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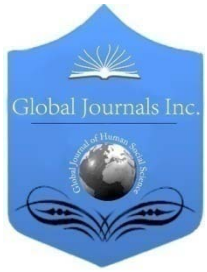

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Morocco in Other Words

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Abstract- For many years now, questions of culture, race, sex and identity, among many others, have been coped with at length in Moroccan literary writings in different languages and for different purposes. These purposes, in fact, have been articulated in a variety of literary outlets with the aim of correcting cultural stereotypes, bridging cultural gaps to avoid cultural shocks or enlarging the extremes of intercultural dialogues among nations of the world. However, one such thorny question ought to be raised in this context is the extent to which any foreign language can be a resort to any Moroccan, in particular, and African writer, in general, to express the repressed cultural forms within their cultures. In this account, my contribution places under scrutiny the Moroccan text written in foreign languages, especially in English, as having the ability to translate the miscellaneous forms of the Moroccan cultural diversity to the outside world; a possibility which is now at hands more than ever before. To help capture this phenomenon in its contemporaneity, a combination of both Mikhail Bakhtin and Chantal Mouffe's philosophies is undertaken with the aim of laying bare the manifestation of a textual enterprise authored or co- authored by different voices in an in-between dialogical as well as virtual space.

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Morocco in Other Words

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Abstract- For many years now, questions of culture, race, sex and identity, among many others, have been coped with at length in Moroccan literary writings in different languages and for different purposes. These purposes, in fact, have been articulated in a variety of literary outlets with the aim of correcting cultural stereotypes, bridging cultural gaps to avoid cultural shocks or enlarging the extremes of intercultural dialogues among nations of the world. However, one such thorny question ought to be raised in this context is the extent to which any foreign language can be a resort to any Moroccan, in particular, and African writer, in general, to express the repressed cultural forms within their cultures. In this account, my contribution places under scrutiny the Moroccan text written in foreign languages, especially in English, as having the ability to translate the miscellaneous forms of the Moroccan cultural diversity to the outside world; a possibility which is now at hands more than ever before. To help capture this phenomenon in its contemporaneity, a combination of both Mikhail Bakhtin and Chantal Mouffe's philosophies is undertaken with the aim of laying bare the manifestation of a textual enterprise authored or co- authored by different voices in an in-between dialogical as well as virtual space. By this combination, the concepts employed provide the conceptual/critical framework and terminology that can be used in the present analysis with the aim of generating new rhetorical concepts or strategies.

Keywords: agonistic pluralism – dialogism – addressivity – answerability – expressivity – epistemic engagement – textual maneuver.

I. Intorduction

It is a markedly phenomenal feature that the concepts of language and culture have generated a hotly disputed debate among scholars up till the present time. In fact, culture and language have come to nestle quite finely in synonymity with each other in a variety of literary enterprises. Writers employ many a language to expose and communicate their cultures. Literature, in this regard, is an important site for cultural exhibition used by many writers, most important of whom to the current paper are Moroccans, to dwell in a space of creativity and transcend the cultural and linguistic borders towards dialogical emancipation. It is the task of the current textual enterprise to analyze the observable fact of some Moroccans writing in foreign languages other than Arabic.

In this account, this paper employs both Mikhail Bakhtin's (1982) and Chantal Mouffe's (2000) useful concepts for its analysis of the Moroccan culture in foreign languages to account for how a certain language can communicate ideas and cultures more effectively than another one. By this combination, the concepts employed shall provide the conceptual/critical chapter-framework and terminology that can be used in the present analysis with the aim of generating new rhetorical concepts or strategies, such as epistemic engagement and textual maneuver, among others.

Bakhtin's dialogism theories[1], among other things, form a conceptual ground for inter-human relationships, which has always been framed in both antagonistic and agonistic terms. That is to say, the aim envisaged from every attempt to engage in a mental process characterized by thinking, writing or even debating is to foster a conception of understanding and accepting a polyphony of voices. In fact, the combination of Chantal Mouffe's enacted theory[2] of agonistic pluralism and Mikhail Bakhtin's (1982) theories of dialogism are used to lay bare the characterization of the Moroccan culture in foreign languages and the implication of translating this culture from the "miserable" source to the outer "nirvana". In other words, the significance of agonistic pluralism lies in its capability of enacting a model of cultural coexistence and dialogue that does without cultural exclusion. In fact, Moroccan writers use foreign languages in their writing to establish a dialogic atmosphere between them and their readers and also between their readers and the subject matters of their writings. It is, therefore, by the creation of a dialogic atmosphere wherein contradictions and divergences can meet that the Moroccan writers in foreign languages have managed to voice their concerns to their readers on a global scale. At exactly this point, both postulated theories of both Bakhtin and Mouffe fit in explaining how foreign languages best translate the Moroccan realities to foreign readers and also why many Moroccan writers have opted for such means of expressions to establish this kind of textual dialogue.

Bakhtin's philosophy of dialogism is, in fact, an encompassing container of a number of closely interrelated terminologies in task and performance. That is, dialogue among subjects is based on its ability to carry out mainly communicational tasks successfully. The pillars of such a strategic activity of dialogue stand,

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[1] Mikhail, Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Ed.) Michael Holquist. (Trans.) Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982)

[2] Chantal, Mouffe. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism." (Ed.) Christine, Neuhold. Political Science Series 72. (Institute for Advanced Studies: Vienna. 2000)

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according to Bakhtin, on a structural delineation and respect of the following instructions: addressivity and answerability/ responsibility/ expressivity. By trying to define the term dialogue, one can definitely aver that it is a sort of interaction with the other. Clark and Holquist (1984) in their book *Mikhail Bakhtin* develop this last idea further ahead by defining dialogue as:

> The extensive set of conditions that are immediately modeled in any actual exchange between two persons but not exhausted in such exchange. Ultimately dialogue means communication between simultaneous differences.[3]

Important in such a definition is the idea that dialogue is carried out by more than one person. Lurking behind it also is the very importance of the presence of the other and its valuableness to the construction of meaning. That is to say, one cannot have a clear stand without having the other's point of view, without being exposed to different contradictions and without being faced with rational disagreements. In this account, language proves a bridge that connects disparities and helps in converging different thoughts. Along with such line of reasoning Bakhtin (1982) writes in his *Dialogic Imagination* that:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's.[4]

Important in Bakhtin's (1982) Dialogism is that language, and therefore the production of meaning, is not authored or authorized solely by an individual but rather coauthored: by the self in its interaction with the other. Language is a linguistic institution that partly plays a role in the production of meaning. The importance of language, therefore, lies in its ability to facilitate interaction between subjects. Still, the partial role of language in the construction of meaning is staged to give agency to other components to contribute to the formation of meaning. In this regard, the full production of meaning is realized by means of a partnership between language and its participants. That is to say, the presence of the other with their different and disputed contributions is an assistance for the self to form an idea about what a thing is, thereby the word in a language is half someone else's. Therefore, it is the play of different forces in addition to language that contribute to directing dialogue to accomplish ideal purposes.

The interaction of subjects in a dialogue is characterized by the presence of highly significant factors for its functioning and success. Among such factors, Bakhtin names the concept of addressivity by virtue of its ability to constitute a dialogic agency. Clark and Holquist (1984) define addressivity as, "the otherness of language in general and of given dialogic partners in particulars."[5] In other words, addressivity is the act of partaking in a dialogic activity and asking a question or rising a point of discussion that is, most of all, characterized by its ability to breathe life in dialogue. People address their question to each other to have answers and more clarifications, which can be the milestone of new forming ideas and meanings. Bakhtin further explicates that:

> expressivity;…life is…an activity, the dialogue between events addressed to me in the particular place I occupy in existence, and my expression of a response to such events from that unique place"[6]

What one expresses from their unique position serves promoting the scope of dialogue. Everybody has something to contribute, and it remains that they address it to others the way they understand it and the way they have culturally grown up to perceive it. The positionality of a subject with regard to their cultural and socio-cultural background proves a touchstone for the richness of inter-human dialogic interactions.

Closely related to addressivity is another dialogic partner, central to Bakhtin's (1982) philosophy, termed answerability. Answerability, another constitutive dialogic agency, is the simple act of answering a question or a request addressed by another actor in a dialogic interaction. The positionality of the answerer is also of capital importance in that it generates different opinions. In fact, dialogue is bound to succeed in spite of its actors' different cultural, socio-cultural and ideological backgrounds on condition that an atmosphere of understanding, empathy and broadmindedness rules in every dialogue. It is, therefore, at this particular point that Chantal Mouffe would further relate her enacted philosophy of agonistic pluralism to Bakhtin's dialogism.

Chantal Mouffe (2000) advocates an agonistic model of democracy as an answer to the serious deficiency of other proposed models. For her, this agonistic model should "place the question of power and antagonism at its very center."[7] That is, to take into consideration the different plays of power and the nature of antagonism that manipulates most of inter-human interactions. Instead of increasing antagonism between subjects, which is a behavior that takes place between

[3] Katerina, Clark and Michael, Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), p. 9

[4] Mikhail, Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Ed.) Michael Holquist. (Trans.) Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 293

[5] Katerina, Clark and Michael, Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), p. 217

[6] Mikhail, Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Ed.) Michael Holquist. (Trans.) Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. (48-49)

[7] Chantal, Mouffe. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism." (Ed.) Christine Neuhold. Political Science Series 72. (Institute for Advanced Studies: Vienna. 2000)

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enemies, there should be another agonistic model that considers the differences of subjects and invest that as a strong point towards an ideal democracy. You and me, instead of worsening our relationship and further drag it into the swamps of animosity, we better be adversaries and compete, all for the well-being of our community and nation. We can be different but we can also use our difference to empower our mentality and behavior. In other words, writers and their readers can still have textual dialogues in which each of them expresses what he/she thinks of the other in form of criticism (from the part of the reader) and also in form of writing and expression (from the part of the writer). Therefore, both Bakhtin and Mouffe come to meet around a single point constituting the milestone in their academic works: the success of any dialogue is conditional on how far its participants listen and answer.

Considerably, writing in a foreign language guarantees more readers and participants in the dialogic activity of the written text. In this account, new virtual conceptions of dialogue come to the fore and also new textual communities are formed. That is to say, by writing a text, one is actually communicating their points of view emanating from their own cultural experiences, thereby their works are subject to discussion or criticism by others to whom the content is communicated. Reading to an author instigates clashing ideas in the mind of the reader. The content of a certain text invites people to discuss, argue and censure it. You and I can be part of the same textual community by reading the same book and to the same author, and it means that we can communicate in that virtual space[8]. This dialogic mental activity eventually amounts to instructive results designed to install notions of competition rather than animosity, produce meanings and help discover the weak points of the dialoguers and develop a sense of listening and answering.

In fact, writers have often viewed their work in terms of a collective struggle to retrieve the untold stories of those who have not had access to education or writing. It is also by using a foreign language that a writer can communicate effectively with the external cultural other. This is in part due to the crisis of reading that has plagued the ex-colonized world and in part due to the wide reach of foreign languages. Therefore, for many writers, Africans in general and Moroccans in particular, the choice of foreign languages to communicate their minds is a demanding priority. Accordingly, Chinua Achebe (1975) explains the reason of his choice of the English language by saying that:

> […] I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding.[9]

In fact, Achebe is fully aware of the wide reach of the English language, but he was, at the same time, resolute on remaining committed to fusing his writings with African experiences that are infused through an Anglophone tongue. Altering the English language so as to suit the changes taking place in Africa is a technique that is not only adopted and adapted by Achebe alone, but along with this technique of abrogating the language write many other African writers, such as NgugiWaThiong'o and V. S. Naipaul, among many others.

As a medium of communication, the English language has been spread out across the globe. In fact, the hegemony of the English language is inherent in a colonial legacy during centuries marked by the British Expansionist ambitions around the whole world. In this sense, the British Empire has always sought to entrench English in its colonies. These colonies, in turn, have appropriated the colonial language and maintained it as an official communicational device serving to put off the flames of inter-ethnic disputes.

In the Moroccan context, English maintains its presence, for it allows easy access to different cultural and educational facilities. In fact, the global reach of English has made of it a language whereby most people across the globe come to be identified. It is a language that facilitates communication between different people from different linguistic backgrounds. Besides, English has become the international language par excellence by virtue of its presence in science, medicine, computer sciences or international university curricula. To that effect, Robert Phillipson (1993) in his *Linguistic Imperialism* explicates that:

> English has a dominant position in science, technology, medicine, and computers, in research, books, periodicals, and software; in transnational business, trade, shipping and aviation in diplomacy and international organizations in mass media entertainment, news agencies, and journalism, in youth culture and sport, in education systems, as the most widely learnt language can estimated 115 million learners at school level by the early 1970 s [...]this non-exhaustive list of the domains in which English has a dominant, though not exclusive, place is indicative of the functional load carried by English.[10]

Long is the list of positions in which English is predominantly present across the globe to the extent that one may think that no other domain is missed from enumeration. English has become inextricably

[8] Kate, Eichhorn. "Sites unseen: ethnographic research in a textual community." Canada: Qualitative Studies in Education, VOL. 14, NO. 4, 2001, pp. (565 – 578)

[9] Chinua, Achebe. "The African Writer and the English Language."*Morning Yet on Creation Day*. (London: Biddles, 1975), p. 62

[10] Robert, Phillipson. *Linguistic Imperialism*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 6

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intertwined with several aspects. It is crystal clear that the number of the English speakers around the world is escalating day by day. For many people, English has become a necessity that cannot be done without, for it is the language that fits in the current global changes. As the amount of information needing to be processed comes to exceed human capabilities, computers, for instance, have appeared on the scene so as to reduce the tensions which could be accrued to the human mind. Likewise, when a multitude of languages have appeared to have conflicts with one another, as the case of the African ethnic languages, English has been the potential communicative device most likely to take on the function of solving these and other communicative break-downs. This way, English has come to be perceived as everyone's language, the lingua franca of all those who seek to have international interactions. Accordingly, Dennis Walder (1998) in his *Post-colonial literatures in English* assumes that:

> […] whatever English now represents, or has represented over centuries of colonization, it belongs to everyone. It is a global language, the first of its kind.[11]

Retaining the phrase "global is a fertile field of imagination which is nurtured first and foremost by a global language. That is to say, writers across the globe tend to translate their cultures, worries and aspirations to the rest of the world in a language that can have the capability of carrying language" can be pertinent to the context of literature. In effect, literature the voice of its users into the remotest corners of the world instead of letting them down half way. People, therefore, tend to put their trust in a global language whose reach transcends the naturally established borders of states and continents. Besides, this global language, which is enigmatic of all what is omnipresent, potent and within-reach is the magic-stick-like to which Chinua Achebe in his collection of essays entitled *Morning Yet on Creation Day* confirmed his support, for he has been given the English language, and thus he intends to use it.[12] In support of this, Samuel Huntington (1998) mentions in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* the idea that:

> The world's language is English, as the editor of the wall street Journal put it. This can mean two things, only one of which would support the case for a universal civilization. It could mean that an increasing proportion of world's population speaks English.[13]

In morocco, the same as in other African countries, many writers have opted for foreign languages as means of expression other than their native languages because of their wide reach. During the colonial period in Morocco, DrissChraibi and Ahmed Sefrioui, for instance, published their first novels in French. Their immediate concern was to produce an 'authentic' image of their society and to force the French elite to hear their voice. French was their instrument of self-assertion despite the fact that both of them could write in Arabic. After independence, Francophone writers found themselves writing in a language which had remained foreign to the majority of their people and which they wished to subvert as part of the process of cultural decolonization and self-assertion. Most of these writers maintain that the adoption of French as a medium of expression does not necessarily imply a downgrading of Arabic.

Equally important is the fact that some Moroccan writers dialoguing in foreign languages express a sense of commitment to their Moroccan culture in their texts. Their point of departure is culturally grounded and what they communicate is often related to their social milieu. Themes like poverty and marginalization, for instance, occupy much space in most Moroccan texts. The reason behind such a choice of themes can be traced to the colonial era that is believed to be the catalyst of change that has blown in Morocco. To explain, the colonial exploitation of Moroccans and their fortunes culminated in bringing about a host of social asymmetries. It is believed that those who have benefited from colonialism are those who still occupy honorable and powerful positions in the Moroccan political scene to the extent that it has become a hereditary option for them to have their sons as their replacements. In this respect, Moroccan writers such as Brick Oussaid, Leila Abouzeid and AbdellatifAkbib, among many others, have blamed colonialism for what has come of Morocco and the marginalization of its people. What is important in this discussion is the fact that most Moroccan writers in foreign languages have opted for foreign means of expression to communicate their worries, concerns or voices as well as those of their people to the outside world.

Importantly enough, this type of textual communication or dialogue is characterized by its proclivity for openness and clarity. Now, they can dialogue with their oppressors without being stopped, express whatever they desire and, most importantly, compete in textual dialogues. This can be explained by the fact that there exists a competition between some Western and Eastern writers. Moroccans also have been engaged in textual activities of combating stereotypes and correcting prejudices of their western adversaries about Morocco and Moroccans. The best example that can be cited here is Akbib's (2001) travel account,

[11] Dennis, Walder. *Post-colonial Literatures in English*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 44

[12] Chinua, Achebe. "The African Writer and the English Language."*Morning Yet on Creation Day*. (London: Biddles, 1975), p. 62

[13] Samuel, Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (London: Touchstone Books, 1998), pp. (59-60)

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Tangiers Eyes on America.[14]Akbib, during his visit to America, tries to correct the ready-made judgments, which some Americans still hold on Africans. He is, indeed, engaged in an epistemic campaign against cultural ignorance in so far as he pays attention to every cultural cliché and tries to correct it. It is this sort of epistemic engagement that has inspired a textual site for Akbib to write back to the American metropolis, thereby start a textual maneuver with his American adversaries. It is, therefore, the time for everybody to express themselves and compete in texts instead of killing each other and justify oppression by terrorism. It is exactly at this point that antagonistic differences can be transformed to agonistic ones.

The question of language is central to the dialogue that takes place between writers and their adversaries or writers and their recipients. The act of writing in a foreign language may cause a writer to reflect, to step out of the maelstrom of their emerging or expanding selves, or beyond their situated position altogether. Through imaginative use of foreign languages, writers are permitted to reposition themselves in different spaces or different chronological eras, including canons and social structures from which they might formerly have assumed themselves to be excluded. The construction of a poem or novel, for instance, is the process through which the writers are permitted to articulate national or cultural conflicts. Therefore, they create for themselves a space in which they can find ways to surpass the constraining order of their culture and use a foreign language, within which they can establish a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between, they draw unexpected results from their situation.[15]

Having negotiated a niche in a transcendental space of virtuality, the Moroccan writers in foreign languages attempt to cast their texts within a continuum of broad agonistic literary enterprises. That is, they tend to address some of their culturally related issues and have an answer to many of their adversaries' addressed queries. It is, therefore, this activity of expressivity and answerability that takes shape in most of the pages of a literary enterprise. As implicated above, constant issues of race, gender or culture still occupy much of many writers' literary works. The eccentric or Eurocentric way such themes are dealt with invites many Moroccan writers to be committed to a sort of writing back to those who do not understand or do not want to understand cultural specificities. For them, if there is no 'responsibility', another Bakhtinian equivalent for the concept answerability, there cannot be something called language or literature. There cannot be a genuine inter-human dialogue or communication.

Noticeably, there is a sort of literary have and take or, more specifically, a competition taking place in an agonistic dialogical literary space between writers of the East and those of the West. Besides, Moroccans openly address many of their cultural issues when they write to implicate a larger audience in their textual enterprises. Take, for instance, the Moroccan public, who are part and parcel of what is being addressed by Moroccan writers. It is a remainder for every Moroccan to remember their past, contribute to the construction of a new advanced Morocco and eventually hope for a better future wherein all Moroccans constitute a power at the level of the international scene.

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[15] Michel, de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1984), p. 30

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