had twin girls, but that they were sickly, change-of-life babies. When she asks after their welfare, their mother breaks into sobs, and implies that these children have died of neglect (79–80). MacDougall has eliminated this exchange. If one examines the breadth of Gallaire's work, one finds that multiple births are a sign for redemption (Gallaire 1990, 1996a). The death of the twins is a signal that redemption will fail in *Princesses*, and cutting the reference to it is questionable.

MacDougall has injected Arabic into her English translation of *Princesses*. There is very little Arabic in Gallaire's play; it is confined to a series of bi-lingual, formulaic greetings. The most striking example of the addition of Arabic is the repetitive plaint of the madwoman, Mahboula, who cries *"Berce-la! Ta douleur, berce-la!"* throughout the French text (Gallaire 1991a, 41). Roughly translated, this means "Rock it! Your pain, rock it!" MacDougall, finding this line too awkward to stage in English, renders it in Algerian colloquial Arabic—*"Berber ala dorrok"*—and appends a glossary of Arabic terms to the published version of the play (Gallaire 1988b, Gallaire 1996c). Mahboula, whose telling name means "fool" or "idiot," becomes "the Maboula (sic)" in all of MacDougall's stage directions. Gallaire herself is ambivalent on this topic, usually referring to this character as Mahboula (a name) or "la Folle" (a description), although she does use the definite article in front of the name at least once. The name of Mahboula is very important. She is only addressed by it once, and at that moment, she becomes absolutely lucid (Gallaire 1991a, 69).

The play that MacDougall has given her American audience and readership is a colorful and tragic folkloric spectacle that offers very little in the way of a political or historical context. By removing references to specific events and modern issues, and by making one of the most important parts of the text opaque to a non-Arabic speaking audience and readership, she has run the risk of making timeless and exotic a play grounded in a particular period and a modern reality.

Jean-Pierre Vincent, the director of the 1991 French production, considers this play dated in view of current events in Algeria (Vincent 1997). Gallaire herself has stated that if she were to write the play today, she would change the ending and have Princesse fight and escape (Gallaire 1997). Vincent himself is responsible for shortening the title, because he felt it was too long and revealed too much of the play's ending. As mentioned above, he also changed the ending and used a doubling scheme whereby the same actors played both the younger and older women. Instead of staging a beating death for Princesse, he had the old women crush her head with a door, an arguably neat solution to

a messy technical problem (Vincent 1997). The 1991 French printing reflects his casting choices in a note and bears the new title, but offers the text itself unchanged.

Meredith Oakes' translation, the "British" version, treats the entire text in an almost literary fashion. Her personal choices are minimal and unintrusive: she has chosen to eliminate the article from Mahboula's name in all cases, and has retained French in two instances, references by Princesse to older characters as *vieux père* (old father) or *veielle mère* (old mother). She has saved all of her artistic license to deal with one problem: Mahboula's refrain. For *"berce-la,"* Oakes gives us "Rock-the-baby. It's crying." (Gallaire 1991b). Since the French verb *bercer* is used when one rocks an infant, this is a defensible choice, particularly in light of the metaphor of the twins. Incidentally, the 1995 Royal Court Theatre staged reading used the doubling scheme for the choruses, but, in a new twist, divided the role of Princesse between two actors (program for Assous' "The Wounded Smile" and Gallaire's "Princesses" 1995).

Gallaire herself is generous with her work. She has permitted it to be censored, cut, translated, and changed in production to fit the needs of a theatrical community or a specific audience. She treats everyone who works on her plays as a collaborator. She has told me that her first priority remains to reach her audiences, in whatever form (Gallaire 1997). Such open-handedness in a living playwright is rare and deserves commensurate care and consideration.[3]

A NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS

As we have seen, *Princesses* presents a densely woven, interlocking net of personal relationships. These relationships suggest one way of approaching the body of North African women's dramatic literature. Like a series of concentric circles, we may look at all of the plays and their themes by working from the female protagonist outward. In a few instances, the protagonists of these works are male, but for the most part, women are at the center. Many of the pieces are about families, with relationships that are at once readily identifiable to a Western reader or viewer, and at the same time culturally particular. From the family unit, we may then move outward to the relationship of the woman to her social unit. Works of this type center around rites of passage, such as weddings or funerals. Next come the pieces that concern themselves with the individual or group in relation to official, and often bureaucratic, institutions: the government, the tribe, the mosque, or even the United Nations. Intersecting these thematic circles, cutting across them all, are the themes of time, in the guise of history; space, physical and psychic; and the disruption of both: migration and exile. Finally, there are plays that demonstrate what happens when relationships break down completely, suffering mortal injury. I call these the "apocalyptic visions," and they deserve a category of their own. As with all categorizations in this study, a play from one category may also demonstrate characteristics of other categories; this is the case with *Princesses*.

The shifts that are occurring in North African family life were mentioned in the previous chapters. As one might imagine, they often provide the dramatic conflict in these works. Ethnic Arab and Amazigh authors in this study approach the theme of family differently than those of European heritage, in all likelihood because the nuclear family is a Western norm, but represents an often difficult innovation for indigenous

North Africans, especially when they move to Europe. Some women are disadvantaged by the movement from extended to nuclear unit, losing contact with their support network of female kin. Others find the shift liberating. In all cases, it creates a profound shock.

Familial Relationships

Nowhere is this shock more apparent than in the discourse about and between mothers and daughters. We find a variety of mother-daughter relationships in these plays, and most are troubled. In our touchstone play, *Princesses*, the mother is notably absent. She is dead, and goes almost unmentioned. Her representative, Princesse's nurse Nounou, tries unsuccessfully to protect Princesse from the impending doom her disobedience has set into motion. A preponderance of these relationships are written from the daughter's point-of-view, and in this regard, Nounou falls into the category of the 'good mother,' one who will support her (surrogate) daughter's choices.

Leïla Sebbar presents another version of the 'good mother' in her play, *Les Yeux de ma mère* (1992). In this case, the family is in France, and the daughter is a rebel *beur* who suffers from cultural dislocation to the point of madness. She has been detained by the police, perhaps because she is a junkie, and spends an hour spewing invective at her captors while telling stories of familial abuse and her silent sister's suicide. Her stories are extreme, and her certainty that her beautiful, blue-eyed mother will come rescue her seems improbable. The police treat her as if she is crazy. In the end, however, her mother appears, exactly as described. It is then that the reader begins to realize that the daughter's stories are true, and that the pathology resides in the protagonist's environment, not in her head.

The mother in *Les Yeux de ma mère* does not speak, she rescues. She, too, has a representative who protects the daughter and facilitates her storytelling by giving it an onstage audience: a female officer whose Italian parentage makes her empathetic to the protagonist's dislocation as a child of immigrants. The theme of maternal silence is a common one, and in Gallaire's one-woman show *Rimm, la gazelle* (1993b), it is Rimm, the daughter herself, who stands as her mother's representative. Rimm, who lives in France like Princesse, is on her way back to Algeria, but unlike Princesse, she has not been long absent. She tells the story of her mother's village funeral over which she presided the previous year.

Contextualizing Rimm within space and time, Gallaire creates an entire family history in a fifteen-page monologue that Rimm addresses to her dead mother. As she talks, mostly about the funeral, Rimm packs her mother's robes for her impending return to Algeria. These props operate as signs for the absent parent and allow the monologue to become a conversation. The piece is a reminiscence of questions unanswered and attention not paid. Rimm asks repeatedly, "[Do] you hear me?—Are you listening to me? Mama, I'm talking to you!" (Gallaire 1993b, 49). The death of Rimm's mother has made her comprehend their inability to communicate across the gap of time, and she says, "I had to cry when I realized that we would never again talk together, that the thousand questions that I had still to ask you would remain forever unanswered" (62). Yet, for Rimm, communication transcends the grave. Her mother's legacy of love and strength gives her the tools that she needs to make a return journey, to work in Algeria for the good of the country and her endangered female compatriots.

In contrast to the image of the 'good mother,' who is often silent, some plays provide that of the noisy 'bad mother,' a woman so caught up in the cycle of domestic violence that she passes it along to her daughter in the form of verbal and emotional abuse. These characters bear a strong relationship to the 'bad' mother-in-law, a class of characters we will discuss shortly. In Béhija Gaaloul's grim and somewhat didactic 1971 Tunisian piece, *Le Refuge* (Gaaloul 1994), a play that also falls into the category of apocalyptic visions, the mother's attitude is so toxic that her daughter, Fazia, flees into prostitution and eventual suicide rather than remaining exposed to it. The *beur* play, *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* (1984), collectively written by the all-woman Troupe Rose des Sables, has a similar plot, but in that work the fleeing daughter seeks social assistance and lands on her feet in France. 'Bad mothers' tend to be two-dimensional, shrieking monsters.

In a more nuanced portrait, Amina Lhassani's Moroccanized Joan of Arc story, *Nour, ou l'appel de Dieu* (1994), treats Nour's family life prior to her religious adventure in great detail. Half of the play is devoted to her relationship with her mother, her father, and her fiancé. It is her mother who opposes Nour's desire to follow the angelic voices she hears, wishing for her a more traditional future. She is not a 'bad mother,' just a worried one who displays more than a little of her daughter's ability to see the future, and in it, her daughter's death. One monster mother who turns out to be no such thing is Meryem Drissi's eponymous marionette character in *Mama Ghoulal* (Drissi 1997). As her name implies, she is an ogre, but she has been maligned. The children who brave her cave discover that she is really quite fond of youngsters, and never makes dinner out of them. Yet another complicated mother appears in Denise Bonal's *Family Portrait* (1984), the only Bonal play in this study that deals with North Africa at all. A French woman decides to hide her racist disapproval of her son's *beur* fiancée by giving the couple a lavish wedding, neglecting her own daughter's wedding in the process. In a strange twist on the expected order, she is thus a 'good' mother-in-law, but a 'bad' mother. Both young women reject her hypocrisy, and she becomes an object of pity.

Two plays in the study are notable for presenting the mother's point-of-view atypically. In *Passions et prairie* (1988c), also by Bonal, a French mother is neglected by her three daughters, none of whom wants to be burdened with her care as she ages. One of them complains, "We may put our mothers through the mill, but, by god, do they get even later!" (1988b, 5). The mother, for whom the cycle of domestic violence and nuclear family malaise is circling back, escapes harm through her accidental association with a marginal: a Canadian, male, homosexual lodger who becomes her adopted son and caregiver. Myriam Ben also presents a mother's perspective. In *Les Enfants du mendiant* (1998a), the daughter of an Algerian beggar's widow forgets her debt to her mother's single parenthood as she enjoys her lucrative career as a lawyer. The mother, who has hidden the father's shameful occupation from her children during their youth, reveals it at last to teach her daughter some humility. This play also contains a 'bad mother': the widow's own mother tries to prevent her from learning to read, and burns a book in order to make her point.

Sometimes, a 'bad' mother will work in concert with a 'bad' or indifferent mother-in-law to make the daughter's life a living hell. Such is the case in Fatiha Merabti's Tamazight play, *They Have Destroyed My Life [Ngan Temzi-w]* (1999). Bahia's mother removes her from school, fearing that she will not learn enough about domestic chores to catch a good husband. In traditional Kabyle society, as in traditional Arab society,

unmarried daughters can become a burden to their birth-families. Bahia's mother treats her like a servant, and marries her off at the first opportunity. Bahia's husband abandons her a week after they are married and returns to his life in Europe, leaving her in limbo. She spends the rest of her married life waiting on her parents-in-law. Throughout this ordeal, which lasts for years, her mother makes it clear that she is no longer welcome in the house where she was born. When her parents-in-law die, she is left without prospects, an education, children, or a future.

Another extreme case of cruelty from a (potential) mother-in-law appears in *Amour et talisman* (1993a), written by Gallaire with a group of male and female students from the Faculté des Lettres in Mohammedia, Morocco. In this short work, a mother uses sorcery, popularly believed to be the province of older women (Davis 1987, 114–118), to turn her son against his fiancée, of whom she disapproves. In a motif reminiscent of *Princesses*, she is aided by a chorus of older women from the quarter, who assassinate the fiancée's character. Perhaps the nastiest mother-in-law figure in the study appears in Gallaire's *Les Co-épouses* (1990), which, like *Princesses*, is a major work with many interlocking themes.

Les Co-épouses is an extraordinary story of four generations of women in a polygynous household. The family is cursed with bad reproductive luck. Nanouha, the matriarch, has borne ten sons only to bury nine. Driss, her surviving son, has married Taos, who has failed to produce a child of either sex after three years of marriage. Although he loves his first wife, his mother, in her hunger for grandsons, badgers him to take a second. Taos must content herself with not having been repudiated altogether:

> We come into this world with a flower between our legs, It is the source of fear for as long as we have it and the source of unhappiness when we lose it. This cannot happen to a man because he comes into the world with a gun between his legs. With that primary weapon, he wins all battles against the flowers…. Is that what one calls justice? Is it that? That's justice? Is it my fault that I was born a flower? Is it my fault that I'm not a gun? (1990 33–34)

The second wife, Mimia, is docile and fecund. She conceives seven times, but bears only girls, and dies in childbed. Taos welcomes Mimia's children and raises them as her own, but Driss, infected by his mother's yearning for a son and shamed by his inability to produce an heir, is not content. He announces to Taos that he will marry again. This time, Taos retorts she will only tolerate a co-wife of her own choosing. Amused, Driss agrees.

In desperation, Taos turns to her neighbor, the thoroughly modern Siréna. Siréna has a bad reputation because she is literate, moves about in public freely, and refuses to marry, saying, "I am not afraid of Heaven. I am afraid of men and their baseness. Of the immensity of their hypocrisy and their strange penchant for social injustice" (Gallaire 1990, 38). The two women, and the mothers of Taos and Mimia, plot to create a marriage that will drive Driss back into the arms of his first wife. The third wedding takes place, but Driss finds himself unable to consummate it. After seven days, the marriage is annulled, Driss is humiliated, and Siréna, who is a virgin but has read all the books on sexual behavior usually only available to men, has instructed Taos, a comically slow student, in the fine art of seducing her husband (Brahimi 1995, 132–133). She declares, "I

agreed to contract this marriage in order to put the world right. That isn't just the privilege of sages. Crazy, hare-brained people like me have their uses too …" (Gallaire 1990, 99). When Driss lashes out at the women in a fury of wounded pride, his oldest daughter, Chems, whose telling name means "sun," steps in to defend her beleaguered step-mother and her forgotten sisters, who are represented on stage by dolls to underscore their unimportance in Driss' world view. The play culminates with Chems' declaration of her own identity:

> I am the son that you dreamed of and never had…. Yes! I am strong, I have will, determination, I am not afraid to make decisions, I love my schoolwork and all that I learn outside of the house, I am clever when something needs fixing around the house. You didn't know? Well surely, you never looked at me, never listened to me, never knew that I was there growing up! (101–102)

The fourth generation is represented by the figure of the Ancestor, Chems' great-grandmother. She is intermittently senile, and is oracular like Mahboula in *Princesses*. She is a fixture on stage throughout the play, until she is replaced by Nanouha in the final scenes. She is unable to assist Taos in her struggles, and her powerlessness is transmitted to Nanouha as a kind of poetic reward for all of the latter's machinations. *Les Co-épouses* is not a tragedy, however. The fact that a group of women cooperate to defy the patriarchy of Driss and the complicity of his mother assures that fecundity will defeat sterility. The sacrifice of Mimia is not in vain. Chems and her sisters will survive and flourish, with a variety of models of womanhood, both traditional and modern, to choose from.

Although the traditional relationship between North African mothers and sons is seen as more socially rewarding than the one between mothers and daughters, some of the plays make the case that it can be just as troubled. As we have seen in *Amour et Talisman* (Gallaire and Students 1993a), women will sometimes sacrifice their relationships with daughters and daughters-in-law in order to strengthen their bond with their sons. This makes sense when one recalls that having a son is a woman's route to power in a traditional household. This is not to say that daughters cannot be loved and desired by both mothers and fathers, but their potential to do harm to the family honor, and the burden of finding them a suitable marriage places a strain on even the most loving relationships.

There is a classic rendering of the mother who dotes on her son in Nadia Bouqallal's Moroccan immigration farce, *On peut toujours rêver* (1994). The play peeks into the nocturnal voyages of a would-be immigrant who becomes shipwrecked, in his dreams, on an island between Morocco and Europe. While the man sleeps, his mother and her neighbors tip-toe around the bed in awe and admiration, waiting for the apple of their eye to awaken and begin his real-life journey. While on the dream-island, he encounters a similarly shipwrecked Moroccan customs official, who demands all his money, a young *beur* man who encourages him to start a political movement to fight oppression, a French male tourist and his Spanish counterpart, who try to claim the island for their respective countries,[4] and the French tourist's wife, who is in love with Morocco and 'knows all about it,' although she has never actually set foot in the country. Meanwhile, back in the

land of the waking, the mother and her neighbors sing him lullabies and long for the day when he might even send them money from Detroit!

The mother-son discourse also manifests a *pied-noir* aspect in the writings of Hélène Cixous. Cixous has a love-hate relationship with Freudian analysis and she has dramatized her exceptions to the great psychoanalyst's work twice, in *Portrait de Dora* (Cixous 1976), a one-act about his most famous patient, and in *The Name of Œdipus: Song of the Forbidden Body* (Cixous 1994a), her rendition of the Greek tragedy. While Cixous has never, to my knowledge, fully explored the connection between her Algerian birth, her theoretical essays, and her theatrical *œuvre*, it seems likely that her fascination with the familial arises from an impulse similar to that of her indigenous North African counterparts. The classical *Œdipus* is, of course, the quintessential story of a suffocating and deadly relationship between a mother and son who have become altogether too close. Cixous' play is less about defiance of fate and the gods than it is about female desire, and reveals the mother-son bond as a coupling stronger than that of husband-wife.

Jocasta, rather than Œdipus, is the center of the play and it is her frank, sexual-maternal desire that drives the action. She tries to protect her son from the Law, and the Word, of the Father, declaring, "I wanted to deliver him from names" (Cixous 1994a, 295). Cixous' text does not apologize for Jocasta's desire and it implies that there are worse things than incest and physical death. Cixous' own desire, her fretful relationship-in-exile with Algeria, is revealed in the chorus' poignant lament, "Already more than one death/Through exile. Through absence. Through forgetfulness./What woman has not suffered these deaths?" (296). In both cases, the dramatic and the real, patriarchal law has created a rift between the woman and her object of desire, declaring desire in women to be forbidden.

In *On ne part pas, on ne revient pas* (Cixous 1991), another Cixous play with a heavy mother-son motif, we find Clara, whose relationship with her husband Nathanael is eclipsed by his usurpation of the maternal role. He adopts a blind musical prodigy, and their relationship renders Clara unnecessary and psychically paralyses her. She falls ill, taking on the boy's disability. She becomes physically blind in one eye, suspended between the boy's world of total sightlessness and that of the sighted, but without his compensating gift for music. A wounded cyclops, she writes poetry, but cannot bring herself to leave a situation in which she is neither mother nor wife. Ultimately, Clara does leave, and like Ibsen's Nora, closes the door behind her.

If daughters are sacrificed by their mothers to promote the suffocating bond between mother and son, what of fathers and their children? The stereotype dictates that fathers should be suspicious of their sons and indifferent or hostile to their daughters. Some of the plays, however, speak to a deeper reality. Hostility to daughters, when it occurs, is a reaction to the betrayal a patriarch feels when one of his own chooses an alliance with another, younger man. Indeed, Gallaire's play, *Richesses de l'hiver* (1996b), presents a Corsican father who locks up his four daughters to protect his honor. The oldest, Gabriella, dutifully runs his house in her dead mother's place, afraid even to let down her beautiful hair. The middle two, Isola and Maria, sneak out to meet their lovers, and the youngest, Bella, has fallen in love with an exiled foreigner, a farm laborer who claims to be a bastard relative of the king of Morocco. He comes to ask for her hand after she becomes pregnant, and the father threatens to kill all of his daughters, and the young man

with them. His anger is defeated by the younger man's courage, the defiance of his two middle daughters, and the fact that he is about to become a grandfather.

Many of the father characters in this study love their daughters, if not openly, then in secret. In Lhassani's *Nour* (1994), it is the father who understands Nour's strange calling and supports her need to leave home. Gallaire presents another loving father in *Au cœur, la brûlure* (1994a). This, together with *Rimm* and *Princesses*, is part of her autobiographical corpus, plays that may even be regarded as a kind of trilogy. Each was written to commemo rate the life of a loved one; *Rimm* is a tribute to her mother, *Princesses* honors her nurse, who lived to be over one-hundred years old, and *Au cœur* explores her relationship with her father (Gallaire 1997). *Au cœur* is an unusual piece, a one-woman show wherein the onstage character does not speak for herself, but listens to a voice-over, a series of conversations her father is having with himself and his male companions. She, like her sister characters Rimm and Princesse, and like Gallaire herself, is in France. Her father sits at home in Algeria, longing for the girl-child who was his secret favorite as his friends ask him which of his *sons* he likes the best. His words are full of love and loss, and may or may not be directly expressed to his daughter, depending on how the play is directed. Gallaire offers no clues in this regard. For her, it is an uncharacteristically enigmatic work.

Cixous has created the most complex set of father-figures in the study, and again, this is due to her fascination with Freud. *Portrait de Dora* (1976) contains not one, but three father-figures: Dora's father, his friend, and Freud himself. Just as in Gallaire's autobiographies and Lhassani's *Nour* (1994), the daughter leaves. She first rejects her father, whose affair with his friend's wife disgusts and intrigues her, as she herself is attracted to the woman. She repulses the friend's vaguely incestuous sexual advances. Finally, she leaves therapy, just at a point when Freud's counter-transference of the case is overwhelming him. But in this portrait, it is not a younger man, a husband, who draws her away, but her own polymorphously perverse desire, which Anne Boyman says, in her analysis of the play, turns Freud's diagnosis of Dora on its head (1989, 181). It is interesting that, while Cixous has written many plays about cruelty at a national scale, she refuses to pathologize sexualized behavior between parental figures and children, or to characterize it as violence, preferring instead to concentrate on the desire of the female participant, no matter what her relative position of power in the exchange. In *Portrait de Dora*, we are not told what has happened *to* Dora. Nothing is clear; every event described by Dora or the other characters is approached from multiple perspectives. Dora eludes both Freudian and praxis[5] feminist analysis: she is neither hysterical nor victimized. Foucault's analysis of the pathologization of sexuality is an obvious point of departure for Cixous (Foucault 1978, 67). As a postmodern feminist, she runs the risk that Lois McNay discusses in *Foucault and Feminism:*

> [A]t some basic level, feminist critique necessarily rests on normative judgments about what constitutes legitimate and non-legitimate forms of action in relation to the political goal of overcoming the subordination of women. Feminists cannot afford to sacrifice such validity judgments for the more relativist position of performative or local justification espoused by postmodern theorists (1992, 117).

Fathers and sons are the least treated category of relationships in the plays of the study. While father and son characters do occur in the plays, their relationships are not generally fleshed out in any detail. There are a few exceptions, mentioned briefly here. Myriam Ben's *Promethée* (1967b), a re-telling of the Prometheus legend that functions as a thinly disguised criticism of the bloodless coup that overthrew Algeria's president, Ahmed Ben Bella, in 1965, contains a strong and loving exchange between Prometheus and his son. The legendary, enchained fire-bringer stands for Ben Bella himself, and the metaphor is especially apt, since Ben Bella was placed under house arrest by his successor, army Colonel Houari Boumedierme (Favrod). The son thus represents the young people of Algeria, who looked to Ben Bella to rebuild their country after independence. In Ben's play, the son has allied himself with a priestess of the Earth-Mother sect, in defiance of the Olympians who have imprisoned and tortured his father, and the couple is expecting a child. In this allegory, the priestess represents the women of Algeria and their ignored potential to change the country. As the eagle tears out his liver, Prometheus watches his son march into the future, secure in the knowledge that his legacy of fire will not be extinguished.

In *Majnûn Laylâ* (1987), a play Gallaire wrote with Jean-Claude Gal, another loving father watches in despair as his child becomes a *majnoun*. In general, a *majnoun* is person who is possessed by a *djinn* [pl. *djnoun*] (Déjeux 1991, 108). In this case, the love of Laylâ, whose telling name means "night," is the source of the possession. The story of Qays-Majnûn and his beloved is a very old one, known throughout Asia and the Middle East. The best known version of the tale is a long poem by the great Azerbaijani author Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209 C.E.), and it has its Western analog in the Romeo and Juliet story (Baguirov; Brians). Qays and Laylâ are Bedouin nomads, promised to one another by their fathers. In the version by Gallaire and Gal, Qays, who is known for his spirituality, violates Laylâ's honor by allowing his feelings for her to carry him away: he sings her name aloud in public. Laylâ's father, enraged, forbids them to marry. Qays slips into madness alone in the desert, and Laylâ dies of a broken heart. Throughout, Qays' father is supportive of him, even taking him on the *hadj* [pilgrimage] to Mecca.

In all of this blood-relating, the marital couple often gets overwhelmed. The exigencies of the social order trump romantic love and carnal desire in *Majnûn Laylâ* and in *Œdipus*. Fatima Chebchoub, the Moroccan *halaqiya*, composed a *halqa, Al-Abaccia,* on the subject in 1989. This piece concerns the difference between what Chebchoub calls the "natural couple" and the "traditional couple." The protagonist, Miriam, is shown in two different situations and is played by two different actors. Miriam One is pregnant by her lover Driss, and miscarries while he is in the military. They are the "natural" couple. Miriam Two accepts an arranged marriage to Allal, a good man, but not one of her choosing. Chebchoub blames Miriam Two's resulting "hysteria" on her "social ignorance," and the loss of Miriam One's baby is a metaphor for a "lost future." Of *Al-Abaccia*, Chebchoub writes, "The real butcher of society is not the country's tyrant but the ignorance of the people who fear change" (Chebchoub 1997a).

The social hysteria embodied by the unhappy Miriam is echoed in Molly of Gallaire's *Molly des Sables* (1994b). Another one-woman show, *Molly des Sables* requires the actor to play fourteen characters, including the eponymous protagonist. The play is an answer to James Joyce's Molly Bloom, and Gallaire's Molly, ravaged by her battle with cultural dislocation and bulimia, says "no" instead of "yes" (Gallaire 1994b, 5 and 14). Molly, we

learn, is the product of an Algerian marriage of mixed religions: her mother is Jewish, her father Muslim and a *hadj* [pilgrim to Mecca], and she is raised in an atmosphere of relative tolerance. Her marriage is arranged, at puberty, to Braham, also a Muslim. Thanks to her female relatives, she is afraid of the opposite sex:

> Me, I had no more than a vague idea of marriage, and no desire. I had a terrible fear of men: aunts, cousins, neighbors, and childhood friends, all were in league, with solidarity and affection, to inculcate in me a terror of men. (6)

Braham is a good and gentle man, and she grows to love him after the initial shock of her sudden and youthful marriage. He takes her to Europe, where she is completely isolated. Even taking the bus is an ordeal, as it is entirely outside her experience. She becomes disturbed, and begins bingeing and purging food, even eating laundry soap. Obsessed with her appearance, and with the fear that Braham will commit adultery while she is locked up in his house, she finally develops the courage to say "no" to him, declaring that she does not want to have sex. For a woman raised in any culture where sex is regarded as a wife's duty, this is a radical act.

In *Témoignage contre un homme stérile* (1987), Gallaire plays with the notions of fecundity and sterility as metaphors for the redemption or failure of the couple. Madame Bertin appears to be an elderly French woman, locked away in a nursing home, who in an uncomfortably graphic outpouring shares with the audience the details of her sex life with her husband, the sterile Fernand. Finally she reveals that 'she' is Fernand Bertin, a secret transvestite. She lingers disturbingly, lovingly, on the details of 'her' defloration, the secret effluvia and disillusionments:

> I knew it! That I was a woman in good health capable of bearing whole litters! Therefore, it was him, the sterile man. For friendship? For love? For a specifically feminine spirit of sacrifice because the society wants it that way and makes us, the women, capable of taking upon ourselves this immense silent pain… Why in fact? For all of that at once… I decided to say nothing and to tacitly let him believe that I was the one responsible for our lack of progeny!!! Men are so fragile! (1987, 48)

The Bertins interrogate their own history by playing a game in which the husband assumes his wife's place and literally takes on her identity, re-presenting it in such a way that it upsets all notions of age and gender. The couple's greatest fear is that they will be pathologized by the institutional community in which they live. They are well aware that, while their games are healing and liberating for them, such play is unacceptable to the community at large. Yet they persist, because they realize that the self-imposed psychic exile of transvestitism is a way to come at last to an understanding of one another. The couple's game, wherein he assumes his wife's place and literally takes on her identity, is their gift to each other. Integral to the game is the wife's function as storyteller: she tells him her secrets and he embodies them. He is her theatrical double. Only by taking on the gender-marginality of his wife can Bertin speak the truth. By letting him take her place, she grants him liberty from silence. Of this, the strangest of all her creations, Gallaire

says, "Madame Bertin is not crazy. She talks to herself in order to relocate each event, to make sense of her life, to cleanse her mind and her soul" (Gallaire 1995, 152).

The Bertin's game is redemptive; not so that of the French couple in Zarina Salahuddin-Rubenstein's *Jeu même* (1983). The lovers also play a game with each other and with the audience. They pretend to be having an illicit affair, but are actually a married couple. This would be harmless enough, but for the cruelty with which they taunt one another. At one point, the woman calls the man her "epiphenomenon" (25), that is to say, he is a phenomenon entirely dependent on her for his existence. The man is driven, in play, to strangle her. Afterwards, she revives and they end the game, but in a piece of stage magic, a body remains supine on the bed. They acknowledge that the game has gotten too real, and the man leaves, with the intimation that he is perhaps going to meet his real lover. In this case, the couple's game is cruel, indicative of a bankrupt relationship.[6]

In *Le Zajel maure du désir* (1997b), by Hawa Djabali, the couple is separated by the Algerian War for Independence, she into exile, he into politics. The woman's memories of herself and the country she left are embodied by a dancer and a singer, respectively. These phantoms provide a counterpoint to the painful Paris reunion of the couple, in the 1990s, during the Algerian civil strife. They try to be loving to each other, but their war-wounds are too angry to allow them any peace. When one considers that the most successful couple in all the plays of the study is Monsieur and Madame Bertin, it is no wonder that Souad Ben Slimane was able to make a whimsical case for staying single in the vignette, *Parole Nocturne #4*, part of the Tunisian *Klem Ellil* series (1990-present).[7] Ben Slimane's character is a woman who cannot get a man because she is too awkward. She cheerfully concludes that she is better off without one, because love would kill her (Ben Slimane 1997).

One relationship that gets almost no attention in this body of words is that of siblings. The dynamic of brothers controlling their sisters' lives is reduced to an occasional abusive power exchange in *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* (Troupe la Rose des Sables 1984), and is slightly more fleshed out in Assia Djebar's historical drama *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1960). It was the inspiration for Ben Slimane's *Delia*, an autobiographical work about her real-life conflict with her brother, an actor who left the theatre to become an entrepreneur in the Tunisian construction industry[8] and insisted that she stop acting as well (Ben Slimane 1997). The only strong sister characters appear in Gallaire's *Richesses d'hiver* (1996b) and Bonal's *Passions et prairie* (1988c). A discussion of brothers is completely absent, unless one takes into account the ghost-brothers in Cixous' *La Ville parjure* (1995), who are the plays victims but not its protagonists.

Certainly, there are sibling relationships throughout the study, but they are peripheral to the action and hardly worth mention. We may conclude, therefore, that sibling relationships are not a major concern for our playwrights. Nor is the question of co-wives as widely discussed as one might imagine. *Les Co-épouses* (Gallaire 1990) is the only play that treats the subject, and mitigates the devastating effects of the lifestyle on the women involved by showing co-wives in a cooperative mode. Polygyny is not at issue in the plays, I believe, because it is becoming less and less common in all three of the countries studied. The nuclear couple, however, is the troubled future of North African relationships. So it appears in play after play, even as it is eclipsed by blood relationships that continue to hold primacy.

One final family category of major importance remains to be discussed: ancestors and elders. We have already seen Nounou, Princesse's ancient nurse (Gallaire 1991a), and the powerless Ancestor in *Les Co-épouses* (Gallaire 1990). The Bertins are also elders (Gallaire 1987), shut away by their family, as is the mother in *Passions et prairie* (Bonal 1988c). *Princesses* has an entire chorus of vitriolic and deadly old women, but often as not, elders occupy a role that is redemptive, informative, or nurturing. An elder will sometimes function as the *hakawati* in a piece, as does the blind poet in *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969), or as a seer, like the ghost of Norodom Sihanouk's father in Cixous' *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge* (1985). The Erinyes in Cixous' *Le Ville parjure* (1995) are old women, both fierce and benevolent, as their double appellation indicates: they are both the Erinyes [Furies] and the Eumenides [Benevolent Ones]. Borrowed from *Æ*schylus' *Oresteia*, the Erinyes return to the human world in the present era to bring justice to a woman whose two sons have died of AIDS after a tainted blood transfusion. It transpires that certain scientists and government officials knew that the blood supply was tainted and did nothing.[9] In the end, when the French government chooses to evade responsibility for the tragedy, and floods the cemetery where the boys are buried and the mother is camping out in protest, the Erinyes can do nothing except gather her to their bosom and acknowledge that they have lost their power in the millennia since they struck their non-aggression pact with Athena.

Elders do not always lose their power with age. Gallaire's play, *Le Secret des vieilles* (1996a), encapsulates many of the ideas that she developed in her earlier work. It involves many generations of exiled women cooperating in order to defeat the threat of death, contains a discussion of the theatrical double, contrasts fecundity and sterility, and relies upon the miracle of twin births for its denouement. Written as a commission under special publishing circumstances,[10] it has never been produced and remains a closet drama. The play is a fable. The king of an island realm, at the behest of his ministers (one of whom is a woman complicit in the patriarchy), selects five hundred women at random and exiles them to a barren island. Their crime is that they are women and they have gotten above themselves. The five hundred are commanded to reproduce, without assistance, doubling their number within a year. If they fail, they will be executed.

On the island, an elder, the Old Barren Woman, takes charge. She organizes work parties, and convinces everyone, even the women who are artists and princesses, that they have a vital part to play in the survival of the group. It is discovered that fifty of the women are pregnant, and so the group joyously sets out to create the remaining four hundred and fifty babies. The actors among them suggest the manufacture of doubles, mannequins who can "shoulder the burden of pain and sin" (Gallaire 1996a, 59), but the others remind them that life, unlike theatre, requires durable solutions.

A year later, the women return from exile. To the surprise of the entire kingdom, each woman has either borne a child, or is carrying a pregnancy. Gallaire does not tell us how they have done it; the characters themselves refuse to explain. But the count is one baby short: the Old Barren Woman is presumed to have no child. She demands a re-count, and reveals that she too has a child at her breast. When asked by the king how this has occurred, she reminds him of the miracle of twins. She is nursing another woman's second baby. Cooperation between women and fecundity triumph over sterility and the Law of the Father.

Rites of Passage

The family is an essential and enduring theme for North African women dramatists, but they no longer live in societies where women are routinely sequestered. Thus, the interaction between a female protagonist and her community is key, and in the plays under consideration, it comes in two forms: traditional communal rites of passage, and exchanges with bureaucratic institutions. The former category takes us from the cradle to the grave, through descriptions and occasional staging of the rites themselves. Birth, or its failure, is an especially important metaphor for any number of the study's subjects. Gallaire uses it constantly, even basing entire pieces around it, as in *Le Secret des Vieilles* (1996a). She is especially fond of twins, and they occur often in her plays. The death of a baby is a sign for disaster, she seeks to valorize the birth of girl-children in *Les Co-épouses* (1990), and even a pregnancy in process can be redemptive, as in *Richesses d'hiver* (1996b). Chebchoub, like Gallaire, equates miscarriage with societal failure in *Al-Abaccia* (Chebchoub 1997a). Denise Bonal also has a major work that deals almost exclusively with pregnancy, the poignant *Légère en août* (1988a).

Légère en août takes place in a posh French home for unwed mothers. We learn that the young women living in the institution have traded their unborn children for financial security and social anonymity. They have lives of ease and boredom, and are discouraged from talking about their condition by the matron, who functions as a seemingly benevolent jailer. The couples who are waiting to 'adopt' the babies are indulged in the fantasy that they are having a child biologically, while the pregnant women are forced to deny their condition, even among themselves. As they sleep, however, some are visited by night-terrors as the reality of what they are about to do impinges on their consciousness. Florence, a student, rebels against the matron's suffocating paternalism, secure in the secret knowledge that her baby has a Black father, and so will not be saleable. Encouraged by Florence, Minda, a Portuguese immigrant, appeals to the matron and tries to reverse her decision to sell her baby. The matron tells her that her contract is irreversible, and threatens her. In desperation, Minda hangs herself at the party the women hold in honor of her birthday. *Légère en août* is a scathing critique of the Western system of closed adoption, and a warning to societies too quick to separate children from their birth mothers.

In the life of a Christian child, baptism is a major rite of passage. For Muslim and Jewish male infants, the most important ritual is circumcision.[11] Although circumcision is a highly unorthodox topic for a play, Gallaire has written one on the subject, and its protagonist is, of necessity, male. *La fête virile* (1992), a farcical rendering of an Algerian circumcision rite, goes to great lengths to compare the circumcision practices of North Africa and Europe, playing on the ignorance that members of each society have about the other. Pierre, a European adult, is seeking a traditional-style circumcision in order to marry Sedka, an Algerian rural woman. For him, the rite becomes a fetish, more than just a means to an end. As he bumbles his way sincerely through the village, he tropes the well-meaning "colonist who refuses" of Albert Memmi, the one who wants to lose his status as ugly Westerner and "go native" (Memmi 1965, 19–44).

Pierre's curiosity provokes a mirroring response in the village's *tahhar* [ritual circumciser], who finds his uncircumcised state fascinating. The audience has a bad moment or two when the time comes for Pierre's rite to be consummated, but breathes a sigh of relief when, by some happy miracle, he is discovered to be 'naturally'

circumcised, as if by God Himself (Fernández-Sánchez 1996, 158). As with the mysterious pregnancies of *Le Secret des vieilles* (1996a), Gallaire stubbornly refuses to explain the event, and leaves her audience to struggle with its own scepticism. *La fête virile* is a very funny play, yet, within the format of the farce, Gallaire honors Pierre's rite of passage; the event itself is never made farcical. To the contrary, it heals a grudge held between two families of a rural village and permits the acceptance of the transfigured foreigner into their midst. It honors the quest of the true cultural nomad, one who is willing to risk pain and even bodily harm in order to understand and show respect to the target culture.

Despite the customary splendor of traditional Maghrebian weddings, Amazigh and Arab alike, very few are staged in plays by women. Perhaps authors are weary of the staged weddings (and mock circumcisions) that are offered up as tourist spectacles at venues like the Marrakech Folklore Festival. 'Morocco,' a professional Oriental dancer based in the U.S., offers a rather distressing description of these spectacles in her internet article on the subject:

> Each year [the Marrakech Festival] choose[s] some sort of loose "theme" for the Festival: a Berber wedding, the path of Islam, tribute to women…circumcision party, etc. It doesn't matter. Any excuse is a good one for a celebration. It is gratifying to see that a lot of Moroccans are in the audience, there to see their own dances and [f]olkloric traditions.

Like the Epcot center at Disneyworld, the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawai'i, and countless World Fairs, the Folklore Festival offers canned culture in convenient doses for visitors who do not wish to risk real cultural encounters. The staged traditional wedding has become such a staple of these events that to stage one in a play invites irony.

It is thus less surprising that only three Maghrebian weddings occur in the plays of the study. Two are in *Les Co-épouses* (Gallaire 1990), and neither of these is a happy event. During the first, Taos, the unhappy first wife, must dance attendance on Mimia, her husband's second bride, and the second is a sham, a plot between the women of the house to defeat the husband and his mother. The third Maghrebian-style wedding takes place at the end of Nacéra Bouabdallah's *beur* play, *Binet el-Youm* (1984 and 1985). Part broad comedy, part serious analysis of the condition of *beur* women, Bouabdallah's play was created in and for the immigrant community of Port-de-Bouc, France. Various stereotyped *beur* characters inhabit the play, including Yasmina, a *beur* woman who has chosen to marry in the old way, by arrangement. Her companions, who wish to believe that they are more modern, disparage her choice, but ultimately support her, and it is her joyous henna ceremony[12] that ends the play in a startlingly respectful and solemn mode.

Denise Bonal puts a French wedding reception under the microscope in *A Country Wedding* (1996). She seems to agree with the idea that weddings bring out the worst in people. *A Country Wedding* offers a fly-on-the-wall perspective as guests move in and out of the picture. We hear snatches of conversation and try to sort out the many relationships between the members of the large cast, most of which are dysfunctional. At the center of this ritually-induced madness is a group of three girls, teenagers, who discuss their lives in disturbing terms. One offhandedly remarks that her father beats her mother. They speculate as to whether or not intelligence will damage their chances of

finding a man. They are heartrendingly insecure about what their future holds, and nothing in the behavior of the adults around them provides them with an anchor, or even a clue.

If Maghrebian authors hesitate to stage Muslim religious ceremonies as metaperformances, it is with good reason. As the example of the Marrakech festival demonstrates, staging a ritual without respect for its efficacy robs it of its dignity and power. There are no examples of a staged *Eid* sacrifice in the plays, for example, although one might argue that the sacrifices of Nour, Prometheus, and Princesse have resonances of that rite. Gallaire and Gal have, however, done something quite bold in *Majnûn Laylâ* (1987); they have staged the *hadj*, complete with a representation of the Qaaba itself. The originating Nizami epic tells of Qays' *hadj*, but being a poem, does not violate the Islamic sensitivity about images. The city of Mecca is closed to non-believers, and to stage the rituals of the Qaaba is to invite infidels to witness a representation of something they are not permitted to see. Of course, the Qaaba and the ceremonies that surround it are depicted in many photographs and films, both fictional and documentary. Nevertheless, live theatre has strange and suspect powers to transform, and so is not usually considered by the faithful to be an appropriate venue for such depictions.

Death and its attendant rites have inspired several playwrights in this study. Based on the Tunisian proverb, "We laugh a lot when we are near someone who is dead," Ben Slimane's *Parole Nocturne #5* concerns an old woman who loves to go to funerals. A *hakawati*, she tells the audience funny stories about the funerals she has attended (Ben Slimane 1997). Bonal offers another amusing look at life's end, showing how the idea of impending death can transform a household in *Beware the Heart* (1994). A French family takes in a dying stranger out of pity. Its members become engrossed in his illness and its progress, acting with compassion and beneficence. They fall in love with his tragedy. Then his illness goes into remission, and he is eventually cured. The family, deprived of an outlet for its charitable impulses, feels betrayed, turns on him, and throws him out, much to his puzzlement. He has mistaken its members' romanticizing of his situation for genuine liking. It is his poignant, potential death they love, not him.

Gallaire uses funerals to situate two of her autobiographical plays: *Princesses* (1991a), where death stands for the failure of redemption, and *Rimm* (1993b), where death becomes a transfiguration. Phelan provides a theoretical setting for the failed redemption of *Princesses*, one that bears an uncanny resemblance to the attitude of Gallaire herself:

> In dedicating myself here to my dream of performative writing I risk the strange economy of every promise…. I want to promise that there is a way to move even within the stone vaults to which too many of us have been banished. I want to promise it rather than prove it. I may be wrong and we'll be frozen forever on cold rocks. But I may not be wrong (which is different from being right) and to dream of dancing while whiling away the hours in the waiting room is better than some other alternatives I can think of. Performative writing enacts the death of the "we" that we think we are before we begin to write. (1997, 16–17)

The death of Princesse is perhaps the death of Gallaire's "we," a necessary stage in her movement towards the redemptive hope that becomes stronger in her later works.

A different kind of death is presented in *Rimm, la gazelle* than in *Princesses*. It is not tragic, and the funeral, rather than dividing the community, brings it together in a manner that is almost festive. Distant relatives are re-united, self-discoveries occur, and Rimm and her mother, through the magic of the theatrical space, finally begin to talk to each other. Once death has occurred, nothing remains unspeakable and anything is possible. During the play, Rimm describes the funeral to her mother, reminding her that they were each "actor and spectator at the same time" (Gallaire 1993b, 51). As she packs her belongings, she also sifts through her memories, setting her mental house in order for the journey that is to come. Finally, she concludes that death is not a durable state for her mother, because, like Prometheus' grandchild, she is her parents' legacy.

State Institutions

Women, no longer confined to their homes, or even their neighborhoods and villages, now have to deal with the colonizer's gift *par excellence* to the Maghreb—bureaucracy—and the institutions they deal with are creeping into their plays like a bad odor. The daughter's encounter with French social assistance in *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* (Troupe la Rose des Sables 1984) has already been noted. Encounters between French bureaucracy and *beur* youth are staples of the *beur* genre. The bureaucratic encounter in *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* is relatively benign, although it leaves both Aïcha and her daughter angry at the social worker's supercilious and racist attitude. *Binet el-Youm* (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985), another *beur* work of the same period, was inspired by the government's closure of a youth center in the municipality of Port-de-Bouc, and actors in that cast actually circulated a petition to re-open the center during performances (Bouabdallah 1997). Institutions of the State are almost always the subject of dramatic contempt in Maghrebian drama, ripe for ridicule.

One of the prime targets for complaint is the Moroccan university system. Registration is difficult because the registrars are corrupt and incompetent, housing is inadequate, and there are no jobs available for the majority of graduates who manage to make it through the labyrinthine system. Two plays in the study deal with Moroccan universities. One was written, with Gallaire, by the same group of Mohammedia students who collaborated with her on *Amour et talisman*. The play's title, *S'inscrire, quel galère!* (1993b), contains a punning tribute to Gallaire herself—the word *galère* [mess] and her last name have the same pronunciation in French. The title jokingly sets the tone for the piece, which seeks to fight absurdity with absurdity. At a university that looks suspiciously like the Mohammedia campus, a young man. Karim, tries to enroll. He is refused by the obnoxious registrar because he has brought eight identity photographs instead of ten—and because his hair is brown. It seems that the university is only accepting blonds this semester! In the same registration line is a very strange fellow named Mirak. He has no more success with the process than Karim, and they bond in their mutual misery. Karim discovers Mirak's problem: he is a Martian, and does not know his way around the planet very well, but enjoys great success with the female students. After Karim, Mirak and their circle of friends don blond wigs to get enrolled, they decide to 'think outside the box' and Mirak stages a takeover of the registration window in the ensuing hilarity.

As silly as *S'inscrire* is, it addresses genuine frustrations. So does Chebchoub's university-inspired 1994 *halqa, Chkouf al-Gars*. *Chkouf algars* means 'the planting-pot

shards,' and the question of human roots and growth compose the central metaphor of the play. Chebchoub's question is: if a plant is planted in front of a house that does not belong to the planter, who has ownership of the plant? Similarly, one may extrapolate, who will take responsibility for the youth of the university, planted carelessly and left to rot in unfit habitation? She offered this linguistic analysis of her title:

> *Chkouf* means: *les pots à plantes mais cassés* [plant pots, but broken]. *Chkouf is* the plural of chafka which has two meanings: *un bribe d'un pot cassé* [a shard from a broken pot]—*et une vieille femme* [and an old woman]. So when you become very old and you start to disturb people they call you *chafka*. *Chkef* for a man, and they have the same plural. (2000)

Chebchoub is herself a university professor and knows whereof she speaks. Her students, she says, are inadequately housed, and some of them are homeless. Her *halqa*, which follows a group of students as they struggle to educate themselves in this hostile environment, points out that to improve the life of a country, the country's citizens must take responsibility for its students (Chebchoub 1997a, Chabchoub 1997b). The title of the *halqa* also suggests that the students themselves can be *chkouf*—dissidents, people who disturb the social order to improve their situation.

Moroccan police officials can be equally difficult to deal with. Khedija Assad's class comedy, *Costa Y Watan* (1997a), is the story of determined female agency in the face of distressing official corruption. The protagonist, a simple country woman, goes to the city to sell her cow and see her sick husband, who is languishing in the hospital. She offers to pick up a bag for her neighbor from a relative working there, in one of the fancy houses of the rich. Of course, she picks up the wrong bag. Along the way, her cow is stolen, and she spends a frustrating afternoon trying to report the theft to the authorities. The police official demands a bribe to file the report, and as she opens the bag to pull out some money, she discovers that she is carrying large amounts of black-market currency belonging to the rich employer of her neighbor's relative. The police attempt to arrest her, but she faces them down, hauls everyone back to the rich man's house and forces him to confess his crime. In this optimistic scenario, simplicity, honesty, and dignity trump corruption and greed.

Raja Ben Ammar's *Seven Out of Sixteen* (1984) is not so cheerful. In this short one-woman show about Tunisian people's lack of access to their politicians, Naïma is standing, with her community group from the district of Sabkha, in the parade route of an unspecified minister. He is in the neighborhood for a "tree festival." She and her neighbors are being evicted from their homes with bulldozers by an unscrupulous district chief, probably so that he can carry out a building project, and they want to avert disaster by having him replaced. Naïma alternately plans the speech she will make when the minister's car stops and conducts an internal monologue expressing her insecurity at speaking to such an important man. This struggle reduces her to speechlessness, but it does not matter, because the minister's convoy does not stop, and neither will the bulldozers. In a chilling epilogue, we hear the voice of the district chief expressing his indifference to the problems of the people, and planning to bribe the minister. The play leaves no room for doubt: he will prevail.

In 1991, Chebchoub composed a scathing *halqa, Al-Matmora*, on the subject of the people's interaction with a corrupt official, Bou Awra. Chebchoub describes him as a "stupid, greedy, bisexual man,"[13] whose subordinate's name, El Awn, roughly translates to "Mr. Yes" (Chebchoub 1997a). The play has a team of two *hakawati* characters: Awicha, an experienced female storyteller, and Homman, her male apprentice. Homman takes the role of Bou Awra, but due to his inexperience he drops in and out of character, so Awicha takes over the role at the end of the play. Such roleswitching is a feature of Chebchoub's *halqat*, and in this piece, she played Awicha. Awicha and Homman are Chebchoub's stock characters; they are in *Al-Abacda* and *Chkouf al-Gars* as well (Chebchoub 1997a).

Appearing before Bou Awra are a series of petitioners, played by the other two actors in the show, one male and one female. First, two freedom fighters from the countryside who have defended Morocco during its independence war ask to share some of the countries riches. Next, a couple of rich, degenerate hedonists bribe Bou Awra in order to gain concessions illegally. Finally, a female student journalist and an unemployed water seller come forward and denounce Bou Awra and his machine. This play suggests a series of solutions to Morocco's social ills: unemployment may be assuaged through the ingenious creation of jobs, an economy may be created by reviving the country's cultural heritage, and corruption may be eradicated through literacy and the education of women. The play's title, which translates as *The Grain Silo*, refers to the wealth of the country that may either be hoarded by a greedy and corrupt upper class or shared by the people (Chebchoub 1997a)

As if internal bureaucracy were not devastating enough in North African countries, women are also, upon occasion, forced to deal with international bureaucracy. Latifa Toujani's performance piece, *Un Fax en dix metres des Nations Unis* (1997b), in which I participated, was created in response to just such a crisis. The U.N. faxed her a form, an application to enable her organization, Fem'art, to become a non-governmental organization (NGO). The form was ten meters long, stretched end-to-end, and composed entirely in English. Fortunately for Toujani's sanity and the preservation of her sense of humor in this situation, she speaks English. So do I, but the language of the document was almost as impenetrable to me, a native speaker, as it had been to her, written as it was in obfuscating jargon. Our response to this was to make an art performance about it, since the document in question defeated its own original intent. Sometimes, the only thing one can do is laugh.

FORCES OF CHANGE

In any society, there are forces that push against, re-form and contextualize the relationships between the individual and her family, her community, or her State. Time, space and movement all contribute to the mix, and to the plays of the study. One of the prejudices that Westerners sometimes harbor about the Orient is that it is timeless in contrast to the dynamic project of Greco-Roman inspired Western civilization. The plays, particularly those that deal with recent events, give the lie to this misguided notion.

Time (History)

A favorite topic for Maghrebian historical dramas is revolution. Three plays, written in the 1960s, deal directly with the Algerian War for Independence and its immediate aftermath. Three more, all written by Cixous or with her involvement, treat various revolutionary struggles around the globe. Another play concerns the first Gulf War. All include a component about the effects of revolution on female participants. *Rouge l'aube*, Djebar and Carn's 1960 Algerian war epic (1969), traces the fate of a large cast of combatants, including a young woman who runs away from home to join the fighting after her father and brother, also a *moujahadine*,[14] have forbidden it. The end of the play finds her in the women's prison, awaiting trial and possible execution.

Three of Myriam Ben's plays, *Leïla* (1988b), *Karim ou jusqu'à la fin de notre vie* (1967a), and *Promethée* (1967b), were written in response to the overthrow of Ben Bella. *Promethée* is allegorical, displacing the events of the coup to mythological Greece. The other two plays are less guarded, and although *Leïla* does not admit to being set in Algeria, the disguise is fairly thin. One must remember that after the coup, Ben returned to Algeria, and had to live under its government for many years. Openly criticizing Boumedienne's faction of the FLN would have been extremely dangerous, and while Ben was used to taking risks as a *moujahadite*, she picked her battles. *Karim* is a loosely structured 'prequel' to *Leïla*. It is set during the Algerian war, and uses some of the same characters as the latter piece, which was actually written first. In this way, Ben anchored the less overtly historical piece to its companion, letting anyone who knows both works realize her intent.

Karim is a short, straightforward play. The eponymous protagonist is a member of a revolutionary cell that he supports from his father's farm in the countryside. His father is dead: killed, he believes, by the French. Leïla is his fianceé. He and his widowed mother are alone at the farm when the leader of his cell, Si Slim, arrives with male and female followers in his entourage, Leïla among them, and announces that the farm is being appropriated to supply the revolutionary army. Karim considers this a great honor. While bringing his guests some tea, however, he overhears them say that they are the ones who have executed his father as a traitor, after a hasty, secret trial. Moreover, Si Slim discovers a love letter Karim is writing to Leïla and summarily informs him that Leïla is now the leader's wife. As Karim is recovering from his shock, the leader and his party leave, and, not realizing that he has overheard their admission, they hand him a gun. Karim watches them leave and then lies to his mother, telling her that his father was killed in combat while committing acts of bravery. The play closes on a scene of Karim contemplating the gun. We are not sure whether he will use it on Si Slim, the French, or himself.

Leïla does not pick up directly where *Karim* leaves off. It is set in a nameless kingdom, and Leïla is now the widowed sister-in-law of the king. In a move reminiscent of Shakespeare's Claudius, the king has killed his own brother, and now seeks to marry his brother's widow. Leïla knows that the king is a murderer, but can do nothing. She seeks out an old friend, Omar, with whom she had fought in the revolution. Omar tells her not to worry, because he is about to overthrow the king. He offers to protect her, but also expresses his love for her, implying that she must reciprocate as a condition of his

help. The king is indeed assassinated and Leïla returns to the palace. When Omar warns her that she will be arrested by his revolutionary comrades, she denounces his methods and tells him that a new order will not result from his violence. The play ends with her arrest.

In Ben's plays, Leïla stands both for the land over which the men are fighting, and for the female participants in the struggle. Her acceptance of the perfidious Si Slim in *Karim* demonstrates the naïveté with which many women approach revolutionary struggles. In her namesake play, she is sadder and wiser, and her ultimate refusal to ally herself with the man at the top of the power chain is an exercise of agency, maturity, and integrity.

Hélène Cixous writes plays about everything under the sun—except Algeria. Yet, her work is imbued with a consciousness of Algeria. This child of the Algerian revolution cannot get away from revolutionary struggles as a source for her dramatic inspiration. The plays from her Théâtre du Soleil period (1985-present) include three historical dramas about real-life revolutions, one—the aforementioned *Ville parjure* (1995)—about the AIDS crisis in France, one—*Tambours sur la digue* (1999)—about a natural disaster exacerbated by human misbehavior, and a new translation of Æschylus' *Eumenides* (1992). War and disaster are her fetishes, and unlike Fatima Gallaire, whose work is getting more optimistic in the face of Algeria's present torment, Cixous seems to be succumbing to despair.

The most recent of her revolutionary works actually lacks a war to write about. The events on which it is based were really more of a rout. 1997's *Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil* was composed "in harmony with" Soleil and artists from Chinese-occupied Tibet. The premise of the piece is metaperformative: the play opens as Soleil's actors are finishing the performance of another play and packing up their things to call it a night. They hear a knock on the door. The members of an exiled Tibetan opera troupe ask for shelter, and an artistic collaboration begins. Unfortunately, the text of this work remains unpublished, and the description of it on Soleil's website is scant. What can be ascertained is that the play is political; it agitates, as so many of Soleil's plays do, for the end to a grave social injustice, while offering audiences yet another variation on the company's specialty, East/West theatrical fusion.

Cixous' Soleil period began with a play about the independence struggles and resulting partition of the Indian sub-continent, *L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs rêves* (1987). The play follows the lives of Ghandi and Nehru as the two leaders try, and fail, to keep the country from coming apart. The sweeping historical saga uses a *hakawati* device, in the person of an itinerant Bengali woman named Haridasi. Ironically, Haridasi was played by the Algerian actor Baya Balal, who also appeared in *Norodom Sihanouk* (Cixous 1987, 242; Cixous 1985, 426). The following passage from the play is reminiscent of the nostalgia surrounding the religious tolerance between Muslims and Jews in the Maghreb prior to colonization. A Hindu soldier sings a Muslim song, and when someone asks him why, he replies:

> Allah is a name of God. God is the same God as God. God is great. God created man. Man was created to become human. I am Hindu. I am from Tamil Nadu. And tomorrow, I will be Indian. (Cixous 1987, 95)

In *L'Indiade*, the land is not symbolized by a woman, but by a dancing female bear, Moona Baloo. Moona is the symbol of the hope for a united India. She does not know her own strength, however, and when she gets loose she kills indiscriminately, finally turning on her owner. He is forced to kill her. India is partitioned, at the cost of many lives, and Ghandi is assassinated.

Cixous' other historical epic, *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge* (1985), traces the downfall of the Cambodian ruler, the rise of the Khemer Rouge, and the tragedy of Pol Pot's killing fields. It is even larger in scope and length than *L'Indiade*, and the *hakawati* position is filled by a number of characters, among whom it rotates. Many characters in the play are ghosts. Indeed, as the play progresses, the stage fills up with ghosts as more people are massacred by Pol Pot's soldiers. The most memorable member of the spectral crowd is Suramarit, Sihanouk's father, who comes back now and again to give him advice. Suramarit is a figure of whimsy, who, at one point, mounts a borrowed bicycle and pedals to Beijing to warn his son that his country is coming apart at the seams. The play ends as one young man, the adopted son of a murdered Vietnamese woman, escapes across the border and into the Cambodian diaspora of the U.S., as all of the ghosts watch in silence.

The Gulf War play, *Parole Nocturne #7*, is the last of the *Klem Ellil* series authored by Souad Ben Slimane. It is divided into two parts. Part One played to packed houses during the first Gulf War, and is the most famous piece she has ever written. The play depicts the breakdown of a marriage as the husband becomes so obsessed by the televised images of the war that he neglects his spouse altogether. Part Two has a female narrator. Inspired by the writings of Nostradamus, it poses the question of what might happen if Arabs won a third world war. It concludes that world domination is a bad idea, no matter who is in power (Ben Slimane 1997).

As we have seen, historical pieces may be displaced in time, and even mythologized to protect the author and evade censorship. The 1960s political climate in which Ben's plays were written demanded such subterfuge. *Nour* (Lhassani 1994) is a more subtle case of the same idea. Lhassani is a lawyer, as well as an author, and the trial scene in *Nour* is a veiled criticism of Morocco's system of justice prior to the 2004 revisions of the Family Code. Cixous used allegory stylistically, not out of necessity, in *La Ville parjure* (1995). Ben Slimane's plays were in harmony with the political climate of the early 1990s in Tunisia, and so her work was not controversial. Recounting history can be risky, particularly if the events are current.

Praxis feminism engages in the project of reclaiming women's history. Some works play up women's participation in events about which audiences think they already know. The revolution plays do this very well. Other pieces, like Mernissi's 1990 play, *Al-Saïda al-Horra*, call audience attention to an important woman who has been forgotten altogether. Plays like Chebchoub's solo *halqa*, *Moulat Sserr* (1998), tell stories of ordinary women and extraordinary acts of courage. *Moulat Sserr* is the story of Hadda, an historical figure, who was raped and abducted into prostitution. She became a famous *cheikha*, and when she could not obtain release from the brothel in which she was imprisoned, she burned it down (Chebchoub 1997a; Chebchoub 1998).

Space

Another force that acts upon the lives of women in life and on stage is space. Walls mark feminized space in North Africa; the interior space of the home has traditionally been the appropriate place for women. When they move outside of the walls, they are transgressing into masculinized space: dangerous territory, where they can be seen by men who are not members of their family. At first glance, women's dramatic literature in North Africa, as well imagery in the visual arts, seems overwhelmingly concerned with interior spaces. Women do move in and out of the interior spaces, but only when they are in some way disturbing the roles prescribed for them. For example, Sedka, Pierre's lover in *La fête virile* (Gallaire 1992), appears briefly at the beginning of the play in a tryst with him, out-of-doors and obviously out-of-bounds.

Rimm, la gazelle (Gallaire 1993b) and *Témoignage contre un homme stérile* (Gallaire 1987) take place in claustrophobically small places: a Paris apartment and a room in a French home for the aged. Rimm's one-sided dialogue with her dead mother is laden with references to stuffed corridors and overflowing rooms in her ancestral home, peopled by squabbling female mourners attending her mother's funeral. Madame Bertin is surrounded by the flotsam of her past, massive pieces of furniture that have been brought to the old-age home from the house that she and her spouse have been forced by time to abandon. In *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a), the interior space is bigger. A courtyard accommodates a large group of middle-aged women in the first act, and in the second, a chorus of old women. Nevertheless, the firstact dances and the murders at the end of the play tax the capacity of the space to contain them. The effect in all of these works is of walls straining to hold in check the unruly female body.

The association of private, interior space with the feminine and the sinister is clearly delineated in *Princesses*. The mobile nature of Princesse is contrasted with static choruses of 'entombed' women, whom we see only within the confines of the house. Like Cassandra in the *Oresteia,* Princesse is killed indoors by a female perpetrator. In order for her murder to take place out-of-doors, a man would have to be the assassin. Unlike the *Oresteia,* however, the patriarchal machine behind the murder is made manifest in *Princesses*. The tribunal of elderly women who carry out the killing are authorized to do so by men, who appear on stage at the very end of the play. Moreover, the tribunal is a dying wish of Princesse's father, who leaves his money to the elders for the construction of a new mosque in return for their cooperation.

A complementary discourse that represents feminized interior space as protective, rather than constraining, is found in Farida Benlyazid's 1989 Moroccan screenplay *The Gate of Heaven is Open [Bab al-Samaa Maftouh]* (Benlyazid 1990). While this study does not officially include any films, this one is worth mentioning because it provides an alternative reading of feminized space. This text concerns the founding of a *zawiyya,* or Islamic house of refuge, for some women who are in distress, and the re-awakening of Muslim faith in its founder, Nadia. The *zawiyya* is an inviolate space that must be respected, even by patriarchs, although this particular institution is threatened by a legal challenge from Nadia's expatriated brother, who wants to sell his share of the inherited building that houses it. This piece upsets the notion that all bourgeois Moroccan women can and should remain indoors: Nadia may lose her home, and the respectability and

safety it represents, when it suits the economic interests of a male relative. In addition to the women who have sought respite from domestic violence in the shelter, there is Fatima, a physics professor who locks *herself* in at night because the competing demands of a professional life in a traditional milieu have left her a little mad. Like the battered child that becomes self-destructive in order to save her parents the trouble of abusing her, Fatima locks her door to prevent herself from escaping entirely the strictures of patriarchy.

Although women in interior spaces dominate this study, there are some notable exceptions to the rule. *Rouge, l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) shuttles between public and domestic spaces as diverse as the *souk* [marketplace], a private home, a battlefield, and the prison of the final act. Women move out of the home and onto the battlefield, they undergo hardship and violence, and they finish their movement locked up in the prison. Men begin in the ambiguous space of the *souk*, traverse the battlefield, and complete their journey trapped and feminized between the prison walls. Djebar and Carn thus manipulate the theatrical space to draw powerful parallels between colonialism and the repression of women. The *souk* serves this Algerian play as a carnivalesque field of permission; a no-man's land where things are not as they seem. People and events change their shape; performances within the performance are staged. This is the home of the blind *hakawati* Poet, a Tiresian raconteur whose intertextual commentary on the action functions as unheeded prophesy. In addition to providing "ritual catharsis and/or community renewal," North African marketplace oratory, like Carnival staged in formal Caribbean theatre, "positions itself deliberately and self-reflexively as art, even if Eurocentric modes of thinking would deny it that status" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 88).

Fadela Assous'1993 adaptation of Omar Fetmouche's one-woman play, *Le Sourire Blessé* (1995), is the excavation of a life lived in pain. In order to change locales and characters rapidly, Assous uses a simple unit set. Panels resembling knives, a reference to the slaughterhouse that is mentioned in the play, form a double arch through which Assous passes repeatedly. The stage becomes multiple interior and exterior spaces, and since the characters Assous plays are, for the most part, liminal, they occupy both and move between them. Time is also fluid in the play; the narrative is not linear. At the center of the playing space is a trash-midden where the widow Douja, the primary character, unearths properties that trigger memories for the character and help the actor to tell a story of disenfranchisement and excruciating loss. A damaged stool is cradled and becomes a child, and scraps of paper fly through the air, punctuating the textual rhythms. Assous, who is no stranger to the traditional forms, inscribes a spiraling pattern on the stage that is reminiscent of Chebchoub's description of the *halqa* (Chebchoub, 1997b). The spiral becomes tighter and tighter, until she is left in the middle, bereft of hope. She breaks out of the pattern, however and clings to the knife-edges of the panels defiantly. Although she herself is trash on the heap, a throwaway woman of no use to her society, she refuses this position and claims agency instead, "Free woman. Rebel woman. I refuse to die." Her trash heap is transmuted into a field of possibility, precisely because she has nothing more to lose.

Migration

Time and space have an effect on an individual's familial and social relationships. Migration disrupts the individual's conception of space and time. The products of such dislocating stress appear in *Molly des sables*, *Zajel maure du désir* (Djabali 1997b), *On peut toujours rêver* (Bouqallal 1994), *Rimm, la gazelle* (Gallaire 1993b), *Au cœur, la brûlure* (Gallaire 1994a) and *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a). The next generation copes differently as it looks back at the Maghreb through European-born eyes, in *beur*-themed plays like *Les Yeux de ma mère* (Sebbar 1992), *Binet el-Youm* (Baouqallal 1984; Bouqallal 1995), *Enfants d'Aïcha* (Troupe la Rose des Sables, 1984), and, to a certain extent, *Family Portrait* (Bonal 1984). A question one must address is: for the women of the Magreb, is migration equivalent to exile? This is a particularly difficult question for the Algerians. Fatima Gallaire says that she does not consider herself exiled, even though, for many years, she was not able to go to Algeria because that government would not grant her a passport (1997). Myriam Ben, on the other hand considers herself to be in exile, although she has been in France for many years (Ben 1998c). For the younger writers, perticularly the *beurs* like Nacèra Bouabdallah, the concern is less about the old country and more about transforming the new one into a more pleasing shape.

In her book, *Women in Exile*, Mahnaz Afkhami quotes Marjorie Agosin: "Being in exile is being outside, at the edge. In that sense perhaps all women are in exile perpetually" (1994, 146). Like women all over the globe, Agosin and Afkhami are finding the possibilities that exist within conditions of marginalization, and psychic as well as physical exile. While Afkhami's book and the women in it chronicle lives of suffering, her conclusion is that physical exile is a condition of possibility for women, a kind of re-birth. If she and her subjects are correct, then the œuvre of North African francophone women writers and artists now living in Europe and North America can be analyzed in a positive light, as a site of hope and transformation. The plays and performances produced by North African women in diaspora seek new answers to the challenges of living as women in their societies of origin. This marginal writing, by exploiting the liberating potential of its own liminal status, holds as well new possibilities for women in the world at large.

The condition of exile is itself not easy to define. As Rosi Braidotti has pointed out, the metaphor of woman-as-planetary-exile has some dangerous limitations. It is absolutely necessary that the *metaphor* of 'the exile,' useful as it is, not be applied so casually as to render the word meaningless (1992, 8). There is a profound difference between the malaise of cultural exclusion and the gravity of physical exile. Nevertheless, the metaphor works precisely because there is a connection between the two conditions. Exile in its most general sense is simply the state of being excluded from one's culture of origin. Exile can be imposed or chosen; it can be physical or psychic. It thus encompasses Braidotti's preferred metaphors: the nomad, who passes back and forth across cultural boundaries, and the migrant who lives, isolated by difference, in the Other's midst (8–9). One can be born into exile, and as Agosin has pointed out, being born female is precisely this condition. While exile seems almost always to contain an element of pain, it can by no means be regarded simply as a site of unrelieved oppression from which there is no recovery. As the volumes of diasporic, post-colonial literatures and other arts from

around the world have already demonstrated, exile is often the catalyst for tremendous, if complicated, productivity.

There are many kinds of exile for North African francophone artists. There are those exiled physically, born in North Africa, now living in Europe or North America either voluntarily or because they fear for their lives. There are the exiles-at-home, North African-born and residing there still, but disenfranchised by the fact of their femaleness. Finally, there are those born into exile, the children of migrants who translate themselves back into North Africa from mixed perspectives. All of these women come from varied class and ethnic backgrounds. Despite their common gender and area of origin, their 'between-ness' confounds easy categorization.

To celebrate exile as a site of creativity obscures the fact that many do not survive its rigors. For someone facing a threat such as decapitation or engorgement,[15] however, there may be no choice. For an artist equally compelled to create and to survive, exile may be the only solution, but it extracts a price that is literally the loss of one's society. For the North African in exile, there will never again be membership at the center of a culture, because in Europe the North African body is marked by difference. This is problematic for men because they are experiencing it for the first time. Women, who have always already been marked by their sex, have a greater possibility for productive exile because they have developed techniques for surviving disenfranchisement (Afkhami 1994, 15).

The works in this study that best illustrate the idea of exile are the ones that embody it. Like Assous' protagonist, exile is embodied in Gallaire's bizarre monologist, Madame Bertin. If Rimm looks resolutely forward, Madame Bertin lives exclusively to tell us about the past. Madame Bertin abuses both her auditors and the people who enter her room as if to reassure the audience that she is indeed senile, and yet her recollections are clear and lucid; she is both lyrical and obscene:[16]

> Protection, help…. My ass! It's the woman who does everything. Marriage? An institution invented by men for the comfort of men. Don't talk to me about wedded bliss if you please! And above all not about the happiness of women. If a man believes he'll have more comfort with a cow, he'll marry a cow! (Gallaire 1987, 52)

As shocking as Madame Bertin's outbursts are, she nevertheless paints a coherent picture of a sterile marital life that she redeems through the manipulation of the gender margin. In her strange enactments are the implements of hope and change, renewal and reconciliation.

A major feature of North African men's diasporic writing is the *mythe du retour* [the myth of the return], a nostalgic desire for an impossible return journey to a North Africa that no longer exists, and perhaps never did. More and more young *beur* writers in France and Belgium, for example, are giving up altogether on the idea of going 'home' to a country where they have never lived (Bouraoui 1988, 223). For women writers, the return journey takes on a practical aspect: women go home because they have work to do. The myth of the return is thus harnessed to the idea that women can transform the homelands of North Africa, from the outside, into places where women can live in safety.

To address the question of the 'return,' Gallaire has provided two plays wherein an Algerian woman travels from France back to her rural home to pay her respects to a

parent who has died, *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a) and *Rimm, la gazelle* (Gallaire 1993b). Rimm and Princesse could easily be the same woman, but for the diverging consequences of their separate journeys. Princesse is murdered by a group of village elders, women fulfilling the deathbed wishes of Princesse's father. Rimm also makes the return to Algeria, buries her mother, and returns to Paris. We meet her in Paris a year later, preparing to return home yet again, this time to fulfill a role as a leader in her society of origin:

> I discovered them when I stayed recently in Algiers: I realized that the women were in danger of dying. What's that? Not only the women? No doubt, Mom, no doubt. But it's the women who called to me. It seems that I know how to say things, to find them out, to present them well. I don't believe I'll be the warrior-woman who saves millions of girls, young women and old women from an intolerable situation but I sense right now my place is over there. One woman less in France doesn't matter. One determined woman arriving on Algerian soil, that counts. (Gallaire 1993c, 57)

Rimm is venturing into an uncertain future, but one that holds the possibility of satisfying work as a women's advocate in her native land. In doing so, she acknowledges the legacy of her mother's love and support. That both of these futures can exist for women attempting to return to and live independently in Algeria is the beguiling central problem of Gallaire's 'woman plays.'

Gallaire treats many aspects of the journey 'home' in the plays she writes. In *Au loin, les caroubiers* (1993a), she explodes the myth of the nostalgic return in a quietly wrenching play about Franco-Algerian tensions fifteen years after the War for Independence has ended. Two families, one Algerian and the other *pied-noir*, have a reunion, not having seen each other since the end of the war. The two families had been neighbors and best friends; the children, Khader, Laziza and Chris, had played together. In the intervening years, the children have grown up and become parents and now the French family has returned to Algeria to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Independence.

As one might expect, the reunion is awkward, and sweetly funny. Chris has brought a new friend to share in the hospitality—Enrico,[17] a famous Jewish singer and guitarist from Constantine who has been forbidden a visa by the Algerian government, but may enter in the company of the French former police commissar, Chris' father. They come bearing gifts—chocolate and tomato paste—things that the Algerians cannot purchase in their newly liberated country. Laziza and Chris shyly recall that they were childhood sweethearts; Tama, Laziza's mother and the host, fusses over Chris and Enrico; Enrico praises Tama's knowledge of Constaninian cuisine; and they all sit down to engage in a ubiquitous North African social ritual, the consumption of coffee.

This pleasant reverie is interrupted by the arrival of Fred, a drunken *pied-noir* neighbor who 'went native' during the colonial period, and did not leave Algeria at the end of the war. He quarrels with the Commissar, and the ensuing argument drives the revelations at the core of the play. While the others attempt to pretend that nothing is wrong, Fred accuses the Commissar of torturing young members of the resistance—

Tama's thenteenaged son Khader among them. As his accusations grow wilder, the Commissar becomes more and more agitated; finally he admits that he knew of a covert operation, code-named "Wheat in the Grass," whereby French youths, pretending sympathy to the cause, had infiltrated the resistance. Khader refuses to believe, but Tama silences him with, "Be quiet, forgetful child! Have you forgotten the million ways you were tortured? Passing all modesty, should I, your mother, remind you of them?" (Gallaire 1993a, 44). Fred breaks down, and admits that he was an informer. Both he and the commissar are implicated in the torture of Khader. The hapless traitor is escorted home. There will be no happy reunion between the families, only painful silences. The visit will continue, but the world has turned upsidedown. As El Haj, Khader's father, and the Commissar lead Fred away, Chris, Enrico and Jeanette, Chris' mother, cover the eyes of Tama, Laziza and Khader in an attempt to spare them further hurt. It is the beginning of an apology for all that has occurred; an acknowledgment that denial of the war's atrocities can only make them worse. There can be no reconciliation without reparation. Jeanette asks, "Tell me, Tama, those carob trees you could see in the distance, are they still there?" Tama replies, "No, someone cut them down!" (47).

Gallaire wrote *Au loin* at the behest of Jean-Christian Grinevald, the director of the Théâtre de la Main d'or in Paris. Grinevald, himself a *pied-noir,* asked for a piece about Algeria, but one "without a drop of blood." The play that resulted is delicate, subtle and, by the author's own admission, inspired by the style of Chekov (Gallaire 1993a, 3). The image of the carob trees is a tribute to his cherry orchard, and Gallaire's Algerian and *pied-noir* characters cling to their bourgeois lifestyle and their gentle reminiscences with the tenacity of Ranevskaya. The message in both plays is the same: there is no going back. However, for Chekhov, the return to the cherry orchard is prevented by major changes in Russian society. Gallaire seems to be saying that for France and Algeria, things have not changed enough. For the *pieds-noirs,* the way back is blocked by an unwillingness to assume responsibility for the atrocities of the past. For Algeria, the way back is an illusion.

North African women writers and artists, exiled by force, birth, or choice, are using their bodies of words and the impetus of exclusion to go on walkabout, and they are taking their audiences with them. Through the medium of performance texts, and using the slippery tools of the *pluri-langue,* they shatter the stereotypes of the Oriental woman that exist in both North Africa and the West. Ringing changes on the *mythe du retour,* they propose constructive revisions to their societies of origin, and leverage their exile by carving out new spaces, with women at the center, where it is easier to do so: in the land of the Other.

APOCALYPTIC VISIONS: WE ALL FALL DOWN

Not all plays in this study offer uplifting messages, optimistic visions and constructive strategies for change. Some are uncompromising in their bleakness. These nightmares come from two kinds of writers: those who are new at their craft, and the very experienced. Merabti's *They Have Destroyed My Life* (1999) and Gaaloul's *Le Refuge* (1994) are examples of youthful pessimism, and as such are not particularly endowed with nuance. Indeed, Gaaloul, who write her play in 1971, but did not publish it until

twenty-three years later, includes a preface in which she denounces her own ideas, warning the reader that she has completely reversed her opinions (1994, 1). One would expect the collage plays about the current Algerian civil strife, *Algérie en éclats, Un Couteau dans le soleil* (Aït el Hadj and Bennour, 1996), and *Kitman* (Achour 1995), which are described in chapter four and will be discussed in chapter six, to be apocalyptic, but their authors demonstrate great resilience in the face of adversity, and as such, do not produce work unrelieved by hope.

Among the most experienced writers, Gallaire, Cixous, and Leïla Houari have produced tragedies that follow the Western model, up to the point at which they subvert the model in order to acknowledge the female protagonist's agency. I do not include Gallaire in the "apocalyptic visions" category, however, because she always suggests an escape from the tragic scenario, and because her plays speak to each other in a larger context of optimism. For every Princesse who dies, there is a Rimm who lives. Cixous is not so quick to see the redeeming factor, and this suggests that she has never made peace with her vexed positioning with regard to her country of birth. Cixous' Soleil plays of the 1980s, *Indiade* (1987) and *Norodom Sihanouk* (1985), were grim; her work with the company in the 1990s was poised at the edge of the abyss, ready to jump. It is possible that *Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil* provided an antidote to her pessimism, in the way that *Rimm* balances *Princesses*, but since it was collectively composed and remains unpublished, it is difficult to tell.

It would seem, then, that Cixous is becoming less hopeful as time goes on. At the end of *La Ville perjure*, the mother whose sons have died asks the audience what she should have done, and suggests that her only solace is to be silent, "But if I forge all the silences/Who, among you, will cry out?" (Cixous, 1995, 219). Then Night, an allegorical character, offers her a place in the heavens, suggesting that there is no recourse for the wretched in life, and consolation only after death. *Tambours sur la digue* (Cixous 1999; Cixous 2000), a nightmare vision, does not offer any consolation at all. It depicts the complete failure of redemption, as if to say, "This is all there is."

La Ville parjure ends with a flood. *Tambours sur la digue* is about a flood. The story of the Great Flood goes back to the Babylonian Gilgamesh epics. It appears in the Bible as a kind of rehearsal for the Apocalypse of the New Testament and in the Quran as a prequel to the Qiama, or Last Judgement. It has meaning for all of the people of the Book (Jews, Christians and Muslims), because they hold the story of Noah, also known as Nuh or Noach, in common.[18] According to the Torah and the Bible, the Creator made a covenant with Noah never to flood the Earth again. What Cixous seems to be saying in her latest works is that evil has so overtaken the world that the Creator will be moved to forsake His promise, or perhaps, that humans have taken upon themselves so much wickedness that they have usurped the destructive power reserved only for deity.

Such pessimism aside, what possible purpose could the theatricalization of an apocalyptic scenario serve? To what use has the end-of-days been put by women writing out of the Maghreb? It is not too difficult to imagine Cixous being preoccupied with the violence recently occurring in her natal land, but what about Houari, whose country of origin is relatively stable? Furthermore, one wonders if the apocalyptic moment written by each of these authors is gendered. It is my hypothesis that in the case of both writers, the apocalypse functions, through its use as a distorting literary and scenic *mise en abîme*

device, as what Catherine Keller would call a feminist counter-apocalypse, one that invites the reader or viewer to break the "apocalypse habit" (1996, 271–310).

Tambours sur la digue [Drums on the Dam] is a fable about a kingdom facing a great inundation. In Cixous' version of the flood at the end of the world, the local ruler knows that the flood is coming, but corrupt factions in his State have ignored flaws in the seawalls, and the walls have weakened. A seer predicts the destruction of the kingdom, and his daughter, Duan, goes up to high ground with a corps of drummers to send warning signals to the people. As the king tries to decide which of his districts to sacrifice to the flood, the arts quarter or the business district, his nephew plots to make certain that the area where he has built his business concerns will be spared. Many try to reach their families in the countryside, but too late. It soon becomes apparent that the flood will destroy everything, and the people, with no place to go, turn upon each other. In the ensuing disaster, all of the characters, except for Baï Ju, the puppet master from the arts quarter, are annihilated. Even Duan, whose bravery and cleverness urge that she should be spared, is killed by her lover, Wang Po, because she tries to stop him as he succumbs to a murderous frenzy born of despair.[19]

Tambours sur la digue was written to be performed by actors behaving as *bunraku* puppets, and draws from an eclectic mix of Asian performance disciplines. In the Japanese *joruri/bunraku* tradition, large-sized puppets are manipulated, not with strings, but by three operators, two of whom are clothed entirely in black, who move the puppets from behind to accompanying narration. In Cixous' play the puppets are actors, who speak their own lines but are 'operated' by other actors. This striking device changes the scale with which the audience views the spectacle and creates some breathtaking special effects. At the end of the play, the stage platform is lifted to reveal a pool, representing the flood, and actual puppets are thrown from the backstage area into the water. The Flood, itself a character, speaks to the audience, saying:

> "Water," you said, "after all, it's not fire!" But it is to me, since the world has existed, that the Gods have entrusted their beginnings and all of their endings. Today, I am entering into all of your affairs. You are all my fish, and I have come to take you back to the original Nothing. You had the earth for your ark, and through the sin of inattention and a laziness of the soul, you punched a hole in it. You have had eyes for nothing. And yet, while the forests still contained me, wasn't I a big enough mirror for you? (Cixous 1999, 75–76)

The Flood exits, recedes. The puppet master enters, without operators, as if he has suddenly come to independent life, and wades into the pool. He gently removes each puppet from the water and sets it up against the edge of the pool, facing the audience, and the performance ends.

My colleague Marilyn Pukkila, a librarian and scholar of comparative religions, and I disagree on the apocalyptic status of the Biblical flood. I am much indebted to her for clarifying my thinking on the subject. She does not view the Flood as the end of the world, and has pointed out to me that in the New Testament Apocalypse scenario written by John of Patmos, the seas die. Life as we know it ceases to exist. Whereas Noah was permitted to preserve two of each living thing, the world-hereafter of the Apocalypse is

cleansed of nature. In this sense, the Great Flood serves as a cataclysmic beginning *in* nature, not the end *of* it. Undeniable as these differences are, both the Flood and the Apocalypse serve as metaphorical gateways to utopian lives-hereafter, available only to the righteous. They have, for millennia, offered the disenfranchised, the unwillingly liminal, the ultimate hope of ingroup status. One story is written as a legendary past example of the reward afforded to the truly worthy, the other, as an endlessly deferred moment-yet-to-come toward which the would-be worthy must constantly strive. As Keller reminds us, pointing to apocalyptic feminist rhetoric, any cause can adopt the "apocalypse habit," provided that it is willing to undergo the binary categorization and violent cleansing that separate the right-minded from everyone else (1996, 224–271).

Cixous' vision of the apocalypse, however, does not celebrate righteousness. Its moment-after is meta-theatrical; it occurs at the extradiegetic and intradiegetic[20] levels of the narrative stratification. Moreover, it is of a particular nature: it is a *mise en abîme*. The *mise en abyme* is a literary device that is linguistically related to the idea of apocalypse through heraldry. The word *abyme* has two spellings in French; conventionally, spelled "abyme," it refers to the center of a heraldic device, or escutcheon. Spelled "abîme," it means "abyss." To further confuse the issue, the English word "abyss," is also sometimes used to refer to the center of an escutcheon (Ron 1987, 420). The term was coined for literary use by André Gide in 1893. In a passage from his diary for that year, Gide stated that he took pleasure in finding a work's whole subject reflected in a portion of the work. Gide made reference, by way of example, to mirrors depicted in paintings reflecting the rooms in which they are hung, as in *Las Meniñas* by Velázquez. He also cited *The Murder of Gonzago,* the play within Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as an example of this phenomenon, his name for which he derived from the heraldic practice of placing, within the larger device of an escutcheon, a smaller one that echoes the shape of the one containing it (418).

Lucien Dällenbach, a major commentator on the *mise en abyme* device, notes that it possesses a quality of reflexivity as well as repetition, and an ability to make manifest the readability and formalism of a text (Dällenbach 1989, 8; Ron 1987, 418–419). What is most interesting about the *mise en abyme* for our purposes, however, is the imperfection of its status as a copy of the original. Moshe Ron, building on Dällenbach's work, asserts that in heraldry, "the miniaturization concerns only the contours or frame of the respective escutcheons and not the symbolic charges they bear. The possibility of the kind of infinite regress we used to see on Quaker Oats boxes does not occur…" (1987, 420). One can take this a step further by noting that even the regress on the Quaker Oats boxes is not perfect; the repeating picture of a man holding a box with a picture of himself holding a box with a picture of himself holding a box, *ad infinitum,* is stopped by the limitations of the printing medium. Unlike the infinite imaginary possibility, the viewable image is finite, and the miniaturized copies, distorted.

This distortion of the imperfect copy in a *mise en abyme* device performs an important and productive slippage, like the one that Judith Butler finds at the intersection of gender and performance (1993, 52). Resignification in the *mise en abyme* takes the form of a change in scale. Indeed, Ron calls it a "rebellion against scale" (1987, 430). Dällenbach, this time speaking of Magritte and his use of painterly devices that are both *trompes l'oeil* and *mises en abyme,* notes that because of its distorting quality, the *mise en abyme* can undermine the project of mimesis:

> [S]uch a manner of ensnaring representation in its own trap entails certain failures which alert the reader, undermining his referential illusion, snatching him away from his transference to arouse a critical point of view. (1980, 443)

While Dällenbach (1989, 8) and Ron (1987, 420) both avoid conflating the literary *abyme* and the abyss of signification, others have been more willing to note the interplay of "i" and "y" as a productive tension. Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons, writing about Georges Bataille, notes that his use of the device creates in his characters a "loss of continuity," a "putting into the abyss" (1995, 92). She contends that the structural *mise en abyme*, having generated a *mise en abîme* in Bataille's characters, then reverberates into a second *mise en abîme* in his readers or "witnesses." In this way, the reader experiences "a loss that is neither fully lost or gained, but caught…in the paradox of a simultaneous and impossible loss *and* gain" (92, original emphasis). This reverberating, reflexive putting-into-the-abyss is precisely what Cixous has done in the final moments of *Tambours sur la digue.* The change of scale from actor-cum-puppet to actual puppet is the initial *mise en abyme* device. It places the characters, and then the audience, in the paradoxical abyss of productive loss, which is, in this case, also a literal abyss: the apocalyptic end of the world of the play.

Or is it an apocalypse? No character, except Baï Ju, the puppet master who has slipped his diegetic moorings, survives. The flood is not a gateway that ushers in the newest millenium. No rainbow appears, and New Jerusalem does not descend from the heavens arrayed like a bride. There is no moment after, not even for the one character, Duan, who has demonstrated no flaws. The juxtaposition of Duan's virtue and her sex undermines this apocalypse, turning it back upon itself: she is a woman, but she is not the site of original sin. She is demonstrably worthy of a life hereafter, and yet she does not live. In the end, her puppet, like those of all the other characters, stares sightlessly back at the audience like a corpse.

Our other apocalyptic author, Leïla Houari, was born in Casablanca in 1958, grew up in Europe and now divides her time between Morocco, Belgium and France. She has been categorized, in France and Belgium, as a *beur*. Unlike Cixous' much performed apocalypse play, Houari's surreal drama, *Les Cases basses [The Lower Compartments]* (1993) is a published work for which no performance history is available. I have never found a record of it having been staged. A more recent Houari play about the lives of immigrant women in Brussels, titled *J'y suis restèe depuis [I Have Stayed Here Since…]*, was in production at the Dito-Dito theatre collective in 2000. This makes it more likely that *Les Cases basses* has also been done. since Houari clearly has an interest in theatre that goes beyond closet drama (European Network 2000). *Les Cases basses* is set in what appears to be a mental institution, somewhere, the author specifies, in the Occident. The *mise en scène* consists of a long corridor that runs past a series of seven doors to rooms the audience never sees. At the back, there is a guardian's glassed-in cage and an elevator that always arrives from an upper floor. Although I do not believe that Houari wrote this play under the direct influence of John of Patmos, it is interesting to recall that seven is a significant number in biblical apocalyptic structure.

In the crucible of the lower compartments, the denizens interact with each other and their keeper, Blouson Blanche, so called because the blouse of her uniform is white. Lie

and Slam are a middle-aged couple but they live apart, occupying separate compartments. Lie is hungry for conversation, but Slam constantly implores her to let him be silent. They have lived, we learn, in a mountainous region where Slam was happy, but Lie was uncomfortably cold and hungry. She likes the city, but he does not. He has brought them to the compartments so that he can rest and reflect, but she is deteriorating from depression. Their conversations are painfully elliptical and it is clear that their relationship is reaching its end.

Kaâle is a Black African man who sings, but whose body has forgotten how to dance to the songs he knows. He speaks of having been displaced, of singing patiently while waiting for history to clarify itself, and of being haunted by the faces of starving children who look like owls. He becomes psychically enmeshed with a new arrival, a blond man named Roubiau, whose wife has driven him out of their relationship by singing so she would not have to listen to him speak. Roubiau recounts his flight from this unbearable situation to an exotic island locale, where he was still haunted by the voice of his wife.

Kaâba is a prostitute with a penchant for jumping—out of windows, down stairwells. She holds her hyper-sexualization in front of herself like a shield, and jumps at every illusion of either escape or attention. Ginon is a former government minister whose retirement has thrown him into an existential crisis and cost him his memory. He complains constantly about the meals served at the institution, but cannot remember if he has eaten them. The occupant of the seventh compartment is Tôwa, who speaks only to Blouson Blanche and is never seen by the audience. She is a mysterious Other, who invokes for an Occidental audience the trope of Sheherazade and the discourse of the veil. She is a storyteller, and when she stops telling her story, everyone in the vicinity perishes. She is the site of Houari's apocalyptic moment.

Blouson Blanche, an indifferent and sloppy keeper, is as bored and restless as her charges. At every opportunity, that is to say when no one else is listening, she goes to the door of Tôwa's room and badgers her to tell a story. It is always the same story, and Tôwa tells it with reluctance, much as one would humor an imploring child. The inmates catch her apparently talking to herself—they cannot hear Tôwa—and threaten to tell the Higher Authorities about her apparent instability. They blackmail Blouson Blanche into letting them have a party. Her authority weakened, she loses control of them, and some begin to leave. Lie, weary of Slam's apparent indifference to her needs, packs a bag and heads for the city. Slam retreats into his compartment. Kaâle decides to go back to Africa, and Roubiau asks to go with him.

Ginon remains mired in his crisis of memory and is terrified of silence. He says:

> All those nights, if you had known how I suffer. I think no one knows that I exist…. Maybe we have never known. Maybe we really have to know the end in order to figure it out. Kaâle swears it's really stupid to know when everything is going to end all my life I've kept my mouth shut, and now, here where I am, all that's waiting for me is silence forever… (Houari 1993, 84)

So uttering, he collapses and dies. Shortly thereafter, Kaâba loses the use of her legs because she has damaged them while jumping after men, but refuses to use the

wheelchair Blouson Blanche offers her, stating that she prefers to be in contact with the ground. She drags herself off to her room.

Blouson Blanche, realizing that world she thinks she controls is unraveling, tells Tôwa that she has decided to end things, and begs her to tell her story one more time. Tôwa remarks that there will be dangerous consequences even for the others—has Blouson Blanche thought of that? Blouson Blanche replies cryptically that the others are all far enough away. Tôwa acquiesces. She begins, tying this final part of her tale to the previous segment she had related, one that told of her own encounter with a beautiful stranger on a beach. The story is a fable about a nude woman with enormous breasts who emerges from the sea and offers a watching boy-child the gold that pours from her mouth each time she speaks. When he asks for a chance to embrace her breasts instead, she disappears, leaving the boy with two gold tears tattooed onto his cheeks (Houari 1993, 94). As she finishes, Tôwa gently invites Blouson Blanche into her room, and as she enters an explosion, emanating from the room, destroys the institution.

It is evident that Tôwa, the invisible storyteller, is a sign for the fear that women have of acting in accordance with their own desires, and the sometimes violent liberation that happens when they do. The institution's loss is mourned only by the clean-up crew that comes in during the play's epilogue to pick through its ruins. Blouson Blanche has perpetrated Armageddon to end the cycle of cruelty in which she serves as reluctant jailer. Her self-immolation, for it is clear that she knows beforehand that it will happen, quite simply sets her free from the lower rooms wherein she, too, is a prisoner. It does so, however, at a price. Recall that Slam and Kaâba remain in their rooms. Blouson Blanche has bought her freedom-in-death at the expense of at least two other deaths; three, if one judges Tôwa to be an entity outside of Blouson Blanche's tortured imagination.

The *mise en abîme* device in *Les Cases basses* is less apparent, and in some ways more vertiginous, than the flood in *Tambours sur la digue*. It relies on our willingness to accept that the boy in the story-within stands for Blouson Blanche. Likewise, the woman from the sea is a reflection of Tôwa, even though Tôwa is also a witness to the exchange between them as a homodiegetic narrator. The gold that tumbles from the woman's mouth is the story that Tôwa tells, and the boy's demand for touch is Blouson Blanche's entry into Tôwa's room. There is one critical difference between the original and the copy, however. The woman from the sea refuses the boy's demand for access, but Tôwa consents to Blouson Blanche's transgression of the boundary between them. This slippage produces the explosion that ends their world.

Unlike Duan, who works to save her world by sounding out its heartbeat with her drums, Blouson Blanche actively seeks to destroy the lower compartments. Caught in the righteous fervor of her own self-interest, she appoints herself worthy to confront, and presumably master, her self-created apocalypse. We who watch from the outside know, however, that there is no more a moment-after for her than there is for Duan. Indeed, the revelation of this apocalypse—for that is what 'apocalypse' means: 'revelation'—is that Blouson Blanche's remains cannot even be distinguished from those of the others by the men picking through the rubble. She is nothing special, after all.

Derrida reminds us that without truth there is no apocalypse, no revelation, no unveiling (1984, 24). He also asserts that the nuclear end-story of the world in which *we* live is fabulous. It is the unthinkable, domesticated and deferred. It is fable, because the realization of its story will end all stories. Moreover, the fable itself "triggers this

fabulous war effort, this senseless capitalization of sophisticated weaponry, this speed race in search of speed, this crazy precipitation which…structures not only the army, diplomacy, politics, but the whole of the human *socius* today…" (23). This is what Keller calls the "cryptoapocalypse," or the "apocalypse habit," linking it to Kristevan abjection (1996, 8). Who among us has not indulged in the fantasy, at least once, of starting the world anew with only the right(eous) people on board? Which of us would not like to be Noah, choosing some of each? What one of us has not succumbed to the terror and abjection of the nuclear specter, and hoped that the next dominant species might do better things with the place after we are gone? This is the message encoded in these abysmal *mises en abyme:* there is no moment after. The apocalypse is a fable, one with the power to destroy even the righteous—whoever they might be. By simultaneously giving us a god's-eye view of the wreckage and placing us abjectly inside the abyss, they hope to break the fatal habit of apocalypse within us.

It remains to be seen whether Algeria will survive its own very real flood of violence, or, for that matter, if Cixous will come out of the fierce abyss of mourning that has fueled her plays of the last two decades. Fortunately for audiences who need something to hope for, most Maghrebian woman playwrights are more ready to suggest practical strategies of resistance to the evils of their environments, and it is these that we will discuss in chapter six.

Chapter Six
Strategies of Resistance

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Within the network of relationships, the connection to time and space, and the dislocation of migrations, North African women playwrights choose to address a number of specific issues. First among these is the inequity in the status of women in their respective societies, with particular attention to the questions of sequestration and illiteracy. Of special interest to the *beur* writers is the changing shape of the family and social structure. Many authors, both in and out of the Maghreb, choose to discuss the problems of bureaucratic paralysis, religious hypocrisy, and governmental corruption and indifference. The most striking discourse I have found, and this cuts across theatre, performance art, and the cinema, is the one that tracks the parallel courses of domestic and national violence and places them in juxtaposition. Plays, performances, and films of this kind make a connection between cycles of violence that occur in the home, and those that are carried out on a national, or even international, scale.

Sequestration

Although formal sequestration appears to be less of a practice in Morocco and Tunisia than it used to be, it still occurs, and the unofficial pressure, through belittlement and harassment, for women not to appear in public spaces is a constant irritation. In Algeria, women are being forced back into their home by threats of violence. In Europe, North African immigrant women are often sequestered by their lack of knowledge of the host culture, and their daughters are sometimes kept at home by anxious parents who fear the effect that the host culture will have upon their morals and behavior. Gallaire's Molly (1994b) is a sequestered immigrant, not because her husband shuts her in, but because her fears do. Some of the young *beur* characters in *Binet el-Youm* (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985) are shut in, as is the daughter in *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* (Troupe la Rose des Sables 1984), by parental fiat. Ben Slimane's Delia is pressured to get out of her public career by her brother. Nor is sequestration confined to Arab societies in these plays: Corsican women are shut in in *Richesses de l'hiver* (Gallaire 1996b), French and Portuguese women are confined in *Légère en août* (Bonal 1988a), and an Amazigh woman is sequestered in *They Have Destroyed My Life* (Merabti 1999). The focus on sequestration in the plays shows that it is a more real issue for modern North African

women than veiling, although Western attention has focused on the latter because it is a visible marker for difference, whereas sequestration, as is its intention, renders a woman invisible to outsiders.

Education and Literacy

Occupying another large area of concern is the discourse about the education of girls and women. Many of the study's plays lobby against female illiteracy. The protagonist of Ben Ammar's *Seven Out of Sixteen* (1984), in addition to composing a speech for the minister whom she is petitioning, is also drafting a letter to him. Part of her quandary, as she waits for his motorcade to pass, is what to say versus what should be written down, and she concludes that these should be two different messages. Despite her inexperience in dealing with politicians, she has been chosen by her community group for her task because she is literate. In *Chebchoub's Al-Matmora,* it is the female journalism student who denounces the corrupt Bou Awra. Toujani uses the marriage contract of Mernissi's forgotten Moroccan queen in *Al-Saïda al-Horra* to emphasize the ability of the monarch to negotiate in writing, and thus links her mastery over the written word to power. Similarly, in Gallaire's *Les Co-épouses* (1990), Siréna's capability to help Taos and to control her own sexuality is linked to her access to books.

The protagonist of Ben's *Les Enfants du mendiant* (1998a), Meriem, the beggar's widow, has become literate in adulthood, at great personal effort. Her mother scorns this skill, and tries to burn one of her books. Meriem's response is to compare her mother to the colonialist troops who burned the library of Algiers. As they fight, a silhouetted scene in the background illustrates the history of book-burning through time, from the destroyed library at Alexandria to the censors of the modern era:

> For a few sheets of paper written in prison, to get them out of hell, the mother of Abd el Harnid and the wife of Bachir took the risk of being mowed down where they stood, and a complete chain of human beings was formed in order to print them, at the peril of their lives. Peasants hid Abd el Hamid's "Journal of the March" in their homes. To write his testimony, "The Question," the author owed a debt to the complicity of the entire cell-block where he was held. And that is how you, my mother, by throwing that book in the fire, have become like the inquisitors of all the countries and all the centuries. (Ben 1988a, 130)

Cixous also argues that some women are willing to die for the written word. In her work, *La Prise de l'école du Madhubaï* (1986b), she fictionalized the story of Phoolan Devi, India's notorious bandit queen. Phoolan, who spent eleven years in jail for massacring twenty-two men in the village of Behmai in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, became a member of the Indian Parliament and an agitator for the rights of lower-caste women. The Behmai massacre was an act of revenge. A rival dacoit, perhaps at the behest of her cousin, captured her and held her for twenty-three days in Behmai, during which she was gang-raped daily, stripped publicly, and forced to draw water from the village well in the nude while the men of Behmai watched and cheered (Weaver 1996). In 1983, Phoolan Devi surrendered to the government and was imprisoned for the next eleven years

without the benefit of a trial. She was finally pardoned and released, and sought public office shortly thereafter. She was murdered in 2001. Cixous' version adheres closely to accounts of the events leading up to the surrender, but differs in one important detail. Her bandit queen, Shakundeva,[1] makes the construction of a school for her village, Madhubaï, a condition of her capitulation. She insists that the school be for children of both sexes, and that her sisters be enrolled. Shakundeva is, as her real-life inspiration was, illiterate.

A more humorous argument for the literacy of women is set forth in Latifa Ben Mansour's *Trente-trois tours à son turban* (1997). This is a Djeha play, a satire that takes on the hypocrisy of the religious establishment in Algeria. In this one-act work, Djeha plays the role of a false scholar whose swollen ego is represented by a turban that gets bigger and bigger as he becomes more and more certain of his ability to delude people. As a money making scheme, he sets up a Quranic school in a neighborhood, and fools everyone, parents and students alike, into believing that he is an academic and religious authority. His scheme is defeated, however, when a poor woman whose husband is working abroad in Europe sends her a letter. She begs Djeha to read the letter, and since he too is illiterate, he lies in order not to be exposed as a fraud and tells her that it is a notice that her husband has died. Distraught, and unable to accept the harsh news, she shows the letter to a neighbor who can read. He tells her that her husband is alive and well, and will be home soon bearing gifts from Tati, the French equivalent of Walmart. The people of the quarter, outraged by Djeha's duplicity, drive him out. At once an argument for the literacy of women and a criticism of false authorities, religious and secular, *Trente-trois tours'* light touch and wicked humor make the play more effective in its argument than some of the more serious dramas in the study.

The Generation Gap

Many of the younger writers in the study are concerned with the changing social and family structure, the gap between their generation and that of their parents. The gap is exacerbated by migration, and so is a feature of all of the *beur* plays in the study, but it also appears in some of the others, like Ben's *Les Enfants du mendiant* (1998a) and Gaaloul's *Le Refuge* (1994). The latter suffers from poor construction and a particularly cinematic narrative, making it very difficult to stage, but it does speak movingly of the malaise of young women trapped between lifestyles and traditions. Fazia is a writer and a student. Her mother is more concerned with her honor than her happiness, and her male friends at the university only want to have sex with her. Her female friends are more concerned with boyfriends than their education, and do not understand Fazia's literary aspirations. She has no one to talk to who will understand her. A publisher declines to publish her book of poems, and this is the final disappointment that drives her to self-destruct. She follows the wrong man out of a disco, and ends up in a brothel. After being raped by a customer of the establishment, she flees. A stranger in a car rescues her, but when it becomes clear to her that he is like all the rest of the men she knows, she jumps from the car to her death.

Binet el-Youm (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985) presents a wide range of stereotypes of *beur-hood*. Each contains a kernel of truth. This is why the play was so successful with its immigrant and second-generation audiences. Rachida, the emblem of the *mythe du retour,* dresses like a Kabyle mountain woman and dreams of her parents'

home country. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Khadra and Aïcha, the shoplifting disco-babes, and Dalila and Safia, the ever-so-sophisticated university students. Rounding out the cast are Yasmina, the future bride, Hayat, the "oppressed," Zohra, the worker, Halima, the unemployed, Nadine, the temp, and Kadidja, the run-away. Each represents an individual reaction to cultural dislocation and generational stress, and a unique possibility. Throughout the course of the play, their particularities make them less two dimensional. Diverse as they are, their mutual struggle to stay afloat in the hostile environment of Port-de-Bouc pulls them together, as they petition for the re-opening of their youth center and celebrate Yasmina's marriage.

Bureaucratic Ineptitude and Corruption

The previous chapter illustrated the contempt with which Maghrebian playwrights view bureaucratic paralysis and governmental corruption and indifference. We have seen that corrupt religious institutions are also subject to this scorn. Whether it is the gentle mockery of *La Fête virile* (Gallaire 1992), the condemnation of *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a), or the ridicule of *Trentetrois tours* (Ben Mansour 1997), religious hypocrisy is considered a fair target. Thus, both secular and religious institutions that do not serve their client populations well are objects of the Maghrebian woman playwright's strategies of resistance.

Domestic and National Violence

Of all the problems our authors would like to eliminate, violence is the gravest, and it is against violence that some of their greatest ef forts and most complex strategies are deployed. If Western feminism has produced any globally useful theory in the last thirty years, it is the acknowledgment that domestic violence is cyclical. In a patriarchy, men are more likely to batter, and women are more likely to be survivors of such abuse. Battered male children may themselves become batterers, and female survivors of abuse have a tendency to regard abuse as the normative standard, choosing partners who continue the abuse initiated by parents or other adult figures of authority. When the survivor of abuse has a female child, she may instill in that child the notion that survivorship is the expected pattern. She may enable a male authority figure to abuse the child; she may, less often, abuse the child herself. In the absence of an outside abuser, the child or adult survivor may even abuse herself in order to continue the pattern that feels correct to her. What makes this pattern so difficult to understand from the outside is that the parents in an abuse situation may genuinely believe that they love the child and are acting in the child's best interest, and that the child believes that she is loved, that the parents are acting correctly, and that the pain she has received at their hands is deserved.[2]

Having recognized the cycle of violence at the domestic scale, it is then possible to extrapolate a wider pattern. One may apply the same template to the governance of a village, or to the agonies of a civil war. Such a cycle may occur in any hierarchical situation where the balance of power is uneven, and continues uninterrupted by another option, for example, the cycle that has occurred in Algeria since colonization, and the one that has been ongoing in the United States through successive waves of race and ethnic violence and the decimation of its indigenous populations. A significant number of plays

in the study place the two cycles in parallel, with the domestic scene against a backdrop of war, revolution, or civil struggle.

The structure that compares the national to the domestic is most often found in Algerian plays that deal with the War for Independence, like *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) and *Leïla* (Ben, 1998b), and plays that discuss the current Algerian civil strife: *Le Zajel maure du désir* (Djabli 1997b), *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a), *Rimm, la gazelle* (Gallaire 1993b), and the collage plays, *Kitman* (Achour 1995), *Un Couteau dans le soleil* (Aït el Hadj and Bennour 1996), and *Algérie en éclats*. It is not unique to Algeria, however. It is also contained in at least one Moroccan play, *Moulat Sserr* (Chebchoub 1998), a Tunisian play, *Donni in Dark Room* (Ben Slimane 1997), and the 1994 Tunisian film, *Les Silences du palais*, directed by Moufida Tlatli. In *Moulat Sserr*, Chebchoub's narrator, the *moulat sserr*, compares the brothel that imprisons Hadda, the protagonist, to the corruption of Morocco, and warns that a peace that is not embodied by women is not a peace at all (Chebchoub 1997b). In *Les Silences du palais*, the background is provided by the French colonial presence in Tunisia, which is actively supported by the Ottoman rulers who occupy the palace of the title. Both pieces also contain examples of woman-on-woman violence, as the theme of women's participation in the oppression of other women repeats throughout these works. In *Moulat Sserr*, the protagonist is imprisoned and forced to prostitute herself by the female brothel owner Kharboucha. In *Silences*, the female servants in the palace maintain a code of silence that aids their masters, and is itself a form of violence.

Donni in Dark Room, written by Souad Ben Slimane in 1994, is a thriller that at first seems to have no connection to Tunisia's political situation. Two women, a Tunisian *bourgeoise* and an Italian skinhead, have been imprisoned in a dark room, where they are tortured with light. They are accused of bombing the Louvre in Paris and replacing DaVinci's *La Giaconda (Mona Lisa)* with a picture of Moana Pozzi, the Italian porn star. As they endure the torture, they subject each other to cruelty and fight for territory. The play, set in what Ben Slimane describes as a "sexual spiritprison," does not resolve the mystery of the crime, and only makes sense when one considers that Ben Slimane lives under a regime that has been implicated in the repression and torture of its dissidents. *Donni* also contains one of the most interesting linguistic devices in the study. The Tunisian woman, who was played by Ben Slimane when the play was produced, speaks Arabic to herself. The Italian woman likewise speaks Italian. They speak French to each other, and it is only through this tongue, foreign to both, that any cooperation may be accomplished (Ben Slimane 1997). Moreover, the use of three languages forces the audience to play linguistic peek-a-boo with the text, since most of its members are unlikely to understand all of them.

In *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) and *Leïla* (Ben 1998b), women participate in the Algerian war only to be raped, shunted aside, or used as political pawns. The colonizer's rituals of violence and death alluded to in *Rouge l'aube* include aggression against non-combatants, the colonial trial without due process, and the guillotine. Staging martyrdom is a powerful political message, but it holds certain perils, as do all universalizing nationalist projects, for women. Women do not die in *Rouge l'aube*, they watch their men die. In this sense, the play serves as a hegemonic, rather than a counter-hegemonic, discourse. Women did indeed die in the Algerian War for Independence, but they do not appear here. Instead, they are positioned once again as vessels of culture in

danger of being violated by the colonizer: they are raped. The staging of rape is difficult; unless the "emblematization" of the victim is somehow undermined, it may reify the trauma to the subject, in much the same way as the continuing dissemination of the Garanger photographs perpetuates the rape event (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 213). The rape scene in *Rouge l'aube* is harrowing, and like the photographs, is subject to the criticism that can be levied against all illustrations of violence against women, namely that it reinforces the trauma done to the women without truly addressing it, and saps them of their agency by portraying them as victims. Rape scenes in general fail the Brechtian acid-test for alienation: they invite emotions, not logic. This one is no exception.

The painful rituals in *Rouge l'aube* are not countered by rituals for healing and change; as a prophetic artifact of the war years, the piece foretells the violence in contemporary Algeria. By wielding the tools of the master,[3] the firebrands of the Algerian revolution have broken their own house and sent their artists into exile. It is as much to the neo-imperialist excesses of post-colonial development as to the past and continued cruelties of the former colonizer that Algerian women playwrights are addressing their work.

Princesses (Gallaire 1991a) provides an anchor for the plays about post-war Algeria. Its stark parody of the ritual Eid sacrifice is also a comment on the cycles of paternalistic abuse and oppression that are passed down through generations with the complicity of women. Ultimately, it is the failure of the *mythe du retour* for women, a warning that nostalgia can be a deadly trap. By trying to be a bridge across the gap between the sexes and the generations, a woman runs the risk of becoming once more the battlefield-object; the passive field upon which the deadly games of power are to be played. In *Princesses* the association of private, interior space with the feminine and the sinister is clearly delineated.

The intergenerational divisiveness of patriarchal oppression and a consciousness of the oscillations in women's status over time are enacted as Princesse's young friends in Act One are replaced by her tormentors in Act Two. The quality of one elder's bitterness toward Princesse, for example, has to do with her own history as a French convert from Christianity to Islam in a bi-racial marriage, and her fight to be accepted by her husband's community. The play encompasses an entire world where the relationships between women have been poisoned by the circumstances of oppression. Princesse's Westernized mobility does not rescue her from her obligation to her foremothers; their love for her does not prevent them from killing her. One is reminded of Luce Irigaray's difficult line from "And the One Does Not Stir Without the Other": "With your milk, Mother, I swallowed ice…. You flowed into me, and that hot liquid became poison, paralyzing me" (1981, 60).

STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

To address the issues set forth in the previous section, North African women playwrights and performers have developed personal, literary, and performance strategies of resistance. They range from direct resistance—the "no" of Molly in *Molly des Sables* (Gallaire 1994b) and the violence of Shakundeva in *La Prise de l'école du Madhubaï* (Cixous 1986b)—to subtle devices of argument drawn from the many theatrical traditions

at their command. By setting the strategies in motion, women dramatists are inserting themselves into discourses that have formerly excluded them, and addressing these issues with audiences all over the globe.

The strategies identified here may be grouped, for the sake of convenience, into two broad categories: theatrical devices of resistance, and depictions of personal resistance in the daily lives of women. A note of caution is required, however, because the categories overlap, particularly in the area of metaperformance. Metaperformance is a theatrical device, but the performances staged 'within' Maghrebian plays are often dance or storytelling events that are very much a part of women's personal strategies of resistance. Chapter five discussed the thematic network of relationships in the plays by starting from the individual and working outward. Here, we will move in the opposite direction, from the theatrical to the personal.

Theatrical Strategies

If a regime threatens censorship, a time-honored method of evading it is to displace one's dramatic criticism in time, making current events into fables or historical dramas. Throughout the world's history of theatre, this technique has been employed to reduce the risk of speaking an unpopular truth. It protected Myriam Ben from Boumedienne in the 1960s, when she was writing potentially controversial material like *Promethée* (1967b) and *Leïla* (1998b). Lhassani used it to couch her exceptions to the Moroccan system of justice in *Nour* (1994). Sometimes, as in Gallaire's *Le secret des vieilles* (1996a), the technique allows an artist who is not under threat to de-familiarize a problem of which her audiences have grown weary, lifting the discourse out of the realm of the didactic. Hawa Djabali's 1996 piece, *Tamouz ou le manifeste de l'éxil: cinq mille ans de la vie d'une femme*, performs this task by displacing the woes of Algeria's disenfranchised and embattled women onto Hagar, slave to Ibrahim's wife and mother of Islam's rescued sacrificial lamb, Ismail. *Tamouz* takes up the cry of "the long feminine experience of those women who are Black, Arab, Berber, suppressed by religions and by powers…" (Djabali 1997a, 224).

Another way of subverting patriarchal or governmental oppression, one that is fun for agent and audience alike, is to behave outrageously. In a sense, all of our dramatists who appear onstage do this, by virtue of performing in public, but some performers, and their characters, are more outrageous than others. Hanane Fadili, for example, does drag impersonations that her audiences adore because she chooses to imitate celebrities like the singer Khaled (Fadili 1997). Gallaire's drag character, Madame Bertin (1987), is also very entertaining, even as s/he turns the tropes of gender definition upside down. Gallaire's *Molly des Sables* (1994b) calls for a single actor to play both male and female roles, as does Chebchoub's *Moulat Sserr* (1998). The *beur* Troupe Rose des Sables was an all-woman troupe that also played male roles in drag. Of course, Nour makes a personal choice that is even more outrageous than wearing men's clothing. She talks to God without a masculine intermediary (Lhassani 1994).

Costumes operate a signifying system in these texts, one that intersects with the binary of public and private space in the discourse of the veil and facilitates marginal manipulation. Assous' Douja unveils herself at the beginning of *Le Sourire Blessé* (1995); at the end she uncovers her hair as well, simultaneously signifying freedom,

exposure, and derangement. Rimm spends the entire duration of her monologue packing the dresses her mother has had made for her (Gallaire 1993b). They occupy the space of her absent mother the way a kimono can evoke the presence of a character in a Japanese *noh* play. Costumes may also delineate a site of permission, as with ritualized cross-dressing. There are two transvestite characters in Gallaire's plays: the clown-dwarf in *La fête virile* (1992) and Madame Bertin. In both cases, drag permits these male characters to say the unspeakable, the vulgar, the obscene. By assuming feminine dress, they take on the magical ability of the uncontrolled female body to transgress, while the phallic power they still possess protects them from harmful consequences.

Of less importance in the plays of the study, but still present, is a technique that Gilbert and Tompkins call "cultural cross-dressing" (73). In a sense, all actors who play characters outside the realm of their own cultural or class experience cross-dress. This kind of display serves an important function for the subaltern:

> Cultural cross-dressing and dressing "up" enact the dressing down of sartorial and cultural limitations by fabricating self-conscious strategies for resisting the power inherent even in the colonizer's dress codes. (1996, 245)

The characters in *Binet el-Youm* play with this technique as they try on various cultural tropes for size (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985). In Cixous' plays at Théâtre du Soleil, the international ensemble has become so adept at both gender and cultural cross-dressing that those markers almost cease to matter. Bouquallal's *On peut toujours rêver* (1994) gives Moroccan actors the opportunity to play stereotyped European characters, in a reversal of Orientalist representation.

There are cross-dressing characters and cross-dressing actors in the study. There are also cross-dressing creator-performers. In *Moulat Sserr* (1998), Chebchoub uses her shape-shifting ability to cross gender boundaries as she plays host to eighteen characters of her own creation, both male and female. In one remarkable scene, she embodies both male rapist and female victim. The Troupe Rose des Sables cross-dressed to play the male characters they wrote into *Les Enfants d'Aïcha* (1984). Nacéra Bouabdallah has played the Madman in *Binet el-Youm* (1984; 1985). Moroccan Hanane Fadili transforms herself into Algerian male rock-n'-raï star Khaled (Fadili 1997). In all of these cases, without exception, cross dressing allows the individual to step into and occupy the margin, wherein change can be effectuated.

Sometimes circumstances pin a woman in place, and all she can do is laugh. Laughter is a form of outrageous behavior that is redemptive. The corrosive power of satire and farce is a puissant tool with which to wear down the opposition. Chebchoub is particularly skilled at the manipulation of audiences through humor because the form she uses, the *halqa*, lends itself to adaptation and requires direct contact with and participation by the audience. In all of her *halqat*, she directly challenges her spectators, who become spect-actors in the Boalian sense,[4] to find solutions to the problems she presents. As she is quick to point out, if there is no circle of spectators, the *halqa* cannot physically exist, since it is they who define the playing space. Likewise, if the audience does not participate, the *halqa* does not exist in the psyche. Humor removes much of the

sting of direct contact, and reduces the specter of immense injustice to a workable size (Chebchoub 1997b).

Humor can be a comfort, a way of allowing people to commiserate. *On peut toujours rêver* (Bouqallal 1994) has this quality. Its audiences know that its protagonist will eventually rise from his bed, pick up his suitcase and undertake the arduous journey of illegal immigration because his prospects in his country of origin are nil. They know that the encounters he will have in the real world will make his dream-desert-island seem like a paradise. They know because they have been there, and they laugh because they recognize themselves. They laugh because it hurts, and they would rather laugh than cry. When an entire room full of people attains that visceral understanding, their mutual experience of the event effectuates the commencement of a healing process, in the solidarity of recognition.

The experience of *On peut toujours rêver* is about 'laughing with.' Farces 'laugh at.' Given the North African dramaturgical focus on bureaucracy and institutional corruption, there is much to ridicule. This is why the legacy of Djeha, seized upon by Kateb Yacine, Latifa Ben Mansour, and so many others, is useful to North African playwrights, and why the intimate actor-spectator contact of the *halqa* is so potent. In the Western theatre, for the most part, audience members may laugh and leave. Not so in the *halqa*. The *halqa* by its nature demands action, and so the commitment of the audience to the discourse is much higher. There are no 'safe seats' at the back of a darkened auditorium where the timid or lazy may hide. The *halaqi* thus serves an educative function: s/he trains the spectators to *act,* in the hopes that they will continue to do so when the *halqa* has finished. Laughter offers perspective through a therapy of small shocks. When we are jolted into laughter, our notions of what we think we know about a subject are dislodged, and we are afforded a brief window of opportunity through which to see things differently. Dramatic representation can tell us something we do not already know, but humor is more likely to make us see it from a new angle.

There is a place in the theatre where time bends back upon itself, because theatre permits the public interrogation of memory. This is a tool that has been particularly useful to writers exploring individual human relationships during and after the Algerian War for Independence. The act of interrogation is anti-romantic. Not only does it ask what really happened, injecting ambiguity or irony into the official story of an event, and providing alternative narratives, but it reserves the right to question meaning of what has happened as well. A simple project of recovered memory puts a woman back into the 'he said/she said' of women's history, as in *Al-Saïda al-Horra* (Toujani 1997a; Chebchoub 1997b). A multi-layered presentation, like the gender game of Madame Bertin, explodes nostalgia and, deconstructs the category of femininity altogether. Plural truths arising from a single event or character are often displayed onstage using the technique of the theatrical double, as in Chebchoub's *Al-Abaccia* and Gallaire and Gal's *Majnûn Laylâ* (1987), permitting more than one actor to share the burden of a seemingly impossible dichotomy and juxtaposing possibilities for action in a non-linear fashion.

In the work of Gallaire, one might argue, the double is stretched across her body of work, rather than occurring in a single play. Princesse and Rimm are doubles, and they address both the crisis of the *mythe du retour* and something that Eric Overmyer, in his play *On the Verge, or the Geography of Yearning,* dubbed "nostalgia for the future" (1993, 82). We have seen that Gallaire has envisioned two pathways for women returning

to Algeria. This is key. Her return-stories are a kind of alternative mythology, a counter to the crises of identity at the core of the *mythe du retour*. Her nostalgia is not for the past, but for possible futures, in her case the 'new Algeria' that has been constantly deferred since independence. This fierce longing can only be fully understood by someone who has helplessly watched their country disintegrate from the other side of an ocean. The fact that Gallaire herself does not often go 'home,' however, is a reminder that women cannot solve the crisis altogether by becoming nomadic. If, as Rimm says, "one women less in France does not matter," (Gallaire 1993b, 57), what about one woman more, the author herself? Carmen Fernàndez-Sànchez reminds us, as do Rimm and her creator, that above all else, Gallaire writes against the "desire to forget" (Fernàndez-Sànchez 1996, 165; Gallaire, 1993b, 57). Nostalgia for the future carries a terrible price: the obligation to remember the painful past.

Women dramatists and filmmakers in the Maghreb draw upon a textured heritage of traditional North African, sub-Saharan, and Middle Eastern performance modes, as well as the full panoply of Western and even Far-East Asian techniques. They have, in this ever-shrinking world, access to everything. With so much to draw from, one of their favorite strategies is to layer performances within performances, usually placing the traditional form within a more modern narrative, but not always. O' Malley supports Abel in defining metadrama as "drama about drama" (1990, 40), and I have followed suit by calling the more general category of a drama or performance about performance "metaperformance." North African dramatists use metaperformances in a host of ways, and the 'performances within' are quite diverse; they include music and dance, puppetry, ritual, plays, inter-textual recitation of known poetry or prose works, and storytelling. A striking feature of the North African metaperformance is that its enactment is often staged in a same-sex setting—performances by women for women.

Fadila Assous, in her one-woman performance adaptation of Omar Fetmouche's *Sourire Blessé*, uses dance and song as signifying systems that play ironically on the tropes of nationalism and traditional Algerian culture. In one particularly humorous moment, the protagonist, Douja, recalls being ordered to dance at a post-independence women's conference by a male government official who exhorts the assembled women to remain the bastions of family honor: "Dear women! Dear mothers—Dear sisters—Dear wives! Be women!" (Assous 1995). It is obvious that it has not occurred to him to think of women in any other context. He finishes his rant by reminding the women to have many children, mind their kitchens, and, if they have extra time, to make carpets—and to dance ebulliently in celebration of the government that gives them these dicta. The elaborate sound-design for Assous' production of the piece employs several military marches that draw the audience's attention to the ways in which the project of nationalism has had a deleterious effect on the lives of two particular women, Douja and her friend, Yasmine (program for Assous' "The Wounded Smile" and Gallaire's "Princesses" 1995). Assous portrays the protagonist, Yasmine, and the government official in lightening-quick character shifts that are facilitated by the changes in music. Contrasting with the recorded martial themes, Assous sings snatches of song in Algerian Arabic, presenting to her francophone spectators a counterpoint that is potentially linguistically impenetrable, at once a trope of culture and a sign for the self-identifying process of the protagonist herself. Assous' fragments of dance and song alienate, "…

draw[ing] attention to the constructedness of all dramatic representation" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 239).

In *Au loin, les caroubiers* (1993a), Gallaire employs live music in a different way. The nostalgic songs of Enrico, the Constantinian Jewish musician, are played against a text of increasing post-independence Franco-Algerian tensions, as French and Algerian characters attempt to resurrect a friendship that has endured the war. They are foiled by the sinister secrets of the colonial past. Again, the text is in French, the lyrics are in Algerian Arabic. The themes of *Au loin* are betrayal and loss; the choice of a doubly marginalized character, both Algerian and Jew, to deliver the nostalgic strain is appropriate.[5] The musical message in Assia Djebar's *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) is less oblique. The "song of the condemned" at the end of the play does not equivocate.

Cixous, operating under the influence of Théâtre du Soleil and its resident composer, world music wizard Jean-Jacques Lemêtre, has included songs and dances in her work since 1985. Most of these have drawn from Far Eastern sources, as befits the settings of a majority of her later works. Of note is the Korean *changgo* drumming corps led by Duan in *Tambours sur la digue*, and of course, the metaperformative slight-of-hand she creates by having the actors act as *bunraku* puppets in the same play (Cixous 1999; Cixous 2000).[6] Duan's drumming is a marker for her strength and agency. Ben's *Les Enfants du mendiant* (1998a) contains a similar device. Meriem's companion, a younger woman, is a flautist, an unusual skill for an Algerian woman. Meriem, upon hearing her play, remarks with amazement that she has never before heard a woman play the flute (Ben 1998a, 107), and one receives the immediate impression that women are expanding their horizons.

The rituals that occur in the plays of North African women have their roots in two continents. Neither universalizing gestures nor gratuitous exoticizing color, they create a place apart, a playing field for difference. When traditional performance elements are incorporated into a contemporary play, they affect the play's content, structure, and style, and consequently, its overall meaning and effect. This process, which usually involves a departure from realism, stretches colonial definitions of theatre to assert the validity, and the vitality, of other modes of representation (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 54). Ritual addresses the large questions, pushing at the boundaries of space and time, and provides a vehicle for healing and transfiguration within the theatrical event.

Staged representations of ritual must here be distinguished from ritualized theatrical moments. Both occur in North African drama, and both have roots in non-theatrical rituals that occur among members of North African societies, either at home or in the diaspora, and in Western rituals the playwrights have observed through the process of their nations having been colonized. These often intersect. *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a) for example, places in parallel a staged ritual and a ritualized moment. The dances of the first act, specifically those that result in trance, prefigure the ritualized murders that occur in the second act. The murders are a twisted purification rite, a perversion of the Eid sacrifice, and they are carried out by old women. Old women's magical power, considered sinister and threatening to Islam,[7] is harnessed to the patriarchal project of cleansing the village of a female heretic, one who has married outside of her faith. In *Rimm, la Gazelle* (Gallaire 1993b), on the other hand, death is a beneficent thing, reuniting extended family, lovers, and a mother and daughter who were constrained from

communicating freely in life. The ritual funeral in *Rimm* is lovingly described, rather than shown, but the transfigurations it creates are nonetheless palpable: not a sacrifice, but a sea-change.

Women writers refuse the trap of cyclical violence by staging metaperformances, enacted by women for other women, or by women for themselves. Princesse's contemporaries dance for her and for each other, as do the *cheikhat* characters in *Moulat Sserr* (Chebchoub 1998). The presence of traditional dance in the texts of North African women reclaims the performances of women like the Ouled Nailyat. In *Princesses,* the village women dance for each other in bursts of joy when their childhood friend comes home from Paris, and when the weight of twenty years of diverging histories threatens to overwhelm them. Dance is their commonality, an embodiment of what they share, and it reunites them. Their dances hint at the possibility of redemption, and establish mobility within the closed system that is their lives. This movement, which takes place within the feminized private space of an interior courtyard, threatens to explode out of it and become outrageous behavior. Gilbert and Tompkins, describing the strategy, assert, "Discursively, those in power trope dance as a form of contagious possession: it invades the body, dislodging normal behavior patterns and overriding all sense of decorum" (1996, 239). By staging within her play a performance by women for women, Gallaire recalls for the viewer the fact that many of the most important modes of women's performance in North Africa take place in front of an all-female audience. Not only is dance a way of "illustrating—and countering—the territorial aspects of western imperialism" (Gilbert and Tompkins 239), but it re-establishes female space in defiance of masculine encroachment. When that same space is violated by patriarchal authority and male-authored murder at the end of the play, the memory of the dance resonates in the mind of the spectator, placed in juxtaposition with what follows.

The women of the second act also dance, but in a reversal of the reconciliation processes initiated in Act I. Theirs is a *danse macabre* that ritualizes the deaths of the liminal redemptors in a parody of the Eid sacrifice. When their dance threatens to escape the bounds of the confining space, it is checked by the men who have authorized the murder. Even anti-redemptive mobility in women must be carefully controlled, as must the magical power of old women, with its sinister and anti-Muslim connotations. In this case, it is permitted because it serves the patriarchal project of controlling a greater threat—Princesse's power to effect lasting change for the women of her village.

In Farida Benlyazid's Moroccan film, *Bab al-Samaa Maftouh* (1989), women inhabiting a *zawiyya* engage in trance-inducing dance for the benefit of the refuge itself. Two more examples of performance within a performance occur in Tunisian films. In *Les Silences du palais* (1994), we see protagonist Alia's mother, Khedija, perform *'la danse orientale'* for her masters, in spite of the fact that it shames her to do so. We also see her daughter, a grown woman, singing in front of unruly patrons at a wedding, and expressing the same sense of shame. However, because the film shows us Alia's childhood in flashbacks, we know that Alia has the power to sing for her own pleasure, and for the pleasure of other women. It is both a performance and an act of open defiance that sends her into exile from the palace: she dares to sing a nationalist song at the engagement ceremony of Sarra, the daughter of one of her Ottoman masters. Similarly, in Selma Baccar's film *Habiba M'sika, ou la danse du feu* (1995), we note that the performances of Habiba M'sika change depending on her target audience: the Ottomans

or her beloved Tunisian public. In this film, the protagonist's politically subversive performances on the stage and her socially transgressive performances of self are placed in parallel, as she creates a space for her own autonomy. Ultimately, the space she makes is too bold for her society to handle: she loses both her audience and her life to the struggle.

One other use of specifically North African vocal production deserves mention here as a semiotic code for the presence of women. Ululation, a signal for joy, approval, or defiance, marks the presence of women at a male circumcision rite in Gallaire's *La fête virile* (1992). Unseen, presumably hidden in the women's apartments of a large traditional Algerian rural home, the women comment upon the progress of the rite by giving or withholding their 'you you's, circumventing the stricture against female intervention in a masculine rite of passage. It is a feminine interpolation into masculinized space. Similarly, in *Au loin,* the Algerian matriarch marks the return of her adopted French son and his friend into her home. Ululation signals her approbation and her reclamation of Chris and Enrico as sons and members of her household (Gallaire 1993a, 19). In both cases, the cries mark the male child as the territory and product of the (m)Other.

Metadrama occurs twice in the plays of the study, in conjunction with the use of inter-texts, in the collage backstage dramas of the Algerian diaspora. The technique, in this instance, layers three elements—the play without, the play within, and the recognizable prose and poetry of famous Algerian writers, in such a way that the boundaries are no longer distinct. The inter-texts become the conversations of the actors, as well as the piece they are rehearsing. These plays were made in a state of emergency, and thus the use of inter-texts was as much, at least in the case of Hamida Aït el-Hadj and *Un Couteau dans le soleil* (Aït el Hadj and Bennour 1996), a case of expediency as of artistic choice (Aït el-Hadj 1997b). Aït el-Hadj is, by her own admission, not really a playwright. She is a director who needed a play about Algerian current events, and so adapted other people's words to her own end. Likewise, Christiane Chaulet Achour's exposure to literary texts as an academician probably inspired her choice to make *Kitman* (1995), which is not a metadrama but is an inter-textual metaperformance. Intention aside, the happy result of blending inter-texts with fictionalized accounts of current events in a metaperformance is that the literary medium is given a new life as performance, and allowed to comment on matters of great urgency for actor and spectator alike.

One could argue that any play that deals with the current situation in Algeria must be a women's play, because the civil strife has become a war against women, so the cycles of domestic and national violence are currently overlapping. Certainly, the genre of Algerian collage plays, which seems to have been developed for the purpose of discussing the Algerian civil crisis, supports this assertion. The trend appears to have started with Achour and *Kitman,* although whether her work inspired the other two pieces in this study is impossible to gauge. All three were created in Paris between 1995 and 1997, in a very small community of Algerian ex-patriot writers and artists. Certainly, *Un Couteau dans le soleil* and *Algérie en éclats* resemble each other in genre and theme, but this may have been coincidence rather than derivation. I prefer to regard all three texts as part of a conversation that, regrettably, has not yet finished. *Couteau* and *Algérie en éclats* both focus on the plight of artists, with a strong female presence. Both are metaperformative, backstage dramas in which two Algerian theatre troupes are trying to

stage plays under impossible conditions. As they struggle, the intertexts speak directly to the conditions in Algeria, often in the voice of an author who has been assassinated. *Algérie en éclats*, interestingly enough, also incorporates a text by one of the Moroccan playwrights in this study, Leïla Houari (Le Boucher and Dumont 1997, 256).

Algérie en éclats is the more complex of the backstage dramas. Within its concern for artists, it manages to be a women's play through its choice of texts and the two strong female characters: Nedjma, the director of the troupe, and Assia, one of the actors. When the play was produced in 1997, Nedjma was played by Denise Bonal, who is also one of the study's playwrights. The word *"nedjma"* means "star" in Arabic, and readers of Kateb Yacine will recognize the reference. Nedjma was the title character of his most important novel, and is, like Ben's Leïla, a symbol for the country in peril. In the collage play, Nedjma is wheelchair-bound, a crippled but potent force anchoring the play that radiates outward from her desk, and the light of its feeble lamp, towards the edges of a darkened theatre that the troupe cannot afford to illuminate (Le Boucher and Dumont 1997, 244–248).

Kitman is quite different in focus from the backstage dramas, concentrating strictly on the situation of women. All of the texts it 'samples' are by women, and there are twenty-eight authors in total. All of the material was written after 1962, and the script includes work from other authors in this study: Djebar, Djabali, and Berezak. It is structured as a hero's journey through space and time, undertaken by three aspects of the same woman, at different chronological stages of her life, portrayed by three different actors. The script is a set of testimonies about the oppression of women in contemporary Algeria, with stage directions that read like narration and may have been intended as such. It gives a theatrical platform to a multiplicity of female voices, some of whom are fictional, and others real, but anonymous.

Without question, the most common use of metaperformance in North African women's theatre and performance is the *hakawati* device. While the *hakawati* is not unique to North African or Middle Eastern performance forms, it holds a place of honor because so many of the traditional forms rely upon it. Nineteen of the sixty-five plays in the study, over twenty-five percent, employ it in some fashion, often in the guise of a one-woman show. "Telling stories on stage," assert Gilbert and Tompkins, "is an economical way in which to initiate theatre, since it relies on imagination, recitation, [and] improvisation…" (1996, 126). Storytelling subverts the colonial modes of marking time, space, and memory on stage and restores oral transmission to its rightful place in societies where widespread literacy among women is a recent phenomenon. Recollections, like those of Rimm (Gallaire 1993b) and Madame Bertin (Gallaire 1987), interrogate the production of memory, while non-linear narratives, like that of Assous' Douja (1995), juxtapose memories and events in ways that startle and inform. Moreover, by presenting counter-hegemonic personal histories, as well as alternative accounts of national history such as *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969) and *Au loin, les caroubiers* (Gallaire 1993a), the playwright herself functions as storyteller, reclaiming and giving voice to the forgotten, the overlooked, and the disappeared. Gallaire's Rimm, Assous' protagonist, Djebar's Poet and even Madame Bertin are relatives of Djeha, the *hakawati*, the *halaqi*, the Rifi poet, the marketplace *majnouna*, and a host of other storytellers and poets in North African history and literature.

Some storytellers, like Tôwa in Houari's *Les Cases basses* (1993), the Poet of *Rouge l'aube,* the Jasmine Merchant of *Leïla* (Ben 1998b) and the Madman in *Binet el-Youm* (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985), provide a through-line, a frame or a counterpoint, however surreal, for the drama. Although he is grave and wise, Djebar's Poet is a shape-shifter like his satirical cousin, Djeha. A blind man who sees the future more clearly than his sighted Guide, he comments upon the action of the play intertextually as he moves through it: "After a sad dawn comes a night of sadness…but I never cry to this agony: cease" (Djebar and Carn 1969, 33). Only when his voice is silenced by death do the young people awaiting torture and execution give voice to their revolt in song. He presents different faces to various people in the play through his intertextual performances; the spectator alone sees them all. To the marketplace men he sings the classical poetry of Ibn al Faridh, switching to mildly erotic love poetry in order to beguile French soldiers. Finally, in open defiance, he speaks the poetry of the revolution and is martyred. Like any good orator, he manipulates his recitations to give his onstage listeners what they want (or need) to hear.

Ben's Jasmine Merchant is an everyman. He is less of a spine for his play than a frame. Since *Leïla* (1998b) is a commentary on current events in disguise, the Jasmine Merchant provides the first clue that the play is indeed political, talking about his government in such a way that Algerians will recognize it as their own, and sets up the expectation that the entire play is to be read as allegory. He has a double, the Father Weight [Père-la-Pesée] character, who appears only in one scene. Father Weight is a marketplace orator who claims to be able to weigh anything. He jokes about weighing women:

> Faithful women—they don't exist. To weigh them, you'd have to weigh their memory…and women don't have either souls or memories…. That's why they all go to paradise—you can weigh their souls—then you believe they have an easy soul…. And boom! All to heaven together… (Ben l998b, 80–81)

However, when he is asked if he can weigh tyrants, he replies that he never does. Having tried it once, he is not eager to do it again (81). The possibility of Father Weight (the Algerian people) once again taking up arms against the tyrant (Boumedienne), lies unspoken but evident in the dialogue.

The *hakawati* in *Binet el-Youm* is totally outside of the play, and unlike the Poet, the Jasmine Merchant, and Father Weight, does not interact with any of the other characters. He is a madman, a drag role—Nacéra Bouabdallah wrote him as a role for herself—and a poetic counterpoint to the rather ordinary, slightly satirized, slice-of-beur-quotidian that composes the action of the play. He addresses himself to the immigrant audience, as well as to the French spectators who may be among them:

> Walls, again the walls, city walls, wall-turrets, walls of defense….[8] How, how when my reason heckles me, how to break all of that down? How to do it? With what weapons? No, no, no weapons, no more weapons today. I will break the walls…. With what? With my Imagination. Let it be the pneumatic drill of my sensibility…. And when there are no more walls,

> when there are no more defenses, then there will be the Azure, at that moment when we will no longer be just a reflection in your mirror, of your creation, of your life… (Bouabdallah 1984, 69, original format)

The mirror to which the Madman refers is the mirror of colonization and post-colonial assimilation, but because the role is played by a woman, an alternative, gendered reading is possible, pointing the way to an independent vision of agency for *beur* women.

Of all the artistic media available for North African women's expression, writing is perhaps the most effective. Cixous, in part precisely because she is of and yet not of Algeria, utilizes *l'écriture feminine* to write from a location within the female corpus. Women who have been denied access to, agency for, and control of their own physical bodies not only "write the body" but they write *a* body, a body made of words, to replace their usurped physicality in the arena of masculinized public space. As we have already noted, when that space is theatrical, itself a battlefield of competing re-presentations, the body of words affords the female playwright a measure of physical safety not enjoyed by the female actor, while simultaneously allowing her to control and manipulate the theatrical moment and the dramatic text on her own behalf. Through their plays and performance pieces, women writers exercise not only agency, but metaphorical and social, if not literal, mobility. Bodies of words enable disenfranchised women to pass through the locked doors of the societies whence they came, and in which they now reside. Because of their movements, the locks erode.

Like the walls of a *zawiyya* or the folds of the *hijab,* the 'body of words' has another protective function: it deprives the spectator of the gaze.[9] A performing body is subjected to scrutiny; that is part of its function. A body of words, by virtue of its agency, subverts and re-directs the gaze. If deftly done, this maneuver may even force the spectator to be self-reflexive. The (formerly) colonized writer also has the advantage of surprise when working in the (former) colonizer's terrain: the colonizer/spectator does not expect the terrain to be contested, nor does he expect to lose the contest. Just as some women have re-veiled in order to move more freely in hostile, masculine, public spaces, North African woman writers have launched their word-bodies into theatrical space in order to have a stronger, and more protected, voice in their societies.

For some women, however, the body of words is not enough. Female author-performers seek to control the gaze with their physical bodies. As they perform their own texts, they are able to gaze back at their spectators, and the gaze becomes instead a conversation. When the female body of words is combined with the female physical body in theatrical space, it is powerful. Fatiha Berezak discovered this when she started to perform her own words in public. Because she reserves the right to improvise, to modify the text as she performs, Berezak has almost complete power over both her physical and literary production in performance. She is a *hakawati* of her own theatricalized Self; her stories are completely her own, tailored to fit the ephemeral moment. The tale need not be as complex or improvisational as Berezak's multi-layered performance pieces, however. In Ben Slimane's one-woman show, *Une Nuit perdue qui revient*, a young woman simply tells the audience the story of her unfulfilled dreams (Ben Slimane 1997). To hold the audience in place with a tale of the theatricalized Self—the author's, the character's, or both—is to give the Self mobility, and claiming mobility for female Selves

in a world where they are restricted through coercion and violence is a strategy of resistance.

Personal Strategies

For our authors, a mobility of ideas is afforded by the body of words and physical mobility is created by performing. For their characters, physical mobility is attained in two ways: the radical act of appearing out-of-bounds, and outright nomadism. Sedka, in *La Fête virile* (Gallaire 1992), for example, steps over the line of patriarchal propriety when she meets with her foreign fiancé outside of her home. Ben Slimane's Delia does it by performing in public in contradiction to her brother's wishes. Gallaire's Molly gets on a bus, and a whole new world opens up before her. But for some women, putting a toe over the line is not enough. These are the nomads, haunting the battlefields of space and time: the *moujahadites* of *Rouge l'aube*, the avatars of Zeïneb in *Kitman* (Achour 1995), Nour, Princesse, Rimm, and all of the *beurs*, whose very existence forces them to be forever in two places at once. Cixous' characters are often nomads: Shakundeva, Dora, and Clara all leave 'home' in search of something better—a reality that they will construct if it does not already exist to be found. Molly, despite the fact that she is confined to her husband's house by fear, is also a nomad. Her terror is a by-product of a voyage already accomplished—one that began with her birth into a family with more than one religion. Nomadism is her birthright, and as she begins to resist the patterns that hold her down, she claims it.

Gallaire's Molly and Princesse, Cixous' Shakundeva, Chebchoub's Hadda, and the women of Djebar and Carn's *Rouge l'aube* (1969) all directly resist the conditions into which the patriarchy has put them. Direct refusal is extremely risky, and rarely completely successful, although it provides a plethora of dramatic tension. Protagonists who refuse do so with various degrees of success, but there is never an indication that the battle is definitively won. For example, in *Moulat Sserr* (Chebchoub 1998), Hadda, who is an historical figure, burns her brothel-prison down, risking death in order to defy captivity. In *Rouge l'aube*, a young woman runs away from home to join her brother and the Algerian resistance fighters. Princesse stands firm even as she is beaten to death. A similar refusal is enacted in Houria Niati's performance piece, *No to Torture*, created between 1982 and 1993. *No to Torture* is a series of monumental panels, each depicting a nude woman or group of nude women, all of whom have been deliberately defaced by the artist. It is, according to the artist, a reply to Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*, a painting that depicts an Orientalist fantasy of the harem. In front of these panels, Niati sometimes performs her poetry, which is written in French, translated into English, and then read in Arabic in a manner reminiscent of Beckett's self-translated plays. Copies of her poetic text or the Andalusian music with which she accompanies the performance were not available when the piece was shown in the U.S. The visual text alone, however, is stunningly complex.

The "no" of *No to Torture* is a rejection of colonization. It is also a rejection of the "continuing exploitation of women." Whereas Delacroix's female figures are partially clothed, these are totally nude. Their faces are obscured, but in a way that avoids the discourse of the veil, even as it alludes to it. Some of the heads are "encaged," others are crossed out, negated. The fetishized objectification of the women is made blatant, but the

identities of the subjects elude the viewer, to whom the "no" is also directed (program for "Forces of Change" 1995, 8–9; Nashashibi 1994, 136). Niati has subverted the facticity of femaleness, the "sustained and repeated corporeal project" of creating femininity that Butler posits (1988, 522). Her paintings, and her self-translations, speak to the impossibility of copies, while her acts of performance re-inscribe that impossibility on the face of the project of culture. At once a response to Orientalism, the prying eye of the colonialist camera, the conflicting discourses of the veil, and the violent deaths of women in contemporary Algeria, *No to Torture* refuses to accept for women anything less than absolute agency and subjectivity.

Sometimes, when survival strategies fail, martyrdom is called for. One can make no stronger statement than to go willingly to one's death for a cause. Martyrdom plays particularly well to Muslim and Jewish communities because the story of Ibrahim/Abraham and his son, Ismail/Isaac, is held in great regard by both. Nour, Prometheus, and Princesse, along with all of her supporters, look death in the eye as they die, each refusing the escape offered. Smaller sacrifices, voluntary surrenders of love or freedom, are also quite powerful. In Toujani's *Haïk Salaam,* Calypso gives up her love for Odysseus and protects him from the sea in the interest of peace (program for "Haïk Salaam" 1995). Leïla's refusal to accept Omar's protection in Ben's *Leïla* (1998b) is a sacrifice of freedom for integrity. The martyrs of the Algerian war appear at the end of *Rouge l'aube*. The final act stages two parallel prison scenes, first in the women's prison and then in the men's, where an execution is about to take place. None of the prisoners know who will be chosen to die. In defiance of the ignominy of an anonymous death, and the cat-and-mouse torture of the random selection process, the male prisoners sing "the song of the condemned": "I am ready, I am ready/My neck shaved, my heart at peace/I no longer remember that I have no future…" (Djebar and Carn 1969, 91). The men's voices are joined, invisibly, by the women's as they reject the primacy of the guillotine, suggesting prophetically that the red dawn will ultimately be colored by the blood of the French as well as their own.

In *Les Cases basses* (Houari 1993), the collaboration of Tôwa and White Blouse in bringing down the old order is emblematic of yet another strategy in the Maghrebian woman dramatist's personal bag of tricks: cooperation between women as agents. There is a recurring suggestion among Maghrebian women writers that the solution to the problem of violence lies within the capability of marginalized subjects, particularly women, to collaborate with each other in productive ways, subverting the excesses of the patriarchy. It is a radical notion to portray women cooperating to realize projects in their own best interest. Patriarchal order, the Law of the Father, the rule of the colonizer: all these depend on divisiveness among the ranks of the subaltern. Collective action subverts this order, institutes a woman-friendly agenda, and allows the burden of care to be shared among many. Failure to collaborate results in tragedy. In her novel, *A Sister to Scheherazade,* Assia Djebar inserted the following passage between the chapters. Like a secret passed from cell to cell in a prison, it is slipped between the pages and does not appear in the table of contents:

> Yes, what if Scheherazade were to be continually reborn, only to die again at every dawn, just because a second woman, a third, a fourth, did not take up her post in her shadow, in her voice, in her night? (1988, 143)

Gallaire contrasts models of competition and cooperation between women in *Princesses* (1991a) even as she remarks upon the gaps of educational status and of age between Princesse and her contemporaries, and Princesse and her elders. That Princesse's experience is markedly different than that of the other women of her age group becomes apparent as they discuss the progress of their lives during the decades she has been away. Badia, like Princesse, is married, but at such a tender age that her grandchildren are the same age as Princesse's children (31). Zohra married late, and like Princesse is the mother of twins, but her husband is habitually unemployed so she has had to accustom herself, and her children, to hunger. She accepts the charity of her wealthy Westernized friend graciously, because she must (34). Other women are not present because they have married into families away from the village, or because they are not permitted to go out visiting, but as each one is described, the spectator receives a miniature portrait of a life. Sessia, for example, has recently been to the village, but her domestic circumstances—a father who marries her off repeatedly and then forces her husbands to repudiate her, keeping her bride-price—have prevented her from extending her stay even to visit a friend she has not seen in twenty years.

Gaby, we are told, has survived the disaster of nine years of infertility without repudiation because of an unusually kind mother-in-law, and has now delivered a son. Gaby is a literary relative of Taos, the barren first wife of *Les Co-épouses* (Gallaire 1990). While Taos remains barren, and becomes the surrogate mother to her deceased co-wife's children in another example of cooperation, Gaby's story ends happily, with the birth of the all-important first son. Zahia, battered by her husband the policeman, has obtained a divorce, but was forced to leave her home with only the clothes on her back, despite her financial contributions to the marriage as a working spouse (Gallaire 1991a, 37–40).

The marginalized characters in Act Two of *Princesses* try together, by a process of reconciliation, to stop the wave of murderous madness that sweeps through their community. Their attempt fails. In *Les Co-épouses*, women successfully band together to prevent a man from taking a third wife, and to make him acknowledge the seven girl-children borne by his second wife. We see a similar pattern in the Tunisian films, *Les Silences du palais* (1994) and *Bab al-Samaa Maftouh* (1989). In the former, the women servants of the palace care for each other within their silence. A particularly striking scene shows Khedija being saved from certain rape by another servant, who is the lover of the prince who is threatening her. He has commanded Khedija to rub his back. She does so with distaste, sure of what will follow. The other woman enters the chamber, and gently displaces Khedija who retreats in haste. In *Bab al-Samaa Maftouh*, the women of the *zawiyya* work together to provide refuge to women in distress. *Silences* is problematic because its cycle of violence repeats without redemption, and *Bab alSamaa* suggests that redemption for women is best obtained through a socially and religiously sanctioned marriage, an idea that is likely to give Western feminists pause. Nevertheless, the collective power that these two films envision for women is very strong.

It is very difficult to break a cycle of violence. In order to move out of such a widespread pattern of normalized cruelty, the survivor needs an alternative. Since the patterns enable the powerful to remain in power, and since the cycle occurs within the sovereignty of a closed system, be it a family or a nation State, alternatives are few, and they are usually ruthlessly suppressed by the holders of power. That is why marginalized

people, people who move in and out of the closed system, are necessary in order to break the cycle. Post-colonial artists and the scholars who study them are beginning to realize that the painful position of marginalization has its uses. Having chosen to inhabit a border, or having been forced there, the liminal subject is able to regard and articulate multiple standpoints as both an insider and an outsider. She is a border-walker, a bridge between worlds. She has the mobility of existing outside of the closed system, and she bears the risks of social unacceptability. She is, in Phelan's words, "queer":

> As an art form whose primary function is to meditate on the threshold that heralds between-ness, theater encourages a specific and intense cathetic response in those who define themselves as liminal tricksters, socially disenfranchised, sexually aberrant, addicted, and otherwise queerly alienated from the law of the father. Queers are queer because we recognize that we have survived our own deaths. (1997, 16)

In no way is the present use of the word "queer" pejorative. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities in the U.S. have reclaimed the word from those who would throw it as an epithet. They wear it, and their liminal status, as a badge of pride. In the context of this study, as in Phelan's usage, "queer" contains not only the connotations of difference and marginalization, but its older meaning: "strange." Queer subjects have the exalted capability to make familiar arguments strange. This paradoxical ability of the marginalized or "queer" subject often carries with it an hallucinatory quality, or a taste for the absurd that approaches farce. This is particularly true of post-colonial African dramatists, whose deft employment of non-realistic techniques has changed the face of twentieth-century theatre. Less often, an African playwright chooses to render the multiplicity of meanings, signs, and subject positions of a post-colonial experience in a linear narrative.

Our authors are themselves queer subjects, and their understandable fondness for marginalized characters, Phelan's "liminal tricksters," is apparent in many of the plays of the study. The cast list for *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a) includes, in addition to Princesse herself and the choruses of women who are arguably liminal because of their sex, a madwoman, two slaves, a drunkard, and a crippled man without legs. These, along with Princesse's beloved nurse, are Princesse's supporters and they die with her at the end of the play. Ritualized cross-dressing also functions as an important space for permission to speak the unspeakable. Drag characters, as well as dwarves, madwomen, slaves, and men who are sterile or impotent like Madame Bertin, function as bridges between binary categories, sites of ambiguity where reconciliation between opposing categories is facilitated. Because of their status as border-walkers, these characters are imbued with the power of reconciliation. In *Princesses*, all of the characters of this kind are killed and reconciliation is rejected. This consequence is one of the marks that indicate that the play is a tragedy.

Déjeux, in his essay on Djeha, offered an ontologically informed, linguistic classification of "the fool" in North African Arabic. Most of our marginals have a place in the roster somewhere. The spiritually possessed, like Qays, are *majnoun*, taken by the *djnoun*. Slaves, like those in *Princesses*, are *meskin*, possessed by another human being. Those in a trance, touched by an overwhelming spiritual force, like Nour, are *madjoub*.

Those who have lost their reason are *mahboul*. Those who behave outrageously, like Madame Bertin, are *mekhalkhal*. Those who have physical weakness, like the Poet in *Rouge l'aube* and the Cul-de-Jatte in *Princesses,* are ironically termed *mabrouk,* literally, "blessed" (Déjeux *1991,* 108). This classification clearly demonstrates that marginals are grouped together as "fools" in Arabic, peo ple with dangerous, but sometimes prized, transformational capabilities.

Manipulation of the margin through the introduction of wise or crazy characters is common and they may occupy the role of the *hakawati,* as in *Trente-trois tours* (Ben Mansour 1997), *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969), *Les Cases basses* (Houari 1993), and *Binet el-Youm* (Bouabdallah 1984; Bouabdallah 1985). Wise characters may either be elders, like the Barren Old Woman of *Le Secret des Vieilles* (Gallaire 1996a), or those made precociously wise through circumstance, like Siréna in *Les Co-épouses* (Gallaire 1990). Madwomen, and men, occur more often. The character of Mahboula in *Princesses* (Gallaire 1991a), the young madwoman who passes through moments of frightening and oracular lucidity, is one of the liminal figures who span the first and second acts of the play. She, like Cassandra of Troy and blind Tiresias of Thebes, is prescient, and screams her unheeded warnings wildly until one of the women hits her with a fan, exclaiming, "The blows do not hurt her. That is all she understands. She is used to it…" (1988a, 396). Mahboula traverses the age gap, and accompanies both choruses. Nancy Mairs might read this connection as vaginal. "They [vaginas] are avenues, not loci, and the traffic through them binds one being to another in complicated ways" (1994, 98). Mairs declares this connectedness to be creative. Mahboula endures cruelty at the hands of all of the women in the play except for Princesse, and her mad howlings, in a very real sense, are the author's own cries of pain.

There is one final way that women can occupy the margin to their advantage, and it is not available to men. Gallaire, especially, reads birth as redemptive because of its transformational quality. In the act of giving birth, the vaginal canal becomes the margin between dependent life in the womb and independent life outside of it. A successful birth changes the world and offers it new hope. Rather than judging women to be limited by the risk of pregnancy, Maghrebian authors embrace it as the most powerful of possibilities. Each birth is a chance to do things differently, to alter the cycle.

The plays of this study are not academic exercises or theatrical indulgences. They address urgent problems. Fatima Gallaire reminds us that the death of Princesse is not symbolic. She observed such executions during the uneasy period when members of her generation, often educated in France, made difficult choices in life-partnerships. Gallaire herself escaped this fate because of the tolerance of her family: she too is married to a French man (Gallaire 1997). Each time these artists write or perform, they put their security, and that of their families, on the line. The texts contained in this study suggest the beginnings of a radical future vision for North Africa, one that takes women into account as agents, rather than vehicles, of culture. Their authors call for the safety, economic independence, enfranchisement, and legitimization of women. They are both evidence of, and a demand for, personhood. They are also a warning: the societies of North Africa and the world at large cannot continue to develop while ignoring the needs of half their citizenry.

Placing their bodies of words at the service of the madwomen who excavate the trash-middens of culture and shuttle back and forth between opposing camps, the women

playwrights of Maghrebian North Africa bring to mind once again Hélène Cixous' tribute to Clarice Lispector, "She had the two courages: that of going to the sources—to the foreign sources of the self. That of returning, to herself, almost without self, without denying the going" (1994c, 91).

Chapter Seven
Conclusion

This study, researched in 1997 and written in 2000, has been re-contextualized. It stands in an entirely new framework, at least for Americans. I suspect that the subjects of this study see the context as part of a much larger pattern—one they understand very well and have been living with for some time. We Americans, on the other hand, have been de-centered by force and by tragedy, and our elected government has reacted by making wars to put us back at the center of our perceived world order. What this means for some women in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the Maghrebian diaspora is that members of their families, and perhaps they themselves, have joined or will join organizations like al-Qaeda. Some have seen or will see their cities bombed because of their countries' perceived sympathies with the United States. What it means for American women is that some of us have died or will die, or have family members who have died or will die, in the tragedy of September 11, 2001, or in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries on our administration's list of nations that support terrorism against the United States.

When I wrote in 2000 that our understanding of the theatres of North Africa, the Middle East, and the so-called Arab and Muslim worlds would be shaped by our political and cultural encounters with those entities, I could not have predicted the events of September 11, 2001. I thought we might return to our aggressions in the Gulf, but I had no idea that we would be occupying the holy sites of the *ta'ziyeh*, and that broadcasts from Karbala would be on the nightly news. Nor could I have known that we would oust the Taliban from Afghanistan, using that organization's forced sequestration of women and suppression of musical, dance, and theatrical performances as part of our justification for doing so. Sitting in the U.S., everything *looks* very different now, but as I revisit the body of words that has accompanied my life for the better part of a decade, it all *feels* familiar. The women writ-ers and performers of North Africa, particularly the apocalyptic ones, have given me a key with which to de-code what is happening to my own country. It is a strange and terrible gift.

Some people in France believe they have seen it all before, and perhaps they are right when they draw parallels between the attacks of September 11 and the actions of the freedom fighters of the Algerian War for Independence. Depending on what side you view the acts of violence from, one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. No wonder the Arabic word *moujahadine* applies to both. Acts of terror are rarely one-sided. As we have seen, there were, and are, enough atrocities in Algeria to go around. The same is true of the wars in the Gulf and Afghanistan. That the French government

has steadfastly refused to support unilateral aggression by the U.S. in Iraq is perhaps, in part, because France understands that the U.S. has not yet come to grips with the responsibility that goes with the power it wields in the world. The French, by grappling with their own colonizing past, may already know the answer to the question that Americans have posed so plaintively since September 11, 2001: "Why do they hate us so much?" On the other hand, the absurd French ban on headscarves and other religious symbols in public schools in 2003, tellingly referred to in the French press as "*l'affaire du foulard islamique,*" may indicate that the French have not learned anything at all from their experience as colonizers in North Africa.

During the upheavals in Afghanistan and Iraq, Algeria, ironically, began to stabilize. Although hostilities between Arabs and the Imazighen have been on the rise in the Amazigh region of Tizi-Ouzu, the urban centers of Algiers and Oran have calmed considerably. The Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), administrator of the Fulbright grants, which declines to send exchange scholars to areas where they are likely to get hurt, opened grants to Algeria for the 2005–2006 grant cycle. This is the first time it has done so since hostilities broke out in the early 1990s. Indeed, CIES has created new grant programs for the Middle East and North Africa, in an effort to get scholars into places where their work will help to illuminate the current strife in which the U.S. is embroiled. Colleges and universities are scrambling to provide Arabic and Farsi classes, in large part because the newly-formed U.S. Department of Homeland Security needs translators. The Carnegie Mellon Foundation, through the National Institute of Technology in Liberal Education, is sponsoring an on-going initiative, called al-Musharaka [The Collaboration], to provide liberal arts colleges with the technical platforms from which to launch inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional classes on the Middle East, the so-called Arab world, and Islam. In our grief, our anger, and our confusion, Americans are discovering that we need to understand what we have previously neglected to know.

It seems, however, that our government would prefer that our knowledge be limited, and that the resources available to scholars be carefully controlled. In 2002, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), declared that articles and books written in certain nations that are under U.S. embargo may not be edited for publication by U.S. publishers. Camera-ready copy may be accepted, but any revision of a manuscript is subject to fines of up to $500,000, and criminal punishment of up to ten years in jail. The reasoning for this bizarre interpretation of the regulation is that the act of editing—which presumably includes translation—constitutes a service, and providing a service to someone in a nation under an embargo of this type is illegal. At this writing, the nations affected are Iran, Libya, Sudan, and Cuba. Embargoed regions that are not affected, due to the differing natures of their respective embargoes, are Iraq, North Korea, Zimbabwe, the Balkans, and Liberia (Miller 2004). Publishers may try to obtain a licensed exemption from the ban, but these are very difficult to procure. To make matters worse, in April of 2003, OFAC began publishing a list of entities against whom civil penalties for embargo violations have been assessed. Names on the list appear regardless of whether or not the alleged violation in question was inadvertent or even substantiated (Sidley, Austin, Brown and Wood 2003). The potential damage to a publisher's reputation should its name hit the list could be profound. As of March 2004, OFAC had yet to prosecute any publishers, but the regulation's latest interpretation has

the entire academic publishing industry reacting with understandable paranoia (Gaynor 2004).[1]

In this difficult new American reality, the usefulness of a study on North African women playwrights and performers is, at first blush, not obvious. Would we not be better served by looking to the sociologists, the scholars of comparative religions, or the economists? Of what use is a play? Precisely this: if we understand the conversations that the popular, academic, and elite performers and playwrights of North Africa and the Middle East are having with their audiences, we will have gone a long way toward understanding the cultural contexts in which those conversations are taking place. Sometimes, we are even lucky enough to have the conversation come to us.

The Persian *ta'ziyeh* came to us in the summer of 2002. In a bold move that was in the works well before the events of September 11, 2001, and George W.Bush's subsequent "axis of evil" speech, the Lincoln Center invited the very best Iranian role-carriers to come to New York to show us how to mourn for Imam Hussein. The event was immeasurably complicated by its juxtaposition with the tragedy that preceded it, even though Iran was never implicated in the September 11 attacks. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service denied visas to ten of the performers, including a child, necessitating a change of program and the recruitment of Iranian-Americans to carry non-speaking roles. The accompanying Asia Society symposium brought the best *ta'ziyeh* scholars in the country together to help us understand what we were seeing, but the media hype surrounding the event focused on whether or not it was appropriate for 'lslamic martyrdom' to be celebrated in a city that had suffered so much trauma at the hands of 'lslamic martyrs.' The conflation of the terror attacks with the massacre of Imam Hussein and his family on the plain of Karbala allowed the event to dissolve into a sea of incomprehension. Parts of the Iraqi version of the *ta'ziyeh*, huge processions involving self-flagellation, have been televised on CNN, but it is difficult to spread the word that the New York performance and the news clips are connected. Most Americans do not understand, nor do we care, that our destabilization of the delicate relationship between the Sunni and Shi'ite populations of Iraq permitted the *ta'ziyeh* to come out of the suppression it had endured during the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, only to be violated by suicide bombers, presumably Sunni and probably foreign, in 2004. Clearly, the impact of one foreign theatrical event on the American psyche is minimal.

In spite of my pessimism about the efficacy of any one theatrical event, I do believe that there is such a thing as an evolving sensibility brought about by a critical mass of scholarly and artistic production. I remind myself that before he began the cross-cultural theater work that lead to the routine inclusion of *kabuki* in American theatre curricula nationwide, Earle Ernst was a censor in occupied Japan after World War II. The internet carries postings about theater in occupied Iraq—a group called al-Najeen [the Survivors] produced Iraq's first post-war play, *They Passed by Here,* in 2003. Al-Najeen, the same group that replaced the statue of Saddam Hussein in Fardus Square with an abstract sculpture representing Iraq's heritage and its future, has been in existence for twelve years, mostly underground. They emerged at the end of the bombardment and went to work in the ruins of the al-Rachid National Theatre, asking their audiences, "What is freedom, exactly?" (Ciezadlo 2004; Heidler 2003; Hamza 2003). Theatre persists—for the artists and audiences of Iraq, the play matters. It should matter to Americans, too, but

They Passed by Here will probably remain a footnote in the history of the occupation for want of American interest and resources to document it.

Unlike the emerging work of al-Najeen, the body of contemporary women's dramatic literature in and of the Maghreb is already a significant movement, anchored in ancient traditions, but robust enough to have been at least partially documented. Its participants are diverse, yet their work presents a strikingly coherent pattern of themes, issues, and strategies of resistance to violence, inequity, and governmental stupidity. They are a complex plurality, and they create plays and performances that deserve a place in world, and women's, theatre and performance studies. To my knowledge, this is the first time that so many pieces by Maghrebian women have been considered simultaneously in any language, and the first time that women's authorship has formed the basis for a study of Maghrebian dramatic literature. Studying works by women permits us to consider them not only from a theatrical or literary standpoint, but also as sociological commentary. By analyzing the plays and performance pieces we may extrapolate and begin to understand what issues are of concern to literary and theatre women in the Maghreb and the Maghrebian diaspora today.

Maghrebian women dramatists resist the pressures of patriarchal power and (post)colonial oppression by claiming and exercising agency through writing and performing, and also through the choices they make while living their lives. The characters they create mirror these choices, and are themselves agents within the created realm of the artistic product. The acts of the characters and their creators are a blueprint for revolution, imbued with a nostalgia for the future. They concern themselves with a wide variety of issues, but underlying themes recur, as do the strategies by which they take action. The study has identified broad patterns that cut across the plays and performances under consideration. The body of work is concerned, in general, with women's relationship networks within the traditional extended family structures of North African societies. Also of interest are women's interactions with their communities and governmental bureaucracies. The forces of time (history) and space (public and private, masculinized and feminized) have caused these relationships to change, as have the intense identity dislocation and cultural disruption of colonization and migration.

The network of relationship structures in flux provides the setting in which women may discuss their concerns. We have learned from studying their work that they worry about the sequestration of women and gender inequity, and promote women's education as the solution. They have contempt for corruption and incompetence in the local, national, and international institutions that are supposed to serve them, and ridicule the ones that do not. They deplore violence at the domestic and national levels, and have determined that personal and political cruelty are related. Sometimes, they succumb to despair in the face of these pressures, but in general remain optimistic against overwhelming odds.

It is possible now to categorize the strategies by which Maghrebian woman authors and their theatrical protagonists resist, directly or indirectly, the inequities their societies, and ours, visit upon them. Some choose direct refusal, and they often suffer as a consequence. More durable are the oblique strategies: outrageous behavior, assumption of the right to mobility, staging of metaperformances that subvert the patriarchal order, ridicule, and cooperation of female subjects acting in their own best interest. Most opt for some kind of manipulation of the margin. Some place their voices at the service of

marginalized characters, while others, mindful of women's (pro)creative power, suggest that it be harnessed to the project of redemption.

I must caution that the word "resistance" in this study's title is inadequate to describe what its subjects are doing. Resistance is reactive, and these women have in fact gone beyond reaction to action. Their strategies of resistance are actually strategies of transformation. Through the creation of the body of words, and the mobilization of a panoply of strategies both contemporary and traditional, women are making plays and performances that speak to the very issues—gender inequity, governmental corruption and ineptitude, and violence—that the Maghreb, and indeed humanity, must face if it is to survive its present circumstances. Plays by North African women are underrepresented in anthologies and theoretical texts, and scarce in English translation. Moreover, there are Westward-directed messages in the texts wherein the formerly colonizing societies of Europe and the U.S. may learn to regard themselves differently. At no time in recent memory has this been more urgent.

The study has some regrettable gaps, and it is my hope that someone will soon have the interest and the resources to address them. The first is the linguistic imbalance. Scholars fluent in Arabic and Tamazight should make a detailed, comparative examination of women's dramatic literature in these languages. The Department of Homeland Security is not the only place where translators are urgently needed. The second is the vast area of theatre for young audiences. Although Meryem Drissi represents that field in this study, more work is required. When I interviewed Fatima Chebchoub, shortly before I left Morocco for the last time in 1997, she told me that many Moroccan women are writing plays for children. Unfortunately, I have not had the time and resources to contact them. More recent encounters I have had with the National Marionette Theatre in Tunisia indicate that women are full participants in the theatre for young audiences there as well. TYA is an area of theatre that is often trivialized, but we must never forget that au-diences are formed in childhood. What the children of the Maghreb are watching today will affect their lives as adults.

Other areas of suggested research include the translation of plays and performance texts by Maghrebian women from Arabic, Tamazight, and French into English and the publication of an anthology, so that anglophone theatre practitioners and theatre scholars alike will have access to the resource. Since women are also making strides in the Maghrebian film industry, especially in Tunisia, comparative studies that include both dramatic and cinematic literatures would no doubt be productive. More attention needs to be paid to the theatres and dramatic literatures of the Maghreb's neighbors, Mauritania and Libya, particularly as the latter's relationship with the countries of the West improves. Finally this 'body of words' needs to become part of a recognized sub-discipline of world theatre studies. Middle East and North African theatre and performance studies need to hit the map of the American academic imagination.

In 1979, Kateb Yacine said, "In our country, at the present moment, a woman writer is worth her weight in gunpowder"(Tahon 1992, 39). He was right then, and he is right still. He knew that to ignore the voices of women in newly-liberated Algeria would be cultural suicide. Likewise, recent events have demonstrated that Americans ignore cultural voices other than our own at our peril. The only way to circumvent the depersonalization necessary to make violence against an individual or an entire people is empathy, and creating empathy is what theatre does best. The dramatic 'body of words' created by

North African women was not made for us, but it can tell us many things we need to know. We should try to watch and to listen. The play matters.

Appendix A
Plays Cited in the Study

This list is alphabetical by title. Plays are numbered 1–65. Titles match those in the body of the study. Titles are given in the original language unless the version of the play being cited is a translation, in which case the English title is used in all cases. A separate list of available English translations of the plays in the study follows the list of titles. Translations are marked with the letters 'A' through 'O.'

PLAYS FOR WHICH ORIGINAL TEXT WAS AVAILABLE

1) *Amour et talisman [Love and Talisman]*
   Fatima Gallaire with the students of the Faculté des Letteres, Mohammedia, Morocco.
   French. 1993.
2) *Au cœur, la brûlure [A Burn on the Heart]*
   Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
   French. 1994.
3) *Au loin, les caroubiers [In the Distance, the Carob Trees]*
   Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
   French. 1993.
4) *Binet el-Youm ou les jeunes aujourd'hui [Girls Today]*
   Nacèra Bouabdallah, Algeria.
   French. 1984.
5) *Les Cases basses [The Lower Rooms]*
   Leïla Houari, Morocco.
   French. 1993.
6) *Les Co-épouses [The Co-Wives]*
   Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
   French. 1990.
7) *Un Couteau dans le soleil [A Knife in the Sun]*
   Hamida Aït el Hadj with Ferid Bennour, Algeria.
   French. 1996.
8) *Les Enfants d'Aïcha [Aïcha's Children]*

Troupe la Rose des Sables, France.
French. 1984.

9) *Les Enfants du mendiant [The Beggar's Children]*
Myriam Ben, Algeria.
French. 1998.

10) *La Fête virile [The Manly Rite]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1992.

11) *L'Histoire terrible mais inacbevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge [The Terrible But Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1985.

12) *L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs rêves [The Indiad or the India of Their Dreams]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1987.

13) *Jeu même [Same Game]*
Zarina Salahuddin-Rubenstein, Tunisia.
French. 1983.

14) *Karim ou jusqu'à la fin de notre vie [Karim or Until the End of Our Life]*
Myriam Ben, Algeria.
French. 1967.

15) *Kitman: contes d'hier, d'aujourd'hui, de demain [Secret Love: Tales of Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow]*
Christiane Chaulet Achour, Algeria.
French. 1995.

16) *Légère en août [Lightly in August]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
French. 1988.

17) *Leïla [Leïla]*
Myriam Ben, Algeria.
French. 1998 (written 1967).

18) *Majnûn Layla [Majnoun and Leïla/Possessed by Leïla]*
Fatima Gallaire with Jean-Claude Gal.
French. 1987.

19) *Molly des sables [Molly of the Sands]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1994.

20) *Nour ou l'appel de Dieu [Nour or the Call of God]*
Amina Lhassani, Morocco.
French. 1994.

21) *On ne part pas, on ne revient pas [We Don't Leave, We Don't Come Back]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1991.

22) *On peut toujours rêver [One Can Always Dream]*
Nadia Bouqallal, Morocco.
French. 1994.

23) *Passions et prairie [Passions and Prairie (A Picture Perfect Sky)]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
French. 1988.

24) *Portrait de Dora [Portrait of Dora]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1976.

25) *Princesses/Ah! Vous êtes venues…là ou il y a quelques tombes [Princesses/Ah! You Have Come Back… Here Where There Are Some Tombs]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1988.

26) *La Prise de l'école du Madhubaï [The Conquest of the School at Madhubaï]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1986 (written 1983).

27) *Promethée [Prometheus]*
Myriam Ben, Algeria.
French. 1967.

28) *Le Refuge [The Refuge]*
Béhija Gaaloul, Tunisia.
French. 1994 (written 1971).

29) *Richesses de l'hiver [Riches of Winter]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1996.

30) *Rimm, la gazelle [Rimm, the Gazelle]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1993.

31) *Rouge l'aube [Red the Dawn]*
Assia Djebar with Walid Carn, Algeria.
French. 1969 [written 1960].

32) *Le secret des vieilles [The Secret of Old Women]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1996.

33) *S'inscrire, quel galère! [University Registration, What a Mess!]*
Fatima Gallaire with the students of the Faculté des Letteres, Mohammedia, Morocco.
French. 1993.

34) *Tambours sur la digue [Drums on the Dam]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1999.

35) *Témoignage contre un homme sterile [Testimony Against a Sterile Man (Madame Bertin's Testimony)]*

Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
French. 1987.

36) *Trente-trois tours a son turban [Thirty-three Twists in His Turban]*
Latifa Ben Mansour, Algeria.
French. 1997.

37) *La Ville parjure [The City Forsworn]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
French. 1995.

38) *Les Yeux de ma mère [My Mother's Eyes]*
Leïla Sebbar, Algeria.
French. 1992.

39) *Le Zajel maure du désir [The Moorish Zajel of Desire]*
Hawa Djabali, Algeria.
French. 1997.

PLAYS APPROACHED THROUGH SECONDARY SOURCES

40) *Al-Abacda [The Abbasids]*
Fatima Chebchoub, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic. 1989.
Description by Chebchoub.

41) *Algérie en éclats [Algeria in Splinters]*
Catherine Lévy-Marié, with Comapgnie I'Amour Fou, France.
French. 1997.
Description.

42) *Beware the Heart [Féroce comme le coeur]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
French. 1992.
Translation.

43) *Chkouf al-Gars [The Planting-Pot Shards]*
Fatima Chebchoub, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic. 1994.
Description by Chebchoub.

44) *Le Conference des Concierges [The Conference of the Concierges]*
Fatiha Berezak, Algeria.
French. 1997.
Description.

45) *Costa Y Watan [The State of the Nation]*
Khedija Assad, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic. 1997.
Live performance.

46) *A Country Wedding [Turbulences et petits détails]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.

French. 1994.
Translation.

47) *Delia [Delia]*

Souad Ben Slimane, Tunisia.
Arabic. No date.
Description by Ben Slimane.

48) *Donni in Dark Room*

Souad Ben Slimane, Tunisia.
Arabic, French and Italian. 1994.
Description by Ben Slimane.

49) *Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil [And Suddenly, Some Nights of Awakening]*

Théâtre du Soleil (in harmony with Hélène Cixous), France.
French. 1997.
Description by Soleil.

50) *Family Portrait [Portrait de famille]*

Denise Bonal, Algeria.
French. 1982.
Translation.

51) *Un Fax en dix metres des Nations Unies [A Fax in Ten Meters From the United Nations]*

Latifa Toujani et al., Morocco
Moroccan Arabic, French, English. 1997. Participation.

52) *Haïk Salaam [Peace Veil]*

Latifa Toujani, Morocco
Moroccan Arabic. 1995.
Description by Toujani.

53) *Mama Ghoulal [Mama Ogre]*

Meryem Drissi with Troupe de Théâtre Elfanous, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic, French. 1997.
Description by Drissi.

54) *Al-Matmora [The Grain Silo]*

Fatima Chebchoub, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic. 1991.
Description by Chebchoub.

55) *Moulat Sserr [The Keeper of the Secret]*

Fatima Chebchoub, Morocco.
Moroccan Arabic, Tamazight. 1993.
Performances, description by Chebchoub.

56) *The Name of (Edipus: Song of the Forbidden Body [Le Nom d'Œdipe: chant du corps interdit]*

Hélène Cixous. 1978.
Translation.

57) *No to Torture*

Houria Niati, Algeria.

Arabic, French, English. 1982–1993.
Description of performance, exhibition of paintings.

58) *Une Nuit perdue qui revient [A Lost Night That Comes Again]*
Souad Ben Slimane, Tunisia.
Arabic. No date.
Description by Ben Slimane.

59) *Parole Nocturne* (*Klem Ellil* Series, *#4, #5, #7*) *[Word Nocturne]*
Souad Ben Slimane, Tunisia.
Arabic. 1990–present.
Description by Ben Slimane.

60) *Al-Saïda al-Horra [Lady Free-Woman]*
Fatima Mernissi with Latifa Toujani and Fatima Chebchoub, Morocco.
Arabic. 1990.
Descriptions by Toujani and Chebchoub.

61) *Seven Out of Sixteen [Sebe'at min sitat 'achr]*
Raja Ben Ammar, Tunisia.
Tunisian Arabic. 1984.
Translation.

62) *Le Sourire Blessé [The Wounded Smile]*
Fadela Assous (adaptation of a play by Omar Fetmouche), Algeria.
French. 1993.
Videorecording.

63) *Tamouz ou le manifeste de l'éxil: cinq mille ans de la vie d'une femme [Tamouz or the Manifesto of Exile: Five thousand years in the life of a woman]*.
Hawa Djabali, Algeria.
French. 1996.
Excerpt.

64) *Telle est Hanane [Such is Hanane]*
Hanane Fadili, Morocco.
Arabic, French, Spanish, English. 1997.
Live performance.

65) *They Have Destroyed My Life [Ngan Temzi-w]*
Fatiha Merabti, Algeria.
Tamazight. No date.
Translation.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

A) *Beware the Heart [Féroce comme le cœur]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
Trans. Richard Miller, 1994.

B) *The Conquest of the School at Madhubaï [La Prise de l'école du Madhubaï]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.

Trans. Deborah Carpenter, 1986.

C) *The Co-Wives [Les Co-épouses]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
Trans. Deborah Folaron, 1999.

D) *A Country Wedding [Turbulences et petits détails]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
Trans. Timothy Johns, 1996.

E) *Family Portrait [Portrait de famille]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
Trans. Timothy Johns, 1984.

F) *Madame Bertin's Testimony [Témoignage contre un homme stérile]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
Trans. Jill MacDougall, 1995.

G) *My Mother's Eyes [Les Yeux de ma mère]*
Leïla Sebbar, Algeria.
Trans. Stephen J.Vogel, 1996.

H) *The Name of Œdipus: Song of the Forbidden Body [Le Nom d'Œdipe: chant du corps interdit]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
Trans. Christiane P.Makward and Judith G.Miller, 1994.

I) *A Picture Perfect Sky [Passions et prairie]*
Denise Bonal, Algeria.
Trans. Timothy Johns, 1988.

J) *Princesses, or Ah! You've come…to where there are some graves [Princesses/Ah! Vous êtes venues…là ou il y a quelques tombes]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.
Trans. Meredith Oakes, 1991.

K) *Portrait of Dora [Portrait de Dora]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
Trans. Anita Barrows, 1979.

L) *Seven Out of Sixteen [Sebe'at min sitat 'achr]*
Raja Ben Ammar, Tunisia.
Trans. Abdennabi Bencheda, 1998.

M) *The Terrible But Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia [L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge]*
Hélène Cixous, Algeria.
Trans. Juliet Flower MacCannell, Judith Pike, and Lollie Groth, 1994.

N) *They Have Destroyed My Life [Ngan Temzi-w]*
Fatiha Merabti, Algeria.
Trans. Hsen Larbi, 1999.

O) *You Have Come Back [Princesses/Ah! Vous êtes venues…là ou il y a quelques tombes]*
Fatima Gallaire, Algeria.

Trans. Jill MacDougall, 1988.

Appendix B
A'Who's Who' of Women in Modern and Contemporary North African Theatre

*Indicates subject of the present study

Parentheses indicate last known country of residence: Fr=France, Bel= Belgium, U.S.=United States, U.K.=United Kingdom

MOROCCO

Amina Alaoui (Fr)
Singer of classical Andalusian music. Collaborated with Farida Benlyazid on the 1997 government-sponsored play about public health, *Aides-toi le Ciel qui t'aidera*. Daughter of Latifa Toujani (Toujani 1997a).

*Khedija Assad

Actor and playwright. Co-founder of Théâtre 80 with husband Saâd Allah Aziz. Renowned actor, recently turned playwright. Author of 1997 play *Costa Y Watan* (Assad 1997b).

Latifa Baouali

Actor. Recent graduate of the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturelle. Collaborates with Naïma Zitan (Zitan and Baouali, 1997). Recently appeared in the film *Nissa…wa Nissa* (1998) with Touria Jabrane.

Farida Benlyazid

Filmmaker recently turned playwright. Author of the 1997 government-sponsored play about public health, *Aides-toi le Ciel qui t'aidera* (Toujani, 1997a).

*Nadia Bouqallal

Playwright and scholar. Member of the Faculté des Lettres et de sciences Humaines Ben M'sik of the Université Hassan II at Mohammedia. Author of *On peut toujours rêver* (1994, produced in 1996) and the 1997 production *Fous de sécheresse* (program of the Ninth Annual Festival International de Théâtre Universitaire 1996; program of the Tenth Annual Festival International de Théâtre Universitaire 1997).

*Fatima Chebchoub (Chbchouba) (U.S.)

Playwright, scholar, dancer, singer, poet, television personality, filmmaker, and proponent of the traditional Moroccan theatre form, *halqa*. Member of the Faculté des Lettres at the Université Moulay Ismail in Meknès and director of the troupe Asays. Best known outside of Morocco for her one-woman show, *Moulat Sserr*, created in 1993 (Chebchoub 1997a; Chebchoub 1997b; Chebchoub 1998). Her father was Amazigh. Currently completing a doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania.

*Meryem Drissi

Actor, playwright and puppeteer. Co-founder of the marionette company Troupe de Théâtre Elfanous with fiancé Driss Snoussi. Recent graduate of the Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturelle. Co-author of 1997 puppet play for youth *Mama Ghoulal* (Drissi 1997).

*Hanane Fadili

Television personality and creator of the one-woman show *Telle est Hanane* (1997).

Souad Hanine

Actor. Student of Fatima Chebchoub. Featured in Chebchoub's *halqa* productions *Al-Abaccia* (1995–1996) and *Al Mattmora* (1991) (Chebchoub 1997b).

*Leïla Houari (Bel)

Playwright, poet and novelist. Wrote *Les Cases basses* (1993).

Touria Jabrane

Renowned actor and director. Co-founder of Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui with husband Abdelouahed Ouzri (Toujani 1997a; program for "Les Fous sont parmi nous" 1989–

1990). Recently featured in the film *Nissa…wa Nissa* (1998).

*Amina Lhassani

Lawyer, poet and playwright. Author of *Nour ou l'appel de Dieu* (1994).

*Fatima Mernissi

Sociologist and sometime playwright. Best known for her scholarly work on women and Islam, she wrote one performance piece based on her book, *Sultanes oubliées*, which she performed with Fatima Chebchoub and Latifa Toujani (Toujani 1997a; Chebchoub 1997b).

Fatima Regragui

Renowned actor. A female pioneer on the Moroccan stage, she appeared often at the Théâtre National Mohamed V (Badry 1987, 48).

Fatima Tazout

Teacher and playwright. Member of the faculty of the Ecole Abou Inan. Author of the 1995 play, *Des enfants parlant le langage des adults* (program of the Eighth Annual Festival International de Théâtre Universitaire 1995).

*Latifa Toujani

Visual and performance artist. Founder of the non-governmental organization Fem'Art. Member of the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles. Creator of the 1995 performance piece *Haïk Salâm* and *Un Fax en dix metres des Nations Unis* (1997b). *Haïk Salâm* was performed at the NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Toujani 1997a; program for "Haïk Salaam" 1995).

Safia Ziani

Renowned actor. A female pioneer on the Moroccan stage, she appeared at the Théâtre National Mohamed V (Badry 1987, 43).

Naïma Zitan

Director. Recent graduate of Institut Supérieur d'Art Dramatique et d'Animation Culturelle. Now employed by the Theatre Division of the Ministère des Affaires

Culturelles. Collaborates with Latifa Baouali (Zitan and Baouali 1997)

ALGERIA

*Christiane Chaulet Achour (Fr)
Scholar and playwright. Of European ancestry. Wrote an autobiography of Myriam Ben (1989) and the collage text *Kitman* (1995). Taught at the University of Algiers, now Professor of Literature at the Université de Clergy Pontoise (Achour 1989; Achour 1997c).

*Hamida Aït el Hadj (Fr)
Director, of Amazigh heritage. Created 1996 collage piece *Un Couteau dans le Soleil*. Worked at the Algerian National Theatre until the assassination of Alloula. At last report, in exile (Aït el Hadj, 1997a; Aït el Hadj 1997b).

*Fadela Assous
Renowned actor and adapter of Omar Fetmouche's one-woman play *Le Sourire blessé* (1995), which she performed in Algeria in 1993–1994, in Tunisia and Morocco in 1993, in France and England in 1995, and in Belgium and Italy in 1996. Worked with the legendary Amazigh playwright Kateb Yacine and with Abdelkader Alloula, the director of the Algerian National Theatre who was assassinated in 1994. At last report, in hiding (Du beau spectacle 1993; Haddad 1993; Jamoussi 1993; Benallou 1994; Brittain 1995; program for Assous' "The Wounded Smile" and Gallaire's "Princesses" 1995; Valla 1995; Guerrieri 1996; Matthys 1996; Assous 1998).

Baya Belal (Fr)
Actor. Played in Cixous' *L'Indiade* at the Théâtre du Soleil. Worked with Marjorie Nakache in her 1995 play *Féminin plurielles* (Belal 1995).

*Myriam Ben (Fr)
Playwright and novelist. Participated in the Algerian War for Independence. Best known for her novels, she has returned to theatrical writing after a hiatus of over thirty years. Colleague of Kateb Yacine. Author of the 1967 works *Leïla* (1998a), *Karim* (1967a), *Promethée* (1967b), and *Les enfants du mendiant* (1998a). (Achour 1989, 33–43). At last report, in exile.

*Latifa Ben Mansour (Fr)

Playwright, scholar and novelist. Member of the Linguistics faculty at the University of Paris III. Author of 1995 play *Dounia* and 1997 play *Trent-trois tours à son turban* (Ben Mansour 1997).

*Fatiha Berezak (Fr)

Playwright, dancer, mime, actor and poet. Creator of one-woman spectacles she has called "maghrebian opera" and *"gouwal"* because she works with a large ensemble of traditional instruments. Some of her many shows: the 1979 work, *Il y a plus de Fatma, plus,* from 1983, *Le Regard aquarel,* and her 1997 show, *La Conference des concierges* (Berezak 1997a, 198–200; Berezak 1997b, 6).

*Denise Bonal (Fr)

Prolific playwright and actor of European ancestry. Author of *Passions et prairie* (1988a), *Légère en août* (1988c), and *Beware the Heart* (1994), among others. Participated in the creation of the 1997 collage text *Algérie en éclats* with the Comapgnie l'Amour Fou (Bonal 1994, 168; Le Boucher and Dumont 1997, 243).

*Nacèra Bouabdallah (Fr)

Playwright, actor, poet, and part of the *beur* theatre movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s in France. Her 1983 play *Binet el-Youm* (1994; 1995) is exemplary of that movement's style (Bouabdallah 1997; Chikh and Zeraoui 1984, 27).

*Hélène Cixous (Fr)

World renowned scholar and playwright of mixed ancestry: Moroccan, European, Jewish, and possibly Amazigh (Cixous 1996). Best known in theatre circles for her work with the Théâtre du Soleil in Paris. Member of the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines at the University of Paris VIII. Author of *Portrait de Dora* (1976), *La Prise de l'école du Madhubaï,* written 1983 (1986b), *L'Histoire terrible mais inachevée de Norodom Sihanouk roi du Cambodge* , written with Soleil (1985), *L'Indiade ou l"inde de leurs rêves,* written with Soleil (1987), *La Ville parjure ou le réveil des Érinyes,* written in 1992–1993 with Soleil (1995), and *Tambours sur la Digue,* written with Soleil (1999). She "harmonized" Soleil's collective creation of the 1997 work, *Et soudain, des nuits d'éveil* (Théâtre du Soleil).

*Hawa Djabali (Bel)

Playwright and actor. Born in Créteil, France of Algerian parents, she moved to Algeria when she was fourteen. Works with the Centre Culturel Arabe in Brussels. Co-author, with Ali Kheder, of the 1995 work, *Sa Naqba Imourou: Geligeamech ou celui qui a vu et touché le fond des choses*, the 1996 show *Tamouz ou le manifeste de l'éxil: cinq mille ans de la vie d'une femme*, in which she performed (Djabali 1996, 5; Djabali 1997a, 223–224), and *Le Zajel maure du désir* (1997b).

*Assia Djebar (Fr)

Author of novels and short stories, filmmaker, playwright and scholar, of mixed Arab and Amazigh heritage. Best known for her novels. Coauthor with Walid Carn of the groundbreaking 1960 play *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969; Déjeux 1984, 10–11).

*Fatima Gallaire (Fr)

Playwright and author of novels and short stories. Best known for her long plays *Princesses* (1988a; 1988b; 1991a; 1991b; 1996c) and *Les Co-épouses* (1990). Author of many short works as well, such as *Témoignage contre un homme stérile* (1987), *La fête virile* (1992), *Rimm, la gazelle* (1993b), *Au loin, les caroubiers* (1993a), *Au cœur, la brûlure* (1994a), *Molly des sables* (1994b) and *Le Sécret des vieilles* (1996a). Often does cultural exchanges with universities in Morocco (Gallaire 1997).

Dalila Helilou

Actor who worked with noted director Slimane Benaïssa on his 1991 play *Rak Khouya Wana Echkoun*. (Helilou and Ouslahi 1991, 61).

*Fatiha Merabti

Playwright and author of short stories, of Amazigh heritage, writes in Tamazight. Author of the unpublished plays *Ngan Temzi-w* and *Tugalin n Lkahina*.

Marjorie Nakache (Fr)

Playwright. Works with immigrant themes. Author of 1995 play, *Féminin plurielles* and *Les Villains* (Nakache 1997).

*Houria Niati (U.K.)

Plastic and performance artist. Best known for her monumental suite of paintings, *No to Torture* (1982–1993), a response to Eugene Delacroix's Orientalist work, *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (1834). Performs her own poetry and Andalusian songs, using her paintings as a setting (program for "Forces of Change" 1995, 8–9; Nashashibi 1994, 136).

Fetouma Ouslahi

Actor who worked with noted director Slimane Benaïssa on his 1991 play *Rak Khouya Wana Echkoun*. (Helilou and Ouslahi 1991, 61).

*Leïla Sebbar (Fr)

Author of novels, short stories, essays and one play. Of mixed Arab and European heritage (Kourilsky 1997, 220). Wrote the play *Les Yeux de ma mere* (1992).

Amel Tafsout (U.K.)

Dancer and dance anthropologist who has revived the dance styles of the Ouled Nailiyat that were degraded during the colonial period (Stahlman 1997, 1–4; Tafsout 1997, 4–5; Lazreg 1994, 29–33).

TUNISIA

Jalila Baccar

Actor. Member of the Théâtre Nouveau. No relation to filmmaker Selma Baccar. (B'chir 1995, 10–12).

*Raja Ben Ammar

Founder of Théâtre Phou in Carthage, actor, dancer, and playwright. (Ben Ammar 1997). Author of play *Seven Out of Sixteen* (1984).

Fatma Ben Saïdene

Actor. Featured in many films, notably *Les Silences du palais, Halfaouine* and *Un Été a La Goulette*. Member of the Théâtre Nouveau. (B'chir 1995, 10–12).

*Souad Ben Slimane

Actor and playwright. Author of *Delia*, the 1994 work *Donni in Dark Room*, Sections *Four, Five*, and *Seven* of the *Parole Nocturne/Klem Ellil* play series, developed in

the 1990s, and *Une Nuit perdue qui revient*. Works with Zeynab Farhat at El Teatro (Ben Slimane, 1997).

Zeynab Farhat

Co-founder of El Teatro with husband Taoufik Jebali (Ben Slimane 1997).

*Béhija Gaaloul

Playwright. Author of the 1971 work, *Le Refuge*. Daughter of trade-union militant Haj Mohamed Gaaloul (Gaaloul 1994, 70).

Soraya el-Kebira

Actor (died 1945). The first Tunisian female actor, she was illiterate and learned her roles by ear (el-Houssi, 1982, 68).

Fadila Khitmi

Actor and founder of the 1929 break-away troupe that produced the controversial translation of Gaston Costa's *The Little Harem* (Ben Halima 1974, 97–98).

Habiba M'sika

Actor (1899–1930). After a brief but wildly successful stage career, she was burned alive by an admirer. The entire country mourned her loss (Ben Halima 1974, 161–162). Subject of a film by Selma Baccar (*Habiba M'sika* 1995).

Néjia el-Ouergi

Actor and co-founder of Théâtre de la Terre with husband Noureddine el-Ouergi. Renowned for her one-woman shows. Featured in the film *Les Silences du palais* (*La Presse Week-End* 1994).

Wassila Sabri

Actor and first female troupe director in Tunisia (el-Houssi 1982, 69).

*Zarina Salahuddin-Rubenstein (Fr)

Playwright, poet, novelist, and actor. Born in Tunis of Russian and Indian parents. Grew up in Pakistan, Belgium, Russia, Switzerland, and in the Russian colony at Tunis. Author of *Quatuor* and the 1983 work *Jeu même* (*L'Avant scène théâtre* 1983, 24).

Glossary

Arabic=Ar.
French=Fr.
Tamazight=Tam.
Turkish=Tur.

abidaterrma a form of halqa that specializes in making peo ple laugh at their own faults (Ar.) (Chebchoub 1997b)
al- the definite article; used much more often than 'the' is used in English (Ar.)
Alif Layla wa Layla the original title of the *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* (Ar.)
Amazigh (pl. Imazighen) lit. 'free person,' the title by which the Berbers self-identify (Tam.)
arifa participants in the *stambali* (Ar.) (Aziza 1975, 35)
ashshaba a female herbalist and marketplace orator (Ar.) (Kapchan 1996, 62–63, and 68)
awalim Egyptian female singer-dancers. See also *ghawazi* (Ar.) (Van Nieuwkerk 1995, 32–37)
banlieu a suburb of a large city (Fr.)
Beldi the elite families of Tunis, from *bled* [country] (Ar.) (Hejaiej 1996, 28–33)
beur an appellation derived from the phrase *berbers d'Europe*. Used to identify some, but not all, children of North African immigrants in Europe. Sometimes used pejoratively (Fr.) (Hargreaves 1996, 33; Bouraoui 1988, 223)
bidonville a shantytown (Fr.)
bilmawn goat-headed character who appears in the masquerades that accompany the Great Sacrifice in Morocco's High Atlas (Tam.) (Hammoudi 1988, 13)
binet (sing. *bint*) girls or unmarried women (Ar.)
bsat lit. 'carpet': an eighteenth-century Moroccan concourse of court-sponsored performances, involving the cooperation of a large number of troupes under the direction of a central figure (Ar.) (Ouzri 1997, 21)
cartes de résistant identity cards given to participants of the independence wars in all three Maghrebian countries that entitle the bearer to certain veteran's benefits (Fr.)
chansons de geste collections of epic praise poems revolving around a particular hero, see also *qasidat* (Fr.)
cheikha a female singer-dancer in the Maghreb; the term also connotes 'prostitute' (Ar.)
dahoukiya a specialized type of *halaqiya*, the female clown (Ar.) (Chebchoub 1994, 17)
dhiwzirin the bride's party, composers and performers of *izran* (Tam.) (Joseph and Joseph 1987, 68–70)

Djeha beloved trickster figure ubiquitous in Arab lore, also called Jeha, Juha, Je'ha and J'ha (Ar.)
djnoun (sing. *djinn*) non-human spirits believed to have the capapbility of possessing human beings, not necessarily malignant (Ar.)
Eid al-Kebir the Great Sacrifice, a Muslim festival commemorating the sacrifice of Ismail by Ibrahim (Ar.)
Eid al-Moulid the festival that marks the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed in Morocco (Ar.)
fellah a peasant (Ar.)
fiançailles official ceremony of engagement for couples who are about to marry (Fr.)
fitna chaos, particularly that inspired by unlicensed female sexuality (Ar.)
(al-)fousha Modern Standard Arabic, also sometimes called classical or literary Arabic; pronounced 'foosha,' not 'foo-sha' (Ar.)
frajat traditional entertainments, e.g. *halqa* (Ar.) (Chebchoub, 1997b)
ghawazi Egyptian female singer-dancers. See also *awalim* (Ar.) (Van Nieuwkerk 1995, 32–37)
hadj the pilgrimage to Mecca (Ar.)
hadji one who has undertaken the *hadj* (Ar.)
hadra a trance-inducing dance common to Sufi ceremonies (Ar.)
haïk an all-enveloping body veil made out of a single rectangle of cloth, often white or black, worn by some North African Muslim women; see also *sefsari* (Ar.)
hakawati a storyteller (Ar.)
halaqi(fem.-*ya*) a *halqa* practitioner (Ar.)
halqa lit. 'circle': a group of North African performance forms that take place inside of a circle or demi-circle of spectators; also the open space on each floor of a traditional Arab home that is surrounded by covered galleries (Ar.) (Chebchoub 1997b).
hijab a scarf that covers the hair and neck, worn by some Muslim women (Ar.)
(al-)hikaya (pl.-*at*) a storytelling performance; see also *hakawati* (Ar.)
izri (pl. *izran*) rhyming couplets composed and performed by the young women who comprise the bride's party at a wedding in the Moroccan Rif; see also *dhiwzirin* (Tam.) (Joseph and Joseph 1987, 68–70)
jihalya in Islam, the world of non-believers and of *fitna* (Ar.) (Dialmy 1995, 53–59)
jouissance pleasure, especially physical; orgasm (Fr.)
karagoz a form of puppetry imported to North Africa by the Turks; from *kara* [black] and *goz* [eyed] (Tur.)
khayal al-zill shadow puppetry, possibly Turkish or Persian in origin (Ar.) (Fazio 1985, 43–44; Alsafar 1991, 43)
khurafat fantastical stories (Ar.) (Webber 1991, 311)
kitman a secret especially associated with women, a profound "care of the heart" (Ar.) (Hejaiej 1996, 35)
mabrouk (fem.-*ka*) lit. 'blessed,' someone with a physical disability (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
maddah praise giver; see also *(al-)madih* (Ar.) (Fazio 1985, 26–28; Alsafar 1991, 41)
(al-)madih a poetic performance form involving praise giving; see also *maddah* (Ar.) (Fazio 1985, 26–28; Alsafar l991, 41)

madjoub (fem.-*ba*) one who is entranced, touched by an over-whelming spiritual force (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
(al-)maghreb lit. ‘a point, west of one’s present location, where the sun sets’; the country of Morocco (Ar.)
mahboul (fem.-*la*) one who has lost reason (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
majnoun (fem.-*na*) one who is possessed, esp. by the *djnoun* (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
(al-)maqama (pl.-*at*) literary competitions engaged in by Arab linguists using unusual vocabulary in short episodes composed of assonated prose, see also *saja* (Ar.) (Fazio 1985, 30–31; Agel 1982, 13)
maquisard revolutionary, member of the *maquis* [revolutionary underground], esp. Algerian War for Independence (Fr.)
marabout a Sufi saint; also his or her tomb (Ar.)
(al-)mashreq the part of the ‘Arab world’ that does not comprise Morocco, Algeria or Tunisia (Ar.)
masrah theatre, in contemporary terms, Western-style theatre forms (Ar.)
medina the traditional, walled Arab city (Ar.)
mekhalkhal (fem.-*la*) one who exhibits outrageous or socially unacceptable behavior (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
melhoun a form of sung poetry particular to Morocco (Ar.)
meskin (fem.-*na*) lit. ‘one who is enslaved,’ fig. ‘one who is pitiable’ (Ar.) (Déjeux 1991, 108)
mitadayyinat Islamist women (Ar.) (Badran 1985, 50)
moudouwana the *sharia-bsistd* Family Code in Morocco (Ar.)
moujahadine (fem.-*dite*) during independence wars: revolutionary or freedom fighter; currently: one who uses violent means to further the cause of Islamic fundamentalism (Ar.)
moulat sserr a specialized Moroccan form of *halqa;* the *moulat sserr* is a female go-between for couples intending to marry and is entrusted with the sexual education of the bride (Ar.) (Chebchoub 1997b)
Moulay a title given to important descendants of the Prophet Mohammed; see also *sharif* (Ar.) (Combs-Schilling 1989,192)
(al-)muqalid an “imitator of didactic and peculiar personalities” (Ar.) (Agel 1982, 13)
mythe du retour the persistent nostalgia for and romanticizing of the homeland by North African immigrants in Europe (Fr.)
nissayat ‘who’s who’ compilations made by Arab historians to detail the accomplishments of women (Ar.) (Mernissi 1995, 128n)
pied-noir people of European ancestry born in Algeria before the War for Independence; can be pejorative (Fr.)
Qaaba the central sanctuary in the city of Mecca (Ar.)
qadi judge (Ar.)
qasidat collections of epic praise poems revolving around a particular hero, see also *chansons de geste* (Ar.)
raï lit. ‘opinion’: a type of popular music originating in and around Oran, Algeria; characterized by fusion of traditional rhythms with reggae, Western-style rock, rap, and world-beat, and lyrics that defy traditional mores (Ar.)
saja assonated prose, see also *(al-) maqama* (Ar.) (Agel 1982, 7)

(al-) samajah comic sketches based on imitations of stereo-typed characters (Ar.) (Alsafar 1991, 42)

(al-) samir nightly entertainments comprised of song, dance, and spoken word (Ar.) (Alsafar 1991, 41)

scènes et types a notorious style of postcard produced in France that offered images, often staged, of native colonized people for the consumption of the colonizer; in the case of women, sometimes obscene (Fr.) (Alloula 1986)

sefsari an all-enveloping body veil made out of a single rectangle of cloth, often white or black, worn by some North African Muslim women; see also *haïk* (Ar.)

sharia Islamic law (Ar.)

sharif (fem.*-fa*) a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed (Ar.)

Sidi in Morocco, lit. 'sir,' (Saïd in literary Arabic): title by which Sufi male saints are addressed (Ar.); female saints are *Lella* (Ar.)

Sidi al-Kafti a short-lived, court-sponsored, Moroccan form of the *maqama*, performed by a Sufi Brotherhood, dating from 1912 C.E.; see also *hadra* (Ar.) (el-Mniai 1987, 40)

sim a group of argots employed by performers, homosexuals and other marginals in Egypt (Ar.) (Van Nieuwkerk 1995, 96–101)

(al-) smeiri a storytelling form of the *halqa* that takes current events for its inspiration (Ar.) (Chebchoub 1997b)

souk marketplace (Ar.)

stambali a Tunisian form of Sufi trance performance (Ar.) (Aziza 1975, 35)

sultan al-tolba lit. 'student king': a seventeenth-century Moroccan performance form, characterized by humor and burlesque performances, wherein students were permitted to create a miniature court around a king of students for one week per year at the end of which they could ask a boon of the real monarch that he was obliged to honor (Ar.) (el-Mniai 1987, 41)

takhurbisht the ablution room of a mosque (Tam.) (Hammoudi 1988, 142–143)

Tamazight a collective term for the languages of the Imazighen; also a female Amazigh person (Tam.)

(al-) tamthil incarnation or figural representation; considered Islamically incorrect; as opposed to *(al-) taqlid* [imitation], which is not (Ar.) (al-Magaleh 1988, 49–50; Fazio 1985, 13–14)

(al-) taqlid imitation, as opposed to *(al-) tamthil* [incarnation, or figural representation] (Ar.) (al-Magaleh 1988, 49–50)

tarifit a form of Tamazight spoken in the Moroccan Rif (Tam.) (Joseph and Joseph 1987, 48)

ta'ziyeh a form of Shi'ite performance involving the recitation, or re-enactment, of the seventh-century battle that took place at Karbala in presentday Iraq between the Umayyad Caliph, Yazid, and Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (Ar.)

tfaska the Great Sacrifice, in the Amazigh dialects of Morocco's High Atlas (Tam.) (Hammoudi 1988, 199)

tifinagh the only known script of the Tamazight language extant, preserved by the Amazigh princess Tin Hinan; due to the Amazigh renaissance, it is currently undergoing a revival after centuries of disuse (Tam.)

wali the male relative who serves as a woman's guardian under the *sharia;* this may be a father, husband, brother, uncle, or son (Ar.)
zawiyya a Muslim refuge; the lodge of a Sufi Brotherhood (Ar.)
ziyy al-Islami Islamically correct dress (Ar.)

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. For a more complete discussion of the photographic collections of Marc Garanger and Malek Alloula, see Woodhull 1993, 42–46. An important new work on the subject, Bailey and Tawadros' *Veil* (2003), also reproduces many of the Garanger photographs, as well as *scènes et types* postcards, juxtaposing them productively with essays about the discourse of veiling and works of visual art by Middle Eastern women and others.
2. The Imazighen are possibly the oldest known population of North Africa, but their geographical origin is unknown. Through intermarriage with other populations, they have become racially mixed; there are now Black Imazighen as well as White and Brown Imazighen. What ties them together is a shared group of languages. There are Imazighen in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and the Canary Islands.
3. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of plays and translations.
4. Gilbert and Tompkins' work focuses primarily on Anglophone post-colonial societies that were or are part of the British Commonwealth.
5. Roth does discuss the role of the female spectator as critic (1967, 51–52), and Ben Halima discusses the fact that during the early years of Tunisian Western-style theatre, as now, women were sometimes founders of theatrical troupes (1974, 97–98).
6. One of the best discussions of these images is contained in the dissertation of Lori Ann Salem, "The Most Indecent Thing Imaginable': Sexuality, Race and the Image of Arabs in American Entertainment 1850–1990" (1995).
7. Many Muslims believe that the true liberation of women is to be found within Islam, and see Western feminism as a trap that leads inevitably to exploitation. Islamist feminism is based in the idea of separate but equal roles for men and women. Islamic women's organizations have been responsible for many of the campaigns to educate women in North Africa. A detailed discussion of Islamist feminisms may be found in chapter three. See also Badran 1985; el Saadawi 1988; Lazreg 1988; Mernissi 1990; Mernissi 1992; Ahmed 1992; Lazreg 1994; Daoud 1996; Medimegh Dargouth 1996; and Haddad and Smith 1996.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Although one may make the claim for incarnation in the *ta'ziyeh,* I must point out that the men who perform the *ta'ziyeh* in Iran call themselves "role-carriers," not actors (Wirth 1979, 38); that is to say, they stand beside the role, not inside of it. Indeed, when the *ta'ziyeh* came to the U.S. one of the performers, who is a professional actor in Iran, distinguished his work in the *ta'ziyeh* from his acting work. For him, practicing the *ta'ziyeh* is a religious devotion (program for "The Ta'ziyeh of the Children of Moslem" 2002). Moreover, there are strong

divisions between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam on the question of how much figurative representation is allowable in the visual and performing arts.

2. In terms of its relationship to the State, the *ta'ziyeh* functions as a vehicle for revolution. At its essence is the story of a righteous man opposed by over-whelming odds. For a discussion of how the *ta'ziyeh* has been harnessed to revolutionary projects in Iran, see Chelkowski and Dabashi (1999).
3. Jews have the same story, but with a twist. According to the Jews, Abraham sacrificed Isaac, his son with Sarah. Ismail was the son of Hagar, and in the Quran it is he whom Allah requires Ibrahim to sacrifice. In both stories, the sons are saved through divine intervention (Combs-Schilling 1989, 265).
4. It should be pointed out that, much like the Western marriage vow that a woman takes to obey her husband, this custom is not as universally practiced as it used to be.
5. I was delighted to hear a Djeha story included in Emily Mansur Shihadeh's solo autobiographical performance, *Grapes and Figs Are in Season* (Shihadeh 1999a; Shihadeh 1999b). Shihadeh is a San Francisco-based Arab Palestinian Quaker who was born in Jerusalem and raised in Rumallah, a city located in the occupied West Bank. She has recently returned to her Arab performance roots by including audience participation in her performances.
6. English-and French-language texts on the theatre of the Spanish Golden Age do not make the connection between Moorish influence on the *corrales* and the linguistic and architectural meanings of *halqa*. It is to be hoped that arabophone and hispanophone scholars will soon address the question more definitively than I am able to do here.
7. I observed a particular *halqa* of musicians over the course of many evenings in the Djmaa al-Fna during the summer and fall of 1997. I marveled at the multiplicity of techniques they had for causing the audience to part with its money. The head of this troupe expressed disgust at people who would listen and then leave without paying anything, thereby breaking the implied contract between audience and performer that guarantees the performer will be paid according to the worth of the performance.
8. Morocco and Tunisia achieved independence from France in 1956, while Algeria remained entangled in its revolution against the French from 1954 until 1962, when independence was finally attained. The British occupation of Egypt ended in 1952, and Egypt became a republic in 1953 (ArabNet).
9. I had an exchange with Assia Djebar at the University of Leed's *Francophone Voices* conference in 1997 that reflected the dis-ease many North African writers have with this debate. She questioned my enthusiasm for the folkloric character devices in the works of Gallaire. "Folklore" is a term she apparently deplores. However, in her only play, *Rouge l'aube* (Djebar and Carn 1969), Djebar herself clearly uses a *hakawati* to comment upon the action of the play through intertextual poetic recitation. *Rouge l'aube* is an early work, so I can only assume that her position has evolved over time.
10. June 5, 1967 marked the end of the Six-Day War, when Syria surrendered the Golan Heights to Israeli control.
11. Habiba M'sika is the subject of a biographical film, *Habiba M'sika ou la danse du feu [Habiba M'sika, or the Dance of Fire]* (1995), by Tunisian filmmaker Selma Baccar. For more information on the abundant involvement of women in Tunisian filmmaking, see issue number 11 of *CREDIFInfo*, a publication that is entirely devoted to the subject.
12. The distinction between amateur and professional theatre in North Africa is not a matter of proficiency. In general, professionals are in the employ of the State, while amateurs are not, but both may be highly trained. Amateurs generally make their living at something other than theatre, and do theatre on the side. Independent, or private, troupes may do theatre full-time, but generally do not do so on the government's payroll (Salhi 1998, 69–73).
13. Mammeri was also an anthropologist, and it was the cancellation of his conference on ancient Amazigh poetry in March of 1980 by the Algerian authorities that led to the student

uprising that became the Amazigh Spring revolt. This uprising left at least thirty-two people dead and four hundred injured (Aym 1995).

14. The Imazighen are just beginning to publish in Tamazight, using an expanded set of Roman characters. Work is underway to revive *tifinah,* an ancient Amazigh script that still exists.
15. For testimonials of male Algerian students tortured in Paris, see *The Gangrene* (1960). Regarding the torture of female revolutionary fighters, see Halimi (1990, 297–301).
16. To trace the escalation of the violence in Algeria, and the implication of the FLN and the FIS, see Bouaita (1989), Bennoune (1995), Bellem (1997), and Saleh (1998).

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. While I agree with Lazreg that the Algerian War had a pronounced effect on French philosophy, I find it more likely that the theories of Cixous and Derrida, who were both born in pre-independence Algeria and are both Jewish, were inspired by their profound betweenness. Jews, like the Imazighen, were used as a minority wedge by the French against the majority Arab Muslim population, and during the Vichy period, their position was especially precarious in Algeria. It must be noted that the Algerian revolution also provided inspiration for the existentialists. Albert Camus was born there, and Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir lobbied in France for the liberation of Algeria during the war.

   Lazreg also argues that the "Berberist" movement receives tacit feminist support because it is anti-Arab and anti-Muslim (1994, 207). Again, I disagree. I do not believe that cultural self-determination for the Imazighen constitutes an attack on Islam, or even on Arabs, nor is the Amazigh cultural renaissance particularly feminist in its priorities. The government of Algeria believes otherwise, however, and has characterized the movement as a betrayal of the explicitly Arabo-Muslim State discourse. Many Algerian intellectuals agree.

2. Although independent of France in 1956, Tunisia did not formally become a republic until 1957 (Daoud 1996, 56).
3. See also Joseph (1993).
4. I accidentally stumbled onto this strategy when I was creating a *halqa*-style fusion performance for an Arabic language class final project. I was dramatizing a short story my professor had given me, about a young woman who complains to her mother that her husband beats her, but shushes her mother when she expresses her outrage because the selfsame husband is asleep in the next room, "poor thing." I did not know how to end the story (particularly in my limited Arabic), so I had the mother suggest a divorce, knowing that divorce is not an option for many women in the Maghreb. Having transgressed that far, I then asked the audience what they thought: "Divorce? Yes or no?" Being (mostly) American students, my audience cheered the idea of a divorce. I then stopped them, and told them, "*Le! Allahu akbar! Fi yandihi!* [No! Allah is great! It is in His hands!]," simultaneously making the Islamic gesture for prayer. I had seen male Moroccan street performers use the gesture when invoking piety to obtain payment for a performance. Moreover, "Allah is great" is the beginning of the Muslim call to prayer. Inadvertently, I had tapped into a powerful formula with a distinguished pedigree. By invoking Allah, I had excused both my outrageous behavior (performance) and my outrageous suggestion (divorce) by associating myself with Muslim piety. It was a triple subversion: I am a female, I perform, and I am an infidel. Like

Hejaiej's and Kapchan's subjects, I used the masculine discourse to legitimize the unseemly. Hejaiej, who was my Arabic professor at the time, witnessed the performance (see also Kapchan 1996, 64–65; Hejaiej 1996, 20–22).

5. The term "oral literature" is used by Daniela Merolla to define a "literary space" that is a continuum of "different modes of intellectual production (oral, written, audio-visual)" (1996, 15). Although she is referring to Kabylia, I feel her paradigm works equally well for the oral production of women of other ethnicities.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. See Barba (1986).
2. The word *beur,* like the word Chicano, has political overtones. It is an appellation derived from the phrase *berbers d'Europe*. *Beurs* are the children of North African immigrants to Europe. Not all of them are Imazighen, as the name suggests; rather, *beur* as a self-identification implies a certain politicized consciousness of marginalized status, whether the heritage is Amazigh or Arab. Not all French people of North African heritage self-identify as *beur*. Lately, the term has become slightly pejorative, so scholars now hesitate to use it (Hargreaves 1996, 33; Bouraoui 1988, 223).
3. Please recall that a Moroccan Muslim man could, until January of 2004, take up to four wives at a time, and might divorce and remarry at will.
4. *Pied-noir* [black foot], like *beur,* is a difficult term. It is a sly racial slur indicating that the colons to whom it applied had tainted their feet by setting them on African soil.
5. A *banlieu* is a suburb of a particular type, filled with the concrete structures that were built in the 1970s to replace the *bidonvilles* [shantytowns] that the early immigrant workers had built to house themselves before, during, and just after the Algerian War for Independence.
6. *Raï* is a fusion of Western rock music with North African and reggae rhythms that was born in Oran, Algeria. Its primary practitioners are Khaled and Cheb Mami. Cheikha Remitti, a traditional *cheikha* performer whose lyrics are known for being transgressive, extremely bawdy, and feminist, is generally acknowledged to be the mother of *raï.*
7. These three plays inspired me to compose *The Gangrene,* a collage text using excerpts from the book of Algerian war torture testimonies by the same name and wartime psychiatric case studies from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* juxtaposed with news reports and personal testimonies from the present civil strife. The piece explores cycles of violence in Algerian history. *The Gangrene* was directed by Carl Eye and presented by Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco as part of its 1999 Middle East theatre festival, *Six Plays—en short.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Fernández-Sánchez mentions the double chorus scheme and mistakenly attributes it to Gallaire, basing her conclusions on the 1991 French edition of *Princesses* that contains Vincent's cast list (1996, 160).
2. A reading of the MacDougall translation led me to write in an article that Princesse lacks a political consciousness. After many conversations with Jan Gross (1998) and a thorough comparison of all the French and English versions of the text, I concluded that my initial analysis was incorrect. Princesse has the political consciousness of a concerned outsider. Her distance from and naïveté about the social patterns in her natal village prove fatal. This view

is supported by Fernández-Sánchez (Box 1998a, 97; Box, 1999b, 176n; Fernández-Sánchez 1996, 163).

3. I have chosen in a number of instances to use my own translations of original texts rather than those of another translator. This does not necessarily indicate that I disagree with his or her translation. In the case of *Les Co-épouses,* for example, the dissertation that contains the translation is unpublished (Gallaire 1999), and I do not have permission to cite it. In all cases where I have cited the original text for a passage rendered in English, the translation is my own.
4. Recall, if you will, Spain's 2002 tussle with Morocco over the island of Perejil/Leïla, a place inhabited only by goats.
5. For an articulation of the praxis and postmodern, or "interpretive" and "genealogical" approaches to feminism, see Kathy Ferguson (1993, 1–35).
6. *Jeu même* (Salahuddin-Rubenstein 1983) bears a slight resemblance to Harold Pinter's play, *The Lover* (1967). It is possible that the former was written under the influence of the latter. However, a detailed comparison of the two reveals that the likeness is superficial. Like the married couple in *The Lover,* the partners in *Jeu même* play at being in an illicit relationship, but we never really see them function outside of the game, as we do in *The Lover*. Moreover, the game is a closed loop in *The Lover,* but in *Jeu même* the possibility of an affair outside the game is strongly implied.
7. The *Klem Ellil* series, like the French *Brèves d'ailleurs* series in which Latifa Ben Mansour's play *Trente-trois tours à son turban* (1997) appeared, is a group of short plays by different authors. Both *"klem el-lil"* and *"parole nocturne"* mean "night words," in French and Arabic respectively. Souad Ben Slimane wrote *Parole Nocturne/Klem Ellil #4, #5,* and *#7* (Ben Slimane 1997).
8. Tunisia is in the midst of an unprecedented building boom.
9. Cixous based her play on current events. In March of 1999, the French courts convicted Former Health Minister Edmond Herve of knowingly allowing the French blood supply to become tainted with the HIV virus. Ex-Prime Minister Laurent Fabius and Social Affairs Minister Georgina Dufoix were also tried, but acquitted. Herve allowed French pharmaceutical company Diagnostics Pasteur to block sales of an HIV screening test manufactured by the American company Abbott Laboratories in 1985. Blood was not screened until months later, when the French company was able to issue its own test. Meanwhile, hundreds of people were infected. French resistance to the American test may have been, in part, a reaction to the HIV discovery controversy. American researcher Robert C.Gallo, now head of the Institute of Human Virology, still takes credit for co-discovery, although the Pasteur Institute has accused him of stealing its research (Gallo 2004; Shilts 1987; Dahlburg 1999; Noveck 1999).
10. Commissioned by *L'Avant-scène théâtre* for its special issue no. 999/1000, *Le Secret des vieilles* (Gallaire 1996a) is one of twenty-six short plays that revolve around the theme of the number one thousand.
11. Female genital mutilation (FGM), sometimes erroneously referred to as female circumcision, is not practiced in Maghrebian societies, although it still occurs in rural Egypt and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. It is not an act required by Islamic doctrine.
12. In a traditional Maghrebian wedding, henna paste is applied to the hands and feet of the bride in intricate patterns. Henna is considered to have therapeutic, cosmetic, and protective properties.
13. It should be noted that Chebchoub probably equates bisexuality in this context with a willingness to sexually exploit children and members of both sexes. Men of other than heterosexual orientation in Morocco, as in France, are often referred to as *pédé* [pederasts].
14. *Moujahadine* [fem. *moujahadite*] is a culturally loaded word. During the Algerian War for Independence, the term meant "freedom fighter." Currently, members of fundamentalist militant groups use the word to refer to themselves. It connotes righteousness.

15. Decapitation and engorgement are favored methods for killing women and others, particularly artists, who are accused of opposing the project of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria.
16. Many of the obscenities in *Témoignage* were considered too extreme for its American audiences, and were cut from the translation by the editor (Gallaire 1997).
17. The Enrico character in *Au loin* is almost certainly a tribute to Enrico Macias, the famous Constantinian Jewish singer.
18. The Noah [Noach] story appears in Genesis 6:9–11:32 of the Torah and Isaiah 54:1–55:5 of the Haftarot (World ORT Union), and in the corresponding chapters of the King James version of the Bible. In the Quran, the story of Nuh [Noah] appears in suras Al-A'raf 59–64, Yunus 71, 73, Hud 25–49, Al-Mu'minun 23–31, Al-Shu'ara 105–122, Al-'Ankabut 14, 15, Al-Saffat 75–82, Al-Qamar 9–16 and the entirety of Nuh (Maududi). The covenant between the Creator and Noah appears in Genesis 9:11–12 and Isaiah 54:9–10, but does not occur in the Quran.
19. Given Cixous' tendency to use current events as her inspiration, *Tambours sur la digue* may be a reference to the Three Gorges Dam project in the People's Republic of China, an attempt to dam the Yangtze River. The project is submerging over a thousand existing towns and villages, as well as at least eight hundred precious archeological sites, and displacing over a million people. Endangered species, including the Giant Panda and the Yangtze Dolphin, are being impacted by the resulting environmental changes. If the dam breaks, the resulting catastrophe would threaten a population the size of that of the United States. There are grave concerns about corruption and flaws in the Three Gorges Dam construction process (*Great Wall* 2000; Trade and Environment Database).
20. I follow here the schema for narrative levels outlined by Ellis (2002).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. In the Sanskrit daughter languages, *"deva"* is a masculine suffix for names, *"devi"* a feminine one. It is difficult to tell whether Cixous was trying to make a point here, or whether she simply was unfamiliar with the way that language system works. The names in *L'Indiade* (1987), a later play, contain no such ambiguities.
2. See, for example, Armstrong (1978).
3. I follow here the usage coined by Audre Lorde (2001).
4. For more on the spect-actor, see Boal (1979).
5. Most Jews left North Africa when the State of Israel was formed, creating a rift in the Maghreb that is comparable to the human body's loss of a limb.
6. *Tambours sur la digue* is nothing if not eclectic. The drums of the title are Korean, as is the costume of the puppet master. However, the puppets themselves, played by actors, resemble Japanese *bunraku* puppets in their operation and costuming. Most of the character names sound Chinese. Evidently, Cixous wanted to avoid identifying her setting with a particular country, while indulging in a great deal of creative cultural appropriation.
7. For occult practices in Algeria see Lazreg (1994, 178). For Morocco, see Davis (1987, 114–118); and *Some Women of Marrakech* (1977).
8. In the original French, this passage uses assonated prose, a technique that dates back to the *maqamat*.
9. The gaze is not limited to the male spectator. It occurs when there is a disparity of power. Hence, a woman who has power over another woman may direct the gaze upon her. This is the main dynamic in the Western feminist discourses about the veil; the veil has become an object of concern because of its intractable difference and its impenetrability.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The organization that called OFAC's attention to the question of academic publishing was the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE). After being notified by its bank that a payment of expenses for a 2001 conference IEEE sponsored in Tehran was illegal, IEEE looked into the Iran Trade Regulations (ITR, Code of Federal Regulations Title 31, Part 560), and received interpretation from OFAC that precluded the IEEE from editing articles submitted by members in embargoed nations, sponsoring conferences in embargoed nations, providing members in embargoed nations with e-mail aliases or online job listings, or giving members in embargoed nations awards or meeting registration fee discounts. The regulation flows from the most recent Executive Order on Iranian trade sanctions, Order 13059, issued by President Clinton in 1997; however, this interpretation of it dates from early 2002. Ironically, the ITR was amended in 2000 to ease restrictions on the importation to the U.S. of Iranian caviar and carpets (OFAC 2003; Kumagai 2003).

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