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**Translating Nouzha Fassi Fihri's *La Baroudeuse*:  
A Case Study in Post-Colonial Translation**

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A Case Study in Post-Colonial Translation**

by

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## **Dedication**

For my husband, Khalil, who made it all possible

For my children, Nawal and Mounir, who made it a priority

For my mother, Laura Russ Love, who provided a model

And for my father, Robert Bruce Love,

who sustained me from beginning to end.

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# **Translating Nouzha Fassi Fihri's *La Baroudeuse*: A Case Study in Post-Colonial Translation**

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My initial translation of the novel, *La Baroudeuse*, into English raised several questions for which this project seeks to provide answers through an analytical case study. Chapter One describes the translation experience. It includes an analysis of the effects of the novel's post-colonial elements on the translation process, states the questions that arose, and presents information gathered from the author, other translations of similar genre, discussions with the translators of these works, and readers. Chapter Two offers a translator's analytical definition and description of the process of translating a post-colonial novel by a Muslim Arab women into English. Chapter Three analyzes the quantity and quality of variation between the initial and final versions of "The Fighter"—my translation of *La Baroudeuse*—to determine how and to what extent various elements influenced the translator's decisions. Chapter Four presents the

complete, final version of "The Fighter." This case study and analysis of the process of translating this genre of literature into English leads to the conclusion that multiple factors can shape a translator's perception of audience and influence translation decisions. The original text sets the first parameters, if the translator aims to re-create the original as faithfully as possible. To elicit from the receiving audience a response similar to that of the original audience, the translator may consider the effect of the original text on the original audiences and situate the original and the proposed translation within the context of relevant literary traditions and critical paradigms. Reading other translations and works of other literary traditions and discussion with other individuals such as the author, other translators and readers may also influence the translator's decisions. These experiences can affect the translator's awareness of her own expectations and those of her anticipated audience, broaden the range of possible translation choices, and lead to modifications in the manuscript.

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## **Chapter One: Translation Experience**

In the global context of the 1991 Gulf War, the 2001 terrorist attack in New York, and the ongoing war in Iraq, cross-cultural avenues of communication between the Arab and Anglophone worlds have taken on increased urgency. Nouzha Fassi Fihri's *La Baroudeuse* is a post-colonial text that provides important, complex and unusual insights into the history and culture of twentieth century Morocco, a modernizing Muslim Arab nation geographically on the cusp between East and West.<sup>1</sup> Though this fiction offers unusual authorial and narrative feminine viewpoints, it opens a window into Moroccan Muslim Arab culture as seen from a Moroccan woman's point of view. Nouzha Fassi Fihri uses narrative techniques familiar to a sophisticated Anglophone readership and depicts human nature and values that strike chords of recognition and understanding in readers of other cultures. This novel represents an effort to speak out in writing, to overcome obstacles that would keep women silent, and to render audible the polyphony of this culture. Like many post-colonial novels, *La Baroudeuse* focuses on the "in-between" space<sup>2</sup> where national identities are

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<sup>1</sup> Nouzha Fassi Fihri, *La Baroudeuse* (Casablanca: Éditions Eddif, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Homi Bhabha, Introduction, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 1- 18. Bhabha used the term "in-between" in reference to the liminal spatiality and temporality of postcolonial writing "that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history" (13).

challenged and reformed in ways that encourage international understanding, a necessity for survival in these times of daily and often violent interaction between the Arab and Anglophone worlds.

My purpose in translating this novel was to make heard these voices of women emerging from silence, to lower the barrier of language so that Anglophone readers might have the opportunity to learn of a Muslim Arab culture from an internal, feminine point of view. I wished to share the realization that potentially surprising foreign elements can relate to that which is familiar. Across cultures, many of the same things concern us. The tensions inherent in this kind of text and in the effort to translate it, however, raised questions about audience.

The present study aims to document and analyze the potential influence of audience and other elements in the translation of this kind of novel into English. Chapter 1 is a case study of the process of translating *La Baroudeuse* into English, Chapter 2 defines the translation process and outlines an approach to translating this kind of narrative into English, and Chapter 3 compares the initial and final versions of the translation to observe the effects of influences on this translation process. Chapter 4 offers the final version of my translation of *The Fighter*.

## THE TEXT

Nouzha Fassi Fihri published *La Baroudeuse* in Casablanca in 1997, more than fifty years after the leaders of the Istiqlal party presented the Independence Manifesto (1944), and more than forty years after Morocco gained independence from France (1956). Set in Fez in 1944, the novel recounts the lives of Lalla

Kenza, Moulay Ali, Sharif, and Marjana during this era of Moroccan history. In the opening scene, Lalla Kenza, as a bitter old woman who despises her second husband, Sharif, is eagerly preparing for the arrival of her cousin Moulay Ali. In a flashback, the reader learns that she and her cousin had fallen in love and married when they were very young, with the blessing of the family. However, when Moulay Ali finishes his studies and is appointed to a government position in Tangiers, Kenza's father autocratically arranges their divorce, refusing to allow his daughter to accompany her husband and risk the voyage through dangerous territory. After Moulay Ali is forced to leave his bride, Kenza's father then arranges for her to marry Sharif, a penniless but highly respected descendent of the Prophet. Kenza never forgives her father for separating her from the husband she loves and takes revenge her on Sharif in decades of hostile marital aggression. Only the steadfast companionship and wisdom of her slave Marjana prevents passion and grief from driving Kenza insane.

When Moulay Ali returns to Fez after four decades of absence, his arrival comes just days before the leaders of the Moroccan nationalist party present the Independence Manifesto to the French, whose harsh repression of peaceful demonstrations provokes armed combat in the streets of Fez. During these events, Sharif disappears with a passing group of chanting demonstrators. The family learns later that he died in a skirmish, and Kenza belatedly comes to respect her second husband. Kenza and Moulay Ali keep each other company through the ensuing siege of Fez, distributing food from her reserves and discussing politics, religion, and the events of their lives during the years they had lived apart. One morning Kenza discovers that Moulay Ali has died of a heart attack during the

night. She plans and carries out his funeral ceremonies, and then abandons her sanity to enter a kinder, brighter world of dreams and memories. The narrative ends with the sentence: "Then she died triumphant, the Fighter" ("Puis elle mourut triomphante, la Baroudeuse" 219). Her triumph was not in winning the battle, but that she fought to the end.

Many of the characteristics that make *La Baroudeuse* a post-colonial narrative deserving translation also contributed to the difficulties of translation, raised questions about the intended audience, and called attention to the many factors that can affect the translator's decisions. Bill Ashcroft defines post-colonial narratives as "writing by peoples formerly colonized by European powers, such as Britain, France, Portugal and Spain" and notes that these narratives share many characteristics.<sup>3</sup> They often inscribe the difference and hybridity of the post-colonial experience, rewrite history, and make heard previously silenced voices. They radiate the energy and tension of simultaneously subverting discourses and challenging boundaries while appropriating the colonial language and negotiating the gap between 'worlds' (Ashcroft 39, 51, 53, 56-59, 65, 184, 196).

*La Baroudeuse* inscribes difference in the complex and multifaceted characters of Kenza, Sharif, and Dada Marjana. Even as a small girl, Kenza displays qualities that transgress the traditional boundaries of gender. She imposes her will on the other children of the household as though she were the head of the family (13). As a child, she disguised herself as a boy to go hunting with her

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<sup>3</sup>Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back, theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 1.

father, who wished she were a boy. When her father annuls her marriage to Moulay Ali, Kenza rebels furiously but indirectly against her father's authority. She runs away from home, threatens to kill herself, and never forgives him for separating her from the man she loves, but nonetheless continues to fulfill her filial duties and agrees to marry the second husband her father chooses for her. Kenza frequently challenges norms of behavior expected of women. Though respectable women were not expected to publicly acknowledge the sensual joys of married life, Kenza openly showed her love for and physical attraction to her husband, Moulay Ali. When Moulay Ali returns to Fez, Kenza insists that he stay in the family home and ignores the women of the family who hint at the impropriety of this arrangement. Though she marries Sharif out of the need to save face, she dominates him and, "speaking the language of men" ("elle le brimait durement et le menaçait de faire appel aux *adels*, parlant le langage des hommes" [37]), she reverses their roles.

Sharif also emerges as a multifaceted and evolving individual, but in keeping with the inverted gender roles, is depicted as the more "feminine" of the pair, consistently subordinate to Kenza within the familial hierarchies of power. The reader sees him first through Kenza's eyes: sleeping in an obscene position, the features of his face sagging loosely and his legs spread to accommodate a round belly rising in rhythm with his snoring ("Il dormait dans une position obscène, les traits relâchés, flasques, les jambes écartées pour faire de la place à un ventre rebondi, se soulevant au rythme de ses ronflements" [7]), an image that highlights his passive vulnerability. From Kenza's father's perspective, Sharif is "self-effacing, submissive, good, and dumb" ("quelqu'un d'effacé, quelqu'un de

soumis, de bien bon, de bien con" [9]). Beginning life as a poor and ignorant country boy, Sharif travels to Fez where he becomes one of the many penniless but honorable descendants of the Prophet hoping to marry into a rich family. He educates himself, becomes an upstanding citizen, and finally, at the end of his life, develops into a courageous man.

Marjana presents an even more complex presence in the narrative, and this character calls monolithic notions of slavery into question. In the social hierarchy, of all the characters, she is the most subordinate, silenced, exploited, and repressed, yet she is the strongest and most enduring. Less a prisoner of oppressive customs than are the women of the family, Marjana condones the young couple's passion and seeks to shelter them from disapproval. Having been divorced from her freedom, Marjana understands the pain Kenza experiences upon being separated from her greatest desire. In her first appearance among the women of the family who come to greet Moulay Ali on the day of his return, she serves the tea, holding herself straight and tall, speaking and letting her laughter peal a little more loudly than usual ("Dada Marjana servait le thé en se tenant bien droite, et en exagérant plus que de coutume la hauteur de son verbe et la cascade de son rire" [23]). She presents a proud, self-confident figure, walking as an equal among the members of the family. Though Marjana is a slave and Kenza her mistress, the greatest difference between the two women is that Marjana has the resilience to adapt and the strength to survive. She represents the spirit that refuses to be enslaved, the mind that rejects being colonized, the woman who does not submit her soul to patriarchal egotism and has the strength to endure what she cannot change.

Fassi Fihri's narrative attempts to re-write history and subvert dominant discourses both of the metropolitan 'center' and the post-colonial 'margin'. Presenting the history of this colonial period and place from a feminine, insider perspective, the narrative depicts mothers who help in the insurrection because they need to break the distorting mirror of the colonizers (131) and a woman begging the soldiers to spare her son (142). Lalla Kenza is a Muslim woman well respected in her community, but she disagrees with the traditional, patriarchal notion of Islamic womanhood and disapproves of her own daughters' submission to it.

Kenza considérait ses filles auxquelles elle portait un amour nuancé où se mêlaient tendresse et condescendance. Elle ne pouvait supporter leurs minauderies, l'affichage qu'elles faisaient de leur pudeur, leurs regards qu'elles ne levaient jamais sur un homme, leur soumission systématique à l'ordre établi. "Dans cinq ans, dix ans peut être, se dit-elle, elles ne seront plus qu'une ombre de leurs époux, des suicidées de la société." Elle ne concevait pas ainsi le couple, quant à elle. Dieu a dit dans Son Livre fondateur de la Religion, Code de notre vie sociale: "Elles (les femmes) sont un vêtement pour vous et vous êtes un vêtement pour elles." Selon elle, la complémentarité existait dans les deux sens, chacun de l'homme et de la femme étant une personne à part entière. Il n'était pas dit que l'une des parties doive chevaucher l'autre et la noyer dans l'anonymat et l'insignifiance pour atteindre elle-même l'accomplissement. (65-66)

Kenza contemplated her girls for whom she felt a mixture of reserved tenderness and condescension. She could not stand their simpering display of modesty, the gaze they never lifted to look at a man, or their systematic submission to the established order. "In five years, maybe ten," she mused, "they will be nothing more than the shadow of their husbands, suicidal sacrifices to society." This was not her idea of a couple. In His Book, the foundation of Islam and the code of social life, God said, "They (women) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them." As she understood it, this was a two-way relationship, each man and woman being a whole individual. It was not said that one person should drown another in anonymity and insignificance in order to attain selfhood.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Unlike her daughters who submit to the patriarchal order, Kenza understands her religion rather as a call for the equality of men and women, thus presenting an alternative and resistant interpretation of Islam.

The author also appropriates the colonial language, using it to communicate beyond cultural limits and to present cultural specificity within a broader framework of human activity and belief systems, a technique that allows audiences of other cultures to comprehend her message. The narrative presents elements of universally recognizable human behavior and wisdom within the culturally specific Arab Muslim context. The author reminds the reader, for example, that though the dawn prayer is specific to Islamic cultures, people here, as everywhere, participate in "universal gestures of waking."

Bientôt [...] chacun s'affairera, d'abord pour faire les ablutions et la prière de l'aube, dans le petit matin ombreux et frais, puis dans ces gestes séculaires et universels du réveil qui préparent au jour nouveau. (9)

Soon the call to prayer would announce dawn to the sleeping population. Each person would perform ablutions and pray in the cool, shadowy early morning before preparing for a new day in the universal gestures of waking.

In another passage, the author emphasizes the similarities between familial groups of this and other cultures. Lalla Kenza's extended, traditional, patriarchal, and distinctly Moroccan family displays "all the genial and base emotions a human community brings to life, wherever it takes root" ("tout ce qu'une communauté humaine, là où elle s'implante, voit naître autour d'elle, de bons et de mauvais sentiments" [13]).

Inscribing the hybridity of the post-colonial experience, the text uses a literary register extensively hybridized with transcribed Arabic words, phrases,

and expressions. In the following sentence, for example, the author italicizes the phrase *Saad Dabouh* but does not attempt to fully explain this allusion to a cultural element foreign to French readers.

Elle eut un élan de sollicitude pour cet homme, son mari, si peureux, si frileux, qui était sorti affronter la mort, sinon la prison et la torture, dans cette nuit glaciale de *Saad Dabouh*. (110)

She felt a rush of concern for this man, her husband, so timid, so sensitive to the cold, who had gone out to face death, if not prison and torture in this glacial night of *Saad Dabouh*.

Most who speak Moroccan Arabic would understand this phrase which means "the butcher's good luck" and refers to the coldest days and nights of the winter when raw meat kept longest before the use of artificial refrigeration. This phrase also conjures memories of biting cold winter nights in the old city of Fez for those who have lived there, and strikes a spark of dark humor: "we are freezing to death, but at least the butcher is happy." This transcribed expression inserts cultural elements without explanation, calling attention to the gap between cultures, but giving enough information to partially compensate for this gap. Without knowing this phrase, French readers understand that Kenza is concerned about her husband being exposed to the "glacial" cold, though they may sense they have lost some of the cultural meaning of the allusion.

*La Baroudeuse* uses a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural registers to make heard voices that have been silenced. The tone varies between lyrical and harshly graphic and contains rhetorical and journalistic as well narrative and descriptive passages. The following passage, for example, animates nature in lyric terms.

Les fleurs, comme une fantaisie de la nature, montraient leurs minois veloutés aux endroits les plus inattendus, picorant aux pieds des arbres, batifolant le long du ruisseau, jouant leur symphonie de couleurs en chatouillant le chanvre. (63)

Like a fantasy of nature, the flowers showed their velvety faces in the most unexpected places, nibbling at the foot of trees, gamboling along the stream, playing their symphony of colors, tickling the reeds by the water.

Another passage paints a stark and graphic image of war.

Sur la pierre nue que la fumée des fours publics et de bains maures avait marquée de son empreinte, venaient se superposer des étoiles sanguinolentes, où s'accrochaient parfois des débris de chair humaine. (85)

The bare rock darkened by the wood smoke of public ovens and baths was marked with stars of dripping blood and pieces of human flesh.

In other passages, the text relates current events in a journalistic and historiographic style, and occasionally the authorial narrator interjects opinions. Fassi Fihri's use of high register acts to confirm the literary status of the novel for the author's primary audience: Moroccans educated in the French system. This style and register help insure that the Moroccan literary community will receive this work respectfully.

The author achieves another discernible effect through the use of a literary register of French in reporting the speech of Lalla Kenza, Dada Marjana, and townsfolk who have little or no education. Lalla Kenza complains of her lack of education, but her reported speech and thoughts are as poetic and literary as those of the educated men in her family (138, 170). Dada Marjana tells the fable of the lion in terms worthy of Aesop (192-194). The talk of the people on the street in Fez is reported without indications of regional or class accent (43). In this narrative the use of consistently high diction and register acts as a unifying element that

elides differences of class, gender, race, and origin, and indirectly demands equal consideration and respect for all.

The author also challenges binary concepts such as individual versus collective and internal versus external using stream-of-consciousness and indeterminacy of speakers in dialogue. In certain passages, the reader cannot determine who is speaking, and boundaries between thought and speech blur. When Moulay Ali, Kenza and Sharif sit down for breakfast on the morning of Moulay Ali's arrival, Sharif initiates a dialogue in which the reader subsequently cannot know who is saying what (17-19). In the following passage, Kenza's thoughts reported in free indirect style flow into internal monologue and speech reported directly but without quotation marks.

Elle se rappelait comment on avait pris dans le tas un nombre impressionnant de citoyens qu'on avait exécutés froidement, pour l'exemple, ce qui avait refroidi les ardeurs. En serait-il de même aujourd'hui? L'ennemi opérerait-il encore une fois dans l'impunité? Toute cette fougue, cette assurance, cette foi dans la légitimité des revendications, capituleraient-elles devant la force déployée par l'adversaire? Elle pria de tous son coeur pour que ses concitoyens sachent résister. Hélas, se dit-elle encore, des batteries sont braquées sur notre cité depuis hier. Elles n'attendent que l'ordre du haut commandement pour envoyer sur la ville une pluie de feu et semer la mort et la destruction. Vat-on craindre pour les vestiges d'une civilisation séculaire? (...) Non, jamais! (112).

She remembered how an impressive number of citizens had been pulled from the crowd and coldly executed, as an example. That had cooled the protesters' passions. Would it be the same today? Would the enemy act with impunity again? All this determination, this conviction, this belief in the legitimacy of the demands, would it all surrender to the enemy's strength? She prayed with all her heart that her fellow citizens would be able to stand up against it. Alas, she told herself, since yesterday, guns are set to fire on our city, just waiting for an order to rain fire, death and destruction on us. Will we hesitate for fear of destroying the remains of an ancient civilization? (...) No, never!

The shifts from past to future tense, from third to first person, and from statement to question and exclamation provide grammatical markers of the move from reported thought to stream-of-consciousness. The author, however, chose not to use quotation marks to distinguish the voice of the narrator from the thoughts of the protagonist, a decision that has the effect of making the reader hear these thoughts as though they issued from the reader's mind. This technique challenges the binary representations of thought as either interior or verbalized, and of ideas and words as attributable to the author or the character.

*La Baroudeuse* offers complex re-readings of Moroccan culture that complicate the ideas of history, class, and gender in the political and domestic world of mid-century Morocco. This post-colonial narrative tends to subvert the power structure of language and culture relationships. It offers the non-Arabic speaking reader the role of a visitor in this foreign context, obliged to translate words and cope with cognitive gaps. The tensions inherent in the experience of reading a post-colonial narrative call on the translator to recognize and respect these effects and decide to what extent to duplicate or domesticate them in the translation. To find answers to this fundamental dilemma of post-colonial translation, I spoke with the author, read other translations of postcolonial narratives by Muslim Arab women, corresponded with other translators, and received comments on the translation from readers.

## **CONSIDERING LC1 AND LC2 AUDIENCES<sup>5</sup>**

Knowing that the author lived in Casablanca, less than an hour from my home in Rabat, I contacted her and arranged for an interview.<sup>6</sup> We talked about the inspiration, characterization, themes, audiences and purposes of her novel. Nouzha Fassi Fihri affirms that she wrote *La Baroudeuse* out of a desire to honor traditions she felt were being lost and with the intention of recording recent Moroccan history from a Moroccan rather than French perspective. I translated *La Baroudeuse* to carry her voice and perspective to Anglophone readers, and to share what I felt to be an unusual and worthwhile message with others who would otherwise never hear this voice or experience this perspective. Nevertheless, I realized that our worldviews were considerably different. She had written and I was translating the text for reasons that were similar, but not identical. I sensed that however faithful I intended to be to the original text, I would be writing for an audience whose cultural and historical knowledge of this narrative's context varied greatly from that of the author's original intended audiences.

Nouzha Fassi Fihri acknowledged that she wrote this narrative in French rather than Arabic for two audiences and various reasons. She wrote for the generation of young Moroccans who had attended French schools so that they might learn of Moroccan traditions and recent history as Moroccans tell and write

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<sup>5</sup> Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin, *Redefining Translation, The Variational Approach* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Hewson uses the symbols "LC1" to refer to the language and culture that gave rise to the original text and "LC2" to indicate the language and cultural context of the translation.

<sup>6</sup> Nouzha Fassi Fihri, personal interview, 18 June 1998. For full text, see Appendix A.

it rather than through the bias of French ideology. She also wrote for people of other cultures to present a Moroccan woman's point of view. She wrote in French because she felt she could use French more aggressively and express herself more freely in this language, for an audience who read French and may not have learned Arabic. Writing in French, the author addresses social issues that would conceivably be difficult to express in written Arabic, a language closely associated with national, patriarchal, and Islamic tradition. In literary Arabic, the language of the Koran, such strongly subversive expressions and behavior would automatically connote villainy and therefore tend to preclude readers' empathy. The authorial narrator criticizes the family's subjugation of the individual, an argument that would have been difficult to sustain in the language traditionally used to subordinate the individual to the group in this society.

French language and culture have contributed to the hybridity of this narrative's cultural context. Using the colonial language, the author projects positive images of Moroccan cultural elements, traditions and characteristics such as the cohesive strength and courage of the people of Fez under duress, subverting the negative gaze of the colonizer and reminding her compatriots of cultural elements that constitute their historic pride. Nouzha Fassi Fihri adopted the novelistic genre to use as a heuristic tool to advocate for national pride. In her opinion, narrative fiction is a more pleasant way of learning history and of "raising questions, of discussing things that bother us," and of bringing about change. For her, writing and reading offer the best means of gaining emancipation.

The author was confident that the context sufficiently explained Arabic words in the text for francophone readers, but I felt certain that most Anglophone readers would need more explanation than the context offered. In *La Baroudeuse*, Fassi Fihri describes traditional ceremonies, architecture and rules of behavior. These passages of enhanced ethnographic description appeal to French and Anglophone audiences as well as Moroccan readers, though each set of readers is likely to receive them differently. Moroccans may respond to such passages with recognition of national pride and fond memories. French and Anglophone readers are likely to experience these passages more as realistic, ethnographic and literary descriptions depicting "local color." Though the cultural information load of such passages may need to be reduced for Anglophones who have less knowledge of North Africa than would francophone readers on the whole, the tone and style of these passages translate with relative ease into English.

As for those who might read the translation of *La Baroudeuse*, I imagined a multicultural and sophisticated audience of Anglophones who read narratives by women and translations of cross-cultural, multicultural literary works. This audience might include professors and students in English, World Literature, and Comparative Literature departments in universities in the United States. Such an educated sub-audience of critical readers would have highly developed aesthetic standards for literature and would likely be open to potentially subversive points of view. Yet, to make this text available to a wider readership, I also envisioned a set of readers with less highly developed generic and aesthetic criteria but curious to know more about this other country and culture. Though virtually all Anglophones know to some extent the challenges or limitations facing Muslim

Arab women, few have more precise information about the challenges facing Moroccan women now or Moroccan women's perspective on their own history and culture. However, since most are aware of the challenges facing women in modern Western society, I expected that those who read the translation would respond to Kenza's struggle for self-determination and recognize in this narrative the belief in the equality of all humans, the ability of people to change and develop, the love of homeland, the need to respect the rights of others, the value of solidarity against an aggressor, and the importance of education.

In this translation of a post-colonial novel by a Moroccan woman, I imagined that readers would expect recognizable though foreign elements of setting, characterization, conflict, and plot, and that they would accept a certain degree of linguistic hybridity in the form of transcribed Arabic words. Knowing that the narrative would make great demands of the reader, I nonetheless offered as nearly as possible the original experience of reading *La Baroudeuse*, including the romantic and lyrical passages, the occasional indeterminacy of the speaker, and the lack of textual distinction between the protagonist's thoughts and speech.

I imagined I was writing for educated, curious readers who would recognize and identify with basic human values and engage with--indeed perhaps enjoy--defamiliarizing elements and themes in the narrative. I translated the political message of the original text so that my audience might comprehend the forces at play and participate vicariously in this dialogue. I used a literary register hybridized with colloquial expressions that would challenge power structures of language and culture as do many narratives in the Anglophone literary traditions.

Anglophones who would read the translation resemble the author's audiences in some respects and differ greatly in others. Like Morocco, the United States was once a colony and fought for independence. Though this historical memory is much more recent and therefore more emotive for the author's Moroccan readers than for most Anglophones, for members of some groups in American society such as African- and Native-American communities, historical memories of oppression may remain vivid. Like Moroccan women, American women have had to fight for social and economic equality and the right to contribute to social planning and development, though in these areas the U.S. Constitution advocates for American women, while family law and traditional interpretations of religious discourse work against Moroccan women.

Anglophone readers more closely resemble the author's secondary audience--non-Arab francophones--in that they would experience the culture of the narrative as foreign rather than native. Though America was once colonized by a foreign power, Americans now recognize their nation to be a global power. In this respect, the American readership resembles the author's French readers who acknowledge having been a colonial power. However Anglophone nations are historically less involved with and geographically more distant from the context of the narrative than are the author's intended French readers. France participated directly in Moroccan history as the colonial power for the first half of the twentieth century whereas the Anglophone Allies entered Moroccan history only briefly during W.W.II. Many French people have traveled the short distance across the Mediterranean Sea to visit, work, or live in Morocco, but relatively few Anglophones alive today have been to Morocco. Notwithstanding the differences

in our audiences, the novel and the translation offer the experience of participating in at least two cultures at the same time and have the potential to challenge audiences' expectations.

*La Baroudeuse* presents every reader with a certain level of cultural or linguistic dislocation. Moroccans read about and participate in their own culture through the appropriated colonial language. As they read in French, they translate back into their own language and culture and participate in the narrative from an interior perspective. Francophone readers of other post-colonial societies may see a close parallel with their own national, social, and personal histories. French nationals are likely to feel both at home and abroad as they read the original: at home with the French language of the narrative, but removed from their element by the hybridity of the language as well as the setting and narrative perspective. At times they need to translate Arabic words and phrases into the terms of their own language and culture. They will recognize the historical events in which their nation participated, but view these actions from the Moroccan point of view and see themselves portrayed as the enemy. Thus, the post-colonial estrangement functions at every level of readership and needs to be maintained at least to some extent in the English translation.

In English as well, native Anglophones will likely experience the translational effect of reading this foreign narrative in their own language, though I made an effort to gauge the degree of defamiliarization my imagined readers would accept. Sentence structures, word choice and culture-bound concepts frequently required active tilting of the text to the target audience. Nonetheless, I

was aware that such interpretation runs the risk of rounding intentionally sharp edges, masking conflicts and diverting subversive aims of the post-colonial text.

Having written this novel about Moroccan culture in French, the author had already translated from North African Muslim Arab to Western discourse. Moving from French to English, I perpetuated several of the translation decisions she had made and strategies she had textualized. *La Baroudeuse* appealed to my sense of aesthetics and exigency because it revises stereotypes of Arab women and society, rewrites history from a feminine point of view, and raises questions that I feel need to be considered beyond the boundaries of the language in which it was written, by anyone who could and would read it in English. Conversations with the author brought to light the differences in our intended audiences and effects as well as the similarities in our perspectives and ultimate goals. This comparison helped me discern more clearly for whom and for what purposes I was writing and suggested guidelines for my translation approach. Detailed comparison of the author's and my own intended audiences and effects relating to the respective ideological, sociopolitical and historic contexts complicated and clarified my understanding of influences that affect a translator's decisions. Readers' comments further solidified the notion that readers--of whatever group--prefer language that encourages immediate and emotive participation in the construction of meaning. Conversations with other translators revealed similarities in motivation and approach, whether they translated from French or Arabic, notwithstanding differences in background, experience and individual hierarchies of value.

Fassi Fihri was in a position to raise questions for her fellow citizens from inside this society and modify the way others perceive people of this culture. I am in a position to let people of yet another culture--my own--see the similarity in the types of questions and perceptual revisions proposed in both cultures. The author aims to cause a difference in perception and behavior. I aim to offer an experience that might act to modify third party perceptions and behavior, at a time in our history when communication and modification of behavior is vital for peaceful international relations.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### Other Translations and Translators' Paratexts

Post-colonial narratives by Arab women published in English offer models of successful translation for this subgenre of literature. In this section I analyze the paratexts of eight such translations: *An Algerian Childhood, A Collection of Autobiographical Narratives; Distant View of a Minaret; My Grandmother's Cactus, Stories by Egyptian Women; Year of the Elephant, A Moroccan Woman's Journey Toward Independence and other stories; Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalvade; Women of Sand and Myrrh; The Wiles of Men; and Short Fiction by Saudi Arabian Women Writers.*<sup>7</sup> The paratexts of these works--footnotes,

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<sup>7</sup> Leïla Sebbar, ed., *An Algerian Childhood, A Collection of Autobiographical Narratives*, trans. Marjolijn de Jager (St. Paul, Minnesota: Ruminator Books, 2001); Alifa Rifaat, *Distant View of a Minaret*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (Oxford: Heinemann, 1988); Marilyn Booth, trans., *My Grandmother's Cactus, Stories by Egyptian Women* (London: Quartet Books, 1991); Leila Abouzeid,

endnotes and glossaries, and the translator's preface, for example--provide valuable insights into the translators' answers to the question of how to remain faithful to the LC1 original while effectively recreating the text for the LC2 audience. Gérard Genette uses the term paratext to discuss elements surrounding the published text such as introductions, dedications, epigraphs and intertitles.<sup>8</sup> He attributes "authorial intention and assumption of responsibility" (xvii, 3) to paratext and posits that it serves as illocutionary communication between the writer and the reader. Though Genette does not apply this paradigm to translations, his paradigm is applicable and offers a theoretical approach to discerning the relationship between the translator and her imagined audience. Analysis of paratextual elements in these translations indicates that the authors' techniques as well as the LC2 readers' expectations influenced the translators' decisions, and that translators tend to provide contextual or paratextual explanation to facilitate the reading even when they replicate the original's demand for high audience participation.

In these translations, footnotes offer information not included in the text but deemed necessary for comprehension. In some, the author has used footnotes,

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*Year of the Elephant, A Moroccan Woman's Journey Toward Independence and other stories*, trans. Barbara Parmenter (Austin, Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1989); Assia Djebar, *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade*, trans. Dorothy S. Blair (New York: Quartet Books, 1985); Hanan al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, trans. Catherine Cobham (New York: Anchor Books, 1992); Salwa Bakr, *The Wiles of Men and Other Stories*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (Austin: U of Texas P, 1992); Aman Mahmoud Attieh, ed. and trans., *Short Fiction by Saudi Arabian Women Writers*, ed. Michael Craig Hillmann (Austin, Texas: Literature East and West, Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 1997).

and in these cases the translator takes care to differentiate her own paratext from the author's, as Marjolijn de Jager does in Sebbar's *An Algerian Childhood*. In this collection of sixteen autobiographical short stories by French, Berber, Muslim, and Jewish Algerian authors now living in France, the format and content of the publication dictate much of the paratext, but little of the paratext is attributable to the translator. Both the authors and the translator use footnotes to explain transcribed Arabic words and cultural concepts that their audiences might not implicitly understand. Translating their childhood experiences in Algeria for a French audience, most of these authors chose to transcribe Arabic words and to complement contextual explanations with footnotes explaining allusions that would otherwise be lost on French readers. In a second translation from French to English, given the even greater cultural and linguistic distance, Marjolijn de Jager occasionally saw the need to add further paratextual explanation (128, 171).

Denys Johnson-Davies and Marilyn Booth usually make moderate use of notation. Translating Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret* from Arabic to English, Denys Johnson-Davies offers notes at the end of every story to explain only a few words. More often, he explains transcribed Arabic words only in the context, such as the words *galabia* and *muezzin* (5, 3). He evidently felt that the meaning of these words was clear enough from context and chose to offer no further paratextual explanation, especially since English dictionaries list these words. In *My Grandmother's Cactus*, Marilyn Booth explains in one note that "the shop that sells trotters and tongues" is the translation of "the 'masmat', a shop-restaurant selling offal and offering sandwiches made with these relatively cheap animal products" (21, 23). Presumably, the phrase "trotters and tongues" conveys both

meaning and connotations of class belonging and informality to the British reader, indicating that the translator was writing for a British audience. On the whole, in these two works, the use of transcription and footnotes is discrete and does not unnecessarily interrupt the narrative.

Translating Abouzeid's *Year of the Elephant* from Arabic, Barbara Parmenter uses footnotes somewhat more extensively. The thirteen notes in this translation explain cultural significance that would be implicitly available to readers of the original language but not to readers of the second language. For example, the translator explains the religious significance of the phrase "the night of *al-Qadr*" ("the night of power, a night during Ramadan" [5]), and the historical import of the name "Moulay Idris the Second" ("ruler of Morocco towards the end of the ninth century. By the end of his reign virtually the entire population professed the Islamic religion and spoke Arabic" [18]). These notes indicate the translator sees her audience as people unfamiliar with and expecting explanations for references to Islamic traditions and the history of Morocco. The translator assumed that these readers would be willing to distance themselves briefly from aesthetic involvement in the literary experience to learn more about the cultural and historical context.

Translators' glossaries often reflect the same tension between the author's and the translator's non-identical audiences and purposes. The glossary in *Year of the Elephant* explains the cultural, social, historical, geographical, or illocutionary significance of twenty transcribed and italicized Arabic words. Unlike Denys Johnson-Davies who did not further explain words listed in English dictionaries, the translator and publisher of this book included eight words that appeared in the

2002 edition of *The American Heritage College Dictionary*.<sup>9</sup> Other transcribed words, such as *foundouk* (19, 102), are explained in context and in the glossary. Apparently, the translator and editor chose to transcribe the Arabic word for "inn" to maintain the narrative's cultural grounding but wished to help the reader by providing the explicit meaning of italicized words wherever the reader might look.

The glossary of four "Terms of Address" that precedes the narrative in Booth's *My Grandmother's Cactus* introduces the reader to the cultural context of the narratives. Three of the four terms—*Amm*, *Khala*, *Sitt*—are used to address members of the family or other respected members of the society. The stories of this collection are set in a society in which family ties are close and feelings of affectionate respect extend beyond the family to encompass members of the neighborhood, and even previously unknown members of the broader society. In this culture, a person's gender, age, level of education, and social position influence social interactions in strongly prescribed and widely accepted ways. Booth's decision to include an initial glossary and the choice of words to include in it suggest that she imagined an LC2 audience whose culture tends to restrict family relations and sanctions social prejudices based on gender, age and social standing.

Of the several translations considered here, the glossary of Djebab's *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade* most definitely arrests the reader's attention. Preceding the narrative, this glossary of seventy-two common and proper nouns

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<sup>9</sup>Djellabah, imam, jihad, kif, medina, muezzin, pasha, and sheikh. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

and phrases from Arabic and Turkish tends to fulfill an introductory rather than a supplemental function. It serves to forewarn the reader that the following text will require readers to behave as translators, a warning likely to appeal to a scholarly, academic audience in search of challenge. Many of the words in the glossary of *Fantasia* also appear in English dictionaries--for example, the words "aga", "amir", and "janizary"--though the glossary definitions tend to include slightly more detail specific to the narrative. Including words in the glossary even if they appear in the dictionary expands the glossary, making it even more impressive for the reader, but also facilitates the reading for those who do not know these words of Arabic and Turkish origin, would not get a clear enough image from the context, and would not guess that they are in English dictionaries. The translator's decisions about what to include in the glossary seem to have been motivated by her aim to replicate the kinds of demands the author makes of her readers and by her desire to accommodate the presumed knowledge level and expectations of her own audience.

Though Genette does not include the use of italics in his definition of paratext, italics allude to elements beyond the text, in glossaries and footnotes, but also in other texts and languages, and therefore need to be considered in a paratextual analysis of this kind of translation. As well as the language of the original, the narrative viewpoint of the original text largely determines whether the translator will feel the need to transcribe and italicize words in the translation. The narrator in al-Shaykh's *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, for example, is a Lebanese woman who describes the lives of foreign or marginalized women in another Arabian culture. Though she is an Arab woman in an Arab country, she is

nonetheless an outsider whose perspective on the narrative's cultural context corresponds more closely to that of a Westerner. In translating this narrative from Arabic to English, Catherine Cobham uses only one italicized word fully explained in context: an American woman "talking in Arabic, murdering the letter *tha*, sticking out her tongue and swallowing the words like a fish swallowing her young in the face of danger" (19). By contrast, the narrator in Bakr's *The Wiles of Men* speaks from within the culture, and Denys Johnson-Davies has chosen to transcribe and italicize several Arabic words. The context makes clear that *basbousa* refers to a culturally significant food in the sentence "Fawz took it upon herself to deliver a plateful of *basbousa* [...] from the dish her mother had made in celebration of her contentment and happiness on this memorable day" (50).

Italics are conventionally used to mark a foreign word in a narrative, but in Djebbar's *Fantasia* the author and the translator use italics extensively for a variety of purposes. In many instances, the translator's use of italics stems from the author's choices, for example: to indicate titles and epigraphs or mark discursive difference. The use of italics for titles of publications and epigraphs is standard practice, but the author creates more extensive and scholarly intertextuality than most readers would expect in narrative fiction. The author also italicizes whole passages to signal that they should be read and experienced not as fiction but as first person narrative or soliloquy (46, 218), poetic, musical interludes (122, 109) artistic revisions of history (151, 176), or as internal dialogue (201, 219). Many words of Arabic origin in the glossary of this translation, however, are not italicized in the text, for example: amir, bey, beylik, burnous, caliph, dey, janizary, jebel, kasbah, marabout, sheikh, spahis, thuya, wadi, and yatagan. All of

these words can be found in English dictionaries. The translator and editor do not italicize these adopted foreign words in the text though they include them in the glossary for readers' benefit. The translator's use of italics shows that she replicates the author's relationship with audience but makes an effort to facilitate the reading.

While some of these works offer little or no translator preface, others include translators' prefaces that explicitly address translation audience, approach and rationale. Al-Shaykh's *Women of Sand and Myrrh* provides no introductory material. In this case, though the narrative setting is foreign, the lack of paratext puts the reader directly in contact with the narrative and leads the reader to look for and experience that which is familiar and recognizable in the foreign characters, situations, and events. The text itself facilitates the reader's entry into this foreign context. This fiction tells of four women living a traditional Arab country, but the characters relate marginally and rebelliously to this culture, and the narrator's voice and tone identify more with a Western perspective. Abouzeid's *Year of the Elephant* and Sebbar's *An Algerian Childhood* include extensive introductory paratext, but none of it is attributable to the translator in either work.

In the "Translator's Foreword" for Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret*, Denys Johnson-Davies concedes that the "mental landscape" is "unfamiliar to most Western readers," but asserts that the reader can relate to "the directness and the sincerity of the writing"(ix). In the four-page introduction for Bakr's *The Wiles of Men*, he offers information about the author and aims to shape readers' expectations and perceptions. Describing the protagonists of the stories he

emphasizes universally recognizable human reactions to power structures and social pressures. He situates the author ideologically in relation to the imagined audience by indicating the author's stance in relation to feminist discourses and noting literary influences on the author's style. He prepares the reader to look for political, social, and cultural issues, and to be edified as well as entertained. Though Denys-Johnson Davies's introductions implicitly acknowledge audience, they do not elucidate his approach to translation, the difficulties he encountered, or the elements beyond the text that may have swayed his decisions.

The introductory material for Djebar's *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade* that is attributable to the translator includes a six-page introduction, a three-page glossary, and a three-page chronology. In the introduction, Dorothy Blair discusses the difficulty of translating the author's "astonishing variety of vocabulary" and "exuberance of metaphor," into English prose "with its normal economy of imagery." She expected that this level of "verbal extravagance" would "deter the English reader." These comments implicitly acknowledge but do not elaborate on the tension the translator felt between the narrative's post-colonial counter-discursive qualities and her own readers' expectations. According to Richard Terdiman, counter-discourse seeks to subvert the power of the dominant discourse and is intended to change and denaturalize discursive boundaries but can only exist in dialogue with dominant discourse.<sup>10</sup> Knowledge of Terdiman's paradigm allows the reader to recognize Blair's implicit

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Terdiman, "Introduction: On Symbolic Resistance," *Discourse/Counter-Discourse, The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 62.

acknowledgment of the counter-discursive tension inherent in this work and to identify similar tensions in other translations of works by modern Muslim Arab women.

Booth's *My Grandmother's Cactus* includes the translator's preface, biographies of the authors, and a sixteen-page annotated introduction presenting the translator's approach and perception of audience. In the preface, Booth explains that her motivation to convey "contextual references and specific socially meaningful gestures and phrases" outweighs her awareness that footnotes can be intrusive. Acknowledging that a translation is a "joint effort" that reflects the influence of multiple real as well as imagined readers, she lists several individuals as having contributed by giving the translator "the benefit of their linguistic and literary sensibilities."<sup>11</sup> In the introduction, she also explains her own inclinations as an influence in her decisions about which authors and stories to include in this anthology. She selected stories by women who "are all receiving the recognition of serious critical treatment" and that deal with contemporary social and political issues, implying that her decisions are based both on accepted aesthetic criteria and on the degree to which she felt they communicate a wide variety of contemporary cross-cultural, social, political, and interpersonal issues that concern particularly but not exclusively women.

Aman Attieh compiled, translated, and introduced *Short Fiction by Saudi Arabian Women Writers*. Of the translator prefaces considered here, the twenty-four-page introduction she provides for this collection most directly addresses

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<sup>11</sup> Margot Badran, Kenneth Cuno, Angeline Eichhorst, Ferial Ghazoul, Edwar al-Kharrat, Denys Johnson-Davies, Djuke Poppinga, Suzanne Masoud, Wahid Sami.

questions of translation approach and audience. In this introduction, she explains her reasons for compiling, translating and publishing this work, notes characteristics of these narratives, and discusses how the "interplay" of the author, the text and the reader affect the translator's decisions. She recognized that "rich and colorful information readily available in prose fictional writings by Saudi women might yield insights perhaps not available through social science inquiry or statistical analysis" (1), "saw the need for their voices to be heard and for their views to find an audience beyond their country's borders" (1), and translated these works to serve "as a facilitator between Saudi Arabia and the Western English-speaking world" (21). She notes characteristics of these works such as stream-of-consciousness writing, "convoluted and fractured prose," "puzzling shifts in voice and perspective, tortuous development of plot, [and] ambiguous grammar and style" that may afford these writers their best chance of criticizing "the prevailing social order" and getting "past the censored environment and into print" (13). Aman Attieh discusses the tension between perceived reader expectations and the need to convey the text's counter-discursive tension as well as traverse the linguistic and cultural distance between the two audiences. She acknowledges expectations regarding repetition, punctuation, paragraphing, voice and the clarity of symbols and metaphors, and explains that she chose to maintain some elements that challenge these expectations to reflect "the force, spirit, and flavor of the idiosyncratic forms of the Arabic language" and preserve "the culture-specific traits of Saudi society" (22). Analyzing the paratexts of these published translations provided insights into the ways in which the translators' imagined

audiences and the original texts influenced translators' during the process of recreating texts that can be find a place in the receiving literary tradition.

Post-colonial novels by Muslim Arab women writers tend to challenge and subvert dominant discourses and offer complex images of Arab culture, and translations of these narratives can establish a place in the American literary tradition. Al-Shaykh's *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, for example, is a thoroughly naturalized translation in that the text reads as though it were originally written in English without preface, introduction, notation, or glossary. Though it presents counter-discursive images of Arab women, it has been well received and widely acclaimed because it develops themes that correspond to values in various currents of American feminist discourse, for example, and allows the reader to forget that it is a translation. *La Baroudeuse* also offers images and voices values with which most feminists can identify, but defends itself against transparent naturalization into another language. The extensive use of colloquial and classical Arabic in the French text creates a hybrid, defamiliarizing and counter-discursive text for the original French reader and for Anglophone readers, to the extent that the translator has chosen to maintain these elements. Furthermore, the narrator's close affiliation with her cultural context demands that the reader be brought into this context, leaving little leeway for bringing the narrative "back home" to the reader. Since the narrative itself demands a certain degree of defamiliarization, the translation might encounter more reader resistance than did *Women of Sand and Myrrh*.

## **Translators**

Analysis of these translators' prefaces led to several inferences concerning their concepts of audience. To confirm these inferences, learn more specifically about these translators' perceptions of audience, hear from those who had not provided prefaces to their translations, and continue the dialogue with those who had, I contacted five of the translators whose works have been discussed here above: Denys Johnson-Davies, Marjolijn de Jager, Catherine Cobham, Marilyn Booth, and Barbara Parmenter. Denys Johnson-Davies started translating before publishers commissioned translations of Arabic literature because he felt these works deserved to be translated.<sup>12</sup> Edward Said referred to him as "the leading Arabic-English translator of our time."<sup>13</sup> A search of the UTNetCat online database reveals that Denys Johnson-Davies has published sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, juvenile literature, novels, and collections of short stories.<sup>14</sup> Between 1976 and 1995, nine publishers produced at least twenty of Denys Johnson-Davies translations. Marjolijn de Jager earned a BA from Hunter College of CUNY, and an MA and Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before 1999, she taught French full-time for thirty years and translated on

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<sup>12</sup> Denys Johnson-Davies, e-mail to the author, 20 November 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Said, "Embargoed Literature," *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*, eds. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995) 101.

<sup>14</sup> "Johnson Davies Denys," UTNetCat, online library database (University of Texas at Austin, 29 March 2004).

weekends and during vacations.<sup>15</sup> Now, she translates literature and social science texts and teaches Literary Translation at NYU in the Translation Studies Program. Barbara Parmenter earned a BA in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago and an MA and a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Texas at Austin.<sup>16</sup> She is currently teaching Geography at the University of Texas at Austin. Catherine Cobham earned a BA from Leeds and an MA from Manchester. Her research is in the field of literary translation and contemporary Arabic fiction. She has published several translations and articles and currently teaches Arabic language and modern Arabic literature at St. Andrews Academy in the UK.<sup>17</sup> Marilyn Booth has published essays composed in Arabic and many translations from Arabic to English. She earned a BA in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from Harvard-Radcliffe College, a Diploma in modern standard Arabic and colloquial Egyptian Arabic from the American University of Cairo Center for Arabic Studies Abroad, and a Ph.D. in Modern Arabic Literature and Modern Middle East History from University of Oxford, St. Anthony's College. She is currently a Visiting Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at Brown University.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Marjolijn de Jager, e-mail to the author, 1 December 2003. For full text, see Appendix B.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Parmenter, personal interview, 10 December 2003. For full text, see Appendix C.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Cobham, e-mail to the author, 3 November 2003. For full text, see Appendix D.

<sup>18</sup> Marilyn Booth, e-mail to the author, 7 and 8 January 2004. For full text, see Appendix E.

To find out more about how these translators perceived their imagined audiences while translating works similar to *La Baroudeuse*, I generated a questionnaire of the nine following questions.

- 1) When you translated [the title of one or more translations], did you have an audience in mind?
- 2) If so, what individuals might you list as belonging to this audience? (yourself? the author? your publisher? a professor you had? classmates in one of your courses? professional readers? non-professional readers?)
- 3) How strong was your awareness of this audience?
- 4) Did you aim to accommodate or to challenge the expectations of your audience?
- 5) How would you characterize your attitude toward the original audience and cultural context?
- 6) How would you characterize your attitude toward the audience and cultural context of the translation?
- 7) How would you characterize the general tone and purpose of your translation?
- 8) How would you characterize what you imagined would be your audience's attitude toward the text and the cultural context it conveys?
- 9) Describe some of the decisions you made while translating in which you felt the influence of, sought to impose your influence on, or otherwise anticipated the responses of your audience?

These questions assume that every translator writes for an imagined audience and ask the respondents to clarify their perception of and interaction with their audiences during the translation of one or more specific narratives, the ones discussed earlier in this chapter. Each respondent was invited to interpret the questions liberally and encouraged to view the questions as springboards for discussions and comments about the relationship between translator and audience. With these questions, I hoped to discover similarities and idiosyncrasies of

perception regarding audience composition and influence in this small group of translators who had worked with narratives by Arab women. The responses indicate that though their approaches to translation vary in many respects, they coincide on several issues. Whether or not the translators "imagined an audience," they all aimed to meet various sets of criteria corresponding to anticipated reader expectations.

These translators approached their job from various positions and backgrounds and with dissimilar priorities and perceptions. Denys Johnson-Davies occupied the position of translation initiator, publishing editor and translator for *Distant View of a Minaret*. Marilyn Booth collaborated closely with the publishing editor who initiated the *Grandmother's Cactus* project and could choose which stories to translate for the collection. Marjolijn de Jager, Catherine Cobham, and Barbara Parmenter were commissioned to translate their respective pieces, but in practice, the separation of duties between the author, the translator and the editor is often less distinct and more permeable than their role titles suggest.

Their responses indicated various hierarchies of values and objectives. Denys Johnson-Davies, Marjolijn de Jager, Catherine Cobham and Marilyn Booth noted the importance of attention to recreating the emotive and aesthetic effects of the original. Marjolijn de Jager hopes to share her enthusiasm for the work she is translating and to pique readers' interest in reading similar works. She tries "to inhabit characters, feel the music, understand events, and then put [the text] into the new language relating it in atmosphere and feeling as closely as [she] can." Catherine Cobham aims to convey "the feeling and atmosphere of individual

"sentences" and to recreate the aesthetic effects of the narrative. Marilyn Booth wants "readers first and foremost to feel transported (and not geographically!) by these works, to feel the literary excellence, to love the stories." Her purpose is to interest readers in contemporary Arabic literature and in "what women were writing and saying" without "reducing literary works to sociological panoramas."

Though also concerned with the literary and linguistic aspects of the translation, Barbara Parmenter emphasized the text's informational value. She sees fiction as a way of "being a geographical explorer" and of learning "through literature instead of travel." She wanted to present Morocco as truthfully as she felt Leila Abouzeid had done. Given her background, she was most interested in the geographical and cultural aspects of the story and felt that it would be interesting to her audience because it presents "a view of Morocco that we don't usually see." She assumed that Americans would be surprised to see an Arab woman so deeply religious and politically active at the same time. Though she imagined her audience would be familiar with Western feminist discourse, she thought it "useful to show the viewpoint of an Islamic feminist."

While Barbara Parmenter's interest in conveying information could be interpreted as a belief in the political power of knowledge, Catherine Cobham and Marilyn Booth expressed definite opinions about political objectives and responsibilities. Catherine Cobham "felt an extremely strong proselytizing urge to counter people's preconceptions, prejudices and ignorance about many aspects of the Arab world, through imaginative rather than polemical channels." Marilyn Booth came to identify with the authors of the stories in the *Cactus* collection, recognizing that they "felt somewhat alienated from their supposed, 'natural'

"audiences" as she felt alienated from her own "broadly conceived English-speaking non-scholarly 'intended audience' most of whom, [she] knew, couldn't care less about Arabic literature." She feels "strongly about the political responsibility of translators (. . .) in trying to complicate" the readers' comprehension of Muslim Arab societies.

The sense of political responsibility correlated positively to the translator's awareness of audience and self. Denys Johnson-Davies paid little attention to audience since he "realized that, for English readers, the material was outside their experience." He "was always aware that much of what [he] translated would appear utterly strange to the foreign reader." Marjolijn de Jager indicates that she rarely thought of audience in definite terms, imagining rather "people who love to read, who are curious about cultures and worlds other than the one they know." Neither of these two translators volunteered an opinion concerning a translator's political responsibility. Barbara Parmenter imagined a more specific audience of Americans "interested in learning more about North Africa." Though Marilyn Booth indicated that at the time of writing she was only "vaguely" aware of audience, in retrospect, she identifies her audience as a group "as broad and unprofessional as possible." Similarly, Catherine Cobham "wasn't consciously imagining an audience for [her] translation of Hanan's novels," but realizes, in retrospect, that her concept of audience must have had some influence on her translation choices. She identifies this audience as including

general readers rather than people with a specific interest in the Arab world (. . .) fairly cosmopolitan mother tongue English reading public (. . .) who don't habitually read novels but are curious to know more about the Arab world (. . .) Arabs who prefer (. . .) to read novels in English (. . .) some friends and colleagues, but not others.

She further explains that "people who read a lot of fiction in English—rightly or wrongly—find Hanan's fiction a bit light or feminist or quasi-journalistic," a negative judgment with which Catherine Cobham does not agree.

The translators who wonder most about audience indicate most awareness of self in the process and the text. Recognizing the active agency of the translator, Catherine Cobham reflects ironically on her own subliminal belief that she "was just being a vehicle for the original writer!" Marilyn Booth affirmed that she was her "own first audience" and acknowledged that she "was trying hardest to satisfy [herself]." She was also able to situate her attitude toward her imagined audience as being "somewhere between hope and alienation."

Notwithstanding individual variations, these translators wrote for similar audiences and for comparable purposes. Though they belong to a class of highly educated "professional" readers, they tend to write for a broader readership of "non-professional" readers who are nonetheless like themselves. They are largely ideologically motivated by the impulse to share the counter-discursive aesthetic beauty, knowledge and understanding they see in these works. Denys Johnson-Davies chose to make available to a larger audience works that he believed deserved to be published though they were "not rightly regarded in [their own cultural contexts] at the time" because he thought they were "worthwhile" and had "literary merit" (Johnson-Davies). Catherine Cobham had a "mission to translate Arabic novels so English speakers could relate to Arabic culture at an imaginative level," and an "idealistic belief in powers of fiction to influence lives." She sees

literature as "one very slow but effective way of changing people's awareness, making them identify more with the diversity of Arab and Muslim culture."<sup>19</sup>

Commenting on translation difficulties, these translators mentioned the same sorts of sticking points. Barbara Parmenter realized the contrast between the author's pronounced Islamic feminist political agenda and her own motivations for translating the work. Catherine Cobham had to decide "what was vulgar (...) and what wasn't, and how far to impose this on audiences." She also "tried to avoid inappropriate archaisms or overly rhetorical language" that might distance and distract the reader from the story by calling attention to the language. She judged whether to make the reader adapt to the "slower" rhetorical style of Arabic, which easily uses long sentences and verbal nouns, or revise the rhetoric to accommodate what she imagined would be the reader's impatience to get on with the plot. Barbara Parmenter chose to transcribe some words from Arabic and explain them in footnotes unless the context sufficed. Her choice was based on the judgment that too much cultural information would be lost in the translation of words like "djellaba," for example, and that "it was important to leave these words in Arabic to give a sense of place." Catherine Cobham gauged how literally to translate colloquial language and wondered, "How much bewilderment can the reader take?" Even when the original text defamiliarizes and challenges the reader, to what extent can and should the translator do so?

Marilyn Booth chose to preserve certain "strange" usages from the source text yet "be elegant and fluid in English." She noted that her attitude toward

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<sup>19</sup> Catherine Cobham, notes for a talk on translating, Edinburgh, 16 July 2001.

paratextual explanations has changed somewhat. She now demands more participation from her readers and expects them to look up or guess the meaning of words they don't know. She dislikes notes in fictional texts and uses them only when she thinks it "fair to explain certain colloquial usages, place names," and other cultural elements essential for understanding. To more fully inform the reader of the cultural and historical context without interrupting the narrative with notes and because she "felt it was really important to talk about the history of Egyptian women writing short stories," she provided a "short research paper" introduction for the collection. These decisions mark the translators' efforts to determine and convey to their audiences an acceptable degree of the tension and ambiguity that exist in the hybrid, polyvocal post-colonial texts they translated.

## Readers

Three university professors in Comparative Literature offered comments on the translation manuscript that enhanced my awareness of their expectations and of the choices I had made. In many cases, these readers' comments led to closer examination of the effects of the author's choices of literary technique and made my translational decisions more conscious and deliberate, even if this more focused attention called for no revision in the translation. For example, readers pointed out the need to avoid suggesting inaccurate or offensive gender differentiation and questioned the use of the masculine pronouns in the following as in the sentence.

Bientôt les muezzins l'annonceront à la population endormie, et chacun s'affairera, d'abord pour faire les ablutions et la prière de l'aube ( . . . ) (9)

Soon the call to prayer would announce dawn to the sleeping population, and each person would busy himself, first to perform ablutions and the dawn prayer (...)

The pronoun *se* in the reflexive verb phrase in French elides the notion of gender, whereas the English equivalent of this phrase calls for the use of a gendered pronoun: "himself" or "herself." To avoid the erroneous implication that only men or women pray, the sentence needed to be rephrased in English.

Readers made notably few comments about characterization or unacceptable imagery. None objected to the portrayal of an unusual protagonist, the kind of character Virginia Woolf exhorted her readers to demand of writers: an old lady "saying anything and doing heaven knows what."<sup>20</sup> The Islamic feminist discourse of the authorial narrator incited no specific comment. The majority of the readers' comments concern register, diction, metaphorical language, determinacy of speakers and representation of narrative perspective. Readers expected characters' reported speech to sound like a person speaking and doubted that a person would say, for example: "huge popular demonstrations were quickly repressed by the forces of law and order" ("de grandes manifestations populaires se sont organisées, vite réprimées par les forces de l'ordre" [18]). These comments required a translation decision: to respect the author's decision to have her characters speak in a highly "literate" style, or to accommodate readers' expectations of distinction between written and spoken language.

In the original, the author has people on the street speak the way journalists write. The effect of this technique is to suggest that even the illiterate

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<sup>20</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Character in Fiction," *The Criterion* 2 (1924): 430.

participated intellectually in political discussions and decisions. The author downplays the distinction that my audience might make between written and spoken language, variations in register that might endorse a distinction between those who read and write and those who do not. To be faithful to the effect of the original, I decided to maintain a high register of language in the dialogue without excessively defamiliarizing the reader.

Comments concerning the use of metaphors indicated that the readers expected clear and effective imagery. One reader highlighted the phrase "equestrian tornado" in the sentence: "They had to preserve this Islam that had been brought to Africa in an equestrian tornado" ("Cet islam amené en Afrique dans une tornade hippique, il fallait le préserver" [157]). This phrase could be translated in a less elevated register as, for example "this Islam brought to Africa on horseback," but as such would lose the formal tone and the tornado metaphor of the original. Though the high literary register of the phrase I have chosen might cause the reader to pause, it maintains the respectful tone of the original. Another reader questioned the choice of the word "bag" in the passage: "she glanced one last time at her reflection and said in a loud voice, as though to ward off the evil eye, 'You old bag'" ("elle jeta un dernier regard à son miroir et lança tout haut, comme pour conjurer le sort: 'Espèce de vieille carcasse'" [12]). This colloquial and highly emotive use of a perhaps dated slang word is likely to defamiliarize many readers. I chose this word to convey the strong imagery and dissonance of the original phrase that projects a character who has let passion rule her life but is also capable of gazing at herself from a distanced, critical, cynical perspective. One reader highlighted the word "hovel" in the phrase: "Your mouth is a ruined

hovel" ("Ta bouche est une mesure dévastée" [87]). Here again, my choice of words is intended to convey the experience of reading the strange and harsh imagery of the original passage.

Metaphors and metonyms can be used to create connections that arrest the reader's attention, but such usage may risk adverse reaction. Two readers had dissimilar reactions to the phrase "pot belly" in the following sentence, for example.

Il dormait dans une position obscène ( . . . ), les jambes écartées pour faire place à un ventre rebondi, se soulevant au rythme de ses ronflements. (7)

He was sleeping in an obscene position ( . . . ), his features loose, his legs spread to accommodate a pot belly which rose to the rhythm of his snoring.

I felt that this metaphor and phrasing recreated the humorous visual and auditory image of the original, and one reader agreed while another questioned the appropriateness of the word "pot." One reader paused at the use of the word "blind" as an adjective for boots in the phrase: "they trampled them with blind boots" ("On les piétina avec des bottes aveugles" [78]). Though this image is incongruent, I maintained the metonym the author had chosen to use, implying that the wearers of the boots were blind to human suffering.

Readers expressed a desire to know who is speaking and to whom and if the words on the page represent expressed words or stream-of-consciousness thoughts. The original, however, does not make these distinctions evident. My first response was to consider the effects of the author's techniques. Not attributing speech to one identifiable character or another makes the dialogue part of the ambient discourse issuing not from one or more individuals but from the

community. Having the characters--men and women, educated and illiterate, upper and lower class--speak in a uniform register disallows their categorization based on gender or class and encourages the reader to give equal consideration to what they are saying. A reader for whom voice distinction is an aesthetic criterion may expect differentiation in the register and style of characters' speech, but the lack of voice distinction may have the effect of highlighting a similarity and solidarity between characters in the story, thereby implying unity of cultural values and political objectives.

Readers commented on the translation's manner of presenting stream-of-consciousness. In one passage, the original text uses quotation marks to distinguish Lalla Kenza's internal monologue from the narrative voice, and I followed suit.

Elle sourit et se dit qu'elle sera debout avec le lever du jour. [ . . . ] "Moulay Ali sera là vers 13 heures, 14 heures au plus tard. [ . . . ] Moulay Ali raffolait jadis des pieds de veau aux pois chiches et aux céréales. Et piquants s'il vous plaît, et bien mijotés. . ." (7-8)

She smiled and told herself she would be up and about long before sunrise. [ . . . ] "Moulay Ali will be here at about one o'clock, two at the latest. [ . . . ] Moulay Ali used to love knuckle of veal with chickpeas and barley. Spicy, please, and slowly simmered..."

In this instance, the reader wondered if italics might not be a better technique for indicating stream-of-consciousness. Nouzha Fassi Fihri chose to vary the narrative perspective without consistently using quotation marks to differentiate the authorial voice from Kenza's stream of consciousness (87-91), thereby creating an ambiguity which one reader questioned in the translation. The author's treatment of stream-of-consciousness allows the reader to perceive several monologic perspectives: internal musings, organized but unvoiced thought about

personal matters, unvoiced thought about social concerns, talking to oneself alone and aloud, voicing inwardly directed thoughts when others are present, and speaking to a crowd, for example. Preserving the ambiguities of this multilayered portrayal of speech acts approximates the effects of the original text for the LC2 reader.

Readers' responses to the use of transcribed words and italics called attention to sociocultural as well as linguistic constraints. Even though discomfort and confusion are part of the experience of post-colonial hybridity, given that I imagined an audience further removed than the original readers from the cultural context of the narrative, the information load needed to be lightened and ambiguity clarified at least to some extent. Therefore, I translated or paraphrased many of the Arabic words that the author had transcribed in the original. For example, rather than transcribe the word *labat* as the author did, I substituted the English word "feltmaker."

Une fois l'animal écorché, mouton ou chèvre, sa peau passe par plusieurs opérations avant d'arriver entre leurs mains. Le "Labat" en arrache la laine et en épile les poils. (133-134)

When a sheep or goat is skinned, the hide goes through several operations. The feltmaker pulls out the wool and plucks the hair.

Though a Moroccan *labat* performs his job in a highly culture-specific setting which the word "feltmaker" does not convey, the context of the narrative fully compensates for the information lost with the substitution of the English word. The word *tahlil*, however, is open to interpretation and unexplained in the text.

Si tu étais une bague, mon doigt serait à ta mesure. / Si tu étais un *tahlil* en or, j'en serais la cordelière. / Si tu étais un poignard, c'est moi qui te porterais en bandoulière. (64)

If you were a ring, my finger would be your size. / If you were a golden *tahlil*, I would be the braided belt. / If you were a dagger, I alone would wear you strapped across my chest

Logically, in this context, *tahlil* refers to a kind of gown, or perhaps a belt buckle, but Arabic dictionaries do not list these meanings for this word, and Moroccan readers offer various interpretations. My decision to transcribe this Arabic word and maintain its irresolvable ambiguity assumes a high degree of reader tolerance and participation.

In addition to sociocultural constraints, readers' comments about transcribed words related to linguistic concerns such as the need to follow rules of English grammar and phonetics. In the sentence "They came wrapped in their white *hayek*" ("Elles arrivaient, emmitouflées dans leurs *Hayek* blancs" [20]), the word *hayek* raised a question of grammar. *Hayek* is the transliteration of the plural form of *haik* in Arabic. Whereas many of the original readers would recognize *hayek* as the phonetic transcription of the Arabic plural of *haik*, few Anglophone readers have any knowledge of the grammatical variations of Arabic, and most would expect to see an *s* when the context requires the plural form of the word.

One reader noted the need for the transcribed words to obey rules of English phonetics and spelling. An Anglophone reader would have difficulty pronouncing the initial consonant cluster in the name "Rkia" (64). To transcribe this name in accord with English phonetics, I wrote it with an apostrophe to suggest an elided vowel sound: "R'kia." Similarly, I transcribed the name "Cherif" as "Sharif" to indicate that the initial sound is that of the word "share" rather than "church" and that the vowel sound receives more emphasis than a schwa.

One reader indicated that the word "kohl" should not be italicized because this word has been adopted into English. Even foreign words need not always be italicized. One reader underlined the word *riad* in the following sentence and commented that it should be in italics at least the first time.

le riad, ensemble de salons et de galeries s'ordonnant sur un patio à ciel ouvert, tout en marbre blanc, qui se prolongeait par un jardin où des orangers et des citronniers très âgés se ramifiaient au dessus d'un fouillis d'herbes sauvages, de rosiers, de giroflées et de jasmins qui embaumait et crépitaient sous l'implacable soleil ( . . . ) (44-45)

There was the riad where the guests were received, a group of sitting rooms and arcades arranged around an open-air patio, all in white marble, and prolonged by a garden where very old orange and lemon trees branched out above a jumble of weeds, roses, carnations and jasmine that perfumed the air and crackled under the relentless sun.

Italicizing the transcribed word the first time it appears acknowledges that the reader is not expected to know what it means and alerts the reader to look for the meaning, in this case, in the same sentence. Italicizing this word *only* the first time implies that the writer expects the reader to treat this word as an acquired rather than foreign element in its subsequent appearances.

These professional readers made few comments in passages that complied with their expectations, but called for revisions when they felt the choice of words, sentence structures or techniques called attention to the language and therefore distanced the reader from the narrative. The three pages describing Kenza's flight across the rooftop terraces and the dialogue with her aunt and uncle, for example, elicited little editorial comment. As the following excerpt illustrates, this passage presented reasonable levels of information specific to the original culture and used few defamiliarizing techniques.

Arrivée face à sa nièce, elle tapa ses cuisses du plat de ses mains et se mit à crier: "Malheureuse, qu'as-tu fait là? Venir jusqu'ici par les terrasses, au risque de te laisser apercevoir par quelque voisin pervers? T'exposer ainsi à la calomnie et nous exposer à la critique? Et ta mère, ne peut-elle apprendre à sa fille à se bien tenir? Je l'ai toujours dit, c'est une femme aboulique, sans ressort aucun, elle n'a pas changé avec l'âge. . . Et les autres, ces vieilles charpentes, elle auraient dû t'enfermer. Une fille comme toi, une dévergondée, une éhontée!" Kenza qui ne s'était pas départie de son calme dit tout simplement: "Peux-tu me garder chez-toi quelques temps?" L'oncle s'était redressé sur sa couche et, dans sa précipitation, avait renversé la moitié de sa tabatière sur l'épaisse couverture rayée de blanc et noir qui cachait ses lourdes jambes. "Ne nous affolons pas, intervint-il. Garde-la quelque temps chez toi puisqu'elle te demande l'hospitalité! [ . . . ] L'oncle se redressa davantage, passa le revers de sa main sur son nez bruni par le tabac, ajusta son turban et reprit: "Voyons mon enfant, approche donc! Considère cette maison comme la tienne et considère-moi comme. . . ton père! Ta tante, en dépit de ce qu'elle dit, est une bonne femme. Elle t'aime beaucoup, crois-moi. Elle ira de ce pas trouver Moulay Larbi et lui parler. Tu restera ici autant que tu voudras, en attendant que les esprits se calment. Mais pourquoi t'en faire, tout de même! Un si beau brin de fille! Un mari de parti, dix de trouvés! Ils feront la queue devant ta porte. La virilité n'est point l'attribut du seul Moulay Ali, conclut-il en passant une main impudente sur son ventre imberbe." (30-32)

Face to face with her niece, she slapped her own thighs and screamed, "Wretched girl, what are you doing here? You came all the way here over the rooftops, at the risk of being seen by some perverted neighbor? You exposed yourself to disgrace and us to criticism in this way? And your mother, can't she teach her daughter to behave properly? I have always said she was an apathetic, spineless woman, and she hasn't improved with age . . . and the others, the old fools, they should have locked you up, a girl like you, shameless and brazen!" Kenza kept her temper and simply said, "Can you let me stay with you for a while?" The uncle sat up on his mattress, in his hurry spilling half the contents of his tobacco box on the black and white striped blanket covering his heavy legs. "Let's not get upset," he intervened. "Let her stay with you for a while, since she is asking for your hospitality!" [ . . . ] The uncle sat up straighter, rubbing the back of his hand over his tobacco stained nose, adjusting his turban and adding, "Now, now, my child, come closer! You must consider this home as your own and think of me as...your father! In spite of what she says, your aunt is a good woman. She loves you dearly, believe me. She will go right away to talk to Moulay Larbi. You stay here as long as you wish, while everyone calms down. Why worry, after all! Such a pretty girl. One husband lost, ten more to be found! They'll be standing in line in front of your door. Moulay Ali was not the only man among us," he concluded, rubbing his hairless belly with a shameless hand.

In French, this passage uses descriptive language, attributes dialogue to identifiable characters, portrays clear action and comprehensible human behavior, and presents few barriers to the reproduction of these elements in the translation. Since these elements correspond to the LC2 readers' expectations for narrative prose, rather than create a critical distance, the translation allowed the readers to immerse themselves in the action.

Though these readers' expectations varied, their comments tended to advocate for a translation that placed no additional barrier between the reader and the text. They called for revision when word choice, sentence structures, and sociocultural information load distanced them from the narrative. Accordingly, I revised distracting elements to invite greater reader participation with less obstruction, though the tension inherent in the original post-colonial text led me to counter some of my readers' expectations, thereby offering them an approximation of the original reading experience.

Thus, discussions with the author, paratextual analysis of similar translations, interviews with translators, and conversations with real readers offered a panorama of responses to my questions concerning audience and possible influences on a translator's decisions. The next chapter brings these responses and perspectives together into a critical analysis of the process of translating Nouzha Fassi Fihri's *La Baroudeuse*.

## **Chapter Two: A Critical Analysis of the Process of Translating a Post-Colonial Narrative in a Comparative Literature Context**

In addition to Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, Gérard Genette and Richard Terdiman, cited in the previous chapter, I have been influenced by many other critics who have proposed theoretical paradigms for language, literature, and translation that can enrich the reading, analysis, and translation of post-colonial narratives. Thus, for example, I found that Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of contradictory forces in language help to explain the tensions readers often experience in novelistic prose.<sup>21</sup> Bakhtin defines the utterance as a dialogic process involving both the speaker or writer and the implied or actual listener or reader. He notes contradictory forces in language: the centripetal forces of "verbal-ideological centralization and unification," and the centrifugal forces of stratification and heteroglossia. Grammatical rules, stylistic norms, and the desire to communicate constitute unifying factors in literary translation, while stratification of readership, cultural differences, and subversive attitudes of authors, translators, and readers contribute to the centrifugal forces. Bakhtin identifies polyphony in the novel as the "dialogized heteroglossia" of many imagined voices, when every written utterance calls into play multiple possible meanings, effects, and reader responses.

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<sup>21</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. and ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981).

Other literary theorists such as Victor Shklovsky and Wolfgang Iser helped me focus on readers' response to and relationship with the text. Shklovsky uses the term "defamiliarization" in reference to poetic techniques that make the familiar seem strange such as the use of "difficult, roughened, impeded language."<sup>22</sup> These techniques present conflicts the reader has to resolve, increase the difficulty and length of perception, and awaken readers to the intricacy and texture of verbal structure. According to Shklovsky, whereas ordinary language is smooth and transparent, literary works "lay bare" and captivate the reader's attention by making the world strange. Wolfgang Iser's term "horizon of expectation" refers to everything that readers perceive to be normative and normal, based on their memory of other texts, and notes that these expectations change as readers experience new literary techniques.<sup>23</sup> Iser identifies two types of "hypothetical" contemporary reader: the first constructed from social and historical knowledge of the time, and the second extrapolated from the reader's role laid down in the text (28). The first of these hypothetical readers exists in the writer's mind as the writer's understanding of potential readers' social and historical knowledge and experience. The second exists in the text. Shklovsky's and Iser's paradigms enhanced my awareness of the original audience, of potential LC2 readers, and of myself as a reader. This focus on audience helped me identify counter-discursive techniques of post-colonial texts and potential

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<sup>22</sup> Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism, Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965) 22.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading, A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1978).

readers' expectations, thereby augmenting my range of possibilities for conveying the effects of the original text to the LC2 audience.

Concerning the relationship between reading and writing, Roland Barthes's and André Lefevere's perspectives were also valuable in the formulation of my approach. Barthes defines texts as "writerly" (scriptible) or "readerly" (lisible).<sup>24</sup> The writerly text makes "the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text," while the readerly text renders the reader idle and intransitive.

Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between the author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged in to a kind of idleness--he is intransitive; he is, in short, serious: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum. Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the readerly. We call the readerly text a classic text. (4)

Barthes attributes the characteristics of "writerly" and "readerly" to texts, but these distinctions may also be applied to readers. I see the translator as a "writerly" reader who assumes an active role vis-à-vis the text and undertakes the transitive function of reproducing the text across a linguistic and cultural boundary. Similarly, with each commentary, interpretation, or analysis, the literary critic creates further meaning from an original or translation. According to Lefevere as well, translators represent a point between authors and literary critics

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<sup>24</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z, An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974) 4.

on a continuum of writers and re-writers.<sup>25</sup> All three are professional readers who approach the text in a "writerly" fashion.

Octavio Paz proposes a different view of the relationship between language activities.

When we learn to speak, we are learning to translate; the child who asks his mother the meaning of a word is really asking her to translate the unfamiliar term into the simple words he already knows. In this sense, translation within the same language is not essentially different from translation between two tongues. . . . No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation: first from the nonverbal world and then because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase. However, the inverse of this reasoning is also entirely valid. All texts are originals because each translation has its own distinctive character. Up to a point, each translation is a creation and thus constitutes a unique text.<sup>26</sup>

According to Paz, all instances of language use are in essence equally creative and translational. Speaking is the act of translating perceptions into language. Individuals speaking and writing the same language are translating their understanding for each other. Every instance of language use is creative but never entirely original in that it makes use of previously existing words and structures. Though I agree with this assertion, I nevertheless see the translator as obligated to reproduce an original text and therefore subject to more constraints than are most poets and novelists.

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<sup>25</sup> André Lefevere, "Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm," *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, ed. Theo Hermans (New York: St. Martins Press, 1985) 235.

<sup>26</sup> Octavio Paz, "Translation: Literature and Letters," trans. Irene del Corral, *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte and John Giguenet (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 152-154.

Theorists such as Edward Said and Mary Louise Pratt offer critical paradigms particularly appropriate for my analysis of characteristics and techniques of post-colonial literature. Said argues the value of recognizing cultural groundedness, power relationships and pragmatic effects in literature.<sup>27</sup> His paradigm suggests the need to evaluate the rhetorical effects of the original text, identify the translator's perspective and purpose, and project the sociocultural as well as linguistic expectations of the receiving audience. Also attentive to the sociocultural grounding of the post-colonial literary text, Mary Louise Pratt proposes the term "contact zone" to refer to "the space of colonial encounters . . . in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."<sup>28</sup> Pratt notes that in this zone, modes of representation from the metropolis are received and appropriated by groups on the periphery, and modes of representation from the periphery are received and appropriated by the metropolis (6). Her paradigm offers further perspectives on the tensions of the Moroccan contact zone in which modernizing elements of society appropriate the French language to counter-discursively represent themselves to national and international audiences. Translating post-colonial texts into another Western language can be seen as an extension of this interactive process.

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<sup>27</sup> Edward W Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 6.

Lawrence Venuti's and André Lefevere's paradigmatic structures influenced my analysis of original texts and translation processes, though their concepts of and approaches to translation diverge. Venuti acknowledges Schleiermacher in distinguishing between the translator who chooses a "domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home" and the translator who chooses a "foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad."<sup>29</sup> Foreignizing techniques include the use of transcribed foreign words, literal translations of proverbs and sayings, and paratextual devices such as glossaries and notes. Venuti calls for translators to insist on "foreignizing translation" to open "spaces for new ideas, concepts of alterity, and literary innovation."<sup>30</sup> He argues for translator visibility and against textual fluency, advocating what he calls "resistant" translation, which makes the reader constantly aware of reading a translation, a text shaped by the translator's choices. He encourages translators to refuse fluency to guide the reader to question the easy codes of the exotic ("Invisibility" 18). This approach presents translation as an act of political resistance against cultural hegemony. Reading Venuti has enhanced my awareness of potential linguistic and cultural power differentials in post-colonial translation and helped me more clearly discern my own approach to

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<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Venuti, "Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English," *Textual Practice* 7.2 (1993): 210.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Venuti, "The Translator's Invisibility," *Criticism* 28 (Spring 1986): 18.

translation. However, in accordance with Lefevere, I choose to see translation as a tool for cross-cultural communication rather than resistance. André Lefevere defines translation as a process of negotiation between two cultures and asserts that the translator's first task is to make the original accessible to the audience for whom she is translating.<sup>31</sup> According to this definition, translation is a specific type of cross-cultural communication in which the original message must be reformulated to meet the expectations of readers in another language and culture.

These brief references suggest the many schools of thought in comparative literature that can inform translation processes. The purpose of the following discussion is rather to consider translation questions from the perspective of a person translating a Muslim Arab woman's novel into English in a comparative literature context. From this perspective, what is translation? What issues are likely to arise particularly in the translation of this kind of literature? What happens during the translation process and what influences are likely to affect the outcome?

## A CONCEPT OF TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATORS

Translation is a process of communication, negotiation and meaning production "through the encounter of cultures that are already characterized by multiculturality."<sup>32</sup> Although for clarity in this study I distinguish between the

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<sup>31</sup> André Lefevere, *Translating Literature, Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context* (New York: MLA, 1992) 11, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Michaela Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, eds. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2000) 141.

author (the person who wrote the original text) and the translator, both occupy points on a continuum of creative writers. Like other forms of writing, translation is a creative and solitary yet audience-oriented act that takes place in a sociopolitical context and crosses boundaries. In this process, some translators feel bound to reformulate the original message as faithfully as possible while accommodating most expectations of the receiving audience (Lefevere *Translating Literature* 13). The translator who takes this approach serves the needs of her audience, but also makes demands of this audience. To convey meaning and recreate effects for the receiving audience, this translator conforms to most audience expectations for narrative prose, but conventions are subject to change according to the pressures put upon them by readers and writers. Translators can challenge and modify readers' perceptions of what is acceptable and desirable.

In most cases, like many other forms of written language, translation is produced for an intended audience that is normally not present during the writing process. How, then, "does the writer give body to the audience for whom he writes?"<sup>33</sup> What determines how the writer will respond to this audience? Writers make decisions in response to the imagined opinions of an anticipated audience derived from many sources including but not limited to the study of literary theory, dialogue with real readers, and personal responses to literary works and translations. The translator's responses to these influences vary depending on her

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<sup>33</sup> Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *PMLA* 90 (1975): 10.

attitude toward the original author, text, and culture and on her relationship with potential audiences.

Issuing from the literary tradition of a specific social group, a text presents the ideology of this group to other social groups who use the same language. This boundary-crossing similarity between fiction and translation is particularly evident in post-colonial writing. Identifying the "culturo-linguistic layering" of "hybrid" post-colonial texts such as those written in French by North African writers, Samia Mehrez notes that such texts

seek to decolonize themselves from two oppressors at once: the western ex-colonizer who naively boasts of their existence and ultimately recuperates them, and the 'traditional,' 'national' cultures which shortsightedly deny their importance and consequently marginalize them.<sup>34</sup>

To perform this simultaneous subversion of two dominant discourses, these texts participate in subversive discourses that cross linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Both post-colonial fiction and translation start with a text that the writer attempts to transpose for a receiving audience. The translator works with a written text, and the post-colonial writer translates from "a metatext of the culture itself."<sup>35</sup> Both forms of writing

mediate cultural difference by means of a common variety of techniques. On the textual level, for example, both postcolonial texts and translations often show deviations from the standard receiving language: perturbations in lexis (including imported lexical items, unusual collocations, non-

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<sup>34</sup> Samia Mehrez, "Translation and the Postcolonial Experience: The Francophone North African Text," *Rethinking Translation, Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 1992) 121.

<sup>35</sup> Maria Tymoczko, "Post-colonial writing and literary translation," *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 1999) 21.

standard frequency distributions, variant semantic fields and neologisms), unusual syntax and defamiliarized language, including unexpected metaphors and unusual turns of speech. Moreover, the unfamiliar cultural substrata in both types of writing give rise to a heavy information load, which both authors and translators relieve by inserting explanations or by supplying cultural information that would normally be presupposed or implicit in other literary works . . . [Both have] the ability to evoke two languages simultaneously.<sup>36</sup>

Both post-colonial writers and translators use two languages simultaneously, determine what demands they will make on their readers, and consider the effects of their chosen approaches and techniques.

Several conditions, however, differentiate translation from the creation of narrative fiction and theoretical metadiscourse. Translation occurs in the presence of and is constrained by an original text. Whereas authors are free to choose what aspects of reality they will translate into writing and formulate the text as they see fit, translators aim to recreate a pre-existing written text in another language with as little distortion as possible. The translator who takes Lefevere's approach makes every effort to convey to this second audience the perspective and attitude of the narrator, the effects of the author's literary techniques, and cultural information that would have been implicitly available to the original readers. To do so, this translator imagines an audience and chooses linguistic and literary strategies to mediate between her audience and the text, attaching greater importance to the expectations of the target audience than to the linguistic and ideological considerations that influenced the production of the source text. When a conflict arises between the two sets of constraints, this translator tends to "tilt to

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<sup>36</sup> Maria Tymoczko, "Translations of Themselves: The Contours of Postcolonial Fiction," *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, ed. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2000) 148.

the target audience and its expectations, not to the source text" (Lefevere *Translating Literature* 11, 19).

Taking this approach, the translator analyzes the narrative's techniques, effects, and relation to audiences and context. She clarifies her own attitudes toward the LC1 and LC2 texts, contexts, and audiences. She might imagine an audience that corresponds as nearly as possible to the audience evoked in the original text. According to García Yebra, the translator aims to say everything the original says, say nothing that the original does not say, and say it as correctly and naturally as the original did.<sup>37</sup> Realistically, a translation can never duplicate the original, given the differences not only in the languages and cultures of the two texts, but also in the perspectives and perceptions of the actors involved in the process including the original author, LC1 readers, the translator, the editor, and LC2 readers.

Nonetheless, while translating *La Baroudeuse*, I aimed to recreate the original text and communicate its effects to my imagined audience. Because the original text subverted discourses and challenged readers, my translation sought to have a similar effect on the reader, though it often tilted toward the LC2 horizon of expectation. I reasoned that too great a challenge might turn the reader away and thereby defeat the purpose of the translation. I made an effort to convey cultural elements essential to the story without unduly increasing the information load for the LC2 audience. I adapted the translation to "standards for acceptable behavior" and dominant concepts of literature in the target culture. When I

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<sup>37</sup> V. García Yebra, *Teoría y práctica de la traducción*. 2v. (Madrid: Gredos, 1982) 43.

thought the target audience would not likely understand a feature of the author's historical, geographic, political, or cultural universe of discourse, I substituted an analogous feature from the target culture or tried to re-create the author's universe of discourse. I judged that the reader should be able to understand the words and ideas without having to refer too often to the glossary or a dictionary. Within my theoretical paradigm, the translator tilts the text to the target audience and its expectations to whatever degree necessary to produce a text that will find a place within the audience's horizon of expectation.

Translating post-colonial novels by Muslim Arab women from French into English presents a specific set of constraints. These narratives are frequently counter-discursive products from a contact zone. A counter-discursive narrative by a post-colonial Arab woman writer presents images of the source culture that challenge readers to revise accepted notions of that culture, thus my goal in a translation of this kind of narrative is to perpetuate these effects. North African Muslim Arab women's narratives often situate characters within Islamic discourse, but focus on and politicize their efforts to gain equal treatment and a stronger public voice in their society. They frequently disclose the politically motivated disjunction between Islamic and traditional discourse. Writing in French rather than Arabic, these authors denaturalize and challenge the boundaries not only between discourses but also between languages and cultures. These writers negotiate the gap between worlds and use the metropolitan language and novelistic genre to convey their own peripheral and traditionally silenced point of view to themselves and to the metropolis. They often aim to overtly challenge their readers' values and expectations. This sub-genre of

literature tends to reflect the cultural and linguistic hybridity of post-colonial North African culture and challenge readers to participate actively in the construction of meaning. In choosing to translate this kind of narrative, I hope to perpetuate the effects of the originals' politicized counter-discourse. In this way, the original author and the translator can together challenge monolithic views of the original culture, rendering audible its polyphony and calling attention to the recognizability of human values in cultures that are not civilizationally linked.

I relied on my understanding of potential readers' expectations in translating to perpetuate these critical tensions. Since the 1950's American society has been evolving towards greater acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity which is reflected in the inclusion of narratives by African American, Native American and Latina writers in literary canons and in the increasing acceptance of colloquialisms into American speech, dictionaries and mainstream culture. According to Catherine Cobham, the U.K. audience is even more sophisticated than the U.S. readership "in terms of translated literatures" (personal interview). Therefore, translating narratives by Muslim Arab women into English might involve negotiating criteria of linguistic acceptability and efficacy in a context of evolving Anglophone literary standards and expectations.

These translations can establish a place in the literary canons of mainstream Anglophone literature, especially in currents of literature by minority women. Hanan al-Shaykh's *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, for example, is a thoroughly naturalized translation in that the text reads as though it were originally written in English without preface, introduction, notation, or glossary. Though it presents counter-discursive images of Arab women, it has been well

received and widely acclaimed primarily because it does allow the reader to forget that it is a translation, and because it artfully develops themes that correspond to underlying values common to many currents of Anglophone culture. Novels such as *La Baroudeuse* also present values with which Anglophone readers can identify, but often defend themselves against transparent translation into English. The extensive use of colloquial and classical Arabic transcribed in the French text creates a hybrid, defamiliarizing and counter-discursive text for the original French reader. I aimed to respect the author's decisions and approximate them in the translation. Since the narrative itself demands a certain degree of defamiliarization, I anticipate that it might encounter more reader resistance in translation than did *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, for example.

### ELEMENTS OF THE PROCESS

Though logically translation entails at least the two distinguishable activities of reading and re-writing, in practice these two functions continued simultaneously throughout much of the process. The translator read the text critically, responding to and interpreting the work on the basis of previous experiences and knowledge and thought translationally while re-writing the narrative in another language for an audience of a different culture. She gauged expectations of her anticipated audience to determine how best to bring the text to the reader while remaining faithful to the original. She recognized politically and culturally significant elements of the original text and identified aspects of the text that will challenge LC2 readers' expectations of and aesthetic criteria for this genre of literature.

Alternate solutions were judged and decisions were made concerning word choice, transcription, sentence structures, sociocultural information load, narrative techniques, and ideological issues. Most Arabic names and transcribed words are easily transposed into the French and English sound systems with minimal deformation; however, some adjustments needed to be made from French to English to insure that the Anglophone reader could pronounce the combination of phonetic symbols. For example, Nouzha Fassi Fihri transcribes the name of a kind of pastry into the French phonetic system as "briouet," but an Anglophone audience might more readily recognize the spelling "braewats" used in Paula Wolfert's Moroccan cookbook written for an English-speaking audience.<sup>38</sup>

Even on the principle that a translation should tilt toward the receiving audience, some decisions are difficult to make. Should the translator use quotation marks or italics to set off a character's inner thoughts when the original text does not? The translator needed to consider the effects of the author's decisions and whether adding textual indicators to satisfy the expectations of the readers would too greatly modify these effects. Using italics to indicate internal dialogue creates a dichotomy between internal and external. The decision to not use textual markers to distinguish between internal and external has the effect of acknowledging a continuum rather than a dichotomy of monologic distances: free association of thought images, internal dialogue, talking to oneself out loud, delivering a monologue to one person or a speech to a crowd. The original text

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<sup>38</sup> Paula Wolfert, *Couscous and Other Good Food From Morocco* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

makes heard a polyphony of monologic voices and creates an effect that the translator felt the need to recognize and respect.

When the original text requires participation in the “translation” of the text, the translator must decide how closely to replicate this effect. To what extent should the translator domesticate or foreignize the translation? Domesticating translation practices, such as substituting proverbs of the original culture with similar sayings of the target culture, may make readers forget they are reading a translation of a foreign text. Foreignizing elements--scholarly introductions, extensive footnotes and glossary, and literal translations of proverbs with no explanation, for example--can distance and defamiliarize the reader. According to some translation theorists and practitioners, foreignisms serve many purposes. Transcribed words maintain a sense of place and let the readers have a taste of what Harish Narang calls the "native flavor."<sup>39</sup> García Yebra asserts that such elements confront the reader with words from the source language and facilitate the discovery of their meaning through context (335). According to Venuti, foreignisms open "spaces for new ideas, concepts of alterity, and literary innovation."<sup>40</sup> In “The Translator’s Invisibility,” Venuti argues that extensive foreignizing techniques lead to the creation of a "resistant" translation that refuses fluency to guide the reader to question stereotypes and makes apparent the translator’s agency.

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<sup>39</sup> Harish Narang, "Roasted Chicken versus Tandoori Murga," *Cultural Relativism and Literary Translation*, ed. Sabiruddin (Delhi: U of Delhi, 1998) 100.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998) 18.

Others, however, deplore the effects of foreignizing techniques. Though transcribed words may give a sense of place, Indira Karamchetti finds that they stress the otherness of place and increase the difficulty of reading, even when footnoted or glossed.<sup>41</sup> Though foreignisms may open spaces for literary innovation and lead the reader to discover meaning, Maria Tymoczko believes that too many "unfamiliar words, unusual grammar and other linguistic anomalies" and too much new cultural information are likely to detract from the narrative's perceived literary qualities ("Post-colonial writing" 29). Interrupting the narrative with footnotes and glossary references renders the translator visible but according to Richard Jacquemond, allows the authoritarian language of Orientalism to "reassert its status as the indispensable and authorized mediator between Arabo-Islamic and Western cultures" in the translation of the subgenre in question.<sup>42</sup> Thus, it appears that a translation that uses foreignisms demands reader participation but also risks causing the reader to refuse this difficult and perhaps unpleasant position. According to Albrecht Neubert and Gregory Shreve, "resistive, non-fluent translation replaces the communicative needs of the target reader with the communicative needs of the critic or special reader" and "may even be translation for the translator's sake."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Indira Karamchetti, "Aimé Césaire's Subjective Geographies," *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*, ed. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995) 189, 190.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Jacquemond, "Translation and Cultural Hegemony: The Case of French-Arabic Translation," *Rethinking Translation, Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 1992) 149.

<sup>43</sup> Albrecht Neubert and Gregory M. Shreve, *Translation as Text* (Kent: Kent State UP, 1992) 119.

The translator's decision to domesticate or foreignize the translation may then depend on the translator's perception of the text and the LC2. In translating *La Baroudeuse*, I needed to respect the tone and purposes of the original text but recognized that the author's intended audience was not my own, and that my purpose was not identical to the author's. Nouzha Fassi Fihri, who writes in French, may well have been addressing primarily members of her own society who immediately grasp the meaning and cultural significance of transcribed Arabic words. Aware that many French people who do not know Arabic will read the text, she included contextual clues to the meaning of the transcribed words, but on the whole, tended to make great demands on French readers' willingness to deduce meaning from context and accept cognitive gaps. Most American readers, like most French readers, might experience transcribed Arabic words as elements of a foreign language and culture, but these elements will probably not have the same effect on American readers. Unlike the French, Americans are not likely to feel directly, historically involved in the colonization of North Africa and its bitter fight for independence. Americans are far more likely to read this narrative as a third party, identifying neither with the primary Moroccan perspective, nor with the secondary and criticized French perspective, but feeling an affinity with elements of both perspectives as both a former colony and a colonizer. The narrative point of view and extensive use of transcribed Arabic words in the French text may well remind the French reader of the long, painful, emotionally charged relationship between France and Morocco. Since Americans do not entertain the same relationship with Morocco, such textual hybridity would not have the same effect on American readers.

This translation sought to challenge readers more moderately and accommodate anticipated audience expectations while maintaining as much of the original tone, voice and cultural flavor as possible. A balance was struck between asking the reader to conform to the beliefs, customs, language and literary formalism of the source culture and conforming more to the receiving audience's cultural and linguistic expectations. Ultimately, any translation of a narrative set in a Muslim Arab context will present the non-Muslim non-Arab reader with a considerable quantity of new cultural information, and I believe that even the most domesticated translation will be quite resistant enough. When a narrative is set in another context and depicts characters foreign to readers, even a smooth translation will constantly remind the reader that the story comes from elsewhere. Such a text is not in much danger of domestication. However, it does risk presenting the reader with such a high degree of unknowability that the reader puts the book down, in which case the translation will have defeated its own purpose. To avoid this consequence, when translating a counter-discursive, hybrid and defamiliarizing text, I decided to moderate the information load for the reader.

Even a highly domesticated translation of this subgenre of literature into English validates the original text and culture in terms of dominant Anglophone cultures and expands the readers' horizon of expectation.<sup>44</sup> Since English is the leading language of international relations, translating a Muslim Arab woman's narrative into English asserts to Anglophone readers the previously ignored

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<sup>44</sup> Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Translation and Understanding* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1999) 16, 39.

existence of this voice and allows it to join the global conversation taking place in English. The translation of this historical fiction offers Anglophone readers a complex and realistic portrayal of Muslim Arab men and women and a culture that most have not had the opportunity to experience. Inevitably, the translator's political opinions and social attitudes always participate in the creation of even the most transparent translation. Purposefully resistant translations might too overtly insert the translator's presence and skew the text.

Rather than consciously create a resistant translation, when working with this kind of narrative, my decision has been to make every effort to recreate the effect of the original but avoid density of cultural information that would call attention to the language and disrupt the reading. To this purpose, I gave the translated equivalent of the meaning and used transcribed words and paratextual explanations only when equivalent terms do not exist and cannot be formed in the receiving language (García Yebra 335). However, by including untranslated words in the text, I aimed to avoid "erasing" the original in the effort to translate it (Karamchetti 194). A glossary was provided to help the reader understand these foreign words and phrases without interrupting the text with definitions that distract the reader from the narrative and distort the hierarchy of themes.

## **INFLUENCES THAT CAN AFFECT THIS TRANSLATION PROCESS**

The language and culture of the original and of the translation and patrons' expressed opinions played a central role in my translation decisions, but at the solitary moment of writing, potential reader response exercised the most

influence. The language, cultural context and intended audiences of the original text set the first parameters of the translation, and the original text's language and style present certain degrees of difficulty. Even if the original French text uses a high literary register and complex sentence structure, I feel that the translator may occasionally opt for a less formal register of language and use shorter and less complex sentences in English when doing so enhances the readability of the narrative without unduly altering tensions inherent in the original text. If the text uses a variety of linguistic and literary techniques to transmit a political message, the translator might aim to produce a literary work that will carry the same political message, using similar techniques. The translator may keep many of the transcribed Arabic words and provide paratextual explanation if necessary to avoid too great a loss of cultural information, but avoid the use of footnotes that might interrupt the reading and tend to distance the reader from the narrative.

Translating *La Baroudeuse* into English primarily for an Anglophone readers who do not read Arabic or French, it was necessary to assume a level of linguistic and cultural distance, and this disparity between Nouzha Fassi Fihri's audience and my own influenced the translation strategies. Transcribed words, italics, intertextual allusions, and stylistic variations in the original result from authorial choices that had to be analyzed to recreate the effect for the receiving audience. If the original text had described the culture from the perspective of a foreigner, presented familiar themes, and used linguistic structures that correlate easily with those of the language and culture of translation, no footnotes would have been necessary, but in the case of *La Baroudeuse*, some elements of the original were untranslatable and required explanation. When the narrator belongs

to the culture of the narrative and the context offers readers few clues to the meaning of a word, the translator is more likely to make use of footnotes and glossing.

The translator and other agents who participate in the realization of the translation--critics, reviewers, teachers, and editors--can propose new paradigms for interpretation and different criteria for translation decisions. The translator has a definite though limited power to introduce new elements into the readers' literary horizon of expectation. When publishers initiate the translation process, they tend to have more decision-making power than do translators since they generally choose the translator, set the translation approach, and decide what gets published along with what paratext. Real readers who offer comments and suggestions during the translation process can directly and immediately affect the translator's overall perception of the text, approach to translation, and sentence level decisions. Though these external factors provide the grounding and framework of the translation, at the solitary moment of composition, internalized influences provide the basis upon which the translator makes decisions.

Working in a comparative literature context, applying paradigms of literary criticism and translation theory to the analysis of texts and translations enriched my reading of the original text, clarified my understanding of audience, and situated the translation within the receiving culture. This broad perspective helped me envision the translation's relationship to the original text and context and to the receiving language, literary traditions and cultures. Familiarity with various literary traditions broadened my perspectives and range of possible solutions to translation questions and helped me project how this work would fit

in with the literary traditions of the receiving culture. I conceive translators as politically and culturally grounded "in the world," and believe that this grounding participates in the formation of the translator's perspectives and attitudes and therefore strongly influences translational decisions. Attention to the text's cultural groundedness made me aware of my own agency and of the political forces at play particularly in post-colonial narratives by women and in the translation of these texts.

Translators' decisions are, I maintain, affected by the groups to which they belong and their place in the power hierarchy of these groups. Most literary translators would probably prefer to translate works in which they see merit. Literary translators can be motivated by the desire to transmit "an aesthetic message" to speakers of another language who otherwise would have no way of discovering that work (Hewson 113). They might wish to share an unexpected perspective and a worthwhile vision with readers of a different cultural group. They may be motivated to challenge stereotypes and broaden potential readers' horizons. The translator's approach to translation will vary also according to her own political orientation in relation to the text, its cultural context, her readers and the receiving cultural context. In a comparative literature context, past and ongoing experiences with people, languages, cultures, and texts shaped every aspect of this translator's decision-making process.

### **Chapter Three: Comparison of the Initial and Final Versions of the Translation**

The following quantitative and qualitative comparison of the first and last versions of the translation reveals similarities and differences that reflect various influences on the translator's decisions. The results of this comparison suggest that critical and theoretical paradigms expand the translator's range of choices during translation and make evident the principles and criteria on which translation decisions are made. The following discussion analyzes quantitative and qualitative variation between the first and final versions of "The Fighter" using André Lefevere's paradigm of ideological, poetological and sociocultural as well as linguistic constraints as an analytical framework (*Lefevere Translating Literature*). Lefevere defines ideological constraints as "standards for acceptable behavior" and notes that the translator needs to consider how the original can be "made to fit in with the dominant ideology or with a sufficiently strong peripheral ideological current of the target audience at the time the translation is made" (87, 92). He uses the term "poetics" in reference to literary characteristics and techniques of a genre, and states that the translator must create a text that can "be easily assimilated into an existing text type in the target culture" (110). The term "sociocultural constraints" refers to elements of the author's "universe of discourse" that do not translate unproblematically for readers of another culture and require the translator to carefully consider word choice, for example. These levels of constraint often overlap and interact.

## **QUANTITATIVE VARIATION ANALYSIS**

Although the need to recreate a given text often limits the translator's range of possible revisions, in this case, a quantitative variation analysis indicates a remarkable number of changes between the initial and final versions of the translation. To perform the analysis, from the 45,857 words of the initial version, I randomly chose eleven passages of approximately 1.5 pages each, a total of 4844 words, 10.6% of the total text. Comparing this corpus with the identical passages from the final version revealed differences in the quantity of words and sentences and in the proportions of changes made. The final version has 2% fewer words (4725) and 5% more sentences (261 in the initial version and 273 in the final version). Though some sentences remained unchanged and others were entirely revised, on the average, more than one change was made per sentence. Of the 291 changes noted, alterations in sentence structure accounted for 4%, punctuation, spacing, and italics accounted for 22%, revisions in phrasing for 24%; and word choice for 50%.

Though some of these changes are attributable to the revision process, as in most kinds of writing, the quantity of revisions in this case exceeds what one might expect in a translation. Revision in any writing process usually entails reduction in the number of words as writers eliminate repetition and wordiness. The increase in the number of sentences marks a tendency to reduce syntactic complexity thereby moderating the register of the first version. However, considering that the translator's choices are limited by the objective of fidelity to the original text and given that these numbers do not include corrections of

typographical or grammatical errors, the number of changes in word choice or sentence structure is remarkable. Furthermore, closer analysis indicates that the translator's evolving perceptions of reader expectations in a comparative literature context and more conscious efforts to maintain the conflict inherent in the original text led to greater consideration of a broader range of translational possibilities but did not always call for revision in the final draft.

### **IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE TRANSLATION**

This comparison reveals little variation in the translator's perception of "standards for acceptable behavior." Like the initial version (i), the final version (f) presents the original's (o) potentially defamiliarizing religious ideology, as illustrated in example 1.

1 o: L'Islam n'est pas une ville. Il n'est pas un saint vénéré ni un marabout ni un monument témoin d'une gloire révolue. Il est justice sociale, tolérance et modération. Il est la vérité déchiffrée pour le bien-être de l'humanité. Il est la troisième religion monothéiste que Dieu, dans sa sagesse, a révélée à son Prophète pour parfaire les deux autres et restituer à l'homme la "Connaissance" (112).

1 i: Islam is not a city. It is neither a revered saint, nor a shrine, nor a monument to past glory. It is social justice, tolerance and moderation. It is truth spelled out for the good of humanity. It is the third monotheistic religion which God, in his wisdom, revealed to his Prophet to complete the two others, and restore "knowledge" to mankind.

1 f: Islam is not a city, a revered saint, a shrine, or a monument to past glory. It is social justice, tolerance, and moderation. It is truth spelled out for the good of humanity. It is the third monotheistic religion that God, in his wisdom, revealed to his Prophet to complete the two others and restore 'knowledge' to mankind.

In this passage, the reader can identify the belief that God exists, that Muhammad was His Prophet, and that Islam is divine truth and a revelation of social justice,

tolerance and moderation. This passage offers a Muslim Arab woman's perspective on Islam. Though not mainstream in Anglophone cultures, this perspective can find a place within the broad ideological spectrum of Anglophone literary traditions.

The final version also maintains all passages that develop the text's potentially counter-discursive political ideology as illustrated in example 2.

2 o: ces européens qui avaient aboli chez eux tout signe de seigneurage appréciaient ici de se prélasser sur les coussins, servis par des esclaves silencieuses, frôlant à peine le sol de leurs pieds nus teintés de henné, répondant les yeux baissés par des "Naam, Sidi, Naam" plein d'humilité. Les comblait aussi cette cuisine bien mijotée qui les changeait du beef-steak que leurs chères épouses prenaient à peine le temps de leur préparer, trop occupées qu'elles étaient à jouer les grandes dames dans les réceptions huppées de la ville. Tout en méprisant leurs hôtes pour cette abondance même qu'ils mettaient sur le compte de leur sous-développement, ils se bourraient de pastilla et de méchoui, mangeant à pleines mains, ignorant délibérément les règles de bienséance qui régissent le repas que l'on prend dans un plat commun, sans l'aide d'une fourchette. (74-75)

2 i: these Europeans, who had abolished all signs of feudal, lordly rights in their own lands, enjoyed lounging on cushions here, served by silent slaves who barely touched the ground with their bare, hennaed feet, and responded "Naam, Sidi, Naam," with their eyes humbly lowered. They delighted also in the well-simmered dishes, so different from the fried steak their dear wives hardly took the time to prepare, too busy playing grand dame in fancy receptions in town. They stuffed themselves with pastilla\* and mechoui\*, eating by the fistful, ignoring the rules of etiquette that governed a meal served in a communal dish, without forks, all the while scorning their hosts for this very abundance which they attributed to underdevelopment.

2 f: these Europeans, who had abolished all signs of feudal, lordly rights in their own lands, enjoyed lounging on cushions here, served by silent slaves with bare, hennaed feet who responded "Yes, Sidi, Yes," eyes lowered. They delighted also in the simmered dishes, so different from the fried steak their dear wives hardly took the time to prepare, too busy playing grand dame in fancy receptions. They stuffed themselves with savory meat pie and roast lamb, eating by the fistful, ignoring the rules of etiquette that govern a meal served in a communal dish without forks, all

the while scorning their hosts for this very abundance that they saw as a lack of cultural refinement.

This passage illustrates several aspects of post-colonial narrative prose previously identified in *La Baroudeuse*. It claims that having declared their belief in "liberté, fraternité, égalité" and abolished slavery, French colonists hypocritically behaved as masters and benefited from the service of slaves, even if they did not own them. Revising the criteria by which cultivation is judged, this passage parodies the notion that French colonialism was motivated by a civilizing mission. Neither in the initial nor final versions did the translator make any attempt to mitigate the possible conflict between the ideology of the narrative and that of the LC2 readers. In this respect, the translation remained faithful to the original that would have been equally if not more counter-discursive for some of the original readers.

No change was made in the portrayal of the protagonist's character. The original portrays Lalla Kenza as covertly rebellious and unforgiving. The passage in example 3 illustrates her penchant for cruelty and encroaching madness.

3 o: Après avoir exacerbé son désir et l'avoir mené au bord du précipice, elle l'y abandonnait, sourde à ses appels, ignorant ses prières. De cette façon, elle échappait à la folie qui l'habitait et sourdait en elle, comme un mal incurable. Son inconditionnelle complaisance la confirmait dans sa cruauté: elle faisait de lui un être tout indiqué pour la servitude. (35)

3 i and f: After having exacerbated his desire and led him to the edge of the precipice, she left him there, turning a deaf ear to his calls, ignoring his entreaties. In this way, she escaped the insanity that lived and welled up in her like an incurable disease. His unconditional complacency fed her cruelty: she developed his aptitude for subservience.

Few Anglophones have seen or heard an Arab woman offer an image of such a powerful and passionate Muslim Arab woman. Arab women of North Africa do not often have the opportunity to express their own views in English language

media. Consequently, most Anglophones are likely to have formed concepts of Muslim Arab women based on images formulated by others. Analyzing American television and print advertisements that include pictures of veiled Muslim women, Faegheh Shirazi demonstrates that

advertisers exploit 'fixed' images of Muslim women--images that have been ingrained on the Western mind: the concubine in the harem at the mercy of her tyrannical master; the exotic but inaccessible veiled woman; and the suppressed woman who is treated like chattel.<sup>45</sup>

Nouzha Fassi Fihri portrays Lalla Kenza as a highly complex and powerful individual who calls these 'fixed' images into question. Anglophone readers may well have met with similarly complex female characters in other currents of the Anglophone literary tradition such as works by African-American women. Alice Walker's Celie,<sup>46</sup> Zora Neale Hurston's Janie<sup>47</sup> and Gloria Naylor's Mama Day<sup>48</sup> also rebel, challenge, love and lose but triumph. Though Western feminist readers may resist the description of a female protagonist as "mad," others may see Lalla Kenza's irrational imaginings as a counter-discursive literary technique. Accordingly, in the final as in the initial version, the translator domesticates none of Kenza's traits.

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<sup>45</sup> Faegheh Shirazi, *The Veil Unveiled, The Hijab in Modern Culture* (Gainsville: UP Florida, 2001) 11-12.

<sup>46</sup> Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc., 1982).

<sup>47</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

<sup>48</sup> Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

The final version does, however, make concessions to anticipated audience expectations concerning the gender question and the use of obscenity. In example 4, the initial version (i) uses the masculine pronoun "himself" to translate "chacun" and "se" in the original French text (o).

4 o: chacun s'affairera, d'abord pour faire les ablutions et la prière de l'aube (9)

4 i: each person would busy himself, first to perform ablutions and the dawn prayer

4 f: Each person would perform ablutions and pray in the cool, shadowy early morning

This revision results from a reader's comment that the use of the masculine pronoun in English suggests that only men pray. Using the gender neutral phrase "each person," the final version avoids this erroneous implication.

Though none of the readers overtly objected to the use of strong language, Catherine Cobham's concern for readers' tolerance of obscenity led to a revision of the expression in example 5.

5 o: Brute mal décrottée. (156)

5 i: Shit-caked animal.

5 f: Dung-caked animal.

In this passage, townsfolk are exchanging insults with members of their own extended family in public. Though scatological images were maintained in contexts involving mistreatment of prisoners and criticism of cowards, in this instance, a more socially acceptable phrase was chosen to avoid implying more animosity than was expressed in the original context.

## CONSTRAINTS ON NOVELISTIC PROSE

The many elements of narrative technique that remained constant from the initial to the final version reflect the translator's decision to maintain intuitive translation decisions relating to what Anglophone readers expect to see and experience in a novel. Wider knowledge of various literary currents indicated that Anglophone readers are likely to have experienced a wide variety of literary techniques in modern narrative prose. Therefore, the original plot and dialogue remained unchanged, and many of the metaphors were maintained.

Though some readers may find that lyrical and rhetorical passages in fictional narrative undesirably call attention to the authorial narrative voice and distance the reader, such variation in style is one of the characteristics of post-colonial literature. *La Baroudeuse* includes several lyrical passages such as the one in example 6.

6 o: O ces terrasses de Fès tant chantées dans des récits lyriques, aux heures envoûtantes de la fin du jour, baignées d'une poudre de lumière, berçées par le chant doux de l'air qui saoule; ces promenoirs qui se couvrent de femmes voluptueuses, surgissant dans le cliquetis de leurs bracelets d'or: Femmes sveltes ou plantureuses, femmes coquettes portant haut leurs coiffes sophistiquées ou jouant avec leurs doigts dans leur chevelure d'ambre; femmes-enfants s'empêtrant dans leurs parures de reines, suivies de leurs esclaves. Ces terrasses, théâtre de plaisirs purs ou entachés d'interdits, de puérils enlacements, de chastes jouissances mais aussi d'amours coupables, sincère envoûtement ou simple revanche sur la traîtrise de l'aimé, confondant pleurs, rires et romances. (28-29)

6 i: Oh, these terrace rooftops of Fez, so highly acclaimed in lyric tales, in the spell-binding hours at the end of the day, bathed in a powder of light, lulled by the sweet, heady song of the air; these promenades that fill with voluptuous women, appearing with a jingle of their gold bracelets: slender women, and plump; coquettish with high, sophisticated headdresses, or running their fingers through long, amber hair; child brides tripping over their queenly garments, followed by slaves. These terraces, the theater of pure or forbidden pleasures, childish embraces and chaste play, but also of

guilty liaisons, sincere love, or simple revenge for the betrayal of the beloved, mingling tears, laughter and romance.

6 f: Oh, these terrace rooftops of Fez, so highly acclaimed in lyric tales, in the spellbinding hours at the end of the day, bathed in a powder of light, lulled by the sweet, heady song of the air. These promenades that fill with voluptuous women appearing with a jingle of their gold bracelets. Slender women, and plump. Coquettish with high, sophisticated headdresses, or running their fingers through long, amber hair. Child brides tripping over their queenly gowns and followed by slaves. These terraces, the theater of pure or forbidden pleasures, childish embraces and chaste play, but also of guilty liaisons, sincere love, or revenge for the betrayal of the beloved, mingling tears, laughter and romance.

Nouzha Fassi Fihri uses lyricism as a valuable and viable element of the Arabic literary tradition that she incorporates into the subversive hybridity of her own narrative in French. Furthermore, this passage suggests the way the people of Fez perceive one element of their own culture and gives information that the narrative cannot afford to lose. To eliminate this passage or render it in more prosaic language would unduly modify the original effect. The translator opted therefore to maintain the passage and its lyricism.

In *La Baroudeuse*, the authorial narrative voice often interrupts the narrative with rhetorical argumentation, as in the following passage.

7 o: Que de ménages furent détruits par la volonté d'un mâle puissant et despote; que d'unions furent empêchées, au grand dam des jeunes filles en mal d'époux; que de rêves furent détruits, que de sentiments furent foulés aux pieds. Dans cette société hiérarchisée, l'intérêt du groupe l'emportait sur celui de l'individu. Pour sauvegarder le patrimoine et le soustraire à la dispersion pour préserver l'union de la famille par de nouveaux liens de sang, on faisait fi du bonheur personnel. On construisait l'édifice sur des épaves de vie. (15-16)

7 i: How many couples were destroyed by the will of a powerful and despotic male; how many marriages were prevented, to the great displeasure of girls badly in need of husbands; how many dreams dispersed and feelings crushed under foot. In the hierarchy of this society, the interests of the group were stronger than those of the individual. To save the patrimony and protect it from disintegration, to preserve the

family union through new blood ties, personal happiness was scorned. The structure was built on the wreckage of lives.

7 f: How many couples were destroyed by the will of a powerful and despotic male; how many marriages were prevented, to the great displeasure of girls badly in need of husbands; how many dreams dispersed and feelings crushed under foot. In the hierarchy of this society, the interests of the group were stronger than those of the individual. To save the patrimony and protect it from disintegration, to preserve the family union through new blood ties, personal happiness was scorned. The structure was built on the wreckage of lives.

This argumentative passage participates in the development of a central, sociopolitical theme in this narrative: the effect of the patriarchal system on the individual. The translator chose to maintain this element of the original text on the understanding that most readers would tolerate this rhetorical interjection of authorial voice though it may have a distancing effect.

Though readers expressed an expectation that characters' voices correspond to personality or social class, the original text tends to subvert this expectation, as example 8 illustrates.

8 o: Le jeune homme se rassit, fasciné par le spectacle du lion qui souffrait, couché sur le flanc, et ne semblait même pas remarquer sa présence. Survint alors un chien, un bâtard des grands chemins, qui s'avança vers le lion malade, leva la patte et lui urina dessus, sans que le lion eût même bougé la queue. (193-194)

8 i and f: The young man sat down, fascinated by the sight of the suffering lion, lying on its side, not even aware of his presence. Along came a dog, a vagrant mongrel. It approached the sick lion, lifted its leg and urinated on it, and the lion didn't even move its tail.

Though told by an illiterate slave, literary register of this tale reminds the reader of La Fontaine's fables with the use of long and complex sentences and literary verb tenses. Rather than revise the linguistic register of this tale to accommodate readers' anticipated expectation that dialogue in narrative prose realistically reflect

a character's speech, the translator maintained the decision to respect the high register of the original, which denotes respect for the character who tells the tale and for the wisdom it conveys. Translating this tale into a more colloquial register would have altered the author's counter-discursive decision. Distinguishing the speech of the slave from that of the master would have implicitly confirmed social and political distinctions that the original text subverts. The translator chose rather to closely replicate this aspect of the original text.

In other passages, however, the translator did revise dialogue to tilt toward readers' voice expectations. In response to the passage in example 9, readers indicated a desire for the dialogue to convey individual personalities.

9 o: Nous ne pouvons plus reculer désormais. Fini le temps des revendications réformistes. L'objectif est à présent l'indépendance et l'unification du pays. (18)

9 i: We can't turn back now. The time for demands for reforms is past. Now the independence and unification of the country is the goal.

9 f: We can't turn back now. It's too late for reforms. Now we are fighting for independence and the unification of the country.

In the original text and initial version, individuals discuss ideological and political issues using journalistic language. Having townsfolk speak as knowledgeably about current events as do journalists and politicians suggests a diminution of power differentials between the man on the street and those in influential positions and implies unity of voice, the people speaking as one. Because discussions with readers and other translators heightened the translator's awareness of expectations concerning voice differentiation in narrative fiction, this dialogue was revised in the final version to sound more like the speech of townsmen participating in a heated political debate. However, some of the

original journalistic tone was maintained to retain the counter-discursive use of voice.

Considering revisions in the text as a whole, the final version 1) has fewer adjectives and phrases that readers might perceive to be repetitious or unnecessary, 2) uses fewer metaphors, 3) aims for greater clarity in sentence structure and word choice, and 4) uses a more conversational language register. Example 10 illustrates the use of fewer adjectives.

10 o: Elle calcula mentalement le temps qu'il lui fallait pour réunir assez d'énergie et s'arracher à sa couche.(7)

10 i: She mentally calculated how long it would take him to muster enough energy to drag himself out of bed.

10 f: She calculated how long it would take him to muster enough energy to drag himself out of bed.

In the final version of this phrase the word "mentally" was eliminated on the assumption that the context sufficiently conveys the idea that the character is thinking silently rather than performing an observable act. Example 11 illustrates a similar tendency to eliminate repetitive phrases.

11 o: Moulay Ali ( . . . ) se dirigea d'un pas nerveux vers le sanctuaire de Moulay Idriss, avec l'espoir d'y retrouver son calme et un certain apaisement à son inquiétude. (56)

11 i: Moulay Ali ( . . . ) walked nervously towards the sanctuary of Moulay Idriss in hopes of regaining his peace of mind and a measure of relief for his anxiety.

11 f: Moulay Ali ( . . . ) walked nervously toward the sanctuary of Moulay Idris in hopes of regaining his peace of mind.

"Regaining peace of mind" implies "a measure of relief for anxiety," and the second phrase was therefore omitted from the final version. Example 12 also

illustrates the effort to reduce concurrent metaphors to make the wording more concise.

12 o: elle avait su braver père et mère et toute la horde de tantes et cousins, toujours prêtes à immerger les autres femmes dans cette mer de convenances où elle s'était (sic) enlisées elles-mêmes depuis l'enfance.  
(67)

12 i: she had managed to stand up to her father, her mother and a whole horde of aunts and girl cousins who were always ready to submerge other women in this sea of the conventions where they had been stranded since childhood.

12 f: she had managed to stand up to her father, her mother and a whole horde of aunts and girl cousins who were always ready to suffocate other women with the conventions they had embroiled themselves in since childhood.

The initial version of this phrase evokes images of land (stand up), land animals (horde), air (suffocate), and water (sea). To mix fewer metaphors, the final version eliminates the sea image. In example 13, an implied metaphor was eliminated.

13 o: Pourquoi donc s'engager dans une résistance armée dont on ne perçoit pas l'issue? (72)

13 i: So why engage in armed combat, if we can't foresee the outcome?

13 f: So why fight if we can't win?

The first version attempted to suggest the originally implied metaphor of entering a tunnel without being able to see light at the end. The final version loses this implicit metaphor but gains in rhythm, parallelism and rhetorical effect. The final version also conveys the voice and tone readers might expect in this kind of dialogue in this context.

The final version also occasionally revised poetic diction and complex sentence structure to enhance clarity, as examples 14 and 15 illustrate.

14 o: Les persiennes laissaient deviner une obscurité à peine plus nuancée que celle de la chambre. (7)

14 i: Through the shutters, she could see a grayness that was dimly lighter than the darkness of the room.

14 f: Through the shutters, she could see the sky was only a little lighter than the darkness of the room.

The initial version more closely replicates the original structure and suggestion of paradox, but the final version gains in clarity of meaning, as in example 15.

15 o: Parfois aussi, d'une langue volubile, elles débitaient des discours incohérents qui traduisaient leur démence, faite de souvenirs intacts et de leur présente décrépitude. (45-46)

15 i: Sometimes, in a great flow of words, they made long, incoherent speeches which translated their madness, composed of intact memories and present decrepitude.

15 f: Sometimes, in long incoherent speeches, they voiced their madness composed of intact memories and present decrepitude.

Though the initial version closely reproduces the structure of the original, one reader commented that "translate madness" sounds odd. In view of this comment, in the final version, the verb is changed to "vocalized." The final version loses the metaphoric effect of the original, but presents a more logical sentence structure and congruent image.

Sentence structure and word choice revisions often resulted from adaptations to stylistic norms for narrative prose as illustrated in examples 16, 17, and 18.

16 o: Le lendemain, de très bonne heure, Kenza descendit de sa chambre en évitant de faire du bruit pour ne pas réveiller son personnel. Non pas qu'elle ait eu quoi que ce soit à cacher mais elle n'aurait pas voulu que la poésie matinale fusse déparée par la présence des domestiques. (25)

16 i: Very early the next day, Kenza came down from her bedroom, making as little noise as possible so as not to awaken the servants. She

had nothing to hide, but she did not want the poetry of the morning to be spoiled by their presence.

16 f: Early the next day, Kenza came down from her bedroom, making as little noise as possible so as not to awaken the servants. She had nothing to hide, but she did not want their presence to spoil the poetry of the morning.

In the final version of this passage, the last sentence was revised to conform to a preference for active verb forms that often are less wordy and paint more vivid images than do passive constructions. One reader pointed out the preponderance of incomplete sentences and gerund forms in the initial version of the passage in example 17.

17 o: Venir jusqu'ici par les terrasses, au risque de te laisser apercevoir par quelque voisin pervers? T'exposer ainsi à la calomnie et nous exposer à la critique? (30)

17 i: Coming all the way over the rooftops, at the risk of being seen by some perverted neighbor? Exposing yourself to disgrace in this way and exposing us to criticism?

17 f: You came all the way here over the rooftops, at the risk of being seen by some perverted neighbor? You exposed yourself to disgrace and us to criticism in this way?

In response to this comment, the translator rewrote this passage as complete interrogative sentences with past tense verbs. Similarly, a reader objected to the long and complex sentence of the initial version in example 18.

18 o: Le matin, après avoir donné ses ordres aux domestiques, inspecté les chambres et les salons, fait balayer les cours et laver à grande eau les patios, après avoir fait astiquer les plateaux de thé et fait reluire la vaisselle des grands jours; quand la cuisine fut faite et qu'elle eut goûté et regoûté les plats pour en tester la saveur, elle s'était enfermée dans sa chambre pour se faire belle et être en mesure d'accueillir dignement l'aimé. (10-11)

18 i: In the morning, after she had given directions to the servants, inspected the bedrooms and salons, ordered the servants to sweep and wash down the patios, polish the tea trays and shine the dishes reserved for

special occasions; when the cooking was done and she had tasted each dish twice to test its flavor, she shut herself in her room to make herself beautiful and ready to respectfully receive her beloved.

18 f: In the morning, she had given directions to the servants, inspected the bedrooms and salons, and ordered the servants to sweep and wash down the patios, polish the tea trays, and shine the dishes reserved for special occasions. When the cooking was done and she had tasted each dish twice to test its flavor, she shut herself in her room to prepare to greet her beloved.

Accordingly, the final version breaks the passage into two somewhat less complex sentences. Accommodating readers' anticipated expectations for narrative prose at the sentence level, the translator aimed for a smoother reading experience to avoid distracting the reader from the narrative. To maintain the original text's high degree of counter-discursive tension, fewer concessions were made concerning the author's discursive style.

## SOCIOCULTURAL CONSTRAINTS

As defined by André Lefevere and applied to the translation of *La Baroudeuse*, sociocultural constraints have to do with Anglophone readers' knowledge of and experience with Moroccan Muslim Arab culture and affect particularly decisions concerning word choice, spelling, and paratext. Most of the revisions in the final version resulted from the translator's greater recognition of the need to reduce the information load and accommodate readers' relevant sociocultural knowledge and experience. In one notable instance, however, critical reflection revealed further ramifications of complexity without leading to a better solution: the choice of a title.

The original title-*La Baroudeuse*--is the feminine form of the French neologism *baroudeur*. According to *Le Robert quotidien*, this word entered French military jargon in the early 1920's, derived from the Moroccan Berber word *baroud* meaning "combat."<sup>49</sup> This dictionary defines the phrase *baroud d'honneur* as "the last battle of a lost war, fought for honor" with a figurative meaning of "a hopeless battle." The word *baroudeur* is defined as a colloquial word meaning one who loves an honorable battle even without the hope of winning.

The translation of this title as "The Fighter" loses the linguistic and discursive transgression and irony but retains some of the functions of the original title. The feminine form of a French word borrowed from Moroccan Arabic, the original title alludes to the influence of the colonized people and the indigenous language on the colonizer and the colonial language. The French title also reminds French and Moroccan readers that Moroccans fought alongside French soldiers in Indonesia and won the respect of their colonial masters. Using a masculine word from military jargon to refer to a cloistered woman, the original title subverts gender and discourse boundaries and gives a first indication of the narrative's counter-discursive tendency. The title in translation lacks many of these effects but retains the connotations of tension and respect and acts as a unifying strand throughout the narrative as did the original title.

In many instances, greater knowledge of literary traditions, critical paradigms, and reader expectations did reveal preferable alternatives and lead to

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<sup>49</sup> "baroud" and "baroudeur", *Le Robert quotidien, Dictionnaire pratique de la langue française* (Montréal: Dicorobert Inc., 1996).

variation in the treatment of transcribed Arabic words. The comparison of the two versions indicates that in the final version, the translator tended to paraphrase or delete transcribed Arabic words and names to reduce the cultural information load. Where the initial version requires the reader to guess the meaning of a transcribed word, the final version often replaces the transcription with a shortened definition, thereby offering immediately accessible information. The sentence in example 19 presents two transcribed words that the translator chose to treat differently in the final version.

19 o: elle avait passé un bâtonnet de *Khôl* dans l'intérieur de ses paupières, avait légèrement coloré ses joues de rouge et avait frotté ses dents de *Souak* pour les faire briller davantage. (11-12)

19 i: she darkened the inner lids of her eyes with a *kohl* stick, lightly rouged her cheeks and rubbed her teeth with *souak* to make them shinier.

*kohl* footnoted: A very fine black powder used to line the eyes

*souak* footnoted: The inner bark of the walnut tree, rich in iodine, used cosmetically to shine the teeth and give color to the gums and lips.

19 f: she darkened the inner lids of her eyes with a kohl stick, lightly rouged her cheeks and rubbed her teeth with cured walnut bark to make them shinier.

Whereas the original text and the initial version mark both "*Khôl*" and "*Souak*" as transcribed Arabic words, the final version paraphrases "*Souak*" but treats "*Khôl*" as an English word. "*Kohl*" need not be italicized or defined as a foreign word since it is included in English dictionaries and a familiar word and beauty product for many Anglophones. Several other English words borrowed from Arabic were marked with an asterisk and explained in the glossary in the initial version, including caftan, jihad, henna, muezzin, imam and pouf. In the final version, these words are neither marked nor explained in the text, but are included in the

glossary for readers' convenience. "Souak," on the other hand, appears neither in English dictionaries nor on cosmetics counters in the United States. Therefore, in the final version, rather than transcribe the word, offer a full paratextual definition, and risk giving undue importance to this relatively minor element of the narrative, the translator chose to replace the word with enough of the definition to maintain its cultural specificity and suggest the image that would have been implicitly available to at least part of the original audience.

In some instances, an Arabic word was replaced with an explanatory phrase in the effort to recuperate indispensable cultural information, as in example 20.

20 o: La vue des campagnards déchaînés, sans foi ni loi, beaucoup plus que celle des chars distributeurs de mort, éveilla en eux une peur viscérale, héritage des temps de la "Siba". (149)

20 i: Much more than the deadly tanks, the sight of unleashed, faithless, lawless country ruffians awoke in them a visceral fear, a memory of the times of "Siba."

*Siba* glossed: Lawlessness, lawless lands, the time before Morocco was unified under one king.

20 f: Much more than the deadly tanks, the sight of unleashed, faithless country ruffians awoke in them a visceral fear, a memory of the lawless times.

Though the transcribed Arabic word in the original text is likely to trigger strong emotions in Moroccan readers who use the term "siba" in everyday language to refer to lawlessness, Anglophone readers are not likely to experience this effect. The final version paraphrases this word, thereby increasing accessibility of meaning and eliminating an element that would interrupt the reading and defamiliarize but not inform the reader.

The culturally specific exclamation "Wili Wili!" is deleted from the final version. English or French vocalizations with similar meanings fail to convey the same sense of surprise and shame and have the disadvantage of being specific to other cultures. The exclamation "Heavens!" is somewhat similar in that it can indicate surprise, but only vaguely connotes that the situation does not satisfy "heavenly" criteria and is therefore sinful or shameful. The French "Oh là là!" suggests admiration or consternation more than shame. Though the final version offers no satisfactory replacement, the phrases "Shame on her!" "How shameful!" and "What a scandal!" appear in both versions and sufficiently compensate for the meaning lost.

Though transcribed Arabic names are maintained from the initial to the final version, spelling modifications have been made in response to a reader's comments and in anticipation of readers' expectations, as illustrated in examples 21, 22, and 23.

21 o: Rkia and Hnia (64, 77)

21 i: Rkia and Hnia

21 f: R'kia and H'nia

In the final version, an apostrophe was added to separate the initial consonant cluster, thereby making the sound image of these names more accessible to English speakers while maintaining an approximation of the Moroccan pronunciation.

22 o: Karaouiène (39), Karaouine (50, 78, 114, 115), Karaouiène (209)

22 i: Karaouiyine

22 f: Qarawiyin

This name of a famous mosque in Fez was revised to provide the spelling most frequently used for the transcription of this word in English language media.

Another notable difference between the two versions that relates most directly to sociocultural constraints is the reduction of the glossary and the addition of a limited number of footnotes as in examples 23 and 24.

23 o: Cette ville séculaire possédait plus d'un point commun avec la ville d'Idriss. (14)

23 i: This age-old city had several traits in common with the city of *Idriss*

*Idriss* glossed: Idriss Ibn Abdullah founded the city of Fez and the Idrisside dynasty in the late 700's A.D.

23 f: another age-old city that had much in common with the city of *Idris*

*Idris* footnoted and glossed: "Mulay Idris b. 'Abdallah, a descendent of the Prophet, founded the city of Fez in 789 CE," according to Richard C. Martin's *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* V.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004).

In this example, the translator footnotes cultural information that supports a narrative theme and would have been implicitly available to most of the original Moroccan and many of the original French readers. The fact that this city was the original capital of the modern Islamic state explains part of the historical pride of the people of Fez, an underlying theme of the narrative. Eliminating this reference would unduly infringe on the coherence of the text. The translator chose rather to maintain the reference and the glossary entry and to add a footnote for readers' convenience.

The word "negafats" occurs six times in two contexts in the original text and is footnoted in the first appearance in the final version.

24 o: Arrivaient ensuite les *négafat* avec, en équilibre sur leur tête, le trousseau de l'accouchée et la layette du bébé qu'une famille aisée envoyait

en cadeau à sa fille pour une première naissance et qu'on avait enveloppés dans des nappes brodées. (53)

24 i: Next came the *negafat* balancing on their heads the trousseau and baby's layette, wrapped in embroidered cloths, gifts for the woman who had given birth, sent by an affluent family to their daughter on the occasion of the birth of her first child.

*negafat* glossed: Women who dress the bride and organize the wedding ceremony.

24 f: Next came the *negafats* balancing on their heads the trousseau and the baby's layette wrapped in embroidered cloths and gifts the affluent family had sent to their daughter to celebrate the birth of her first child.

*negafats* footnoted and glossed: Women "hired to attend the bride during the wedding ceremony," according to Richard Harrell's *Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Arabic-English* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 1966) 18.

In this passage, these women act as porters in a procession that is part of a traditional birth ceremony. In other passages, they gather funds to support the resistance movement. These women belong to a social group for which there is no equivalent word in English or concept in Anglophone cultures. They are female service providers who impose their will on others and are respected for what they do, in spite of their low status as "public" women who live and work in society as opposed to hidden from the gaze of men. Neither the transcribed word nor the footnote conveys this information to the reader, but the narrative sufficiently illustrates this implicit cultural information. The transcribed word was maintained to signal that these women belong to a recognized social group and that the characteristics of these women should be perceived as pertaining to the members of this culturally specific profession.

The initial version included and glossed most of the transcribed Arabic words that Nouzha Fassi Fihri had included in the French text, on the assumption

that these words would offer the LC2 reader an experience similar to that of the author's original French audience. In the final version, to reduce the cultural information load and cognitive gaps, the translator paraphrased or translated many of the words and names that were initially transcribed from Arabic, on the understanding that there is little danger of "domesticating" a narrative so definitely grounded in a foreign culture. However, several English words of Arabic origin were maintained though not marked in the final version and listed in the glossary to facilitate the reading. On the whole, revisions were made to reduce distractions and enhance the overall readability of the narrative. These revisions indicate the translator's efforts to accommodate and challenge many of the readers' anticipated expectations and belief in readers' willingness to experience the discursive tensions of the original and participate in the construction of meaning.

Only five years separate the initial and final versions of the translation done by one translator working with the same original text and underlying translation principles. The similarities and differences noted in the initial and final versions of the translation indicate that theoretical paradigms, greater knowledge of literary traditions, and the opinions of readers and other translators participated in the development of the translator's approach and led to the maintenance of many initial translation decisions. Reading narratives and paratexts of various Anglophone literary traditions offered greater insight into ideological constraints at work in both the original and the translation and tended to explain and reinforce the translator's decisions more frequently than suggest revisions in the final version. In numerous instances, however, critical paradigms altered the

translator's perception and application of underlying principles leading to revisions in the final version. Literary and translation theory offered the translator more perspectives on the original text and a variety of methods for analyzing its effects. Comments from other translators and readers led to the greatest number of revisions, particularly at the sociocultural level.

Revisions as well as maintenance of original translation decisions indicate that the underlying principles guiding the initial and final versions remained constant, with variations in interpretation and application. In both versions, the translator sought to maintain fidelity to the thematic strands, tone, and tensions of the original. Though intervening influences modified the translator's perception of audience and expectations, in both versions the translator seeks to challenge some reader expectations and accommodate others, as did the original text. The final version, however, shows a more marked tendency to "tilt" to the receiving audience resulting from an enhanced perception of readers' expectations.

## **Chapter Four: The Fighter**

1

She woke up very early that morning. Through the shutters, she could see the sky was only a little lighter than the darkness of the room.

The sun was laboring behind the hills. It would not come up for another half-hour, at the earliest.

She leaned back against the pillows and glanced absent-mindedly at her husband lying beside her in the large, four-poster bed. He was sleeping in an obscene position, the features of his face sagging loosely and his legs spread to accommodate a round belly rising in rhythm with his snoring. She calculated how long it would take him to muster enough energy to drag himself out of bed. She smiled and told herself she would be up and about long before sunrise. Always too early, at least in her servants' opinion. "Moulay Ali will be here at about one o'clock, two at the latest. We have all morning to cook and get the house ready. Mimoun will have brought the groceries by eight. I gave him the list last night. If he doesn't forget half of it, the idiot. Moulay Ali used to love knuckle of veal with chick peas and barley. Spicy and simmered slowly . . . "

She waved her hand impatiently, as though she wanted to chase away a fly buzzing at her ear. But it was only her husband's snores becoming loud and bothersome.

" . . . and chickens with almonds--everyone loves that--and honey almond pastries. I think that will be enough. I don't want to make this meal seem like a feast. He must feel at home in my house. There's no question of his staying with any of his sisters. I won't allow it. He must be persuaded to stay here the whole time he is in Fez . . . "

She moved her bad leg. Not one muscle of her face reflected the biting pain she felt. She had resigned herself to the pain and was no longer offended by it. Her husband's hand fell on her knee, increasing the pain.

She lifted his hand abruptly and put it back on his stomach. He was sound asleep. "He would do well to let himself be forgotten. At least for the time being, I wish I could wipe from my mind the forty years I have spent with him, erase every memory, remove the tattoo from my flesh. Anyway, he doesn't mean anything to me. He never did. He occupied a very small place in my life, in spite of the closeness of our daily existence."

When her father began to look for a husband, after her divorce, he said, "I need someone self-effacing, submissive, good, and dumb who could put up with her moods and obey her hand and foot. Poor fellow, I wish him luck. She won't make life easy for him."

In Sharif, he found the ideal husband, better than he had hoped. Her father knew her well. She was made of the same stuff as he was. Too bad she hadn't been a boy. She sat up a little in bed. The sun was rising behind the shutters.

Soon the call to prayer would announce dawn to the sleeping population. Each person would perform ablutions and pray in the cool, shadowy early morning before preparing for a new day in the universal gestures of waking.

"I will have him sleep in 'our' room. There, poetry reaches its climax. Memories of laughter, kisses, and wild play lay dormant there. There our love has languished for...for nearly half a century." She tossed her head, laughing at herself, at her old-fashioned romanticism, at her tragic destiny.

She heard the first cockcrow, then a second. Dogs barked in the distance; birds awoke in agitated twittering; light filtered into the pastel finery of the bedroom.

The man beside her was tangled in his sleep, alien to this resurrection of the world. Straightening her back quickly, ignoring the sharp pain the movement caused her, Lalla Kenza got up, walked straight to the window, and opened the two leaves of the shutters. She took hold of a bell hanging on a long silk cord, threw it over the windowsill and shook it violently. A door opened instantly on the ground floor, and a black woman with kinky hair came out, followed by a mulatto girl with indistinct features. They simultaneously lifted their heads toward their mistress whom they greeted with a grumpy "good morning," and walked toward the washroom. In addition to Mimoun the porter, they were the only servants remaining in the household that had once been swarming with male and female slaves.

Sitting cross-legged on the divan, crowned with the traditional hantuze headdress, Lalla Kenza reminded Moulay Ali of the young woman he had left, forty years before. She had done everything in her power to hide her age.

In the morning, she had given directions to the servants, inspected the bedrooms and salons, and ordered the servants to sweep and wash down the

patios, polish the tea trays, and shine the dishes reserved for special occasions. When the cooking was done and she had tasted each dish twice to test its flavor, she shut herself in her room to prepare to greet her beloved. She put on an Indian red caftan and a sheer outer garment of matching silk muslin. She circled her waist with a belt of velvet brocade and put light yellow, gold-embroidered slippers on her feet. Then she sat down in front of her mirror to begin the difficult job of putting on the headdress.

She parted her hair in the middle, smoothed it flat, twisted it into a low bun and covered it with a black net banded in gold at both ends. On this net she placed a quilted red silk crown with upturned tips at either end. She attached these tips behind her head with a thin elastic band passed the bun. She laid two gold-embroidered bands over the silk crown. Then she covered the entire crown with a gold-threaded silk scarf that draped in light folds down her back. Over the scarf, she placed a few strings of pearls. When her headdress was properly adjusted, she darkened the inner lids of her eyes with a kohl stick, lightly rouged her cheeks and rubbed her teeth with cured walnut bark to make them shinier.

These preparations lasted more than an hour during which she forgot her age and felt as nervous as a girl. When she had finished, she glanced one last time at her reflection and said in a loud voice, as though to ward off the evil eye, "You old bag."

This was not Moulay Ali's opinion when she met him at the door, standing straight as an arrow, radiant with happiness. For a moment he imagined that all the years of their separation had only been a long and painful nightmare.

They were cousins, born and raised in the same household that had been in those years as populous as a village. In addition to their two families, there had been their three uncles with their wives, children, slaves and maids, and several family members whose misfortunes had forced them to come live off the charity of the patriarch, the grandfather who had since died. Day and night the large house had been alive with various sounds: shouts, laughter, babies crying, whispers, conversations in loud or quiet voices. There had also been frequent quarrels involving masters, servants, and children. Alliances were woven and unraveled, friendships developed and hatreds, too, interrupted by competitions and rivalries. On the whole, this family displayed all the genial and base emotions a human community brings to life, wherever it takes root.

Since time before memory, Moulay Ali had preferred Lalla Kenza to all the others, resolute little girl that she was. Authoritative like the head of a family, she imposed her rule on a crew of children of all ages. She had always stood out from the others because of her clear thinking, her disdain for the social conventions that kept the other girls under strict control, forbidding any free action or spontaneous speech. She would put her small fist on her hip and defy the accusing stares of a multitude of aunts, blood relation or not, fierce guardians of the traditions. In this way, she had grown up, and her personality had developed over the years, to the delight of her father who always said, "Oh, if only you were a boy!" However, she was not a boy, and Moulay Ali was quick to have his father ask for Kenza's hand in marriage, before she could be married to an outsider. He was her cousin, and he had the right to ask for her hand before any other suitor.

They were children, and they remained so after their marriage, their parents assuming all the expenses of the young couple.

They abandoned themselves to games of love with the innocence of their age and managed to give these games a wild frenzy. They wove between themselves seemingly unbreakable ties and grew very close, deliciously complementary, like the flower and its scent, the fruit and its nectar. But their happiness was short-lived, flaming and ephemeral like the fire of woody vines.

A few years after his marriage, having finished his studies, Moulay Ali was appointed to work with the caliphate of the king in Tetuan, another age-old city that had much in common with the city of Idris<sup>50</sup>. In Fez, as in Tetuan, religion conferred nobility and acted as the axis and motor of daily life. However, their conservatism, their unwillingness to compromise on traditional notions and their intense regionalism pitted the populations of the two cities one against the other in a perpetual joust.

Also, Tetuan was on the other side of the Rif Mountains, hundreds of kilometers from Fez. Especially in the mountains, thieves frequently ambushed caravans on the hazardous roads that separated the two cities. Terrible stories were told of men beheaded, women raped and killed, and children sold into slavery.

"Kenza is not going with you. It is out of the question. She cannot be exposed to such risks." Thus fell the verdict of Moulay Larbi, Kenza's father, a

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<sup>50</sup> "Mulay Idris b. 'Abdallah, a descendent of the Prophet, founded the city of Fez in 789 CE," according to Richard C. Martin's *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* V.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004).

verdict without appeal. Moulay Ali would remember to the day he died his confrontation with this inflexible man on whom prayers, pleading, and angry protest had no effect. "You have chosen to leave, so be it. But my daughter shall be freed at once. I have sent for the witnesses to come after the afternoon prayer. This affair should take place in total discretion; it is strictly a family matter! We don't know how long you will be gone. Five, ten, twenty years? Only God foresees what is to be. My daughter will rebuild her life. She would not be able to wait for you so long. And you will find another wife where you are. The women of Tetuan make good wives and cook well. They are thrifty, though as far as beauty is concerned, man-to-man...ho! ho!"

Moulay Ali had thrown himself at his father's feet, begging him to save their marriage. But what could a younger brother do when his elder stood by his decision? The elder brother traditionally inherited the role as head of the family, and his word was law. He held the destiny of all the family members in his hand. How many couples were destroyed by the will of a powerful and despotic male; how many marriages were prevented, to the great displeasure of girls badly in need of husbands; how many dreams dispersed and feelings crushed under foot. In the hierarchy of this society, the interests of the group were stronger than those of the individual. To save the patrimony and protect it from disintegration, to preserve the family union through new blood ties, personal happiness was scorned. The structure was built on the wreckage of lives.

Kenza had cried, screamed, and shouted her pain. She had clawed her cheeks and torn out her hair. She had refused to eat and vowed to set the house on fire, to kill herself, but her father had remained imperturbable. She was stubborn,

but he was more so, and he had total authority over her. The war they declared that day would last until the end of the old man's life.

His daughter never once allowed him to believe she had pardoned him. Beyond the demands of filial duty and deference, she never again showed him affection. She remained cold and dignified in his presence, a living condemnation.

To avoid stirring up hot coals, Moulay Ali never came back to Fez. He disowned his father, his mother and the birthplace of his family. His uprooting was complete, final. He remarried and had children, and his children grew up and married in turn, but never did his cousin leave his flesh and soul. The years had drifted by without extinguishing the love he had lost. He had slowly fallen apart since then, like a puppet without strings. On opposite sides of the Atlas, in the depths of that hollow part of the soul where each of us buries impossible dreams, in each half of the divided couple the image of the other had lived on.

"The trip was long and difficult. We had to stop at a dozen police road blocks and at all the customs checkpoints. They frisk you from head to foot and dump suitcases out on the pavement. They handle the clothes as though they were filthy!"

"Swine! We are washed and purified. They can't say as much for themselves, they who stink like pigs."

Kenza had given her opinion in an even voice, while pulling on her caftan to smooth imaginary creases. She coquettishly tossed back the scarf and it fell softly to her back. Moulay Ali continued, "I was wise to take the seven o'clock bus. Otherwise I would still be on the road, broiling in the heat. Travel is difficult in these times."

Closely shaven and dressed in a wide white robe, his turban elegantly wrapped in honor of the guest, Sharif asked him, "What's it like over there on the other side of the Atlas, in the Spanish zone?"

"A wind of freedom is blowing. When the nationalists presented the Independence Manifesto, they set a decisive process in motion. The people organized huge demonstrations, but the forces of law and order quickly dispersed them."

"Every day and from all over Morocco, people are sending letters of support to those who wrote the Manifesto. Each one expresses the willingness to die for the sake of the nation. The nationalists are carrying on an active propaganda campaign, printing out local newspapers and circulating underground newspapers brought into Morocco by our citizens living in Europe or the Middle East."

"We can't turn back now. It's too late for reforms. Now we are fighting for independence and the unification of the country."

"The international situation is right. There is a total upheaval in the world order. A new era is beginning."

"Most important, the people and the king are in perfect agreement. We are fed up with humiliations. We will work together to regain our sense of dignity. It is time to make our voices heard in the world."

"And the only way to achieve this is to die for what we believe in."

"Where there is smoke, there is fire. All it needs is a twig to take flame."

"The will of God be done. No one escapes his destiny."

The three old people raised their hands, palms open to heaven, and prayed together, "God help and protect our heroes. Be merciful on our martyrs."

Sharif served the tea that the young mulatto had brought in a silver teapot, steaming in the center of a tripod tray. He half filled the glasses, lifting the teapot high as he poured. The aroma of mint and absinthe rose and perfumed the air.

In a cage that must have once been gilded and which was now rusting apart, three canaries sang at the top of their voices. They tirelessly climbed up and down the bars of the cage. Moulay Ali caught himself thinking, "What good is this incessant activity? Does it lighten the weight of their imprisonment? Does it give them some relief?"

He did not know. He only knew that his own life had been a useless quest for vanished happiness. Like these small birds, he had desperately searched for a substitute to happiness, but had never found one. He thought back on the enormous part of his life wasted, and once again felt a piercing regret. He looked at his cousin and the man sitting in front of him with his stomach almost touching the tea tray and his smug self-satisfied face, and he felt a great wave of tenderness for her.

Early in the afternoon, the women of the family began to flock in. Sisters, nieces, co spelling of the one after the other, like a swarm of white herons. They surrounded the visitor, babbling, cackling, clucking, and endlessly comparing this flesh and blood person to the image they had painted for themselves during half a century of absence. They came wrapped in their white cloaks. The same ghostly shape, the same quick, inquisitive, sharp eye. The same gestures, simpering

mannerisms and pretenses of modesty and reserve. But when they took off the long piece of more or less worn cloth, they appeared, each in her own individuality, youth or decrepitude.

Moulay Ali smiled at one, embraced another and briefly answered the questions of a third. Distinguished and dignified, silent in the concert of feminine voices, Kenza presided over the generous refreshments that were served to these ladies, neglecting no detail of the perfect hospitality required by her upbringing. She deliberately ignored any poisonous insinuations. She wasn't going to let them bother her now! She had always countered them with cold disdain.

"Dear uncle, you should have come to stay with my mother, your older sister. I would never presume to tell you what is proper, but my husband was telling me a little while ago . . ."

"Or with my mother. She loves you so much, in spite of your long separation, and she has taught us to love you, too . . ."

He smiled at them, "You forget that this is my home. I was born and grew up in this house. For me, this is where the perfume of the past still lingers. This succession of arched doorways with their fascinating designs, these pillars with their tapestry of blue and white mosaic tile blending with the sky and its light, these sumptuous wooden sculptures, these gardens where all the colors of green entwine . . .!"

"Uncle, why didn't you bring your wife and children? Coming like this, like a bachelor! What a frustration for us who are burning with impatience to finally meet your dear family!"

Mina, his younger sister, intervened, "Do you remember Halima, Brother? She was four when you left. She is a grandmother now, and that makes me a great-grandmother."

"We are getting old, dear sister. When I left, you were still playing with your dolls, and you had a four-year-old child. How old were you exactly? Eighteen, twenty?" The same age as his beloved when she wished him good-bye, saying, "My life ends with your departure. It doesn't matter. One day with you was worth a lifetime. So I am old, very old . . ." The rest of her sentence was lost in a sob that had torn his heart. She had been very young then, and for her, youth meant the hope of reunion. Stubbornly and deliberately, she ignored time gnawing away her physical assets.

"Your wife should have come, dear uncle. Doesn't duty require that she visit us, after all these years?" Halima insisted with a mischievous smile.

"Daughter, are you unaware of the risks a woman takes traveling in these troubled times?" her mother admonished. "Stop bothering your uncle. Let him tell us a little about himself. We have so missed the sound of his voice!"

Kenza was grateful for her cousin's intervention. The two women had always had close ties, in spite of the differences in their personalities. Kenza had a violent temper; her cousin was gentle, forgiving and discrete.

Moulay Ali smiled at his sister. He appreciated not having to answer his niece, but he knew he would still be forced to talk about his family, though it would hurt his cousin. He would have preferred to discuss the subject with her privately, so that she would be free to express her bitterness openly.

His staying in her house might seem improper, but he was not going to worry about slander at his age. He had waited decades for this meager happiness, and he was not going to sacrifice it to the gossip of an obtuse society.

Holding her back straight, Dada Marjana served the tea, her voice and laughter louder than usual. The little maid passed around the almond confections shaped like gazelles' horns, semolina cookies, honey almond pastries, and other sweets to which the visitors helped themselves generously, twittering all the while, jumping like crickets from one topic to another.

Then, at dusk, they left as they had come, in a flurry of white wings. Nonetheless, before leaving, each one insisted on taking Moulay Ali with her, swearing before God and all the saints of paradise that she would not leave without him, showing vexation at his refusal, in accordance with the exacting rules of courtesy. Then, with a peaceful conscience, each one stole away, secretly relieved that she didn't have to offer hospitality to this family member who was after all a stranger. As they left, each whispered to whoever would listen her disapproval of the two ex-spouses living together, a situation that was no longer authorized by any law.

Early the next day, Kenza came down from her bedroom, making as little noise as possible so as not to awaken the servants. She had nothing to hide, but she did not want their presence to spoil the poetry of the morning.

He was already there, sitting on the ledge of the large fountain, his eyes lost in what he called a countdown. When he looked back on his life, his thoughts inevitably returned to this house, under the thick foliage of these trees, at this hour of the day when light undulates like a voluptuous dream. She sat down close to him.

She was not looking for any sensual pleasure. She had been weaned from that very early, though she kept a burning memory of it. Simply, her place was by his side. They remained silent a long time, a very long time. An ordinary person would have taken them for an aging couple that some evil spirit had turned to stone. Yet, their eyes moved, intensely, scrutinizing the present to revive the past. In unspoken accord, their gaze fell on the solitary bitter orange tree at the corner of the patio, a tree that had once received their secrets. They used to count the golden fruits and pretend they were the suns that had risen and set on their happiness. Their memories sprang up again complete and burning like living beings, having breath, scent and consistency.

They were a young married couple and they marveled at the thunderous and unexpected sensations they discovered together. They did not hide their happiness and gave no thought to the passions they aroused. They disregarded the stares directed at them and willfully forgot the upbringing they had both received in which duplicity and hypocrisy were virtues of the well-born.

The love affair they lived with all the passion of their youth had altered their features, drawn dark circles under their eyes, and changed the tone of their

voices. This was profoundly shocking to those around them who had been well disciplined to repress their amorous instincts.

She especially was not forgiven her effrontery. She did not fit into this feminine society that had acquired a fetal position, head down, back bent and arms crossed on a chest buried in layers of veils, due to timidity, reserve and prudishness. She stood tall, proud of her anatomy, her bearing noble and her gaze imperious.

"How shameless! What loose morals! Shame on her!"

Her fearlessness astonished them and made them surly.

When she was little, her father used to take her hunting with him, disguised as a boy. In this way, she had learned to use a rifle and cold-bloodedly shoot hare and partridge. They called her "the fighter." Her character justified this nickname, and Moulay Ali's departure was the circumstance that gave it full meaning.

When her father delivered his verdict, she thought she would die. After that, her life had no purpose. She no longer knew where to aim. She exhausted herself in useless struggling. She spent her nights tossing in bed with impotent rage. She hated herself for being a woman, for having a heart and for suffering. She screamed and shouted her rebellion but no one listened. She almost threw herself off the highest terrace rooftop of the house, but a thousand arms reached out to pull her back from the edge. She threw herself into the well at the back of the garden, but clutched onto the damp wall on the way down. The instinct of self-preservation was stronger. Hung between the sky and this inkpot the color of suet, despair and death, she preferred life to a freezing death . . .

She ran away from home one morning, after a night during which she thought she would go crazy. She left, jumping from one rooftop to another, spanning the gap between housetops in the blinding white heights, hundreds of times risking broken bones, stumbling on obstacles strewn on the surface, ignoring the astounded looks that followed her, incredulous at the appearance of this mythical nymph in broad day.

Like the other women of the city, she was familiar with these cement platforms that had harbored her games and been witness to the most memorable moments of her life. It was the women's favorite place, their land with no frontiers. There she found inner peace and escaped all forms of servitude. She could speak without restraint, move without false modesty and display her charms under the sun. There she asserted herself, far from the censuring eye of men, wrapped only in the gaze of the heavenly sky.

Oh, these terrace rooftops of Fez, so highly acclaimed in lyric tales, in the spellbinding hours at the end of the day, bathed in a powder of light, lulled by the sweet, heady song of the air. These promenades that fill with voluptuous women appearing with a jingle of their gold bracelets. Slender women, and plump. Coquettish with high, sophisticated headdresses, or running their fingers through long, amber hair. Child brides tripping over their queenly gowns and followed by slaves. These terraces, the theater of pure or forbidden pleasures, childish embraces and chaste play, but also of guilty liaisons, sincere love, or revenge for the betrayal of the beloved, mingling tears, laughter and romance.

Without quite knowing how, she arrived at the house of her paternal aunt who lived a dozen streets away. Finding the terrace door open, she ran down the

narrow stairway and did not stop until she reached the door of the family living room where her aunt was perched on a ladder in the mezzanine, packing belongings into one of her trunks. She nearly fell when she saw the young woman appear looking haggard and disheveled as though she were a vision that had just jumped out of her own nightmares.

"Kenza! Where did you come from like that, unveiled like a slave or an infidel? What a scandal! Dear God, help us all."

As she quickly came down the ladder, she nervously glanced at her husband who was lounging on a mattress on the floor, looking the young woman up and down with lascivious eyes. He had not seen her without a veil since she was ten or eleven years old when she had come to stay with them for a few days, accompanied by her slave. He might not have recognized her if his wife had not said her name.

Face to face with her niece, she slapped her own thighs and screamed, "Wretched girl, what are you doing here? You came all the way here over the rooftops, at the risk of being seen by some perverted neighbor? You exposed yourself to disgrace and us to criticism in this way? And your mother, can't she teach her daughter to behave properly? I have always said she was an apathetic, spineless woman, and she hasn't improved with age . . . and the others, the old fools, they should have locked you up, a girl like you, shameless and brazen!"

Kenza kept her temper and simply said, "Can you let me stay with you for a while?"

The uncle sat up on his mattress, in his hurry spilling half the contents of his tobacco box on the black and white striped blanket covering his heavy legs.

"Let's not get upset," he intervened. "Let her stay with you for a while, since she is asking for your hospitality!"

"Do you want my brother to slam his door in my face? Is that the advice of an uncle? To rebel against her father's will, to make her loving father an object of pity, or worse, the laughing stock of his peers?"

"What's wrong with a young woman coming to visit her aunt? It's our custom!"

"Custom or not, she's going straight home!" The thought of this niece with all her youth exposed like an insult to her own faded charms, living with her for an indefinite time did not please her at all. She had little confidence in this third husband, younger than herself, who had come to fill the absence of the first who had died in the typhoid epidemic, and the second who had left for the Holy Lands and had never come back, simply sending her divorce papers in the mail.

The uncle sat up straighter, rubbing the back of his hand over his tobacco stained nose, adjusting his turban and adding, "Now, now, my child, come closer! You must consider this home as your own and think of me as . . . your father! In spite of what she says, your aunt is a good woman. She loves you dearly, believe me. She will go right away to talk to Moulay Larbi. You stay here as long as you wish, while everyone calms down. Why worry, after all! Such a pretty girl. One husband lost, ten more to be found! They'll be standing in line in front of your door. Moulay Ali was not the only man among us," he concluded, rubbing his hairless belly with a shameless hand.

The man's behavior immediately made Kenza give up her plan to stay with her aunt. She quickly said, "Very well, I accept your judgment, Aunt. Have Dada M'barka take me home. Lend me your cloak. This time I'll take the streets home."

Overjoyed to escape such a troublesome dilemma, the aunt belatedly demonstrated her affection for her niece.

"My little girl, now you are being reasonable. Nevertheless, I sympathize with what you are going through. By God and the Prophet Mohammed, I sympathize! Men are louts!" she said, throwing the comment in her husband's direction. "They are egotists who play with our fates. But you'll get burned if you continue to resist. They are stronger than we are! The fight is unequal. It's useless to persist. God is great and merciful. He will reward us for our patience . . ."

The rest of her sentence was lost in the icy corridor. Kenza had already closed the door of the house behind her, cutting off the voice of her aunt who was, in retrospect, pleased with this event that had briefly broken the monotony of her daily routine and promised to spice the conversations she would have with her neighbors this afternoon on the terraces. She would tell the story in detail. She might even add a little. In this way, she would avenge herself on Kenza's mother who had spread slanderous gossip about her from one end of the city to the other under false pretenses of secrecy.

Kenza locked herself in her room when she got home, refusing to speak to anyone except Marjana who brought her meals and stayed long hours with her, massaging her toes or combing her long hair with languorous gestures, softly singing songs of lost love.

Sometimes her mother came to visit, begging her to end her isolation. Kenza loved her mother, undoubtedly, but as one loves a trembling kitten or an abandoned orphan. The poor woman was simply terrorized by her husband. Not that he was violent, but because she herself offered him the whip he beat her with. She was a specimen of the kind of woman who silently invites a man to enjoy his atavistic misogyny.

As it was, her father blamed his wife for Kenza's rebellion. "You have nurtured the instincts of revolt in your misbegotten daughter. But I will put an end to it. I swear that if a charcoal vendor or a garbage collector asked for her hand, I would give her to him without a second thought. She would be getting just what she deserves."

In truth, he was sad to see his daughter fall into such profound depression. He had not understood how deeply she was attached to her husband, but his paternal honor was at stake. He could not openly reverse his decision. He preferred to convince himself that she would finally submit to the fait accompli.

In the end, the young woman's pride got the better of her despair. She did not condescend to appear beaten and destroyed in front of the women who had been jealous of her before. She emerged from her withdrawal, her eyes defiant. No one dared to approach or pity her.

Her father, who had dealt her a deathblow, offered her a life raft. A precarious raft, it is true, but one that would nonetheless help her keep up appearances.

Sharif was an instrument of procreation, but he was especially a scapegoat she used to sharpen her claws, sure as she was to get her revenge one day on those who had destroyed her dreams.

Not for a moment did she let him forget his subordinate position. Strengthened by the infatuation he felt for her, she abused his passion, frustrating him at will, ridiculing his virility, mocking his male attributes. After having exacerbated his desire and led him to the edge of the precipice, she left him there, turning a deaf ear to his calls, ignoring his entreaties.

In this way, she escaped the insanity that lived and welled up in her like an incurable disease. His unconditional complacency fed her cruelty: she developed his aptitude for subservience.

Sharif was a boy with no fortune, no job and no training of any sort. Before his marriage, he had just managed to get by, supported by patrons in Fez.

Because he was a descendent of the Prophet, his room and board were provided without his having to do the least bit of work. But what more miserable life than that of a man whom other men feed from day to day, a man who doesn't know, each morning when he wakes up, whether some departure or accident had put an end to the good will of his benefactors. Also, Fez was swarming with these penniless sharifs who sponged on others and ended up going back home to their villages, never having found the hen who lays the golden eggs who would have saved them from their wandering ways. However, some of them received princely donations that provided security for their old age or married into rich families. It was not unusual to see girls of middleclass families marry paupers of noble descent because, in this profoundly religious society, tying one's name to that of a

sharif, in spite of his material poverty, was a distinct honor. No other nobility equaled theirs. No amount of riches put one on such a high pedestal as theirs. One hears the unexpected respectful title of "Sidi" given to some poor fellow frozen in an attitude of tattered dignity, or "Lalla" preceding the name of a masseuse who spends her life scrubbing backs in the hot room of the public bath.

When Kenza's prestigious father honored him by proposing his daughter's hand in marriage, Sharif nearly choked on his joy. Not only would this marriage guarantee him a life of luxury, but also, oh joy of joys!, the young woman had the reputation of being beautiful and intelligent.

He was instantly lifted to the height of bliss and meant to take advantage of the situation. Unfortunately, reality was entirely different. He quickly had to abandon his illusions.

"Between you and me, this marriage is just for show," his young wife had set him straight from the very beginning. "Not sentimental, I warn you. This union is to our mutual advantage," she had continued, her eyes glittering with cruelty and cynicism, "but there will be no cooing and cuddling."

The roles were thus allotted, without the least ambiguity. From the first evening, Kenza held the reigns of her husband's heart and libido, manipulating him at will. Each time he tried to break the pact concluded between them, burning with the fire of repeated frustrations, she harshly rejected him. Speaking the language of men, she threatened to divorce him. Married life was no more than prolonged torture for both of them until their shared old age quieted their anger and passion.

Kenza tried to empty her mind of these thoughts. Her hand came to rest on Moulay Ali's. She silently reproached him, "Why did you abandon me? Why have you made me a hard woman with a frozen soul?"

"I was a coward," he conceded, as though responding to the reproach he read in her eyes. "You thought you had married a man, but I was only a child. I was caught in the trap of social conventions. I was afraid of breaking the rules that required me to obey my elders, even at the expense of my own happiness. I was like a young rooster, proud of its feathers, crowing loudly and running to hide in the hen house at the least sign of danger, leaving the rest of the fowls to fend for themselves. My uncle was my judge and executioner. He ruled people and decided their destinies. Who would have paid attention to the poor kid I was, even if I had resisted? Who would have taken the side of a lowly child against the great wise man, the protector of basic values?"

He stood up, short of breath, suffocating with the rage that had never died. Kenza stood up in turn, pushing herself up with one hand, gracefully holding the folds of her caftan with the other. They walked side by side down the garden paths under a mist of white jasmine. The mosaic patterns danced in festival colors, caressed by the rays of the rising sun.

They were extremely moved to continue the walk they had begun half a century before, and gloom invaded their hearts.

"I want to ask you," said Kenza in a subdued voice, "I want to know why you decided to come back, finally."

She added more loudly, "Don't tell me you were homesick. That would be ridiculous."

"I was on a business trip in Madrid last month and I got sick, very sick. I was in the hospital for two weeks. The doctors said it was a heart attack. I was suddenly afraid I would never see you again. I couldn't sleep at night thinking about it. I became obsessed with the thought of seeing this house again, smelling the air of my childhood, feeling you near me, in spite of my age and yours.

"To finally see Fez again, my city of light. To see Moulay Idris, the sanctuary of peace and love. I wanted to go to the Qarawiyin Mosque, where I learned to love the Islam, and to see our beautiful schools, the pearly towers of our minarets rising into the sky, our streets and alleys. . .

"When I got back to Tetuan, I took care of urgent business and I came.

"The memory of you never left me, my city and you, symbol of this city. I lived like a blind man who had lost his sight in a festival of sound and light. All this poetic charm was concentrated in my heart. It gave me strength and endurance.

"I didn't even come for my father's funeral. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to leave again. My brother-in-law Hajj<sup>51</sup> Mohammed took care of the inheritance settlement. They called me an ungrateful and degenerate son. They looked for signs of illegitimacy in my features. Then, as always, time discouraged the most wicked intentions."

The footsteps of the couple had led them under the cupola where the branches of vines energetically intertwined. He crossed his arms behind his back

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<sup>51</sup> The honorific title given to a man who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. "In some Muslim communities the title confers honor, respect and special status," according to John Esposito's *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

and leaned against the railing. She leaned against the trunk of an ancient lemon tree and put her palms on the worm-eaten wood, trying to find a comfortable position. They both looked at the basin in front of them, at the murky water that was turning the marble green at the edges and making the mosaic tile slippery.

"How did you manage to live away from Fez, so far from your family and all of this?" She made a circular gesture with her hand.

"In Tetuan, they called me "the Fassi." Now in Fez, people call me "the Tetuani." I was a stranger there. I am a stranger here," he concluded with a bitter smile.

She looked at him and returned a proud smile. Everything about him showed him to be of a descendent of Idris: his pale complexion, fine features, stately walk and gentle ways. These were unmistakable signs.

"I waited so long for this return. I lived it over and over again in my heart. Neither my marriage nor the passing of time could make me forget. I could not allow absence to vanquish our love, or concede that I would never again be happy."

"And me? Didn't you ask yourself what it was like for me? A small pain crouched down in my womb and knotted up inside me, present at every moment of the day and night, as though it were my soul making itself known through pain. I saw myself growing older, and each day I thought, 'Let him come now! Yet another day and he will no longer be able to love me.' "

"Oh, you shouldn't have worried about that. My love grew, as though fed by absence. My dear, in my heart, you are forever twenty years old. Your skin is translucent with rays that light it with a thousand fires. Your hair is perfumed with

ambergris, your smile sweet as a sun-ripened fig. Your fingers, oh, your fingers! They haunted me by day with their transparency. They obsessed me by night, running on my skin in sensual harmony. I loved them one by one and all together, like goddesses before time. I loved you each day and every hour of my exile, religiously, waking and sleeping. You were my shade in the burning desert."

"You were the burning desert where I gathered with both hands the fire that kept me alive."

"My dearest love!"

"My only love!"

Their features were motionless. Who would have guessed the passion contained in these declarations, all the more poignant because they could go no further?

They had to interrupt their outpouring when the mulatto came to invite them to breakfast.

Moulay Ali could not see the murderous look his cousin threw her maid who had come to disturb their private conversation at such an inappropriate time. If he had, he would have been shocked to see what had become of the woman walking so proudly in front of him.

Jovial, Sharif wished them a good morning. He graciously offered his guest the tastiest morsels, following the rules of hospitality to the letter and taking pains to please him. Indeed, never had Moulay Ali tasted better pancakes, fresher butter nor sweeter honey. The mint tea was aromatic and perfectly sweetened. The cream was thick and the cheese full-flavored. He did not, however, taste the dish

of preserved meat--it was too salty for his ailing heart--but he treated himself to fritters that he swallowed burning hot and dripping with butter and honey.

The polished silver trays reflected the radiant morning adorned with lush greenery. A slender spiral of steam rose from the samovar toward an intensely blue sky. As though molded in a translucent gown, the world seemed to dance to the rhythm of romantic melodies and invite one to rejoice, love, and join in tender play. Moulay Ali was suffocating with emotion. Never, anywhere else, had he experienced a morning like this, purified, astonishingly new, extraordinarily luminous.

Sharif rescued him from this tyrannical beauty, from the iridescent memory of the past eclipsing the present. He had leafed through the morning papers and commented on the news.

"A storm is brewing in the hills. Neither the nationalists nor the occupying forces have shown their cards, but both sides are mobilized and a clash is imminent. The Independence Manifesto hit the French like a bomb. They cannot conceive that we have advanced so quickly from harmless demands for reforms to a pure and simple claim to independence. They plan to counter the Manifesto with severe repression. Otherwise, they are saying in the French high command, their presence is doomed in all of North Africa. They are saying they need to cut off the viper's head before it can bite."

"The nationalists don't intend to back down. 'Live proud or die' is their motto from now on."

"They thought they could strip our identity and make us wear theirs, under the pretext of bringing us civilization. They distorted our culture, ridiculed our

beliefs, and trampled our traditions. Then they portrayed us to ourselves as barbarians."

"This way of doing things doesn't pay in the long run. Sooner or later our people, who have been wounded to the core, will rise up like a hurricane and sweep away everything in their path."

"God protect the faithful. The days to come are menacing."

"And I decided to come back now. It's my fate to always swim against the tide. Let's go see the medina and pay our respects to the patron saints before it's too late. I have a feeling the apocalypse is near."

The two men smiled to hide the apprehensions that tortured them. The people could not continue with impunity the demands, meetings, and demonstrations of anger and rebellion which the colonizer considered scandalous. The colonial powers would react, and the casualties would surely be heavy.

They left the house and went to the old city as pilgrims visiting holy sanctuaries. At the end of the street, Moulay Ali gave in to the urge to look back and contemplate the house his ancestors had built. With its crenelated rooftop terraces and enclosed central courtyards, it resembled a flower bed of gigantic blossoms in a profusion of greenery. It had two distinct parts. There was the area where guests were received, a group of rooms and arcades arranged around an open-air patio, all in white marble, and prolonged by a garden where very old orange and lemon trees branched out above a jumble of weeds, roses, carnations and jasmine that perfumed the air and crackled under the relentless sun. And there was the house where the family usually served meals, where dozens of female slaves and servants used to live. There they slept, worked, sewed, polished, and

washed wheat and oats in great quantities of water. They picked the grain clean, made bread and washed clothes. On wash days, they bared their arms and legs, separated the colored and white clothes into piles, dipped boiling water from monumental cauldrons on large charcoal braziers and bent several at a time over wooden tubs to scrub, knead, rinse and wring out clothes that had often been worn for weeks.

It was a time of chatter, songs, shouts, quarrels, violent disputes and spectacular reconciliations. Barefoot, with scarves in disarray, these women who were mostly from the countryside rediscovered among themselves a spontaneity that was condemned by the too repressive rules governing life in the city.

Today, in this house that had once been teeming with people, the old slaves of the patriarch were slowly wasting away in an odor of urine and excrement that had become familiar to them. Sometimes their moans and curses could be heard. Sometimes, in long incoherent speeches, they voiced their madness composed of intact memories and present decrepitude. Moulay Ali's sad gaze encompassed the whole vista of these buildings presently touched by decay. Then he turned his back on it as one turns away from a family vault where loved ones are buried.

The two men walked slowly toward the area of the medina where most of the old places were to be found, beautiful and laced with cracks. Moulay Ali walked ahead led by his memories and the unmistakable smells of leather, wood, spices and bird droppings. He was stopped a hundred times on the way by an embrace or a handshake. The news of his return had traveled through the city. People scrutinized his face to learn the reason for his departure and for this late

return. Most of them only knew of him through hearsay. Their fathers or members of their families had told them about the unexplainable departure of El Amine's grandson and of the preceding divorce. His uncle, Moulay Larbi, had not chosen to clarify the situation.

Moulay Ali walked up and down the sloping streets strewn with rubbish.

"These people of Fez," he said to himself. "They sweep their houses until they wear the broom down to the stick, but they aren't bothered in the least by the piles of trash polluting the air of the city."

He remembered that when he was young, it took weeks and sometimes months for them to decide to clean the streets and remove the dead animal carcasses. When the odor of rotting cadavers became unbearable, the authorities cleaned it up. To do this, they would open floodgates in the high parts of the city and water would surge down, sweeping away everything in its path. He and his friends would hang onto a precarious wooden beam, expecting at any moment to fall into the roiling water, or they would climb a wall to escape the flood, scraping their hands on bare rock. From their perch, they saw the turbid water carry away the trash of the city. They also saw, and especially heard, frantic, living animals, a cat meowing in distress, a howling dog, rats scuttling up drainpipes, knocked half-senseless by the water that had surprised the city in its everyday carelessness.

Moulay Ali stopped at each sanctuary, visited each mausoleum, and said a short prayer at each house of worship built in honor of the local saint. He saw the city as a large tomb where death rested like a hecatomb, where the last musty odors of a long celebration were fading away, a city of memories in which each monument and building was a silent witness to the long, winding march of

history. Now muzzled and wounded but not beaten, the city was planning her revenge.

Nothing disclosed the hidden rebellion. The citizens seemed to be living their daily routine. They appeared resigned, bent over their jobs, but sedition fomented in their bald heads.

Moulay Ali saw very few changes in the ancient city. The same narrow alleyways, the same decrepit walls, the same shops opening onto the street, offering passers-by a view of the artisan in the same posture pilgrims had seen for half a century, working with needle or hammer, surrounded by apprentices resigned to their fate.

He stepped aside to give way to a fine, harnessed mule ridden by a swaggering townsman wrapped in white muslin. The man was none other than Hajj Hafid, the spice merchant who had made his fortune at the beginning of the war. He had stockpiled merchandise and sold it for great profit on the black market. Having recognized Moulay Ali as the nephew of Moulay Larbi, he got off his mule and showed profuse signs of deference. Didn't social etiquette require him, the converted Jew, to bow before an Arab of pure family line?

When they got to the Sharratene, the two pedestrians were suddenly caught up in the animation they found there. After the calm of the small streets, this commercial artery swarmed with a mixed crowd, people speaking loudly, gesticulating, and elbowing their way from shop to shop where clients gathered in the heat of bargaining. From time to time, one could hear a piercing shout or the bray of a donkey whose back was bent under a heavy load.

In the side alleyways, one could see apprentice tailors mechanically crossing threads. In front of each was a master tailor squatting, his eyes fixed on his work. Only God knew how their thoughts crossed and uncrossed, as their lips remained sealed and their gaze blind.

Moulay Ali was deeply moved to recover his memories in this way. His nostalgia had become a fierce love of his native city which he had kept hidden, but which now sprang up. Standing next to him, Sharif had the delicacy to remain quiet to avoid disturbing his resurrection. Moulay Ali addressed this poem to his rediscovered city: "Fez, my beautiful, dear love! I was able to live so far away from you for so long, only because in my exile, incessantly, I recreated you with each step I took on the endless road, all the way on my wandering path. I rebuilt you a hundred times in my heart, and I turned to you as a swallow turns toward bright lands. My memory was full of you like a song of survival. I was your messenger in those far countries. I was the lost poet who sings the charms of his muse in wild verses. I was a part of you carried far away on a wild wind, a seed that brought the prodigy to life again."

They came to the square of the brass dealers and stopped at the workshop of Ahmed the One-Eyed. It was packed full with red copper cooking pots of all sizes and shapes, couscous pots, samovars of impressive dimensions, and cauldrons blackened with suet. The shop owner received the two men warmly and had them sit on low stools among the odds and ends of his shop. He told them in a low voice:

"Three of the men crouching on the other side of the square are spies." Then, in a louder voice, to justify their visit in the eyes of the listening men, "How

many pans and couscous pots do you need? God bless our pious acts! May this meal you are offering to the poor be beneficial to you, in this world and in the next."

To throw the spies off, the two men pretended to be doing business with Ahmed the One-Eyed, but they were watching the activity in the square.

Two soldiers of the native regiment dressed in thick, black- and gray-striped wool tunics scrutinized the street, their eyes shadowed by gray turbans on shorn heads. They stood guard at each side of the Qarawiyyin Library. Rifles were their only weapons, strapped across the chest of their short, belted tunics that showed their muscular calves and feet shod in strapped sandals. They were ferocious looking Berbers, all the more cruel because they had been warned against the people of Fez who, they had been assured, wanted to rise up against their king. These soldiers struck their fellow citizens with the butt of their rifles, going beyond the orders they had received, zealous auxiliaries of the devil, dispensers of death.

They were part of the spearhead force that had served the interests of France so well since the beginning of the Protectorate. First, to save their own skins, they played the role of indigenous police and were the worst enemies of the people. They informed the occupier of the ways and customs of the people, offering them up for speculation, helping the occupier overcome a nation that had been unconquerable until then. Then, in the early forties, they constituted a troop of interim soldiers who were sent to Europe to provide a protective shield for the regular army. As soldiers in the French army, they participated in the French, Italian and German campaigns. On every front, in the front lines, one saw "the

black ears," as they called the Senegalese: sturdy, strapping young men accustomed to following officers' orders and getting killed without having quite grasped for which cause they fought and died, and the Berber regiments who astonished people with their courage, agility and infallible intuition. They were called "the lions of the Atlas." They slept on army blankets on the snow, without even taking off their shoes, socks or belts, always ready to fight and die. Second class humans who provided cheap shields for the allies, throughout the war of liberation. They died by the thousands.

As for these two sturdy young men, they were from a Berber tribe of the High Atlas and had not enlisted lightheartedly. They had both lost their fathers in the battle that the inhabitants of their village had fought against the French who came plundering to occupy the land. They burned crops, confiscated livestock, destroyed food stocks and forced able-bodied men to work overseen by menacing officers. Those who refused to obey orders were beaten and thrown in the freezing river in the middle of winter. The young men were forced to join the native regiment. Stripped of all belongings, burdened with a family to feed, they had no choice. They found themselves in barracks speaking broken French and learning to handle light arms. Afterwards, it was easy to exacerbate in them an ancient, ethnic surliness that translated into acts of unusual violence.

Students entered and left the library, carrying books. People passing by in the street seemed busy, each going about usual occupations. A procession came down the street. At the head of the line came porters pushing two stubborn rams. Then came other porters, one carrying a bag of sugar and another carrying two bags of flour. A third had a dozen hens cackling at the end of each arm. Next

came the negafats<sup>52</sup> balancing on their heads the trousseau and the baby's layette wrapped in embroidered cloths and gifts the affluent family had sent to their daughter to celebrate the birth of her first child.

From time to time, the negafats shouted out the traditional cry, "Praise be to God and his Prophet." Otherwise, the procession was silent. This was not a time for rejoicing. The city continued to celebrate marriages, procreate, circumcise its boys and live happy and sad events, but everything happened in discrete intimacy. Bands were unemployed. Many musicians had taken other jobs or entered a different trade to earn a living. Everything seemed to continue as it had in the past, but Fez had lost the lively voice that makes cities sing.

Fez was voiceless. Before, in each alley one heard the songs of artisans at work, merchants' sallies, the news called out in a piercing tone by public criers, the chanting murmur of students in the Koranic schools, the calls of bakers' boys offering to carry housewives' bread to the public oven, and noisy processions eager to be seen and heard. Now, the silence was poignant. It was a scream of distress audible only to the soul and unbearably intensified by the imagination.

Moulay Ali felt the heart of the city beat and ache. She was wearing herself out in anxious anticipation of what would come. He also felt a profound empathy with this land of his ancestors that was experiencing once again a terrible quaking of its foundations.

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<sup>52</sup> Women "hired to attend the bride during the wedding ceremony," according to Richard Harrell's *Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Arabic-English* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 1966) 18.

"What's new?" Sharif asked the artisan. "What do those who live outside the city say in their daily comings and goings? What fresh news do they bring of the enemy camp?"

"They say the French are ready for war, that they are determined to crush the liberation movement, that their anger might shake our city and demolish it like an earthquake."

"What do they want? To bombard us, to crush us with their devilish weapons, to exterminate every last one of us? So let them. We are prepared to die. Let them attack and get it over with. Anything is better than this waiting."

"Traitorous pigs with fat bellies, eaters of rotten flesh, one after the other preach from pulpits of mosques, inciting believers to surrender. They falsify the spirit of the sacred texts to give weight to their words."

"These are the ones God has branded as hypocrites. They sell their souls and use their knowledge to deceive simple people. Their punishment will be great."

"We are ready to defend ourselves. Doesn't God call on us to perform jihad? We have already lost everything except our lives, but what is life worth when you borrow it every day in exchange for your dignity as a citizen and a Muslim?"

"May my wife be forbidden to me as is my mother if I don't kill at least one of those rotten pigs! I will soak my turban in his blood and wear it on my head in defiance! They'll have to cut off my head to get back this trophy of revenge. I swear they won't get it any other way."

"Our cause is just and our demands are well founded. If it comes to that, so be it. If hatred, violence, killing and bloodshed are the only language they understand and the only path to liberty, then may God's will be done!"

Moulay Ali had only listened to the dialogue between the two other men. He stood up painfully, said good-bye and, followed by Sharif, walked nervously toward the sanctuary of Moulay Idris in hopes of regaining his peace of mind.

Several ragged beggars leaned and sat against the walls at sanctuary of the city's patron saint, holding up hands that looked leprous with accumulated misery. Their sad and worn clothing and the grime encrusted deep in their flesh were all the more disturbing in contrast to the fine rosette carvings interwoven in the plaster and wood behind them and over their heads in the narrow corridor leading to the main door of the sanctuary. Women gathered around the Loufa spring whose water, it was said, was a cure for sterility. They chattered noisily, all the while passing around the yellow metal drinking cup, each one slipping it under her water-marked veil to drink the beneficial water.

Reinvigorated, Moulay Ali winked knowingly at Sharif as he made his way through these human masses that exhaled the scents of his youth. He rediscovered the smell of henna, orange flower water, olive oil, and milk soured on nipples. Also, through these layers of odors rose the sensuality of times long ago, when he delighted in this feminine folk who ruled the kitchens that rang with high-pitched voices and the women's bath that exuded troubling scents. He, like all boys under the age of eleven, was taken to the women's bath. His nanny would wrap him up in a towel, carry him in her arms, and put him down in the farthest corner of a room. There, in the conspiring shadows, she would energetically scrub

him with a pumice stone, anoint him with salves, and pour buckets of water over his head while he stood, mouth open and arms dangling, gazing at feminine anatomy in all its complexity. Paradoxically, the full forms of women caught his eye more than the barely nubile bodies of girls his own age. Their marble white bodies bent and straightened in glowing shapes. Breasts kept the beat of the movement with suggestive bounces, instinctively returning to the first rhythm of music, body and soul joining in the gesture, as in a pagan rite.

He shook his head and awoke to his old age and the present situation. When he finally reached the door of the mausoleum where the delicate colors had nearly completely faded, he felt rising in him a flame that had been smoldering in ashes, now brought to life by a gust of wind. A violent, unquestioning devotion that had nothing to do with the rational Islam he had always practiced, a devotion misrepresented by popular beliefs, a devotion that bent the body and expanded the soul, making all beings equal in the same boundless feeling.

"My Lord, help me endure this unbearable happiness," he exclaimed. He gained control of his emotions before entering the sanctuary. With a firm step, he crossed the first, richly decorated room, entered the second room, and walked toward the saint's tomb, his heart in turmoil. It was the hour of prayer and from the top of the minaret that towered over the old city, the muezzin began a call that echoed from hundreds of other minarets built in the maze of the centuries.

Sharif, a well-known personage in these holy places he regularly visited, walked in front of the "Tetuani" as the ranks opened to let him reach the front of the room and approach the tomb, close enough to touch its garnet-red and gold

covering. Behind the imam, the believers finished the noon prayer. Then the ranks dissolved as each one left to continue his momentarily suspended activities. A few, however, stayed to pray in the sanctuary.

Moulay Ali spoke thus to his creator. "I praise You, my Lord, for having kept me alive until today and for letting me know this joy. If I must die now, Your will be done. I praise You, my Lord, for giving me a pure heart, passionate faith and honest piety. I praise You, my Lord, for giving me sight, hearing, the sense of smell, and a healthy body and soul. I praise You for the faith I have in You, for the joy that fills me at the thought of appearing before You, some day soon. I praise You for having brought me into the world a Muslim."

Then, after a pause, "Dear God, help us in this time of need. Offer your support to the nation, give us victory over our oppressors, You the Merciful, You the Ever Present, You the Just."

An infinite serenity blanketed the mausoleum. Those in prayer were unaware that these places of peaceful meditation would become the center of a bitter fight for identity.

The family spent the following day in the orchard. In addition to the family home and fields cultivated by sharecroppers, every well-to-do Fassi had an irrigated garden where vegetables, fruits and flowers were grown. He generally chose one close to home, which made it possible to go there frequently, sometimes for a picnic, and often for a simple tea with family or friends.

Kenza had inherited her father's garden and went there whenever the weather was fine to escape the monotony of daily routine. On that day, she invited her two daughters and their children to join the group.

The gardener came early in the morning to get the rugs, cushions and utensils necessary for the picnic. The whole family went to the garden as soon as they got up. They had breakfast there under the flowering jujube tree where the gardener had spread the rugs and arranged the cushions. His wife had made pancakes that she served, still hot, to the owners, bowing and nodding her greetings.

Dada reached into the wicker basket and brought out aniseed rolls, hard-boiled eggs, fresh butter, honey, white cheese, black olives, and fritters dripping butter and honey, all the delicious treats that transform breakfasts in the leafy shade and silvery lavender light of spring-like winter mornings into feasts for all the senses. The kettle sang on the pottery brazier and soon the group passed around glasses of tea, the ultimate pleasure. Laughter rang out and everyone was talking at the same time, teasing each other and telling jokes. Contact with nature relaxed the rigid rules of conduct that regulated relationships between generations.

Afterwards, they went for a walk under the trees, the adults holding the children's hands and helping them step over nettles that grew wild in the humid earth. Barefoot and runny-nosed but plump and rosy-cheeked, the sharecropper's children followed at a respectful distance. The flavorful vegetables grew in weedy rows. Lemon and orange trees reveled in the sun, offering a palette of green, white and gold and perfuming the air with a delicate scent. The branches of the

pomegranate bushes were bent down with the weight of the first red fruit. Like a fantasy of nature, the flowers showed their velvety faces in the most unexpected places, grazing under the trees, gamboling along the stream, playing their symphony of colors and tickling the reeds by the water.

The family walked back to lie down on the rugs. Making a swing, the mulatto tied a rope between two tree trunks and attached a pillow to it. As Kenza's two daughters, R'kia and Asmaa, and their children took turns on the improvised swing, their dada sang a folk song in a voluptuous voice.

Ana-na-naa, ana-na my beloved  
Oh, bouquet in a finely carved vase  
Oh, child, oh musk, oh perfumed amber  
Oh, gracious, elegant one reposing on rich pillows  
Oh, priceless emerald  
For pity's sake, let yourself be swayed at last  
And be merciful  
Ana-na-na ya my beloved

The listeners repeated the refrain in unison, praised the Prophet and trilled joyously.

The stream murmured its eternal chorus at Kenza's feet, and above her head the birds sang, coloring the silence without breaking it. The dada began singing again.

Oh, Sidi Mohammed! Oh little nugget of gold!  
Oh, bamboo rod in the hands of lovers!

Oh, rosy cheeks, red rose of Sidjilmassa!  
Oh pomegranate flower blooming in glory!  
I ask you in the name of God to tell me  
With what you have darkened your eyes?  
I fear, if I give you wine  
Your cheeks will blush redder and excite my desire  
Ana-na-na my beloved . . .

Caught in the magic of the moment, R'kia sang next:

If you were a ring, my finger would be your size  
If you were a golden *tahlil*  
I would be the braided belt  
If you were a dagger, I alone would wear you  
Strapped across my chest

Her sister sang in turn:

God has kept the apple for me to share  
And this apple is very high on a very thin branch  
I stretched out my hand as I told myself  
'Perhaps I can reach it'  
But I pulled my hand back all scratched by thorns  
We are fighting for you

The one who wins will take you

Ana-na my beloved

You-you-you...

Swinging high in the rope swing turned the world upside-down for the party-makers. Their hearts leapt in their chests when sky and earth changed places before their eyes and the rapturous melody carried them away in the languor of unrequited love.

The mulatto leaned against a tree trunk and watched them, letting her thoughts roam free. She had been called "the mulatto" since the day they had found her crouching behind a gateway to the old city, half dead from hunger and cold. They had given her this name because of her wide nose and thick lips, signs of her Negro blood in spite of her white skin, the useless legacy of her worthless father who had sold his pregnant slave to drown his soon-to-be-born bastard in anonymity. They had taken her in, first putting her to work in the basement kitchen where she scrubbed pots all day and slept in a corner by the fireplace. Then she had been brought into the household as an all-purpose maid, and as Dada grew feeble with age, she had become Dada's right hand. She watched the young people of the well-to-do family and dreamed what her life would have been if her mother had been a free woman.

Off to themselves, the three old people daydreamed as they passed around a box of tobacco. They watched the young people swing, and nostalgically remembered a whole world that had disappeared, the world of their own youth.

Kenza contemplated her girls for whom she felt a mixture of reserved tenderness and condescension. She could not stand their simpering display of modesty, the gaze they never lifted to look at a man, or their systematic submission to the established order.

"In five years, maybe ten," she mused, "they will be nothing more than the shadow of their husbands, suicidal sacrifices to society." This was not her idea of a couple. In His Book, the foundation of Islam and the code of social life, God said, "They (women) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them." As she understood it, this was a two-way relationship, each man and woman being a whole individual. It was not said that one person should drown another in anonymity and insignificance in order to attain selfhood.

Kenza knew in her heart that she was not being fair to her daughters. Like other young women of their time, they were victims of a misogynous education in which the word "shame" was frequently heard. It was an education dictated by morality, by the heavy legacy of rigorous rules of a lifestyle defined in the smallest detail, in which man was king.

Yet, she wished her daughters would show a little more character. Hadn't she also been subjected to an even stricter upbringing? However, she had managed to stand up to her father, her mother and a whole horde of aunts and girl cousins who were always ready to suffocate other women with the conventions they had embroiled themselves in since childhood.

The old woman put her hopes in her granddaughter, a beautiful little girl with black ringlets escaping from under a muslin head scarf tied in the usual manner at the back of her head. She was an angel of sweetness, but if her wishes

were thwarted, she would fly into a rage. Kenza loved the expressions in her eyes that changed at will, sparkling or sad, cruel or teasing, dark or gold-flecked. This little woman was lit by the same flame that had consumed Kenza and had set afire those around her. Kenza contemplated the two men sitting in front of her. For her, they were as different as a sweet water spring and a bitter apple colocynth. She could not keep herself from thinking she had destroyed them both.

Sharif, from his point of view, attentively watched his wife and this stranger who had come to snatch away the peaceful life he had led for decades. For the first time, he wondered, "Have I really been happy? This life as a substitute, is this all I dreamed of in my youth? Was I born only to leech off my wife's fortune and be satisfied to have her despise me? What belongs to me in all this? The garden, the trees, the flowers? My house, my slaves, even my daughters who are her creation and models of her? This entire paradise where I wallow in perpetual laziness is hers." A weight crushed his heart. He breathed deeply to chase away his dark thoughts.

A veil of delight wrapped Moulay Ali. His spirit gathered nectar from blossom to blossom, flying up to the treetops, through the rays of the sun, at the risk of burning. Too much happiness came crashing down on his weak heart; he felt it quiver in his chest. Still he wished this hour of pleasure could last forever and that the magic of love might bring back the time when they springtime was their field of frolic.

The porters' arrival put an end to games and memories. On their heads they balanced cone-covered pottery platters containing the noon meal. They laid out the steaming dishes under the jujube tree and left, well paid.

The family gathered around a couscous of artfully arranged vegetables, a delight to the eye and a delicacy for the palate, and numerous other plates full of savory delicacies.

After the meal, they took a short nap, then sipped mint tea--the final touch to every special meal. Finally, satiated with good food and fresh air, they walked home carrying armloads of fresh mint, parsley, and coriander. The sharecropper followed, bringing the vegetables and fruits for the next day's meal.

When they got home, they heard the shattering news: in the main cities of the kingdom, by the order of the colonial government, the nationalist leaders had been taken prisoner and deported to unknown destinations. This act was in retaliation for the presentation of the Independence Manifesto.

A few days earlier, in one of their villas in Rabat, the bright young leaders of the nationalist movement had prepared themselves to perform this act that would be a turning point in peoples' actions. Their faces shining with joy, dressed for an official ceremony in white burnoose robes, saffron-colored leather slippers and fine linen socks, they had presented the Independence Manifesto to His Majesty the King, the colonial government, and representatives of diplomatic delegations in Rabat. Won over to the cause, His Majesty the King immediately assembled his council of ministers along with the officials of the kingdom and presented the document for their approval. The following day, *Al Maghreb*, the only nationalist newspaper published in Arabic, was going to appear with a large headline in red across six columns: "Morocco: King, Government, and People Demand Independence."

That issue of the newspaper was seized, and the newspaper was banned along with the popular rejoicing that expressed the people's joy at the presentation of the Manifesto.

For the first time since the beginning of the French Protectorate, this document demanded "the Independence of Morocco in its national integrity, under the rule of its legitimate king."

The news came bit by bit, sometimes corroborating and sometimes contradicting what they had heard. Moulay Ali and Sharif went quickly to the neighborhood mosque to find out what was happening. Many of their neighbors were already there and each had an opinion to offer: "This news doesn't surprise us. We expected it as soon as the authors of the Manifesto broke the taboos. Their daring left the officials of the colonial government speechless."

"The Manifesto surprised even us with the extent of its demands. It tied independence to territorial integrity and the return of all occupied territories to the Motherland."

"In fact, we will not be truly independent until our dismembered country has regained its unity. This effort is courageous. It puts us in the spirit of our times that are dominated by the fight for political and economic autonomy."

"The age of colonialism is finished. France takes pride in defending all the liberties adopted by democratic countries. Can she at the same time continue to deprive our people of the right to self government?"

"The Manifesto is clear. Let's hear no more about reforms."

"Oh, oh, you think they'll pack up and go, just like that? They will open their jaws and let go only if they are forced to!"

"We'll force them!"

"We are a free people. We had never been occupied before. Even the Turks who dominated far and wide did not conquer us."

"It is urgent that we take up arms again. These pagans understand only the language of guns."

"We fought for more than a quarter of a century, from when the French landed in Casablanca and occupied Oujda and Beni Snassen until the nationalists founded the Moroccan Action Committee."

"Even so, our resistance didn't discourage the invaders. The prospect of gain was stronger. Just the carnage of the battle of Mediouna when they fought against the Ma El Aïnine tribe should have made them think twice."

"They had their eyes on our riches and nothing, believe me, nothing could make them clear out."

"The Ma El Aïnine were real lions, and so were the warriors of Abdelkrim Rifi. Just read the way the French describe this hero of the Rif War. At least they are honest about it. It's to their credit that they recognize the courage and skill of their enemies."

"Yes, but times have changed. War is now a question of military strength, sophisticated weapons, and money. Banks determine the outcome of war."

"So why fight if we can't win? Why didn't we follow a policy of appeasement? We would have regained our rights without violence."

"Some are more afraid of losing their privileges!" Si Mohammed shot a contemptuous, meaningful glance at the person he was speaking to.

"What are you insinuating? Did you ever see me, like some, sell goods on the black market or speculate to take advantage of the poor?" The retort was quick. Each one had a response to put the other in a bad light.

"That wouldn't have been so bad. But many of you have acquired protection from the French, English or Germans. You live in your country, but you do not obey its laws. The rich and powerful don't pay taxes. You are second-class Europeans and traitors to your own country."

"You are the traitor, the speculator, the merchant who sells copper as gold and rotten donkey meat as veal!"

"Men, men! Our children are dying and now you show your dirty laundry. Better to pray for them. If we stoop to bickering now, we no longer have legs to run nor voices to shout our revolt. Be reasonable. Later you will have time to settle your disputes."

"Satan be damned."

"Damn him."

They lowered their heads in one movement, suddenly ashamed at having lost control of their emotions in such an argument at such a time.

Others also lowered their heads, knowing they would have willingly agreed to foreign occupation to avoid troubling, anxious times. They were worthy, well-to-do men whom the French had taken care to treat well. They had frequently tried to hinder the nationalist movement that, in their opinion, prevented their children from pursuing their studies peacefully and led them into reprehensible acts, to the despair of their parents who feared for their lives and

future. But can you prevent the young from making liberty their religion and the fight to gain it their purpose in life?

Certainly they did their best to cajole "the masters." They received them in their sumptuous homes and prepared places like the garden of Eden for them, under flower-laden cupolas that evoked the lost paradise, Muslim Andalusia, where opulence rivaled refinement. In the light of the setting sun, these Europeans, who had abolished all signs of feudal, lordly rights in their own lands, enjoyed lounging on cushions here, served by silent slaves with bare, hennaed feet who responded "Yes, Sidi, Yes," eyes lowered. They delighted also in the simmered dishes, so different from the fried steak their dear wives hardly took the time to prepare, too busy playing grand dame in fancy receptions. They stuffed themselves with savory meat pie and roast lamb, eating by the fistful, ignoring the rules of etiquette that govern a meal served in a communal dish without forks, all the while scorning their hosts for this very abundance that they saw as a lack of cultural refinement.

Even as they regaled their guests, these distinguished gentlemen, wrapped in their arrogance, were telling themselves that their scatter-brained children must be among the demonstrators whose passionate voices could be heard echoing along the ancient walls, shouting patriotic slogans. They prayed to God the All Powerful that their children might be spared.

At the news of the arrests, their wives slipped away to the rooftop terraces, this heaven-blessed place where the authority of men did not pursue them and they could express their emotion with restraint. They leaned far over the terrace walls and passed on to the neighbor and friend the news each one thought only

she had heard. They were accustomed to these uncomfortable and dangerous positions. They had often tossed a bundle from one rooftop to another or lifted a basket of treasures from below. They sometimes lifted a baby, suspended for a moment between sky and earth, while the mothers chatted.

They would run up the stairs two by two, their white calves molded in pantalets of lacy embroidery, followed by scrawny cats and squalling children. They often let themselves go in the joy of cavorting within reach of the sky, free of all constraints.

But when the people went out into the street, defying the forces of order and waving hundreds of copies of the Manifesto that had been recopied and passed around by school children, when the ruthless havoc began and the demonstrators began to fall under vengeful bullets, the women came down from their refuge and joined the men in the same unfettered agitation.

They shouted, called to each other and ran barefoot, their feet slapping sharply on the tile floor, and covered their ears when a scream brought visions of a new victim. They hid small objects in hiding places prepared in advance. They tried to hide those whose names were known to be on the occupier's black list, but their efforts were in vain. The mezzanine, the attic and the storage room are the places they search most carefully when they want to find a fugitive. Women who were used to seeing their men leave were already packing the suitcase, throwing in warm clothes and sweets, books--faithful companions in long months of solitude--and a lucky charm that held the promise of reunion.

H'nia told anyone who would listen that they should be careful of roosters; they were true traitors. Her distrust of this fowl was justified. Her husband, Si

Tayeb, was under house arrest and forbidden to cross his threshold under pain of imprisonment. But one day when they had company for lunch, she asked him to catch the chickens in the poultry yard. He was determined to catch a fine cock with a proud comb that got away from him as soon as he opened the door of the hen house. He chased it from the hen house to the garden, from the garden to the patio and from there to the entrance hall, but the rooster spread his bronze-tinted wings and ended up on the other side of the wall. In a rage, Si Tayeb forgot the order he had been given not to leave his house. They nabbed him in the street as he was yelling and chasing the worthless runaway.

In Fez, the demonstrations took on alarming proportions. Stores and workshops as well as elementary and secondary schools closed their doors. A growling human mass fell in a wave on the old city, flowing into the mosques and sacred places.

From Moulay Idris Mausoleum, the Qarawiyin University, the Rsif Mosque, and all the houses of worship rose the voice of thousands of believers repeating the same prayer until they were breathless: "Ya Lateef, O Savior." For two days and nights, the haunting prayer continued. Then the colonial forces reacted. They surrounded Fez and declared a siege. They aimed artillery at the city from the top of the bastions. Arrests multiplied. Fighting broke out. The police responded to hecklers by striking out with clubs. They shot into a crowd at close range and killed demonstrators. They trampled them with blind boots, tortured them in makeshift prisons, and executed them without a trial.

Under cover of a black night unknown in times of peace, without the least point of light, the soldiers invaded the old city. They surrounded its heart to

prevent the nationalists from reaching the ordinarily inviolable sanctuaries. They dug trenches and faced each other in two ranks, guns in hand, ready to fire at any suspect movement.

In the deserted streets, from time to time someone could be heard running and hiding somewhere, in a house whose door stood ajar, in the local mosque, or in the public bakery or bathhouse. Then, a short time later, soldiers were seen dragging him out of his hiding place, kicking and insulting him in an incomprehensible language, a mixture of French, Arabic and Berber, "Zid enta lemok." "Walk, you filthy Arab." "You want independence?" "Independence, my ass." "Enta khessek lahraoua." "You need a beating with a sledgehammer, fool. Get up and walk, you stupid shit." Women came out on their doorsteps, crying, screaming their hatred, calling down the curse of God on their children's tormentors. "God is with you, my son, God and His Prophet."

"May the Psalm of Protection wrap around you on all sides, in front, in back, on your left and on your right."

"May the hand that strikes you be paralyzed, by the will of God."

"May it be cut off."

The soldiers ignored these hysterical women and pushed along the young men who were already dazed, their gaze drowned in visions of horror, in fear of prisons where other Moroccans, under the encouraging eye of foreign officers, crushed fingers, tore off nails and cut flesh, making the victim's eyes roll back in pain, making wills crumble.

The siege lasted several days and intensified. Water and electricity were cut off. The road was blocked to supplies of any kind. On the outskirts of Fez,

mules loaded with produce were turned away. Donkeys trotted back home with their loads of vegetables and fruits, roughly handled by their masters who hated to see several weeks of hard work go to waste. Trucks that had been denied passage were parked on the roadside while the drivers waited in hopes that they would eventually be given permission to deliver their goods.

But the French decided otherwise. They wanted to "starve their insolence to make them show some respect."

Would the ancient city die of starvation? Would the city of legendary hospitality be refused the bread crust that could save it? Would her death thus be without glory, like that of an abandoned beggar?

God forbid! The French had not taken into account the precautionary Fassi spirit. The people of Fez had the habit of filling their attics with all kinds of staples to be prepared for the unexpected. There were jars full to the brim with olive oil and salted butter, and baskets full of wheat and oats. Lentils, broad beans, chickpeas, almonds, raisins and dates were piled up to the eye's delight. Every wealthy Fassi had stored enough salt, sugar, tea and honey to last a year. A calf or two had been slaughtered in mid-October to prepare for the hardships of winter, and large stoneware vats were filled with the preserved meat swimming in a grainy sauce. Onion and garlic decorated kitchens, hanging from the rafters in fragrant bunches. Charcoal and wood filled sheds.

What more did they need to stand up to the aggressors and survive with dignity? Water? Fez had many, gushing sweet water springs in the most unexpected places. The rich shared with the poor and showed a generosity unusual in times of peace.

The nationalists had organized themselves into several active units. The few days of calm that followed the presentation of the Manifesto gave them time to complete the major plan of resistance.

In the secrecy of locked houses, the silence hardly broken by the soft step of devoted servants distributing mint tea, the resolute leaders had written speeches and appointed those who would organize demonstrations. They had encouraged strikes, distributed the remaining weapons and planned for replacements in case of death or arrest.

Some hid inside the enclosure of Moulay Idris Mausoleum in order to act unimpeded if conflict broke out. They knew quite well that the enemy would surround this privileged zone first but would never dare violate its sacred status.

They had done their best to convince the people that grave events were coming soon and to prepare them to face the storm that already thundered in a dark sky. Everyone knew from experience that the road would be long and thorny. The French would not easily abandon their vision of a great empire. Morally weakened and physically strained, deformed or fatalistic citizens needed to be shaken and helped to find the necessary flame in an unequal combat. Everyone knew also that too many selfish interests were involved, but especially that the worst dissuasion was the paralyzing, conscience-killing security, the same that the master promises his slave and that the oppressor gives in exchange for self-determination.

When the city awoke, it was surrounded. Soldiers of the native and Senegalese regiments patrolled the streets and terraces. Protests were instantly organized. Patriotic slogans rang out from each part of the city. Speakers followed

one another on makeshift platforms, whipping up their fellow citizens' emotions and zeal, reminding them that the foreigner wanted to take their worldly goods, and above all, destroy their religion. "They want to make this country a Christian land. The country where Okba and Idris brought the word of God. Can you allow His law to be ignored again? Will you be the cursed generation? On the Day of Judgment, would you dare to appear before your Creator with this shadow over your head? What is life worth if you have to live as an outlaw? What does death matter if you die a martyr to your faith!" People cried hot tears, and the history lessons they had learned by heart, famous battles and magnificent deaths, rose in them like personal memories. The nonchalant, comfort-loving people of Fez were unrecognizable. Indifferent to the machine guns aimed at them, they marched into ambushes. When one of them fell, hit by a bullet, they hardly missed a beat. Their heart-rending chant became a fraction louder, "O Savior." Those who died were martyrs and therefore sure to enter paradise, and from the rooftops, the women responded to each new death with strident calls, "You-you-you!" They rained down every stone within reach on the soldiers and poured buckets of boiling water or oil on their heads. From time to time the soldiers pointed their guns skywards and shot blindly at silhouettes that darted behind walls. Sometimes the bullets reached their mark, and women, young and old—equally vulnerable to violent death—fell to the cement floor, their eyes wide with wonder at such an honor.

Their weapons were absurd in comparison to those of their adversaries: stones of all sizes, anything they could throw, sometimes their own slippers, kitchen knives, sticks, butcher's axes, barber's blades, or forks. But joy inspired

them, the indescribable joy of finally being able to kill and die to wash away the shame that stuck in the throat like a lead ball.

The wounded were taken inside houses whose door opened for them where doctors, nurses and volunteers took care of them, and to Rsif Mosque when they died. The fissured walls echoed and intensified screams of women and children and the exultant clamor of the fighters when they managed to deliver a mortal blow to the enemy. In the alleys, hand-to-hand fighting always ended in the death of one of the adversaries because there was no way to escape or hide. Blood and mud mixed in nauseating puddles. The bare rock darkened by the wood smoke of public ovens and baths was marked with stars of dripping blood and pieces of human flesh.

The knife gleams as the time-honored weapon of brave warriors. The barber's blade becomes a noble weapon, and the axe is light in expert hands. The blade flashes above turbaned heads and brown bodies. Blood shoots from throbbing necks. Anger drowns bitter hearts, killing the enemy before the bullet or blade can reach him. People of the land and native soldiers kill each other, for or against the same hidden master, equally pitiful in their vulnerability as colonized peoples.

The fighting lasted until nightfall. When the regional Commander General called a cease-fire, the nationalists lost no time. They barely stopped to catch their breath before wrapping the martyrs' bodies in blankets that had previously been stashed in the house of the muezzin, and whisking them away to the cemetery. Tanners had been ordered to carry the dead through a maze of streets to the tanneries where they infiltrated toward the cemetery. Their rugged trade had made

these young men as solid as rock. It was easy for them to run silently in the dark, holding their loads lightly, following the shadowy path to the cemetery where they were accustomed to spreading hides to dry between the graves. By the light of lanterns, they buried their brethren fallen on the field of honor.

The next morning, the soldiers of the French forces were ordered to count the enemy dead and watch that they be properly buried. What a surprise to discover that the dead had been buried secretly during the night! No one was there to tell them how or where.

#### 4

She put her dentures in a plastic cup. Glancing at the mirror, she laughed irresistibly. It was the laughter of her youth, slightly cracked, and tinged with cynicism. She put her hand over her mouth, leaned closer to the mirror and spoke to herself with biting irony, "Get hold of yourself, my poor girl. Stop this romantic farce. You're too old. You're just a crazy old woman. Your skin is as wrinkled as toad skin, as rough as a weaver's comb, as spotted as a piece of old parchment. Your mouth is a ruin and your eyes are two wormy holes where your mind drowned. You drag your foot like a vagrant bum. You're beaten, weak, trembling on your twisted old legs, and you pretend you're still in love? The old thing is getting emotional, chasing her dreams of love through the years. What a joke! How sad!"

She turned away from the mirror and continued, "I waited for the return of the prodigal son like a romantic little girl. I made sure the house was fit to receive

him. I perfumed his sheets with rose water and burned incense in his room. I went up and down the stairs ten times, forgetting my age and his, to arrange small objects on the table that might remind him of the past and of our life together that was so abruptly torn apart.

"Oh, my cousin, my friend, my twin brother, soul of my soul and flesh of my body. Oh, my mind, my conscience, my obsession and my folly, drop of honey in the blood of my heart bled dry. Oh, melody of my life, my defense against despair, old age and death. My love for all eternity.

"I fought for you. I conquered bitterness and survived adversity. For you, I accepted the taint of this other man and never gave myself away. I tricked them. His advances withered me, day after day, because I had to pay tribute to my family and protect my memories. I had bit into a tasty morsel with a ferocious appetite, but they snatched it away from me and threw me a bone. I don't know when this oppression began or when it will end. I am my mother, my grandmother and my great grandmother. I am my maiden aunts afraid of mismatches. I am my preadolescent cousins married to older men. I am my daughters confined in their empty bliss. I am all the victimized women around the world, body and soul abused: the French woman who prostitutes herself, the English woman addicted to drugs, the Chinese woman whose feet and brain are compressed, the Hindu woman burned on her husband's funeral pyre. I am all these women and more. Because I was aware and they were not. Because I could have lived and did not.

"When I saw age attacking me, my eyesight diminishing, my ears becoming deaf and senility lying in wait for me like a laughing demon, fear gripped me. So, is this the beginning of exile into nothingness, toward

nonexistence? The suicide of dreams, the end of all hope, the drowning death of the future and the past? I knew if you didn't come soon, it would be useless for you to come later.

"I waited so long, my love. I nurtured the memory of you as though it were a child born of my body. I made a fine poem of it to nourish my dreams, a song to brighten my thoughts. I built a shrine for you in my heart and let my life burn down there, like a solitary candle.

"I fought to prevent anyone from violating this sanctuary. Not even this man I lived with day after day and slept with every night. But in my struggle to preserve us, I did not notice time passing. Unaware, I became this wreck washed up on the shores of the world. I preserved my soul but not my body that obeyed nature's law of obsolescence.

"'She still has a young spirit,' they say. 'She's young at heart . . .' Nonsense. When your wrinkles precede you in a grotesque dance, when your legs tremble with every step and you cling to the ever-expanding emptiness around you, when your voice cracks and you spit out your teeth one by one, your so-called youth is nothing but an illusion, a shameless masquerade.

"My God, I'm ashamed of myself. What do I have to offer you, my poor beloved? My decrepitude and cynicism? Men, time, and fate have joined forces against me and they have won, in spite of my fierce determination. What more could I have done to stay whole for you? What can a person do against the termites of decay, except record the signs of intelligence and memory before losing them. These distorted hands are still marked by your burning kisses. This skin tattooed by your kisses is shriveled. My eyes are drowned in wrinkles. My

face is leathery, like a dried fruit. My voice is broken with repeating your name. You have finally come back and I am ashamed, having forgotten how to love. I no longer know the language of the senses or lovers' words. We have both had a precious part of our being amputated. The time for love ran through our fingers, but love's fire burned our living flesh to the bone. Now we are only ghosts in a morbid scene, acting out the character of our vanished ego. She smiled, 'Our vanished ego!'"

With this reminder of the transcendent nature of the soul, her face relaxed, her eyes drifted in a world of happiness, and the spell wrapped her soul.

Indeed, they had been unimaginably happy. They lived in the perpetual enchantment of two children amazed by the miracle of love. They had taken refuge in a room on the terrace to hide their joy from a disapproving household. "How lewd!" they said about her. "She 'comes' like a whore or a slave!"

Dada, their accomplice, brought them a tray of tea she had decorated with jasmine flowers. People loved openly in Guinea, her native land.

He rocked her in his arms and in the heat of passion. He promised to be hers forever, beyond death. She promised with faith and fire. As if, masters of this world, they would be masters of the next as well.

They gazed at the sky and divided up the stars: "This one is mine. I offer you that one as proof of my love. I can't stand a sky without stars. It's like a heart without passion. My heart twinkles like a gold-flecked sky."

"What message do you read in that constellation? What code? What prediction? What do you see there that I can't see?"

He began to decipher the sky for her: "It is written that we will live one hundred years. Our days will flow by in sweet expectancy. Our nights will be swept away in the whirlwinds of our passionate love . . . I see a glowing young woman, a contented wife, loved and loving . . . We will have children, grandchildren, many descendants. I see an old woman with children all around her and an old man trying his best to get her away from them . . ."

They burst out laughing and, arm in arm, returned to their nest.

But the sky had lied, or Moulay Ali had been unable to penetrate the language of the stars. Their marriage didn't last long. Even so, they had the time to taste the delights of Eden. After that, everything seemed colorless, in the other's absence.

"God punished my insolence. Such happiness as ours should have been silenced, hidden from the others. 'Moderation and modesty' are the only virtues recognized in our hypocritical society. A young woman of noble birth should be, if not repulsed by sex, at least indifferent to the impulses of her body. She should experience love as a pious act, a sacred duty, a rugged path toward procreation."

"Oh no! I reject this lie. In spite of the price I paid. That is the law of men, not the law of God."

"I was a young woman and I had a body, senses and a heart. I had a man I loved and I gave him all, without restraint."

"Now, I am once again face to face with my beloved, but I no longer have a body or senses to offer him, and my heart is lacerated."

Suddenly tired, she waved her hand, chasing away those bothersome thoughts and forcing herself to think about what had happened that afternoon.

"What could have gotten into Sharif? Did he join the demonstration for spite? After all, he is a man, even if I belittle that quality in him. His wife receives her ex-husband in her home. Right under his nose, she celebrates his presence and pampers him. In the end, he couldn't take it. No, I'm being ridiculous! Do I think I'm still capable of making anyone jealous? Besides, Sharif doesn't have enough imagination or romance to make a mountain out of a molehill. God knows what impulse put him up to this bravado. I never knew him to have any patriotic inclinations until now."

She sat up and made an effort to remember the facts. In the early afternoon, when the demonstrators reached the neighborhood where Lalla Kenza and her family lived, everyone in the household went out on the doorsteps, but the old woman stood behind a window in the entryway to watch without being seen. There were men of all ages, but most of them were young. Their voices rose up low-pitched and calm, as in a collective prayer. They walked straight ahead, in a tight line, arm in arm. Young athletes led the way, proud-chested, wearing white handkerchiefs tied across their brows, raising high the red flag: a green star on a field of red.

Their eyes were vague, their beards showed several days' growth, and they wore simple clothes. Most of them were craftsmen: weavers, blacksmiths, and carpenters. They shouted slogans: religion and country, king and government, and the names of exiled leaders. They showed no zeal and looked for no fight. They were simply men in need, exasperated with humiliation. They wanted to recover their whole country, neither divided nor dismembered. They wanted to regain their own identity, neither diminished nor disguised. They were not looking for

violence. They were peaceable citizens using moderate language to express their desire for dignified peace.

Sharif had looked at these strong young men whose only wealth was the nobility of their gaze, and the burning memory of his past life flared up.

He was an ordinary child in a humble family. His father was a farmer who scraped subsistence from an unproductive land, a rocky field he had to clear and cultivate to extract from it a meager harvest barely sufficient to nourish himself and his family. They lived in a small village of only a hundred souls, their homes rising in tiers up a slope in the Rif Mountains. They led a peasant life. Goats and the produce of small plots of land were their only livelihood. The agile, ruminating goats had the same harsh character as the mountain men and women who worked hard and never complained. When they were still young, they had wrinkled skin, rough hands and a stubborn disposition. Their rough palms whipped tender flesh when they spanked their children as the hot wind from the desert whips the wheat fields to dust. In a few short years, they were ageless and sexless, having lost distinctive facial features. They looked alike, each faded by sun and toil.

The children got as much as they could out of the barren land and the people who lived there. Lifting their short tunics high above their dirty bottoms and ran down steep slopes, screaming with laughter when they started an avalanche of stones or startled a flock of starlings into frantic flight.

At a tender age, they were given a shepherd's staff and lost themselves in windswept mountains, looking for tufts of grass between rocks for their goats to graze. Left to themselves on these heights where they could touch the sky and the

earth was a docile animal lying at their feet, they learned of liberty unfettered by discipline.

Then things changed. Tanks climbed the paths that only donkeys and mules had used until then. Airplanes cut through the sky previously the territory of only passerine and predatory birds. Frightened goats climbed trees. Children hid in their mother's skirts.

The mountain people had never had any master but God and a faraway sultan; they totally rejected the heretic power. Each one took his rifle and went to battle. They resisted for years, experts in the art of guerrilla warfare. They sprang up, out of a ditch, from behind a rock, from a riverbed, and took the enemy by surprise. But other tanks came, puffing up the hillsides, and the struggle became less and less equal. Each day they received news of the death of a father, and their only response was to send an adolescent son, grown up in his absence, to replace him! This was how Sharif learned of his own father's death. He had been crushed under the treads of a tank. Sharif was a scrawny, fifteen-year-old who seemed to have no inclination toward bravery. He crouched in his cowardice.

His bad-tempered mother became obstinate. She developed a habit of taking out her daily frustrations on him. She had a brood of six children, and the oldest was good for nothing, no help at all. He became her scapegoat. She beat him every time she got into an argument with a neighbor, whenever one of the children got sick, when the goat's udders hung like empty water skins, when her rough dry body yearned for a man.

She followed him, shouting insults—"Son of a bitch, bastard of ill omen, face of misery!"—and beating him.

The neighbor men and women came out of their huts to fan the woman's temper.

He ran away as fast as he could, swallowing his tears, holding his hands over his ears to escape the insults coming from all sides.

"Woe to the women who lose their husbands in these times! You'd think their children suckled at the breasts of infidels! They have no heart or faith."

"Woe betide you, O Fatima, who gave birth to this hard-hearted child! He does not care about your health going to ruin."

"Shame on the young people these days! They don't hesitate to eat the bread their mothers earn while they wallow in obscene impudence!"

"Hey! Where are you, Hamou? Come see your wife slaving away while your son struts around like a one-eyed rooster!"

He climbed to the highest peak of the mountain and hid in the brambles. He didn't come down until the last farmer had shut his door for the night.

His boundless indolence was the root of his problem. He never finished a job. He sometimes fell asleep leaning on the handle of the ax he had been using moments before, or stopped working to sleep and snore blissfully in the shade of a tree.

Sharif could not take the harsh treatment for long. One day, he braved the unknown and his own shiftlessness, put a loaf of bread and some black olives in the hood of his cloak, and left, carrying his slippers in his hand, never to return again. He set out for Fez. Since childhood he had heard of its charms.

He had heard tell of marvelous things. Fez was the city of light, the city of saints and shrines, the meeting place of the great scholars of Islam, the refuge of

the disinherited, the home of the abandoned. People said that kind souls depleted their fortunes feeding the poor. Wasn't he, too, worthy of their generosity, as a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed, may his soul rest in eternal peace? His father had declared that only twenty-five generations separated him from the prophet. He also said that Moulay Idris, their first ancestor to come to Morocco, fleeing from the persecution of the Abbassids in the East, had been received like royalty. He later became the prince of the faithful and founded the first Muslim state in Morocco. When all was said and done, Idris had been just another immigrant running away to a friendlier place.

It took him several months to reach the city of Idris. During these months, he worked as a day laborer, a farm hand, a porter, and a night watchman. When he couldn't find work, he stole, begged and prostituted himself in the inns where men and animals slept in the same mud and where merchants fond of tender flesh practiced their shameful dealings under the pretense of paternal charity.

There were kind people who gave him a place to stay for the night and others who gave him food and clothes in exchange for small jobs. When a hand gently stoked his scarred head, he would imagine it was his mother's hand, not the bitter mother he had left behind in his native village, but a different mother, born of his painful need for tenderness.

He discovered cities. Seeing the white buildings, hotels hidden in leafy gardens, opulent villas, squares teeming with a mixed crowd, he thought he had been projected several centuries into the future, into an imaginary world, so great was the difference between his rustic village and these large, modern cities.

Carrying his slippers--he wanted to keep them whole until he got to Fez--he ran on callused and cracked bare feet through cities the French had disguised to look European. A thousand times he was nearly run over by elegant cars, and the hat-wearing women inside them said, "Oh, oh my goodness! He's crazy, absolutely crazy!"

He sat down at a sidewalk café, and when the waiter came to take his order, Sharif ran away, swearing by all the saints that he hadn't done anything wrong. He thought the waiter--dressed in a white jacket and bow tie--was an official, superior person capable of harming him.

In this manner, living breathtaking new adventures, suffering from cold, heat and hunger, sometimes sleeping outdoors, taking serious risks, day by day he came closer to Fez.

He usually walked, but sometimes he caught a ride on a cart or shared the saddle with the obliging owner of a donkey. He took the bus when he had a little money.

He walked down valley paths and followed twisting trails around hills that shone red, green or gray where the sun transformed them into piles of gems.

He walked in this stunning light, unaware of nature's beauties. Sometimes, from the top of a slope, the countryside changed into olive groves stretching to the horizon, orchards where oranges perfumed the pure air, and vegetable gardens where fragrances mingled in a heady mixture.

Sharif ate however he could along the way. He gathered the fruit of thorny cactus plants, and filled his mouth with olives, sucking their delicious juice. He begged milk from a solitary shepherd, sucking the hot sweet liquid from the udder

of an ewe or a goat he had trapped between his legs. He sneaked into hedged gardens and filled his hood with oranges, taking them away to eat while he dangled his feet in the water at the river's edge or sprawled on the bank. Sometimes the owners caught him red-handed. Then, he lifted his cloak to his armpits and ran, leaving behind his pickings to lighten his load and get away from his pursuers.

Not once did he consider settling in one of the cities along the way. All he knew about Fez was that it was big and ancient, that it was in a valley at the foot of Zalagh Mountain, and that it was famous for its flowing springs and luxuriant gardens.

One day an old man asked him, "Where are you going like that, my child?"

"To Fez," he had answered.

"Do you realize how far it is to Fez, without a father to hold your hand, or a guide to show you the way in the maze of paths? Do you realize there are snakes that bite careless ankles, dogs that are set on the tracks of vagabonds, and thieves who steal and kill?"

"I know, Father, but I also know there are young nymphs who dance to the rhythm of the west wind, flowers that sparkle with dew and stars that weave a twinkling cloak for the solitary traveler each night."

He was radiant with joy when, at the call of the sunset prayer in blood-red twilight, he finally reached the hilltop overlooking the city of his dreams. Hundreds of minarets pointing up over the city sounded the same call, "God is

Great," which Sharif took as a welcome addressed directly to him. He fell to the ground and rolled in the dust, making a sharp, high sound, a cry of joy.

The kindly old man had suggested he go straight to the sanctuary of Moulay Idris as soon as he got to Fez. "When you get there, my son, go to the sanctuary of the patron saint of the city. There, they welcome and honor strangers."

After that, he had lived on charity. He quickly changed his manner of dressing. He learned to wrap a heavy turban on his head. He wore clean clothes and walked with a dignified bearing. He managed to get invited to marriages and he attended funerals. He was a member of that class of individuals who were always present and never useful, nonetheless tolerated in deference to the principle of never refusing one's hospitality to a "guest of God."

Sharif was not ashamed of his parasitic lifestyle. He did not consider himself responsible for it. "May the makers of my misfortune be blamed for it," he told himself. He blamed the events of the century for his failure. He added it to the list of colonial abuses.

His life, like so many others, was tied to the ever-turning wheel of history, attached to a Machiavellian gear that was breaking his ribs with each cycle.

His better instincts had committed collective suicide when he had left his village and his family, the firm earth beneath his feet, and the section of sky where he recognized his lot of stars. Only the virtues likely to please his masters had survived in his heart: servility, humility, a spirit of subordination, and a talent for mimicking the ways of those he had to consider from then on as his benefactors, a complicated hierarchy of benefactors.

He had lived without regret or shame, satisfied with his disgrace, until this day, this instant. As he stood face to face with this human mass in a state of trance chanting words of liberty, honor, and dignity, his past life flashed before him, empty of glory, and it humiliated him.

Since he had arrived in Fez, with no other wealth than his belonging to the "family of the Prophet," he had never known poverty. He had been respectfully received everywhere, fed and lodged at the expense of the community and honored for his noble ancestors. He sometimes worked with craftsmen in the concealing half-light at the back of a workshop, but he refused to do demeaning tasks that would have tarnished the grandeur he wished to project.

Still, he felt his future was precarious. He lived from day to day in growing uncertainty that his peace would last, until the splendid day when Moulay Larbi, God have mercy on his soul, proposed to give Sharif his daughter's hand in marriage and his fortune.

The meeting had been arranged by a mutual friend, in an inn, away from prying eyes. Moulay Larbi had peered at him suspiciously before speaking to him.

"I have come to offer you my daughter's hand in marriage, considering your noble lineage and because I have been told you are a good man."

These last words had been pronounced in a severe tone, implying, "Woe betide you if I've been misled!"

"You will not need to give the bride price or the customary gifts," the patriarch had added. "I will take care of everything. You will live in my house with your wife and children, if God grants you offspring. I will pay your expenses. However, I warn you. Lalla Kenza has . . . well . . . shall we say . . . an

obstinate character. She is stubborn. You will need to be patient, especially at the beginning of your marriage. You must promise, here and now, to treat her gently, whatever happens."

Only too happy to be given this unexpected blessing, he had promised everything that was asked of him, in the presence of an encouraging witness whose eyes sparkled as he thought of the blessed coins that would surely come his way.

Since then, he had enjoyed a stable if lackluster life. Without complaining, he had put up with his wife's moods, however dictatorial, angry, or ferociously cruel. She called him to her or pushed him away as she pleased, and he adjusted to the situation as well as he could, suppressing inappropriate signs of desire to avoid displeasing her and moving away when his arousal became visible and troublesome. Sometimes he sought hasty relief with one of the household slaves, being ever so careful not to get caught. He slipped out of the bed when he was sure his dear wife was sleeping, and like a condemned soul, grabbed whichever slave had stayed up to finish a job or had stayed awake to wish and dream in late-night emotional freedom.

Sometimes he lost his temper. Just a little bit, a tiny bit. He was like a man facing the ocean. He might well get angry, shout, scream and gesticulate; the immense blue would never stop playing with the folds of her wave clothing, swaying her magnificent hips, indifferent to his grotesque behavior, like a beautiful woman haughtily turning her back.

He threw himself into studies. He hired a tutor to teach him to read and write, and to his own surprise, he discovered he had a gift for literature. He read

every book in his father-in-law's library, little by little becoming familiar with the masters of Arabic thought. Life suddenly seemed fascinating. In time, the boorish man became a polished intellectual. Emerging from under the smothering weight of vulgarity, his mind awoke to intelligence. Still, he felt a secret discomfort, an unexpressed shame, as he searched in vain for values that would give him a particular reason to live.

On this day, through the call of duty, he perceived his soul, this human enigma, man's moral conscience and the heart of the mystery of his individuality. Without a second thought, he joined the marchers.

## 5

They waited a long time for him to come home. The stew simmered on the brazier until the meat stuck to the bottom and a crack in the crockery pot let the sauce drip out onto the coals. Then they decided to have a few bites, setting aside his portion of dinner. But it got late and he didn't come. Lalla Kenza finally wished Moulay Ali a good night as he told his prayer beads, and went upstairs to bed, telling her slave to wait for the master's return.

"Wait until he comes and lock the door behind him. If he is hungry, serve him dinner and wait until he has finished. Then make sure all the faucets and lights are off. You know how absent-minded he is. Good night, Moulay Ali. I'm going to bed."

As her worried cousin looked on, she left with faltering steps, torn between anxiety and an unjustifiable feeling of betrayal.

Who was this hero who came so late in life to disturb her way of looking at things, making her question the structure she had built during her whole life, probably on false assumptions?

She removed the band that held back the sleeves of her caftan, unfastened her belt and lay down on her bed, fully dressed, holding in a sigh. She let herself drift as she lay awake. Her mind wandered between haunting reality and nebulous dreams. She heard all the sound of this dreadful night: dogs barking, owls hooting, the whistle of the wind in the branches and Moulay Ali's chronic cough. She also heard smothered cries, machine gun fire, the sounds of running feet stopped abruptly, and the tread of heavy boots making the ground groan.

She felt a rush of concern for this man, her husband, so timid, so sensitive to the cold, who had gone out to face death, if not prison and torture in this glacial midwinter night.

It couldn't have been false bravado. He had truly left the comfortable security of the house on a fearfully uncertain venture. For the first time in his life, he had managed to get her attention. She was more inclined to admire him than pity him. She disliked weaklings and hated self-satisfied expressions, submissive attitudes, and begging hands. She abhorred poverty in any form, but especially the moral poverty that makes a man dependent, naked, and slimy like a worm.

For her, gentleness was softness, docility was weakness, modesty was hypocrisy and fatalism an escape from responsibilities. Pride in a needy person moved her more than tears, and dignity in distress more than a display of misfortunes. She had enjoyed demeaning her husband because he had crawled in

front of her. He had never bucked in revolt. Her relations with her slave had been different, precisely because her slave stood up to her.

In spite of her subordinate rank, Dada never gave an inch in their frequent disagreements. Her bulging eyes said, "You can insult me, you will beat me if you want to, you'll kill me if you have to, but you won't make me change my mind."

As for her husband, she had learned to despise him since their marriage when he basely sold himself to acquire a good reputation. Even today, she was still skeptical about his pretense at heroism. He'll back down in the end when the machine guns are aimed at him. Besides, he won't be the only one to give up. She remembered other times long ago when the treaty of the Protectorate was signed and people rose up to protest. Then, the people of Fez had marched in the streets to expel the intruder. She remembered how an impressive number of citizens had been pulled from the crowd and coldly executed, as an example. That had cooled the protesters' passions. Would it be the same today?

Would the enemy act with impunity again? This determination, this conviction, this belief in the legitimacy of the demands, would it all be surrendered to the enemy's strength? She prayed with all her heart that her fellow citizens would be able to stand up against it. "Alas," she told herself, "since yesterday, guns are set to fire on our city, just waiting for an order to rain destruction on us. Will we sacrifice mankind to protect the stones of an ancient civilization? Will we sacrifice the vital breath of Islam—the liberty to think and act—to Islam's outward signs? No, never!"

"Islam is not a city, a revered saint, a shrine, or a monument to past glory. It is social justice, tolerance, and moderation. It is truth spelled out for the good of

humanity. It is the third monotheistic religion that God, in his wisdom, revealed to his Prophet to complete the two others and restore "knowledge" to mankind.

"We must save it from every apocalypse.

"Even if we have to die, Islam must remain!"

She was at this point in her thoughts when she heard a light knocking at the outer door of the house. She listened, sure that it would be bad news. She was sure her husband was dead or mortally wounded. In moments, the door was opened, and she heard a quickly silenced scream.

Lalla Kenza got up and straightened her clothes with slow deliberation. She was already mentally organizing the details of the funeral: get the shroud he had brought back from Mecca out of the old chest, empty the side reception room to lay out the body, call the reciter of the Koran from the local sanctuary. When Dada got to the top of the stairs, out of breath, she found her mistress standing and gazing at her with sharp, scrutinizing eyes. Dada burst into tears and gasped the message: Sharif was dead. A bullet had hit him square in the chest.

Lalla Kenza showed no visible reaction. Not a muscle moved in her frozen face. Annoyed with the noisy display of emotion, she pushed away her slave and walked down the stairs one by one, not letting herself touch the wall for support. She did not wish to go gently on her bad leg. The pain would keep her alert. She would need to focus her attention in order to miss no detail and ask pertinent questions about the circumstances of her husband's death. It was only now that she wanted to understand the man's personality and do him justice.

A tall young man stood on the patio that was partially lit by a lantern hanging from a faded cupola. Wrapped from head to foot in a black burnoose, he

was leaning his head back on a pillar, as though he wanted to use the few moments of relief to take a nap.

He was surprised how quickly Lalla Kenza appeared. He braced himself for the agony of announcing the news of her husband's death to the elderly woman. However, he admired her proud manner and perfect self-control.

"Tell me every detail, I implore you. Don't try to spare my feelings."

The young man took a breath of cold air before he began to speak.

"As you know, Madame, your husband joined us as we passed your house. At first, we were astonished by the presence of the old man among us. We saw he was respectable, but obviously feeble, pardon the expression. But when he marched beside us with a firm step, when his voice rose above ours, when his tone expressed more spirit, feeling and fire than we would have been able to express, we understood that his strength came from faith and that age would never be an obstacle for those who are willing to sacrifice everything for what they believe in. We marched down winding streets into the center of the city followed by the women's ululation and prayers.

"We met no obstacles on the way. Our adversaries hadn't come anywhere near these streets, knowing they were traps in a maze.

"All the shops were closed and our ranks got tighter and tighter. When we reached the Qarawiyin, we saw that the soldiers had surrounded it and Moulay Idris Mausoleum. They had dug trenches to cut off access to the two monuments. We were under orders not to open fire. We knew how inferior our weapons were compared to our enemy's sophisticated firearms. We did not intend to take on a

regular army. We simply meant to show our discontent and demand the liberation of our leaders.

"But the sight of our fellow citizens' bodies still quivering drove us wild. They had been killed as they left the mosque. Someone told us that men had gathered at the Qarawiyin to make speeches denouncing the repressive acts committed against the nationalists. Religious advisors, university professors and students spoke in turn at the many pulpits in the university. The intense words of the speakers fired the emotions of a dense crowd. Alerted, the soldiers circled the building and blocked all exits. Anyone who tried to leave was cut down, regardless of age or allegiance. It was chaos. People ran from end to end of the courtyard, shouting frantically, praying, screaming like trapped animals, and appealing for quiet and a dignified death. A traitor was uncovered in the midst of the confusion, and he tried to use a gun. He was quickly overpowered by two young men, and a third one knifed him in the stomach. The crowd spat in his face. They insulted him and dragged him across the white and blue tile leaving a bloody trail. Then they left him, and his wide open eyes seemed to watch with detachment as his blood drained away.

"A young man tried to run back inside when he saw the machine gun aimed at him. Too late. He fell with his knees to his chin, his hands over his ears in a last, absurd, protective gesture. A man cried out, 'Oh, my mother!' A forty-year-old man who had been a great speaker just moments before wrapped himself around his fear in a fetal position, calling on the two solid truths that remain safe in our souls from childhood on: God and mother.

"Finally, they remembered a little side door that had been forgotten in the general panic. Thank God, it wasn't guarded. The crowd rushed to it, everyone pushing and elbowing to get out first, shouting and calling to try to find a friend lost in the upheaval, running the risk of alerting the hunters. Two strong young men reestablished order. They stood on either side of the narrow exit and let the men out two by two at timed intervals.

"The sight of men shot dead at the doorway of one of the most sacred places in our city made us lose our self-control, and fighting broke out without our having planned it. Children threw stones at the assassins of our martyrs. Men brandished knives. The soldiers reacted immediately. They fired randomly at the protesters. Our brothers fell under the avalanche of bullets. It became a terrible mob where patriotic slogans mixed with the 'Savior' prayer, the whine of bullets, and the screams of soldiers who had been knifed, in spite of their guns."

The man fell silent a moment, choked by emotion, remembering what he had seen and experienced.

Lalla Kenza seemed dazed. She was remembering hunting trips with her father. She saw again the hounds, the men turned into wild beasts, and the prey cornered and sacrificed to blood lust, dripping with the scarlet liquid. When her father invited her to deliver the *coup de grâce*, her father's guests, taking her for a boy because she was dressed like one, encouraged her with manly expressions. She remembered the fierce pleasure she had felt when she saw the proud stag or the gentle doe fall on its side, killed by the bullet she had shot with a steady hand.

Her slave stood by her side, as black and frozen as a flake of this starless night. What other black and frozen night was she remembering? What embraces

drowned in the gurgle of the wall fountain in the haunted kitchen? What bodies merged and equal in the same fear of being discovered? Everyone in the household was sleeping then, but she was sure her mistress lay awake after having sent her husband out of the room once more, and in her insane stubbornness continued an incomprehensible communion with her distant cousin.

"Your husband," the messenger continued, "was everywhere at once. He used his blood-stained knife and did his job as though he were enjoying himself. He never lost his smile, even as he fell, shot in the chest. I was a few steps away from him. He pulled my sleeve. I leaned over and tried to open his shirt to check his wound. He motioned me to stop and said, 'It doesn't matter. I won't survive this. Promise me, my son, if you get out of this alive, promise me you'll find my wife and tell her . . .' "

"He was losing a lot of blood, so I tore a strip off my turban to make a compress for his chest. He took a deep breath and spoke more quickly to gain time, 'Tell her this is the other side of the coin. Until now, she could only see one side. I hope to God she's satisfied now. She is so demanding. Tell her that even though I never understood life, I faced death squarely, and I was not afraid. Tell her, though in half a century I never fully adapted to this city, now I am one of her sons, because I die for her. Tell her I loved her, so much!'

"He stopped talking. He motioned for me to turn him on his right side and move away. Caught up in the heat of the battle, I didn't come back to him for a quarter of an hour. He wasn't breathing any more. The fighting stopped at nightfall. We didn't waste any time. Our martyrs were immediately taken to the

Rsif Mosque. Your husband's body is there now. We are waiting for our leader's orders."

Moulay Ali had joined the group and warmly shook the militant's hand. The man stopped speaking because he had come to the end of his account and because more words would have seemed indecent at such a solemn moment. Dada brought him a large glass of milk and some aniseed rolls. He drank the milk in one gulp but did not touch the rolls.

When he looked at the widow again, he was staggered to see her expression of rage. This death had come too soon, and such a death! It had fossilized her as a malicious woman, for all eternity! She had missed the chance to redeem herself.

She had wounded her husband to the heart and would never even be able to soothe him.

Now she understood. He had suffered all these years, poor man, and had had the decency to hide his pain. And she hadn't been perceptive enough to see the good in him. For the first time in her life, she doubted her judgment, but she was too old to question everything.

She felt enormous fatigue overcoming her and suddenly looked like what she was: an old woman defeated by age.

Without a word, still trying to walk with dignity, Lalla Kenza turned her back on the messenger and started up the stairs to her room.

The messenger suggested that Moulay Ali go with him to identify the body and complete the usual formalities. The two men left the house and vanished into the night wrapped in dark cloaks. They went back the same way the young

man had come. They went down sloping streets in total darkness, running the risk of falling into deep mud or tripping over ruts with every step. They stepped on piles of trash, slipped on mud and slick rocks, and clutched at rough walls that were cracked from top to bottom. When they passed others on the way who had come out into the streets, as they had, for God knows what purpose, they flattened their shoulders against the wall without exchanging a word, wanting to maintain the protective silence.

As soon as they entered a wider street, they saw the first signs of combat: bloody puddles of mud, a strip of clothing torn in a run for life or death, a twisted slipper reflecting the dim light from the sky, or an incongruous kitchen utensil lying there too peaceful in the bleakness of this morbid, deserted scene. Then, in a small square with one lonely tree, they saw a mule lying with its mouth open, its rider clutching at its hide, his face hidden in the mane, surely to escape this last vision of horror. One meter away, a boy lay in his last sleep, his head crushed, his legs spread apart, the terror of death still alive in his wide-open eyes. These were the first victims they found on their way. They saw others, by the dozens in desolate streets, carcasses piled up or lining the walls, waiting to be taken to make-do cemeteries.

With permission, they took short cuts across fallow garden plots and through courtyard gardens to reach several areas of the city that would have been more than an hour's walk away had the two men taken the winding streets and alleys. At this hour, guard was down. Both sides had suffered and were taking care of casualties. In these places of mourning, darkness and scalp-tingling, skin-tightening silence reigned. No cry, no moan, no sigh of life. The few soldiers on

guard seemed frozen in their uniforms, motionless, bolt upright or squatting. Moulay Ali and his companion slipped by and crossed the tannery to reach the river. They followed the wall that hid the river from view but could not eliminate the putrid odors of this running sore that carried away the sewage of the city.

They went staunchly, stepping over obstacles, running low when the terrain allowed, inconspicuous in the haunted shadows.

Moulay Ali had recovered a long-forgotten agility. In the excitement of action, he became again the adolescent with a shaved head who lifted his robe to his thighs and wrapped his turban around his waist before climbing trees or walls to pursue a run-away rooster or tease a cat.

However, the effort made his heart miss a beat; he felt a fluttering tug, which he ignored.

At a bridge, avoiding the large rats that ran from under their feet and holding their noses against the nauseating odors, they walked through the water to reach a secret stable door that had been left unlocked for them. They left the stable through another door leading to the Rsif Mosque.

They had hardly left the stable where a mule lying on the cement floor had stirred in its sleep, barely disturbed by their passage, when they came face to face with the brutally tragic reality of heart-rending loss. The dead were lined up side by side all the way to the entrance of the mosque, up the stairway leading to the prayer room, and in the large central hall. Ordinary faces, without particular marks, distinction, or saintly halo. Simply men who had lived the ups and downs of life and been blessed with a fine death. Men who had been good and bad, gentle or brutal, honest or deceitful whose lives had ended on a harmonious note.

Walking around the exposed bodies, they carefully entered the large cross-vaulted room where they recognized Sharif whose white beard stood out among all the other black beards pointing toward the ceiling, an eloquent protest to the waste of so many young lives cut down before their time.

Coagulated blood on the stairs, a handkerchief fallen from a pocket, still damp with the sweat of the fighter, a hand gripped over a heart rebelling at having to stop beating so soon. Eyes open in a gaze crowded with courage, daring, regret for things left behind, and fear of what was to come. Signs of death engraved on the face of a martyr.

One of the young men in charge had come to them. He exclaimed, "He's one of us!" In response to Moulay Ali's questioning glance, he explained: "He was a member of the network I was in. He was an important member of the resistance. For nearly two years, we went to meetings in one house or another, or in private schools."

"And to think he pretended he was going out to play cards with friends!" Moulay Ali exclaimed.

"Oh, we all made up excuses for going out! We didn't even let our wives know the truth. That was the rule. At first he was a firm believer in the Salafi movement, the return to the Source," the man continued, looking at the old man lying at his feet and speaking frankly. "Then he became firm nationalist.

"Just the day before yesterday he told me: 'I read the nationalist newspaper regularly. I am very interested in the writings of Sheik Mohammed Abdou, the greatest reformer of the century. I am a fervent admirer of his and, like him, I am

convinced that the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet contain the seeds of modernization.'

"One day he told me the story of his past wanderings.

"'In the past,' he said, 'I was lost in this world that had no definite place for me. My soul had been wandering for a long time, abandoned by all, lost in the error of my ways. I was forced to go forward, pushed by the impatient crowd behind me. If they hadn't pushed me, I would have stayed where I was, like a passive old mule waiting for the end of my days.'

"'Then I started to read, hesitantly at first, stumbling on words, stuttering, then better and faster. I read the Koran. Even though I didn't grasp the profound meaning, a ray of light shone through into the darkness of my life. I learned to get around without tripping on stones or falling in ditches. Then I read interpretations of the Koran, the Traditions of the Prophet, and theology. I learned the terms. Each day I went deeper into 'knowledge.'

"'I discovered the pleasure of long hours alone with books. Friends, former students of Moulay Idris secondary school, taught me to decipher French newspapers. In them, I read detailed news on the latest developments of the war, the approximate number of casualties fallen on the battlefield, the allies' advance, and the upheavals caused by events. There were also news items about reforms supposed to improve the daily life of the natives, and the various activities of the Resident General and the foreign dignitaries he received. I was unaware that this mixture of ideas was forming my opinion. For me, and for many Moroccans, the existing government was beginning to lose its sacred power.'

"France was no longer the invincible force that stood up against any quiver of rebellion. Her defeat on several fronts, her prolonged occupation by Germany, her defense systems that were relatively weak when measured against those of other nations, all this brought her back to human dimensions. And then came the allied forces with their new ideas about human rights, democracy, and people's sovereignty. Besides, liberal French people, members of the collective French conscience, wrote scathing editorials in which they criticized the behavior of soldiers who acted unjustly toward the people in rural areas or the ruthless racism and discrimination at all levels, in civilian life as well as in the military. They said this conduct cracked the sanctity of the ruling power.'

"I started coming to your consciousness-raising meetings. At first, I came for my own edification, without participating in the debates. I listened carefully when the leader said, "The return to the Source! It is better to rebuild faith on empty land than restore ruins. It is better to reconstruct identity in a virgin world, cleared of false ideology. The first Muslims broke the stone idols that men had clothed with their fantasies. Let us in turn break the chains of our misconceptions. We are like the traveler who arrives at his destination after crossing the desert, his throat dry and his clothes in rags. We would be better off naked. Let us then return to Islam as it was practiced by the prophet and his caliphs, in the light of reason, in the logic of change, the first condition of life."

"I was a lost traveler and I found an end to my wandering in the return to the Source. I became a determined advocate of the Salafi movement, our surest path to knowledge."

The militant stopped, suddenly aware that the man who had spoken with such enthusiasm was lying in front of him, lifeless, felled like a horse whose strength has deserted him.

His voice became gentle, like a caress. "His action flowed over into politics based on Islam. He was one of our bravest militants."

The man stopped talking, choked with emotion, as were his listeners. Moulay Ali asked to be taken to the person in charge of burial arrangements. The young man motioned him to follow and led the way toward the public oven next to the mosque. He went straight to the fireplace, removed the ash with both hands, and without saying a word entered a seemingly endless tunnel. Repressing his fear, Moulay Ali followed his guide through the blackness of the underground passage, murmuring a prayer.

They went forward, bent double and ears deafened by the noise of colliding shadows. "My God," prayed Moulay Ali, "this has been my life, from beginning to end. In spite of the sun and the light, my heart was drowned in darkness." He was instantly ashamed of this sacrilegious thought. To think of love at such a time? What impudent egotism! But isn't love the first necessity of life, the only justification of death? To die having loved is not to die. Death perfects love, preserves it, removes it from the inflexible law that governs the living world: to be born, grow, develop, and then decline, shrink and disappear in ugliness.

"We will take our love with us in all its beauty," he thought, "our unlivèd love!"

Finally, they saw a faint light and emerged from the other end of the tunnel through another oven fireplace into the underground kitchen of a house inside the Moulay Idris sanctuary. This place was doubly protected. First, it benefited from the law of asylum that pertained to the mausoleum. Even a criminal could take refuge in the sanctuary of the city's patron saint, and no hand could reach in to punish him. Second, it was a place reserved for women. In the central reception room, young men leaned over papers.

It must have been pamphlets because they gave them to a group of women who quickly hid the bundles under their veils and tied them to their backs with a length of cloth, as though they were carrying babies. Then the women disappeared into the night, ready to face all dangers. They would spread out under cover of darkness, as inoffensive mothers whose main concern was to return home, but in reality, they were brave citizens intending to fight to the end, having offered the nation husbands and sons. Their lives regained meaning only when they contributed to finishing the task undertaken. They did not know the extent of the job, but they knew they had to break the colonizer's mirror, for in this mirror they saw their loved ones diminished and demeaned. The colonizer's voice takes on a strange tone when it says "Moroccan, Arab, Muslim." They knew they had to silence this voice and break this mirror to prevent the young people from being ashamed of themselves.

The man who seemed to be in charge looked up inquisitively as they entered. When he learned the purpose of their visit, he spoke to Moulay Ali, "We are going to bury our dead immediately. They are martyrs. They do not need to be bathed or shrouded. God will receive them in His paradise as they are. We cannot

afford to wait until morning to bury them. If you want to come with us to say a few prayers, that should be no problem."

So began a ghostly parade in which men advanced, bent with the weight of the corpses they carried, moving like shadows, close to the walls, like the spirits that populate our lands when we sleep.

Moulay Ali later related the events to Lalla Kenza with an animation unusual for a gentleman who usually showed restraint in word and gesture:

"This was indeed a most dangerous and extraordinary expedition. Fear, anxiety, determination and fatalism filled the silence. We were fifty, or a hundred, or a hundred and fifty, I don't know the exact number, but we made no more noise than a column of ants. Strapping young men like Malik, the angel of hell, built like walls, furtively faded into the night holding their burdens close and swallowing their breath. We heard soldiers above our heads patrolling the bridges and expected bullets to rain down on us at any moment. But the soldiers had been warned against the ghosts of believers that returned in pilgrimage to the old walls. They dared not look too closely at the foul-smelling wadi. They simply stared straight ahead to save face. The officers had gone to rest, leaving as sentries only beardless boys who had just fought their first battle and were hiding their fear under a veneer of courage.

"We went out the same way we had made our way into the Rsif Mosque. We crept through the same stable to the banks of the river and followed it to the entrance of the tannery.

"Our men, mostly tanners--which explains their colossal build--guided us between basins of dye where skins soaked. Other skins were hanging on frames,

looking like scarecrows set up to keep away the dark birds of prey that seemed to be circling in clouds over the city, ready to dive in voracious swarms.

"They went with stealthy steps, as alert as when they had left the mosque, seeming to be one with their bundles. A long time ago, I used to watch them work, these giants with steel biceps. They had wide fingertips, and their fingernails were eroded. Their faces were jovial and empty, their laughter was frank, and their appetites were astounding. Knee-deep in colored water, their feet rhythmically crushed the tanning leather while they chanted. When a sheep or goat is skinned, the hide goes through several operations. The feltmaker pulls out the wool and plucks the hair. The tanners soak the skin in lye, then in pigeon dung, and finally in bran mash. Then they carry it to the river where they wash it well to get rid of all remaining impurities. The skins are put in basins where they are dyed red, brown, or yellow, depending on the intended use. Then the skins are wrung out, and tanners carry them on their shoulders to Bab El Hamra and spread them on the hillside. When the skins are dry, they bring them back to the tannery, and, wearing wire shirts, they beat the skins in a rhythmic back and forth motion to soften them. I utterly admired the tanners' physical strength, and I was stunned by their gluttony. One day, someone brought a group of them a dozen loaves of bread and a stew of preserved meat, dripping with fat. While his friends chanted to the rhythm of their work, a stocky young man swallowed the meal that was meant for ten men as though it were a piece of candy. When the hungry tanners came and discovered the prank, they badgered him and dared him to demonstrate strength equal to his appetite. At that moment, a rock-salt merchant arrived on the scene with his donkey whose back was bent under a heavy load. Our young tanner

went to the donkey, lifted it hee-hawing and terrified above his head, and calmly walked around the multicolored basins."

"God protect us from such ogres," cried Lalla Kenza, laughing, holding a hand over her mouth, in spite of the painful circumstances.

"Well, we followed our guides," continued Moulay Ali, "on a path they knew well, and reached Bab El Hamra with no problems. From a distance, the hillside looked like a garden with flowerbeds blooming in various colors. We walked around the drying skins and got to the cemetery, which will from now on be called the Martyrs' Cemetery. Quickly, by the light of a few flashlights, they buried our dead, and we left in different directions, relieved to have saved our brothers from a mass grave."

Lalla Kenza made no comment. There were no words for the occasion.

She had changed her gold-banded headdress for a very simple white scarf that completely covered her head. She wore a light yellow caftan instead of the yellowed white mourning clothes that she had worn for her mother's, father's and relatives' funerals. All the wrinkles on her face were visible. She had not put kohl on her watery, glassy eyes. She seemed suddenly old and vulnerable, and her cousin felt a wave of tenderness for her. "You can rely on me for anything you need," he said, adding with a sigh, "as long as I am here, anyway."

"Don't you worry," she defied him, as though his kindness had slapped her, "I haven't given up yet. I have lived long enough to understand that human beings inevitably run to their death, as if they were in a huge marathon race. Still," she added as though speaking to herself, "when someone you have lived

with suddenly dies, you get caught in spite of yourself in the dizziness of existence . . .

## 6

She felt agitated, started to get up, changed her mind, and sat back down. She reached into her pocket to get her snuffbox, then decided not to. Her chin trembled, but she mastered her emotions, and looking directly at her cousin she said, "The truth is, this death, such a death, took me by surprise. I feel guilty about being so unfair to Sharif. Too much misguided vanity. I loved myself too much to love others. The ego is monstrous and selfish. It pulls everything back to itself. It swallows the universe and changes the history of men. Man's only purpose has been to tame the world for his own despotic, egotistical purposes. This ego allows others to exist only to help realize itself. The super ego, what a joke!"

She fell silent, and then began again with less force. "He did not speak, and I could not hear his inner voice. Your love clouded my horizon. I was like the Arab Bedouins of old, walking on shifting sands, armed with the eloquence of racial memory, effortlessly reciting passionate poems singing the virtues of their men. And you were my only man, my only knowledge in my atavistic ignorance.

"They had the advantage of education!"

"My dear, your intelligence is beyond compare, and your cultural refinement is vast."

"My illiteracy is an alienation. I gleaned knowledge by intruding on other peoples' conversations."

"Your pride makes you stronger than many educated men."

"My gender limits me. I am a prisoner inside my female body and womanhood."

"So many men are beneath you!"

"But they are our masters by nature's decree."

"You are . . . invincible!"

Again, she laughed, modestly covering her mouth with a charming, youthful gesture.

"I must surely be a rare survivor of that race of women who lived free or died trying to change the ancient order."

Then, after a moment of silence she added, "To balance our relationship, Sharif and I would have had to exchange egos, wouldn't we?"

Moulay Ali nodded, overcome by his cousin's undiminished verve.

"Outrageous Lalla Kenza," he mused, "you will always astonish me. Philosophizing about the ego at such a time. You keep coming back to that because you were denied the right to be yourself."

In fact, the thought that she had been so wrong about her husband tormented her. Yet, in her memory, during their whole shared life, he had been helpless. He often cried when she pushed him away, exasperated with his dullness. And when she grandly called him back, he came running, gushing a string of compliments. Even then, careful to reverse their roles to the end, she felt him flaccid on top of her, while under him she shivered with repressed disgust. She became mean, trying to embarrass him, but she only read distressing submission on his self-satisfied face.

"Now he is dead, and I still have the feeling of having been deprived of a man's presence." It was four in the morning. Neither Moulay Ali nor Lalla Kenza wanted to sleep. They sent for blankets to cover their knees and settled down in the living room, sitting on mattresses on the floor. The coals in a brazier crackled and warmed the small room. Moulay Ali opened the Koran to the Yassine chapter and began to read.

"Is man not aware that We created him from a little germ? Yet he is flagrantly contentious. He answers back with arguments, and forgets his own creation. He asks: 'Who will give life to rotten bones?'"

"Say: 'He who first brought them into being will give them life again: He has knowledge of every creature.'""

The two maids came and went, attending to small tasks and holding vigil for the absent deceased. Their silent tears marked the rhythm of the readings of the holy scriptures.

Lalla Kenza seemed absorbed in the meaning of the Koranic verses, but in truth her soul was following the spiraling whorls of her thoughts, one moment held in meditation, and then off again, free of constraint, leaping on the peaks of the cosmos in a universe she had created for herself where she had taken refuge each time the social order threatened to capture her in its tentacles.

Nature awoke peacefully, as it did each morning, indifferent and superb, blooming with new births, turning its back on the dead. The sun did not delay its appearance. It rose this day on a grieving city that was prepared for further sacrifices.

The authorities vainly tried to break the strike that the people of the city observed with unanimous solidarity. The forces of order carried out severe reprisals and mass arrests. Prisons were filled with political prisoners. Dozens of men were taken to unknown destinations. Sons were torn from their mother's arms. Husbands were taken from their beds at gunpoint. Young people were beaten and molested while their helpless parents looked on. Houses were ransacked, and goods looted. The soldiers violated the privacy of citizens and trampled their most basic civil rights. The city became an animal market where the shouts of dealers mingled with the cries of mistreated livestock.

No one was spared, neither rich nor poor, neither young nor old.

Dada went around to the neighboring houses to convey her mistress's sympathies to distraught families. The Berradas, their next door neighbors, had seen their two sons taken away. The mother, Lalla R'kia, was slapping her thighs with her palms, her clothes in disarray, her scarf awry on her disheveled hair, kohl mixed with tears running down her cheeks. She had followed the kidnappers, pleading with them to take care of her dear children, especially the youngest whose health was fragile. "Oh, sirs, I was older than forty when I had him, and day after day and from one year to the next I fought to keep death from stealing him away from me. I nursed him back to health by giving him dishes prepared especially for him, with meat broth--nothing better than that for anemia, gentlemen--and dates stuffed with anise--that will bring your blood pressure up in a wink--and raisins crushed in onion juice. I held him close to me to keep him warm. I spent whole nights keeping alive the small flame that threatened to go out at any moment. I rocked him in my arms and bathed him in my love as the sun

bathes and warms new chicks. So I beg of you, spare him. Pity a poor mother. Save my dear little one . . . "

In response, the agents pushed the two boys roughly into the Jeep and it took off, splattering mud.

As for the Benshakrouns, they watched as the head of their family was taken away, an older man with an emaciated face wreathed in a salt-and-pepper beard. This was not his first encounter with the agents of the occupier and their reprisals. Already, at the publication of the famous Berber Decree—the colonial government wanted to establish a separate judicial law for Berbers, thus creating a split between the two ethnic groups of the Moroccan population—he had been deported to the Sahara where he was kept for three long years in such poor conditions that he returned looking like a skeleton, suffering lifelong amoebic dysentery. He went without a struggle, wearing the thick wool cloak he had quickly put on over his long cotton shirt, and did not turn even once for a last look at his wife and children who swallowed their tears to let him leave in dignity.

The Iraqis, the Tazis, the Benjellouns, all had to witness the departure of a father, a brother, or a son, pale with anxiety. Choking on their anger, the women restrained themselves from cursing the tormentors for fear that their loved ones would suffer the consequences. They trembled with hatred, especially when they saw Hajj Abdelkader. The soldiers were pushing him in front of them, beating him with their rifle butts. Stumbling and distraught, he threw teary glances at his wife who ran after him (a manner of speaking since the poor woman had never run in her life: a well-born woman does not run) with his medicine bag and some warm clothing, screaming that he was diabetic and that depriving him of his

medicines would be murder—as if it were their first assassination—and that God would punish them in the hereafter—they weren't thinking about that yet—and that God was just and merciful . . . The rest of her sentence was inaudible. The words gargled in her suddenly knotted throat from which escaped only agonized, irregular breathing.

Most of the prisoners were taken to the forest in the Middle Atlas. They felled trees. The snowy cold was too much for them, as it was for all the animals, grass, leaves, and flowers that made this place festive in the summer. These city men with their fine hands handled the scythe and ax poorly in the frigid air. Sweat froze on their foreheads and swollen eyelids. When they couldn't take any more, weakened by hunger, their backs gave way under the work, and they fell. Their stiffened bodies were dragged away, leaving bloody shreds on the ground. One of them, named Mohammed, as he was dying at a sergeant's feet, said to him, "You kill a Mohammed every day, but there will always be one left who will make you leave this country." The sergeant killed him with his bayonet.

Those who rebelled against this treatment were put in a latrine trench where the grinning cracks of bottoms loudly excreted on them.

These men's forced labor in the Middle Atlas inspired the poignant, poetic lyricism of the people.

Oh, my beloved in the rocky land where no green grass grows.

Lower your eyes so that no evil may reach you.

You have left me like one who cooks tar,

vainly blackening his hands and blinding his eyes.

You have left me like one who cooks stones:

he eats no meat and tastes no sauce.

You have left me like one who has lost his horse:

others ride while he walks.

You have left me like one who has fallen into a river:

one wave lifts him and the next pushes him under.

You have left me like one who has fallen into a well:

no one can save him,

and he can find no way out by himself,

and everyone cries.

My beloved did not let me meet him and I am dead,

but not yet delivered,

for the breath of life remains . . .

There were brave men, but there were also cowards. They hid under piles of blankets and came and went, mutely praying, resembling the goatskins used in our countryside to churn butter. The same slack skin, the same spasmotic gurgling, the same abdominal to and fro.

They shat in their pants each time they heard the conquering boots nearing their houses or a voice of command. "You never know," they said to themselves. "Mesbah the shoemaker might give them my name, the first name that comes to his mind, to stop the torture. Or Jilali the barber who cut my hair the day before yesterday, to whom I made harmless remarks about current events. Or even Abderrahman the butcher who turned out to be an informer and who isn't

particularly fond of me. And all the others who are jealous of my wealth. Luck has continued to smile on me and turn her back on them. How can I be sure that none of these envious people will take advantage of the situation to destroy me? My God, I ask for your protection. Dear God, have mercy on me!"

Hedonists, they had always taken their pleasure where they found it, stepping on bodies if they had to, caring little for their fellow citizens' fate or that of their own brothers. Following in the footsteps of the colonists, they crushed under foot their own demeaned people who were not base but debased and enslaved.

Their wives cried around them, calling on the saints they had served for years to guard against such catastrophes. They barricaded the doors and closed all exits. They showered attention on husbands who had become suddenly as compliant as newborn babes, hiding at home in hopes of being forgotten by the nationalists and the colonial forces.

Those who lived in the besieged city meditated in silence. Police investigations found only the empty eyes of people in prayer who seemed not to understand their questions.

Soldiers had climbed onto the rooftops of public buildings and aimed their machine guns at people passing in the street. Whoever tried to cross a river or a street was shot down in cold blood and fell face to the ground with the sound of a cracking nut.

A twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy with steel-blue eyes and a shaved head appeared on the Tarafine Bridge. He was determined to reach Nakhaline Street at whatever cost. He made his way through the tight haggard crowd, pushing aside

the men who stood there looking at the other side of the bridge as though it were an unattainable dream: their houses, their families, a worried wife, children crying for their father pronounced lost in action, a grief-stricken mother. The boy lowered the hood of his cloak over his eyes and without hesitation made a prodigious leap over the human wall. Taken by surprise, the soldiers opened fire a second too late. The boy had vanished and was running to the arms of his mother for whom he had just shown great courage.

The city had lived in isolation for several days. Water and electricity had been cut off. No food was for sale. The large grain mills were sealed shut. The continuous rumble and creaking of olive presses could no longer be heard. The public ovens and baths had closed their doors. All commercial and social service activities were suspended. The absence of familiar sounds contributed to the atmosphere of anxiety and amplified the sounds of yesterday in peoples' memory: protesters' thundering slogans, women's ululation, shouted orders and counter-orders, "God is Great!", calls of encouragement and triumph, voices of submission, and death rattles.

In spite of the soldiers who had invaded the city, first-aid workers continued to ensure the distribution of products that had been stockpiled by the richest to those who had been hit the hardest. At night, black silhouettes could be seen bent under heavy loads, transporting generous offerings over the rooftops from one end of the city to the other. From the surrounding hilltops, French military officers aimed their telescopes at these moving shadows, observing with grudging admiration this coalition that was the major strength of their opponent.

When the runners paused within range, soldiers sometimes shot at them, but this did not stop the nocturnal activities.

The morning of the twentieth or thirtieth day of the siege—memory clouds in this flow of dark hours—brought a catastrophe darker than the night that had just passed. Out of dozens of trucks and into the city spilled an evil-eyed troop of men recruited from populations of rural Bedouins who hated their neighbors' superiority. They were given every liberty to steal, pillage, rape, and destroy. When the people of the city saw them preparing to begin their dirty work, they surrendered and ceased all resistance to save their belongings and their honor. Some, those too accustomed to the comfort of their way of life, were relieved to see the end of the hostilities, in spite of the humiliations and reprisals that the adversary would surely impose. Much more than the deadly tanks, the sight of unleashed, faithless country ruffians awoke in them a visceral fear, a memory of the lawless times. Their fear quieted when order returned.

Lalla Kenza had spent this whole period in ceaseless activity from early in the morning until late at night. As soon as she had given the orders for the meals and housekeeping, the old woman climbed to the attic, settled on a low stool and presided over the distribution of foodstuffs to disaster-stricken families. Men came and went, working around the dignified elderly matron, rarely lifting their eyes to look at her, out of respect. One filled cloth bags with dried beans or peas.

Another used a ladle to fill buckets with oil, clarified butter, or honey. A third lifted baskets brimming with garlic, onions, potatoes, or flour.

Moulay Ali kept his cousin company. From time to time he went to hear the news in the street and returned to tell Lalla Kenza of new developments and neighbors' comments.

Sitting next to her on a straw-filled pouf while the men worked in the freezing shadows, he told her about the debates among the besieged people, about their sadness, revolt, and fatalism. He spoke to her about the other cities of Morocco that were also besieged: Meknes, Rabat and Salé. He told her of the extreme poverty of the Moroccan people, the misery of the lower classes, the desolation of the countryside, the sickness, famine, and exploding population. He grieved over the ships taking agricultural products away to Europe while the people died of starvation. He compared conditions in Morocco to the modernization and development of other countries he had visited in the West and East. He spoke of an anemic Morocco, whose people were kept on a leash and remained confined in their old theories while a new world was emerging thanks to revolutionary technology. He described to her the Maghreb countries united in misfortune. In Tunisia, the local French and Tunisian governments were at odds, and the country had become a political arena and a battlefield. In Libya, the Italian population had been evacuated for the same reason. The regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were ruled by Great Britain while the Fezzan region was under French control. Algeria was the country the most marked by colonial domination. It was divided into three French provinces and its economy was oriented toward France to the detriment of impoverished Algerians who had been

robbed of their lands and were considered subjects but not citizens. The colonial powers thought they had "tamed" Morocco, but a large-scale demand for nationhood had emerged, and its first expression was the denunciation of the "Berber Decree."

"How did the colonizers think they could shelter Berbers from Muslim jurisdiction? The people condemned this arbitrary proclamation so forcefully that the French had to withdraw it. But with the constant repetition of perverse ideas, this regionalism is reappearing. Arabs or Berbers, from the North or South, we are one and the same entity united by Mohammed's religion. Authentic ways are welcome; they enrich our cultural heritage, but what should we reject? What should we give up? Why should we choose? In the name of what? What right do we have to say one is better than the other? What law says some can act to the disadvantage of others? What difference can there be between elements of the same people who have lived together for centuries? How can anyone separate bloodlines crossed millions of times? What is Arab and Berber now? Which one of us can prove he belongs to one ethnic group and not the other, even if he grew up in isolated Berber lands or has the characteristic ring-shaped birthmark on his shoulder, the mark of the Prophet's children?"

Moulay Ali was agitated because the subject pained him, but he mastered his emotions and smiled. Having recovered his normal quiet voice, he concluded, "The urban middle class has spearheaded this claim and crowned it with the Independence Manifesto."

Lalla Kenza agreed with her cousin. She was convinced that there was no life without the liberty to act and think, that the worst genocide was in the will to

"exclude them from their own culture, uproot them from the set of habits, attitudes, traditions and customs that constituted their collective identity."

She had listened attentively to her cousin, drinking in his words, nourishing her thoughts at the spring of his knowledge, asking pertinent questions, allowing vague notions that had been forming in her subconscious to emerge.

Their faces close together, they resembled one another now more than before: their deeply lined foreheads, their sunken, intense eyes, their quagmire noses, their cheeks like wrinkled fruit, round and brown, their heads identically and philosophically tilted to one side, a mouth whose upper lip smiled while the lower was set in a grimace that contradicted the smile and told of the long battle they had fought between a happy nature and a contrary destiny.

Nonetheless, they seemed to be enjoying the moment and savoring these unexpected private conversations they were allowed in exchange for their humanitarianism. Lalla Kenza was pleased to play the role of philanthropist. Moulay Ali made sure the goods were properly shared, gave orders, and imposed his quiet thoughtfulness.

Like most of the fortunate people of the city, the old woman had "her families" whom she cared for all year long. She gave them valuable aid against their poverty, made sure they had enough to eat, took care of the sick in their family, and arranged marriage and birth ceremonies. She kept an assortment of gowns and jewelry to lend to poor brides during the first weeks of their marriage. She helped fathers pay their children's school fees. She directed their choices and influenced their decisions. Her wealth gave her authority over the most

recalcitrant. She did all of this with the most scrupulous discretion. Fez knew how to keep its secrets. An authentic Fassi would never put his hand out to beg in the streets, but each person was expected to search out the family member, friend, or neighbor whom fate had reduced to indigence and to offer support.

Some, however, were forgotten by all and would close themselves off in their poverty and die, smothered by the anger they harbored against their fellow citizens for not having helped them as they should have.

Others showed their grief in public, railing against more fortunate family members who had failed their duty. These, hurt by the scandal, came running, insulting the worthless slanderer: "Son of a Jew, illegitimate offspring! Your mother should have smothered you the day you were born! Your father should have disowned you before you could smear our name! We have done all we could for him--Oh creatures of God--but bad luck follows him. Tramp he is and beggar he will always be!"

And he would reply, "You are shameful, you gang of egotists, worse than bandits! What about the divine commandments that call on the believer to help and support his Muslim brother in need, even if he is a stranger?"

"We have helped you many times, but your lack of judgment is destroying you."

"I do not use your fraudulent methods."

"Dung-caked animal. Roll in the mud, if that's what you want, but don't make us carry your shame."

"Dirty crooks, inveterate cheats, robbers of widows and orphans."

They were still forced to help him, for if there were accusing eyes, they were looking at the more fortunate. Heads nodded. Disapproving gazes were lowered. Sarcastic voices rose up: "There is no force or power but in God!"

"He will inherit the earth and the sky."

"He is the Rich. He is the Ever Present!"

In this situation, all energies merged into a formidable coalition. The city had to be saved from famine. People had to share to insure the survival of all.

They were defending not only their country, but also their language, identity, and religion. They had to preserve this Islam that had been brought to Africa in an equestrian tornado. It was the only language they could use to speak to God and they did not want it to fall into disuse.

The high Christian authority was eloquent: "The Pope requested that, following his example, I devote my life to this pivotal movement to eliminate the Arabic language and Islam from North Africa, to the benefit of the French language and Christianity. . ."

They would rather die to the last man. This holy ground will not hear the sound of church bells. The only call that will rise to heaven would be the unadorned, original call that rose from the first mosque built in a Muslim land by Bilal the slave dignified by the new religion!

Lalla Kenza was only one of the gears of this machine that had been set in motion to foil the enemy's plans. Others worked in the secrecy of their homes, moved by the same visceral emotions to fight for the survival of the people.

Different groups came into play. In particular, the association of negafats was in charge of collecting funds for the rebellion, and they were just the right

ones for the job. In their line of work, these matrons entered the private lives of the best families. Their language was direct and commanding. They had access to the men of the family and knew how to speak to them. They were good at flattery and past masters in the art of confiscation. They were feared for their tendency to gossip.

They knew how to extract from the most miserly small fortunes that had been buried in clever hiding places. Each person gave generously. One would open a locked chest and empty it to the last coin into their open aprons. Another would dig in his garden, unearth a chest full of various currencies, and give it to them willingly. From a secret hiding place in the fireplace of his private bath, a third pulled a bag full of gold coins. One old man broke a square tile and lifted from the floor a treasure that had been buried for decades and would have stayed there forever if he had died suddenly, not having had the time to tell his family about it. (It sometimes happened that people bought a house and during renovations unexpectedly found a fortune.)

Women gave their jewelry, and the less fortunate ones gave the small savings they had scraped together, coin by coin, for more difficult days.

Old Hajj Mohammed, stingy as a rat, told anyone who would listen that he had no confidence in these bands of thieves who pretended to want to defend the nation by taking away good peoples' belongings. Even he had to participate in the collective donation, whether he wanted to or not. He scowled at the three women who came to his house one morning and harassed him like large flies. At first he pretended that doctors and their cursed drugs had ruined him. He complained that his sons were so preoccupied with their shameless wives and noisy children that

they neglected their old father. He showed them the many patches of his worn robe and the cracks in the walls and ceiling of his house that was falling to ruin. Then, tired of the struggle, he sent away the servants, who were as greedy and irritating as a rash, and decided to get rid of these pests by the only possible means: partial satisfaction. He got up painfully, took a tobacco-stained handkerchief out of his pocket, and untied from it a key with which he opened a closet. He took a large black key from between books by Muslim historians and scholars. He carefully turned the key in the lock of a large antique English chest. Waving away any help from the negafats, he lifted the lid with difficulty and began to take out various objects: mite-eaten manuscripts, an old black burnoose that had undoubtedly belonged to his dead father or grandfather, his own shroud wrapped in a package, a bottle of water from the holy Zamzam spring for his mortuary cleansing, pieces of sandalwood, and a bottle of orange blossom water several years old. He felt around in the chest and after much hesitation took out a small chest inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The three women sighed, thinking the wait was over. But no! From among the many tangled strings of prayer beads brought back from his frequent trips to the holy land, they saw him remove from the box a small golden key. Then he reached into the chest again, and after much wheezing and nervous coughing, took out a white metal safe which he opened only a crack to take out a few tarnished coins. He handed them to the mesmerized old women, swearing by God and his Prophet that these coins were his only fortune.

The old man owned, apart from the house he lived in and a dozen other houses in the area, hundreds of hectares of farm land, a jewelry shop run by one

of his nephews since he could no longer take care of it personally, and a public bath the proceeds of which alone would have been sufficient for him to live in comfort.

When the negafats got to Lalla Kenza's house after a long quest, they let fly their sarcastic and biting ridicule of the old merchant and others like him, shouting their laughter, sitting in the kitchen that was crowded with packages intended for clandestine delivery. They felt comfortable in this house where they came to eat, drink, joke, laugh, and pour out their streams of gossip to a willing dada who was glad to have these spicy intermissions in a life of otherwise unbroken austerity.

"If you had seen him, Marjana, trembling on his skinny legs, a sneer twisting his mouth!"

"The old monkey! Does he think he will live forever? He will leave his money to those who won't even pray at his grave."

"He swore these rusty coins were his only fortune. He deserves to have his treasure stolen in the night."

"You'd have to kill him first, the old bag of bones, to make him let go of it. He sleeps on his safe to be prepared for any attempt at robbery."

"His greed is legendary. People say he eats meat once a month, drinks tea only on Fridays, and counts the number of logs burned under the pot."

"Ha ha ha..."

They had put down the bundles they had been balancing on their heads during their whole expedition, and they had unwrapped their booty before the

wondering eyes of a dada who was barely able to believe she was seeing such a pile of diverse treasures.

Incredible objects appeared among the silver coins: jewels, precious stones, metal ore, gold pieces, ancient bronze coins, bills that had been out of circulation for ages, foreign currency dating from the previous century. Some bank notes were nearly new and others seemed to have gone through the hands of all the needy people of the city before getting to the tired and pessimistic mother who was using the last of her eyesight in the light of dusk doing poorly paid needlework. Thus she offered her country the proceeds of the infinite stitches she had made on uncountable slippers and belts during still evenings after days of labor.

In the pile were stones some pious people had brought back from the sacred Ouhoud Mountain during their only, memorable pilgrimage to the holy places. There were other fetishes among the gifts. What fantastic powers had the givers perceived in them? What happiness had they seen reflected there? What evil spirits had they kept away? What good luck had these objects brought, wherever they had been? What had people expected these ridiculous good luck charms to do that they were not able to do for themselves?

Giving the excuse that they needed to rest their sore feet from so much walking, the negafats stayed a long time in the kitchen that was warmed by several braziers of coals crackling under large copper kettles. They told their exploits and all the tricks they had to use to extract the savings of the miserly. They salted and spiced their stories, adding color and making their tales slightly

fantastic, delighting their audience in spite of the alarming events taking place in their city.

These were days of mourning, days of tears, uncertainty and desolation, but paradoxically and as fate so often is, favorable to some while harmful to others. For Lalla Kenza and her cousin, these were the happiest days they had lived in several decades.

Drafts whipped through the attic where they sat feeling isolated in a continuous flow of strangers. They were together all day long, saying nothing or understanding each other with few words, calling to each other with gestures and glances, searching for each other in the poverty of their souls, mixing their shallow breath and dreaming of what had been. They faced each other in their mutual decrepitude that was a protection against gossip.

Those who looked at them meditating thus, draped in their old age, saw only philosophical philanthropists who could do nothing more than create the necessary balance between good and evil in the world, living to give but not receive, every hope of private life in the future forbidden to them by the simple fact that they were old.

Lalla Kenza felt these hours of happiness in her flesh. Her blood boiled in her veins like a substance alien to her body. Her face, like that of a little girl, went from bright red to waxy white. Ashamed of these childish emotions, she bowed her head, only to raise it again immediately. What shame was there in feeling happy in the presence of the man she had always loved, in the fall of her life, in the peace of the senses they had achieved through willpower?

Their love was not guilty. They loved each other with reasonable bodies. "How could we do otherwise," she thought cynically, "with these carcasses fit for dog meat? Our hearts are still young because we have kept them locked away, both of us, since our separation, and we haven't used them since. They did not follow our physical aging. At present, all these emotions are surely fatal. So much the better. We will have had the joy of tasting a deathly delight."

Moulay Ali smiled at her. He would certainly accept a fine death that would only be an effervescence of life.

The mulatto brought tea and coffee at regular intervals, to keep up their energy.

When the muezzin called the prayer—a reminder of the existence and greatness of God, like a call to attention—Moulay Ali touched his cousin's sleeve, and the two old people, helping each other, went to do their ablutions at the edge of the fountain. Then, they prayed, he in front and she behind him, both bent in adoration and extreme humility before their creator. Afterwards, they went back to the attic, reinvigorated by the cold water and the open air.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, Lalla Kenza felt savage pains in her bad leg. As for Moulay Ali, he seemed to become even older and more shrunken. Yet, neither would ever have admitted feeling tired.

From the attic windows, one could look down on the patio where the old woman's grandchildren played. Running and shouting without restraint, three little boys and two small girls were playing ball with a bitter orange that had fallen from the tree. Two young women were standing in the doorway of the living room, chatting and watching their children's game.

They were Kenza's two daughters. They had come to spend the forty days of mourning with their mother after they had been told the dramatic circumstances of their father's death.

They were not wearing white: their father was a martyr to his faith. Instead, they wore pastel colors. They had tucked the hem of their caftans into their silk embroidered belts, leaving visible the pantalets that bared their pearly white calves and framed them prettily with an embroidered flower hem. Their heads were wrapped in light muslin scarves knotted on top. Their long silky black hair with blue reflections floated in the breeze across the creamy whiteness of their faces. They wore no make-up since they were, nonetheless, in mourning.

The light spread in waves across the ground where designs of small colored tiles harmonized with large squares of white marble. In the center of the patio, a corona of mosaic tile seemed to rotate around a basin where a fountain sprang up in a love song.

The young women were telling each other about their love lives, each holding a hand in front of her mouth, smiling secretively.

"My husband is a passionate lover. If I let him, he would make love to me on the back of a camel—the Prophet's truth—ha ha ha! Men are capable of anything."

"Oh, mine, too. That's the only way I get him to do what I want. It's a sure means of persuasion. They'll do whatever you want. I had to use all my charms to get him to buy me these bracelets. You know, I have been dreaming about them since I saw my sister-in-law wearing them. It's a new style called 'the seven

bracelets of the leader.' I even had to turn him away . . . hum . . . for a week, before I got my way."

"Be careful, my dear! Your in-laws' house is crawling with young and healthy slaves."

"Oh, there's no danger there. He doesn't like blacks."

"Watch out, just the same. He might change his mind if you keep it up."

"And, tell me, what about your sister-in-law? The one who married that 'government official?' Is she happy with him?"

"It seems he has another wife in the new section of town and that he married her in . . . shall we say . . . doubtful circumstances! She must have trapped him and forced him to marry her by threatening to make a scandal!"

"Poor Lalla H'nia! What a wasps' nest she fell into!"

"Serves her right! She was as puffed up as a peacock, and so proud of this marriage!"

"Still! If only she had a co-wife who was her social equal, but to share her husband with a nothing, a low-life?!"

"Have you ordered your outfit for Ashura<sup>53</sup>? There's this new material called 'the pool'. You must get your husband to bring you a sample. It's very pretty and the latest fashion."

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<sup>53</sup> The tenth day of the month of Ramadan. In *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), Cyril Glassé writes that "among the Shiites it is the terrible anniversary of the murder of Husayn by the troops of the Caliph Yazid" at Karbala in 680 CE.

"I'll do that as soon as I get home." She raised her eyes to the attic hidden in partial shade and said, "Mother is impossible. We don't see her all day. Why did we even come? She doesn't seem to notice we are here!"

"I wonder, too! She is so taken with her decrepit old cousin. And to think we left our husbands in houses crawling with slaves, to keep her company in her grief!"

"Ha ha ha! Dear sister, you are going to make me stay up all night worrying!"

Suddenly, they saw Atika, the little girl who had moments before been playing peaceably, grab her cousin Youssef by the hair. The boy began to yell and fight to get loose from her furious grip.

The two mothers ran to them, and each pulled her child away without trying to discover the cause of the dispute. Lalla R'kia, ashamed of her daughter's impetuous character, pinched her at the top of the thigh, calling on those present to witness her displeasure at having a tomboy for a daughter. Atika was enraged and took her anger out on the bitter orange, trampling it furiously, splattering her pretty dress with its juice. Her mother lifted her arms to the heavens, helpless in the face of this explosion of anger.

Tickled by the scene, amused and proud of her granddaughter's vivacity, the grandmother returned to her occupations, praying that the child would remain what she was and not be affected by her mother's dulling influence.

The little girl was like her, independent and free thinking, and she wished for her to have a great destiny, better than her own.

"I want her to be free like the antelope who leaps and plays with the wind. I want her to be sovereign and not submissive. I want her standing on her own, not sitting down. I want her pride to grow and ramify, and I want no hand to ever crush her freedom of thought."

"As for me, I have lived with my destiny, but I have not lived it. My whole life has not been long enough to make me accept it. I spent my youth remembering what had been but had not lasted. I spent my youth in revolt, nostalgia, regret, and bitterness. And now that my life is coming to an end, I still feel this profound abyss in me that grows forever deeper and wider. It makes me want to bite, scratch, and stand up against death to ask, "What do you plan to take away? An already dead body, an unlived life, an incomplete existence? What good will it do you to rob a penniless person? What glory to beat an invalid? What death will you be for me, when for all this time I have been chasing after life and never caught it?"

Dada finally climbed the steep stairs to the attic to persuade her "harebrained" mistress to come down to rest.

Lalla Kenza scolded her roughly, "I'm old enough to know what I should and shouldn't do."

"You are proud and stubborn more than anything else. Do you think you are still twenty years old? Look at you! Stiff as a board, but you'd never admit it."

"You are just a crazy black bastard. Mind your own business and don't come stick your nose where it doesn't belong."

"I'd be the one to have to put up with your mean temper if you were stuck in bed. And you certainly will be if you stay here acting like a little girl. Look at

her, creatures of God. She is weak and feeble, but as hard on herself as she is on others. A real daughter of the Filali family, I swear! Proud and stubborn!

"And you, you old toad, do you even know where you come from? From what devilish world, from what universe of perverse and evil demons?"

"What a mean tongue she has! One would think, O my ancestors, that she had been raised on hot pepper juice instead of her mother's milk!"

The two women would have continued this dispute for a long time—they felt a childish joy in exchanging insults—if Moulay Ali had not intervened laughingly. With affectionate authority, he made his cousin give in. The two old people helped each other stand up. They had to try several times before they managed, fragile and pitiful, overcome by age and fatigue. Moulay Ali kept remembering the sight of an old man holding the hand of an adult retarded child who trembled and smiled with a drooling mouth and protectively smoothed the white hair of his aged father who was panting with the effort of walking. His path had crossed theirs, he couldn't remember where, and he couldn't help comparing his and his cousin's present physical debility with this street scene . . .

The slave followed them, making faces behind her mistress's back to silently express her opinion of her owner's irascible personality.

She frequently had such battles with Dada in spite of the affection each felt for the other, or perhaps because of it.

Lalla Kenza's father had bought the Guinean when both girls were lonely adolescents.

The defiance Kenza saw in the eyes of the dispossessed girl made her love her slave immediately. She still had the bill of sale: "Praise be to God! The honorable Sidi Larbi, son of Sidi Mohammed—God give him long life—has bought from Hajj Ahmed the entire ownership of a female slave. She has dark black skin, a flat nose, and thick lips. The midwife who examined her in the presence of a sworn female witness affirms that she is a virgin. The price of sale is forty Hassani rials. The sale is irrevocable and both parties renounce any claims after the liquidation of the sale and exchange of possession, unless the sold slave wets her bed or has some other hidden defect . . ."

The young Guinean proved to have a bellicose nature, which did not displease her young mistress. She quickly learned to make herself respected if not feared in a household where she was at the bottom of a complicated hierarchy. When she was scolded for no good reason, she mumbled barbarous words in her native language between too perfect teeth in her ugly face. One could only remember the strange, dominant sounds of "grou-grou" and "gri-gri." However, when she had done what she was accused of, a lack of obedience or a meaningless theft, she admitted her mistake and took her punishment without blinking.

Several times she had eaten raw meat, and this act--forbidden in an Islamic country like Morocco--strengthened the belief that she had a pact with evil demons. Indifferent to slander, she stayed in a corner, licking her lips like a satiated wolf, the whites of her eyes so white in her face so black that looking at her was like diving into a mirage of shadow and light.

So they decided to leave her alone, not knowing the extent of her evil powers.

One night, when Marjana had been with them only a few months, the household awoke in a panic, their sleep disturbed by the smell of something burning.

They ran to see what it was, thinking a brazier had been left too close to a wool mattress or that coals had spilled out and set fire to rags nearby.

How great was their consternation to find the newest member of the group, naked as a worm, her hair like a steel helmet around her uproarious face as she danced around a fire she had lit in the middle of the living room. Was she crazy--they almost resold her as such--or was this a ritual of her native Guinea?

In any case, she got forty lashes with a wet cord across her buttocks. That was the only time Lalla Kenza ever saw a slave being punished. After all, the misdemeanor was relatively serious.

Marjana was put in Kenza's service as soon as the more experienced slaves had taught her the requirements of her new job. She quickly became Kenza's friend and confidante. When her mistress married, Marjana began protecting the couple and their privacy in a house full of people as a lioness protects her young in the den. In her approximate Arabic, saying *ka* for *kha*, *ha* for *hha*, confusing masculine and feminine and singular and plural, she challenged anyone who dared to approach the lovers' den without invitation. She could be seen squatting in front of their door constantly on guard cleaning lentils, shelling dried beans, or singing sensuous songs from her homeland. The newly-weds' love shone in her eyes, ran in her veins, and swelled in her chest.

Never had anyone seen a vicarious passion lived so intensely.

They were grateful to her and willingly included her in their games when they wrestled like kittens on the rooftops under the heavens, satiated with love, their ardor calmed.

When they were so cruelly separated, when Lalla Kenza's father decided that under no circumstances would his daughter follow her husband who had been appointed to work in another city in Morocco, the slave devoted herself to saving her mistress from insanity. She put up with her unjust behavior without complaint, submitted to her sarcasm, and felt Kenza's suffering in her own flesh. No one knew as well as Marjana what the young woman endured, the nights she spent screaming into her pillow, the awful tantrums during which she fought in the arms of the Guinean who was as patient as a mother. No one remembered as well as she, scorched in her mind and heart, the young divorcee's wrenching moans and burning distress in the starless night as she cried for this aborted love that was sacrificed to a father's egotism. She saw her mistress's heart catch fire in her bosom and stood, in useless devotion, incapable of stopping the disaster.

How many married couples were thus separated by parents' despotic wills! How many households were destroyed by insults--both families fighting a merciless war above their children's heads--more surely destructive than digging under the foundation of a building! How many impulsive and thoughtless mothers, for a trivial arrangement or for simple feminine rivalry, put their sons in the dilemma of repudiating their unwanted daughters-in-law or being cursed forever: "You have to choose between her and me. One house is not big enough to hold us both. Obey your mother, my son, to reach paradise. I will bring you

women more beautiful and more virtuous than that witch. But a mother, you will only ever have one . . ."

The sons obeyed, thus putting themselves in the hands of a mother whom no daughter-in-law would ever satisfy because she would never agree to share her child with another woman. How many fathers--patriarchs or hardheaded fools--break up the life of a couple under false pretenses to strengthen their tyranny. Our society is organized in such a way that the individual is firmly tied to the whole, and because of this, there is no individuality.

Marjana went with Kenza to the tomb of Sidi Bushashia, known for his power to reunite lovers. She took her behind the ramparts of the city in a secret outing to visit the tomb of Lalla H'mama, the princess transformed into a dove who continued to be the messenger of lovers. For Kenza, she called on the good jinn of her childhood, the afreets whose wings could stretch to cover the North, South, East, and West at the same time, asking them to bring back the absent one.

They made use of witchcraft, spending all their savings on illusive promises.

They even went to the Jewish quarter where, they had been told, a world-famous fortuneteller had come to live out his life after having gained supreme wisdom. Disguised as poor women in ragged wraps, they entered the area reserved for the Jewish community where great poverty and ostentatious wealth lived side by side, where the reminders of a past marked by the rigidity of religious precepts mixed with a lame adaptation to modern life.

The two women went forward, one with trembling knees, in spite of her innate daring, the other with defiant determination. Her tightly wrapped veil led some to imagine her insolent breasts, long thighs and golden belly, all the traits that led people to understand and excuse Fassi men for being attracted to their black concubines and neglecting their legitimate wives. Such girls called attention to their anatomy, without false shame, while most of the legitimate wives ended up hunchbacked from curling upon themselves out of timidity or excessive modesty.

In unnamable streets, there were crowds of people on this sunny midmorning. Housewives were carrying home baskets overflowing with groceries they had bought. They were going to simmer ragout, true to their reputation as excellent cooks, while their husbands worked at their traditional trades: fashioning precious metals and tin, selling clothing and textiles, making lanterns, or crafting inlaid wood furniture. They saved their money coin by coin, making one little pile of change next to another until they had gathered a plump fortune. One could see them at the back of their shops, squatting down in their black robes and black skullcaps, playing checkers and waiting for a client. Ambulant vendors and merchants loitered in the streets, their watchful eyes avidly searching for the day's prey. Beggars in rags, shivering old men with saffron colored beards, watched the sun in its daily path, holding out greedy hands to equally avaricious others, members of their religion.

The two visitors observed this world that was totally different from their own, though implanted in the heart of their city. These barefaced women negligently dressed with their hair held back in a black scarf and their shoulders

covered with a fringed shawl. These fleshy girls offering their charms to view, these girls whose free manner of walking, rouged lips, and foreign-style clothing imitated the inaccessible, deified foreign women living in the new city.

The two young women walked in this quarter where the pestilential odor of fish caught in their throats wherever they went, where the trash cans spilled their intestines onto the sidewalks and even into the street, where bearded rabbis and psalm singers made them tremble with fear at the thought of dying on the spot and gave them the urge to feverishly recite their profession of faith to protect them against any eventuality: "There is no God but God and Mohammed is His prophet."

They practically ran, hanging on to one another, holding their veils firmly over their quivering noses, convinced that evil spirits were pushing their destination further into the distance. Finally, the slave pulled her mistress's sleeve, and the two women ducked into an old two-story building. The façade was painted blue and had small windows with iron grating, like all the neighboring houses. They passed through a dark entryway and emerged into a small patio similar to those of modest traditional Muslim homes. They saw a Jewish woman of indeterminate age sewing in a corner of the patio. She was dressed like a gypsy, wearing a long skirt and a colorful blouse. Her stringy, bleached hair fell to her shoulders. Next to her a child cried in a wooden cradle even though the woman was rocking it with the tips of her bare toes.

A girl wearing a large apron was washing dishes at a wall fountain. She didn't even turn around when she heard the voices of strangers.

When questioned, the woman who was sewing pointed her chin toward the stairs. The visitors climbed to the first floor, one behind the other, needing no further directions. In front of them was a middle-sized reception room decorated in a fancy, old-fashioned style. It had European-style furniture: a sofa and chairs upholstered in flaking imitation leather, a Formica table on a brightly colored carpet that clashed with this interior where everything seemed to have been passed down through the centuries. A golden vase holding slightly dusty artificial flowers crowned the table. Family portraits, dishes, religious relics, and Hebrew inscriptions stood in front of a large mirror on top of a buffet.

The two women were standing in the doorway to the room, ill at ease and wide-eyed, looking at the tinted lithographs of crowned Davids and Solomons, when a cracked voice called to them, "Come closer, dear women, come closer. Here the wanderer rests and the lost communicate. Here you will find the good spirits of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Here, each one gets what she wants and sees her dreams come true."

In this mysterious sanctuary that smelled of stale air, medicine, and urine, they slowly walked toward the voice. As their eyes adjusted to the dim light, they discovered, deep in a dilapidated bed, the most beautiful old man they had ever seen. Only his face was visible in the pillows above the dingy quilt. A serene, luminous face as pale as the moon. A long, aquiline nose rested on a long, pointed, very white beard that covered his lips, his chin, and nearly his whole face. Their gaze was hypnotized by his gold-flecked, green eyes from which the energy of youth had fled, but in which the experience of the veteran's long and

adventurous life—his wisdom, wit, trickery, philosophy of love, and disdain for humanity—had taken root.

He motioned for them to sit in the two chairs at the foot of the bed and began a long interrogation, asking questions which Lalla Kenza answered somewhat hesitantly. In truth, she wished she was far away from this place she found disgusting and fascinating at the same time. She had never believed in clairvoyance. Both her rational mind and her religious beliefs made her reject it. But where reason had failed, she tried folly. The man rang a bell, an unexpected luxury in this poverty, and the girl they had seen earlier washing dishes appeared carrying an incense burner that was giving off an odor of death, burned spirits and incinerated rats. Lalla Kenza could stand no more, and would have fled to escape the old demon and his heretic practices, but Marjana gave her an encouraging look. She told herself to be patient. The dying man recited magic spells of which she understood not a single word—they were in Hebrew—gesturing dramatically all the while, his eyes tightly shut. What would the young woman have read in his beautiful eyes if they had been open?

Lies, trickery, or the immense fatigue of this farce he continued to play to the moment of death, in which he played the role of the charlatan doctor, the counterfeiter of hope?

He was still for a moment, and looked like a real cadaver. He shook spasmodically, as though the forces he was dealing with wanted to make him suffer before conceding to his wishes. He finally smiled, fell back onto his pillows, exhausted, and said, "It is done. I spoke to the greatest, the saints of the saints." He did not move or speak until Marjana put the fee on the edge of the bed.

Then he reached out and grabbed the bills, hiding them quickly under his shirt before his young relative could see them.

Since that memorable visit, Lalla Kenza had never again set foot in the doorway of a fortune teller, whatever she might hear about his powers, nor had she visited any sorcerer however effective his ingredients might be.

Then Sharif had come, and the slave saw her mistress's thwarted love turn into the cruel tyranny she exercised on her second husband, taking unhealthy pleasure in it. She saw her devilish mistress humiliate the poor man, demean him, enrage him, and mercilessly mock his virility. She saw her lift him to the highest peak of hope and then drop him, like a dead skin. For all the frustrations she had had to bear since the departure of her beloved, the young woman took revenge on this extra husband. She poured all her accumulated bitterness on him .

Blindly and passionately in love with her, Sharif played his role, shamelessly happy to gather the debris of true love crushed. And his submission led his wife further astray. It was a form of real entertainment for the lonely young woman to lead this easy prey down the hellish paths she knew so well. She wished she had ten "Sharifs" to torment. She tortured herself in this poker game of love, winning once, losing ten-fold. She was expert in the art of fanning desire only to kill it. She lent herself to speculations in which her own being was at stake. She risked being beaten, raped, kicked and trampled by the very person in whom she had knowingly exacerbated the murderous instincts of insanity.

"No," Marjana told herself, "this is not the same woman. Before, she was beautiful and pure, loving and loved, smooth and sweet as honey. She was feline and pliable as a willow twig. She was magical, marvelous, and sublime. Her

husband left, leaving his heart and mind as a promise of love. Now, the brilliant dawn of love has given way to the shadows of night. Unable to confront her father, the cause of her misfortune, she seems to want to demean the entire masculine gender through her husband. This growing hatred is the only thing she lives for. She seems to thrive on it, to the point of forgetting the reason for it, her true love."

"Forget true love," Lalla Kenza replied to the silent interrogation she read in the eyes of her slave-confidante, "my own true love? I would die."

In the pain she hid behind her tyranny, in her frustration disguised as orgiastic cruelty, he was her only dream. He was "the memory," her only experience and hope of life. He was the past, the present, and the only admissible future.

He was winter, summer, sweet-scented springtime, and thundering autumn in which her divine virtues fell, one by one. She remodeled and reconstructed the memory of him as she pleased. She looked at it from all sides, adjusting it to fit, wrapping herself in it again and again, wearing it threadbare. She wracked her brain not to miss a single piece of the puzzle of her awareness. In the shadows of her sorrow, he was the only source of light. She held tightly to this light to escape insanity.

She saw herself as she was on the day of "fish-cleaning," a newly-wed glittering with jewelry, magnificently dressed and adorned. She wore a green brocade caftan and a gold-threaded silk apron tied around her waist. A heavy gold chain studded with jewels held the sleeves of her caftan up around her shoulders and bared her pearly white arms.

Her dada held a silver platter with two fine fresh whitefish on a bed of parsley. Another dada held a silver pitcher and a towel perfumed with rose water, ready for use. A third held a censer from which rose enchanting spirals of sandal wood incense.

Her mother, her aunts, and other women who were close family relatives surrounded her, playing tambourines, clapping, and singing rhythmic songs.

Moulay Ali was the only man admitted to this feminine party. He was ill at ease and shy in his new masculine role, and all the women pushed him toward her in instinctive conspiracy.

Paradoxically, in spite of her extreme youth, she was the one whose eyes shone with desire for the beloved. Inside the stiff caftan, her young body trembled with impatience.

Her mother handed her a knife with an ivory handle, and she began to scale the fish she was supposed to clean. She worked with a frenzy that was out of proportion to what was expected of her; this ceremony was only a symbolic representation of the role of housewife that the bride would later have to fulfill.

She reached further into the maze of her memories. She saw herself as a little girl, ten or eleven years old. That night, her aunt gave birth to her cousin Asma. She remembered her cousin, now a grandmother, as a red and wrinkled new-born, her kohl-lined eyes wide open in a detached gaze.

Everyone in the house had been kept awake by the mother's screams that tore an enormous hole in the wintry night. Her other cousins were playing a noisy game of blindman's buff, but after her aunt had delivered the baby, Kenza sat on a window sill dangling her legs and thinking. Leaning over a wall fountain, the

midwife who had been called in the middle of the night as soon as her aunt had first cried out was washing the bloody sheets in full sight of everyone. This spectacle had offended Kenza's girlish modesty. She thought for a long time about this birth in the midst of pain, blood, and filth. She squeezed her thighs together apprehensively. Is this what comes of love? Did one have to go through that to attain the status of motherhood and to consecrate love? She remembered her aunt the way she had been: coquettish, in full bloom, wonderfully feminine, adored by her husband, making less fortunate women jealous. She thought of her again, her hair disheveled, screaming, lying in an indecent position, torn apart by the pains of childbirth.

She remembered her uncle who had been spared this sight. He had paced up and down the garden walkways in spite of the cold night, and then went off toward the other side of the house until the degrading signs of childbirth surrounding his wife could be cleaned away while he announced the birth of his child.

She remembered she had run to her cousin Moulay Ali, jumped on him and slapped him hard, twice, without his knowing the reason. Why had she done that? Out of all the children playing in the patio that particular evening, why had she chosen to take out her resentment on him? Was it a premonition? Did she already instinctively know that she was predestined to be his for all time and that she would suffer because of him?

Every morning, the hem of her caftan tucked into her belt, sleeves held back with a silk cord and head scarf awry, she dressed him carefully, from head to foot. He would sit on the couch, docile, letting her have her way with him, happy

to rest his head on his beloved's chest and breathe the mingled scents from between her breasts. She dressed him in a long, white linen shirt, an ivory gabardine vest, a robe of fine muslin, and finally, the superbly handmade, translucent, thin-striped silk and wool djellaba. She wrapped his turban so that the perfect folds were layered above his forehead, making a headdress worthy of the Abbassid Caliph Harun al-Rashid. She put a cotton-wrapped piece of musk between the folds. She sprinkled him with orange blossom water and perfumed him with sandalwood incense. Attentions that other women reserved for feast days were for her a daily ritual. When he was ready, as handsome as the angel-faced prophet Joseph, she would follow him down the stairs all the way to the outer door. She would stand on tiptoe to kiss him between the eyes before running up to the attic to watch her handsome love from the gabled window as he walked down the street, a bouquet of sweet scents blossoming with every step, watched by the eyes of the neighborhood women hidden behind slightly open doors. When he finally disappeared from view at the end of the street, she would leave her watchtower and, missing him already, she would walk slowly toward the orchard where she rediscovered the scent of her beloved drifting down from the highest branches of age-old trees and in the living earth under her feet.

The petals of flowers soaked in morning dew while the breeze shamelessly teased them before carrying away their mingled perfumes in a lively dance. Tipsy with the spell-binding fragrance, she would begin to sing high and loud of love, ignoring the women who put on scandalized airs. What an orgiastic song the young woman threw in the face of her prudish and frigid society!

"Shouting out her love for her own husband in public? As if marriage could persist in lovers' ecstasy. As if such "immoral" words as passionate lover, desire, sensuality, all the words of lovers' language could be those of a couple married in the spirit of purity. As though it were acceptable for a married couple to abandon themselves to dizzy sensuality and build their life on carnal delight. That way of life is destined to fail," people said. "This marriage is an insult to decent society. It cannot last!"

Indeed it did not last, to the joy of those who had wished it to fail, tortured as they were by jealousy.

Drafted into debilitating rootlessness, Lalla Kenza had blindly waded in the polluted waters of her suffering. Then, like a fat fly on raw flesh, she had finally landed in fallow field, her second husband. With wicked pleasure she harassed him and put him through a thousand torments. He played the game for gain at first, but also on a whim, and perhaps by choice. An exacerbated masochism pushed them into each other's arms, not to share life, but to mutually destroy each other.

They developed an ambiguous relationship that even Marjana, in spite of her lively intuition, could neither understand nor interpret.

Worried by her mistress's free fall from the higher spheres of happiness toward cynicism and perversity, the Guinean began to scold the young woman in an attempt to prevent a catastrophe. Strangely enough, the invincible fighter submitted; a frightful child who nonetheless bowed to the admonitions of her slave because she knew her slave was right.

"He who claims to be strong dies of weakness! In my native village, in the middle of the bush land, there lived a young man of amazing physical strength. From the age of ten, he began to bully his friends. As an adolescent, he fought with all the boys his age and won each fight in the blink of an eye. They all began to fear him and he took advantage of their fear to enslave them, threatening to beat them if they disobeyed him. He would walk through the village with his nose in the air, his nostrils wider than natural, his skin shining with contained strength, his gaze arrogant. He never worked or made himself useful; he was too busy showing off and acting important, like a peacock in a barnyard. One day, the wise man of the village called him over and said to him, 'My son, God gave you exceptional physical strength. Why don't you put it to a godly use? Go see the country, my son. Learn from other men, discover other horizons. Who knows, perhaps you will have gained wisdom by the time you return. God is great!' "

"The boy took his stick and a bundle of food and left holding his head even higher than usual, if that were possible, with a scornful look on his face. He went through the forest and came to the main road. He traveled from city to village and from plain to mountain. He went down the last hill to the edge of the sea and got lost in crowded cities. He found shelter each night in a different hospice, walked along rivers, and felt the peace of mountaintop hamlets blanketed by a pitiless sky. He mingled with all kinds of people and mixed with rich and poor."

"But wherever he went, he displayed his arrogance and mean temper. Simple people tolerated him, but none loved him or invited him to stay longer. Still blinded by the power he seemed to get from his muscles, he decided to go

home through the same forest he had crossed some two years earlier, aware that his wanderings had been in vain in spite of what the village wise man had said."

"One evening at dusk, exhausted after a day's walk through the underbrush, he stopped to rest and eat. He sat in the moss at the foot of a crooked tree and began to drink the milk of a coconut he had cracked with his bare hands. Suddenly, he heard a sound like a whimper of pain. He looked in the undergrowth and saw a lion collapsed on the ground, barely breathing, its eyes half closed. The young man sat down, fascinated by the sight of the suffering lion lying on its side and unaware of his presence. Along came a vagrant mongrel dog. It approached the sick lion, lifted its leg and urinated on it, and the lion didn't even move its tail."

"At first the young man was indignant. How could the lion, ordinarily the roaring, unchallenged king of the forest, honorable descendent of the lions of Africa, the bravest of the brave, fearless and proud, who would not have condescended to even rest his royal gaze on the worthless vagabond, how could he let the dog urinate on his golden tawny fur without budging?"

"Then, little by little, the boy realized how extremely feeble the dying lion was and finally understood why he himself had been sent on this voyage. He learned that nature is full of good lessons for man. He understood that his own strength, as well, was not eternal, and that one day he would perhaps be at the mercy of someone he now scorned. From that day on, he became humble and friendly."

Later, Lalla Kenza realized and said, "I was able to keep my sanity, self-respect and some part of my innocence thanks entirely to my half crazy, half wild

slave who still has tree bark stuck to the soles of her feet, but also some innate sense of devotion."

I would like to fall sleep and never wake up. To die unaware, evaporate, dissolve in the air. Not become a stinking cadaver thrown to the worms, a ghost that comes back to haunt weak souls on stormy nights. I would like to simply not exist anymore. To be and then not be, without having to suffer the last trial of life: death and decomposition.

The birth cry is the first manifestation of a new being. The death cry is repressed, hushed, swallowed. It smothers and strangles us. It is the last blow. What comes after death? What fills up the emptiness? A blessed lack of consciousness or the awareness of surrounding emptiness, of solitude with no tomorrow to bring it into perspective?

When we are young, safe in our immaturity, we do not think of the threat of death. We are born into an established order. We are the children of our fathers and the grandchildren of our grandfathers. We vaguely know that this grandfather also once had a father and a grandfather, but those are facts from forgotten times, like the fictional stories that feed our imaginations. We are at the center of the world and we build a family of ancestors and descendants around ourselves. We are the central point of a whole system of alliances that branches and roots to suit us.

Then, when we get old, we understand that we are only a pulse, a simple blip in the heartbeat of the universe, just like any other creature—human, animal or plant. A tiny particle that is nonetheless important in the harmony of succession, in this world that makes and remakes itself through the inevitable births and deaths from generation to generation to form the chain of descent and prolong the survival of the species.

Oh, my dear Moulay Ali, my heart is caught in a steel vise. I feel as though a current is carrying me away. I am afraid of these last steps toward nonexistence. I am afraid of my death and of yours, afraid of the unknown lying in ambush in my own mind. My eyes are clearing, and I am helpless in the face of my recent lucidity.

In the throes of an anxiety contrary to her nature, Lalla Kenza confided in her cousin, the only person with whom she ever deigned to share her moods. And that night nourished anxiety.

Neither one had any desire to sleep. They stayed up very late in the quiet of this winter evening, and their conversation marked the beginning of their imminent end, the initiation of a funeral march on the path that separates life from death.

Moulay Ali teased her gently, "Why are you speaking like an atheist? God never abandons his creatures. He is the truth of truths, the light of lights. Does he not say: 'He who purifies himself, remembers the name of his Lord and prays will prosper.' But you prefer life here below, even though the life to come is better and more lasting! You know this verse and many others of the same meaning. You know a large part of the Book by heart!"

"It has not satisfied my thirst!"

"One is not Muslim, except by the grace of God. And being Muslim means putting one's fate in the hands of the Lord."

"My love for you led me astray."

"I suffered as much as you did, if not more. My masculine pride was wounded, but the Koran was my refuge and consolation. I found there the answers to my questions, peace to quiet my fears, and truth that put an end to my doubts. In exile, when sleep eluded me, when I felt like a stranger to my wife and children, I would spend whole nights reading the sacred pages. Over time, faith illuminated my understanding and brought solace to my bruised soul. I rocked myself in the music of the words and absorbed their meaning. I thirstily drank the words of salvation and, in the end, peace came over me in the desert of my loneliness. Then I saw the futility of human passions. I prayed that men might reach out to one another, beyond selfish interests, egotistical love, appetite, beyond differences in class, wealth, race and religion."

"I wish I could have as much faith in men as you do, but they have disappointed me irrevocably!"

His look of bright tenderness swept away her pain.

Even though they were sitting apart in the dignity of their age, in their thoughts they were close, side-by-side, in the shade of their mutual love.

Oh, they had long ago finished with sensuality. All that was left in them was an imperceptible flutter at the bottom of the stomach, a sensation that was, like their bodies, only a cruel parody of their long ago passions. However, their blind wandering down the worn paths of their love was a quest into the deeper

metaphysics of this love. They wanted to find an explanation for their wasted lives.

Still, these were useless investigations, trying to penetrate the secret ways of God.

They stayed awake late into the night, sharing memories. He lay on his side, leaning on his arm, lifting his face toward her. She sat straight, cross-legged, hanging on his every word, the tassels on her headdress nodding with each phrase.

Together they went back through the years they had spent apart from one another, practically their whole adulthood compressed into the single, painful reality of their separation.

Each one laughed the laugh and shed the tears of the other. Each applauded and disapproved of events that were twenty or thirty years old. Each was caught up in the joy or smothered in the grief the beloved had lived decades before.

They stiffened with the bite of jealousy when their respective conjugal relations were mentioned, even though they knew how loveless these unions were.

Never had a night been so long or so charged with emotions, enough to fill a lifetime. Love, hate, pleasure, sensuality, anger, bitterness, feelings of success and failure, of pride and humiliation, of vanity and humility, all were exorcised, bared so that nothing of their forty years of parallel life should remain hidden. They lived their agony together, an "after-life" confession, and they felt the life that was left to them slowly dripping away in their heavy tears. Pitiful fragile old

people, so vulnerable and ancient, so close to death and yet so far from having lived, they cried with dried up tears, returning to childhood in their senile love.

If death is the tribute of life, what can be said of them whose existence had been nothing more than a series of small, daily deaths? They had loved each other beyond marriage, time, distance and reason. They loved each other on the strength of their memories, like soldiers in the heat of battle who think of childhood drawings or fights with neighborhood children. And like these warriors, they could not be sure of their future, except that they were both still alive, which was reason enough to hope.

One would not have been able to survive without the other, even as the earth could not outlive the sun. Can anyone imagine constant night, dawn without a brightening sky, morning without curtains of light?

She had watched him grow from a literate man into a businessman. From a distance she had followed his social success, his introduction to the outside world, his trips, the contacts he established with Europe and the Middle East. He lived in a modern house, she had been told—mail periodically passed between the two zones—with European furnishings like those she saw in the offices of the French doctors. He had a kitchen with a refrigerator and a gas stove. She was still cooked on charcoal braziers.

Yet, she was content to store her leftovers under a wooden box to keep away the roaches. And in the summer, lifting the lid of a pot, one would gag on the acrid odor of food that had fermented during the night. To keep the dish from going sour, they put it on a window sill in the cool evening air, and even if it left a

sour aftertaste when it was re-heated, it was eaten with the pleasure of knowing it had not been wasted.

She had even seen photographs of him dressed in European clothes, hardly willing to recognize him in these barbarous garments. They made him look like the Englishmen she saw passing by in the new city with stinking, smoking sticks in their mouths, or like some famous Egyptian actor who proudly imitated these heretics and even drank alcohol.

She had learned about the birth of his children as they were born, and each time it had been like so many whiplashes to her heart. As for his wife, she was unworthy of the least interest. Kenza's neurotic mind had never condescended to focus on this ugly growth. She saw her as a somewhat bothersome but benign tumor, as a factor that was irrelevant in their irreversible attachment.

Her cousin confirmed her presumptuous judgment. "You have been my only joy, my first and last dream. You and I, we symbolize humanity going toward a point of light which gets further and further away, in spite of our determined march, a point where mirages dance. We have both experienced the same delirium.

"You might have thought to return, whatever the sacrifice! How often I repeated this obsessive thought! It possessed my consciousness."

"At first I did not return because of your father, then because of what people would say, and . . . because of hurt pride. Afterwards, the world reached out its tentacles and imprisoned me in the monotony of daily routines!"

She understood and pardoned him.

"Don't worry about it. I had my share of happiness. Sharif was a perfect replacement. Better than that, your perfect double."

"Stop being cynical and say no more bad things about the poor man. If anyone is to blame, I am. I was cowardly. I admit it. But life is fickle and hasn't been kind to me either. Far away from you, I lived in hell!"

He changed his position. His arm could no longer support his body which had grown heavy with sorrow.

Pain welled up in his heart to the beat of his blood. Across his face flowed waves of anger against himself.

Suddenly worried, seeing the sorrow and pain she had awakened, Lalla Kenza became agitated and wanted to master her thoughts and turn their course.

She tried to speak of happy, carefree things. She desperately searched for the memory of a joyful event, a story, a clever thought, and found nothing but a long tunnel that relentlessly brought her back to her fugitive happiness. Like a child, pushing out a trembling lip, making a pitiful face, she began to cry and then to laugh.

"Anyway, our honeymoon was certainly wonderful!"

He smiled at her, and she felt rewarded.

Suddenly very tired, having spent all their remaining energy during this night of memories, the Kenza and Moulay Ali went off to their rooms to sleep, murmuring prayers that the Almighty might finally put an end to their torments.

The next morning Kenza woke up with a dreadful intuition. She painfully got out of bed and dressed, commanding herself to stay calm. She arranged her headdress with her usual deliberation and went to open the window. She had to push several times before she could open the shutters—her muscles betrayed her—and reached to ring the bell, but stopped short. Dada and the mulatto girl were already up and washing the patio of white marble with a bucket of water. "It must be late," she thought. Small birds fluttered and bathed in the water right in front of her and then flew to the treetops where they chirped noisily.

In the fountain, the water purred like a kitten caressed by the sun's rays.

The old woman hesitated before leaving the window, as though she wanted to hang onto this ordinary, seemingly cheerful morning.

Finally, she turned her back on this heavenly vision and walked with a firmer step toward the room where her cousin slept. The door was open a crack. She went in. From a distance, she could see he was dead. He was lying on his side, his prayer beads in his hand.

She knew he was dead because the serenity on his face was the peace of past times, when they had been happy. Since then, neither of them had attained serenity. On their faces, under a smile or a laugh or in the absence of emotion, the tension of the soul remained, making the smile artificial and the laugh harsh. In death he seemed finally content. She recognized him, her dearly beloved. Once again, she let herself go in the vertigo of memories, this marvelous mirror that

conjures images, brings them alive and puts them up to screen off a loathsome present.

She saw him again as a young man, and she was holding his arm. Together they were crossing a light-filled garden. Expert in the art of mixing perfumes, nature combined the essence of orange flower, jasmine, carnation and rosemary in the air, bathing the lovers in waves of sublime scents, intoxicating them to delirium. Voluptuous sensuality rose in them then like a fire fanned by the breeze.

She remembered when she returned from the bath, her skin still warm and imbued with scented salves. His hands so beautiful, noble, so divinely alive and knowing, caressed her in the half-light, sending thousands of shivers through her.

And now his hands seemed as passionate as then, holding the prayer beads and joined in prayer.

And on his face, she found traces of their long ago joy.

It was like a posthumous message: he had been happy to die in her house, with his beloved, and to the very end she should be worthy of his confidence in her. This was no time for tears. She had remained his wife in his soul and conscience, his only wife, and she should behave like it.

The other woman, the husband thief, should be excluded forever, she and her family.

Certainly, she would have someone send a telegraph to the North--that was the right thing to do--but she would do it as late as possible so as not to give that substitute family time to act.

"You will have the grandest funeral this city has seen in twenty years. Sandalwood will burn day and night in the house. Orange blossom water will flow

in steams. Singers of the holy verses will only stop to make way for the next relay of singers. To smooth the way for you to meet with the angels of judgment, all the beggars in Fez will eat their fill the first three days of the funeral. I will hire a public crier to let everyone know that the prodigal son returned to die in his birthplace. I will make sure that the community pays its respects to you, that the whole city blesses your body. You will leave with honor, as you lived."

Before moving away, she looked at him one last time, and, her heart torn, in spite of her efforts to maintain dignity, she pronounced the ritual words choking on her own tears, "You and I are under the protection of the Prophet Mohammed."

Then began a headlong race against the clock, which left no time for emotions. A good Muslim had to be buried as soon as possible. Family members came from Meknes, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech, and each person felt obliged to give a spectacular demonstration of grief. From the North, only his two sons came: they were the only ones, besides their dead father, who had passports. Tetuan was under Spanish rule, and even nationals needed passports and visas to enter or leave. Even so, they came too late for the burial which took place after the afternoon prayer.

The boys did not get to Fez until after dark. They had had to go through endless checkpoints and various harassments going from one zone to another in their own country. The officials were afraid of contraband--there were a thousand ways to get around the vigilance of the customs officers--and of the distribution of pamphlets, underground newspapers, and weapons.

The young men arrived exhausted and furious with shameless foreigners and self-important, worthless collaborators. This inconvenient death had come in troubled times. They only wanted to return to their home as soon as possible after having paid their last respects to their father. Their family in Fez was as foreign to them as this city that did not seem to justify in any way their father's attachment to it. At first glance, the city seemed to them to be harsh and austere, like an old grandmother embittered by the weight of the years.

Their father had tried to make them love his city, without success. The grand and noble ideas he built about his beloved city in the evenings, his wife destroyed in the morning, striking with indifference and disregard.

A middle-aged man--the husband of a cousin, if they understood correctly--said to them, "It was a funeral worthy of your deceased father. All of Fez was there. The prayer for the departed was performed at the Qarawiyin mosque, and then an impressive following went to the cemetery chanting in two choruses, as it should be, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God." Then "There is no force or strength but in God, force and strength equal to His knowledge in number, volume, and weight. There is no power but in Him."

"May God receive his soul in holy mercy," added another uncle, a presumptuous man with a solemn expression. "He was very pious."

"Amen!" exclaimed a third, bony old man. "Truly he was. He was buried in the tomb next to his father's. It's a real stroke of luck that the tomb had not been occupied before today!"

"No one can know what will happen tomorrow; no one knows in what land he will die!"

"He stayed away for forty years, and God took him back while he was in his ancestral home. He did not die in exile, as he lived."

"He lived with his family, with his wife and children," his sons replied indignantly.

"Of course, my son, of course!"

"We would like to go to our father's grave tomorrow before we leave," interjected the older son.

"Leave? So soon? It wouldn't be proper. You must stay for the three dawn celebrations and then the dinner of the tomb before speaking of leaving. Besides, your blessed father would have wanted you to stay long enough to get better acquainted with your paternal family. You are the only 'scent' we have left of the dear man, God rest his soul."

"In the meantime," the bony old man continued, "I must work out some details of the inheritance with you. Moulay Ali delegated the responsibility to me--let me remind you that he and I were first cousins--to take care of his possessions in and around Fez. Speaking of possessions in our case," said the man in a modest manner that defied any objection, "is saying too much. In fact, it concerns portions of properties donated to religious charities. Your father instructed me to use the profits to maintain our ancestors' burial sanctuaries. There are also indivisible rights concerning some family houses that are falling to ruin and some farmlands that have belonged to us for centuries. These rights would have been of some value if the family had not grown so extensive, making the part of each one of us so modest that it isn't even worth the time it would take to make the fruitless

calculations. However, the revenue provides a living for the least fortunate among us. We would not be able to change this state of affairs without harming them."

"We did not come looking for an inheritance, my uncle!"

"I know, my children, indeed, I know. You are worthy descendants of honorable lineage. But it's better for you to hear this now. Heritage is sacred. One must always abide by the rules of our holy law."

"Truly, heritage is sacred and whosoever breaks its laws will never see the face of God."

"God forbid!"

Behind the pious façade, these men were greedy. Whenever the occasion arose, they had been quick to divest helpless women, a sister, an aunt or a cousin of their part of inheritance.

These uncles were all shriveled and shrunken as if they had done nothing in their whole lives but hover over a treasure that slipped away between their fingers. They saw in these young men and their mother a last chance to rebuild their herds, easy victims since they lived far away. Yet, they wrapped themselves in the inviolability of Islamic law which they pretended to know perfectly and apply to the letter for fear of eternal punishment.

Under the gaze of women who watched them from a distance like strange beings from a different planet, the two young men felt lost in the litany of these uncles with turbans cleverly wrapped around bald heads shining with malice. They had difficulty adjusting to the Fassi accent that was very different from their own and in which sounds seemed half-swallowed in toothless mouths, and occlusive consonants were breathy.

Even though they tried to force a friendly attitude, they were pained to feel so alone among these people who meant nothing to them, at a time when they would have wanted to be surrounded by loving sympathy. What a notion their father had had to come die in this wilderness! And their poor mother had not had the chance to see her deceased husband. They did not understand the relationship between their departed father and the mistress of this household. She was a cousin, they were told. Yet, he had several sisters in the city. Why hadn't he stayed with one of them instead of this senile old woman who was acting like his lawful wife? First of all, what was the meaning of her mourning clothes, dressing in white from head to foot, while even the sisters of the deceased were wearing colored headscarves? And this pretense of grief, this unfocused gaze, this enigmatic, toothless, Mona Lisa smile?

Why was she everywhere present, getting involved in other peoples' business? She seemed to make all the decisions, organize everything, and give orders to everyone.

And this look of a tolerant godmother, these distraught words--"the dear," "the precious one"--expressions barely acceptable when spoken by a grieving widow?

"They have strange ways in this city. Let's go home quickly."

In truth, Lalla Kenza organized, orchestrated, and took care of the thousand details of the many funeral ceremonies. She was everywhere at once in spite of the gout that tormented her.

Yet, she moved like a robot, and her eyes gazed into an abyss.

Everything went as she had wished. The house was constantly full. Decorated china platters full to the brim with honey and fresh butter were served to all who came. Sandalwood incense perfumed the whole neighborhood, burning day and night in the tall incense burners inherited from their great grandfather. In the kitchen, there was constant activity to feed the poor who crowded around the side door of the house. Family and friends kept sending large platters of chicken and cinnamon couscous to help the grieving family who had a house full of guests for several days.

The psalm singers recited the Yassine and Taha chapters of the Koran in which man is reminded of his mortal destiny. The women played their role as mourners, as required, singing the praises of the absent one, naming and repeating his dominant traits of generosity and nobility of spirit, calling down on him divine grace.

Lalla Kenza went from one to another, tearless, holding her head high. "I will cry when everyone is gone," she told herself, "in solitude and peace. I will cry as no woman has ever cried for her husband. Other women cry for a married life in which they lived sweet and bitter times with their husbands, but I will cry for an empty life of repulsive tastelessness, because he was not part of it."

Sometimes her hallucinations overcame her. She imagined herself preparing a great feast in his honor on the occasion of a return from Mecca perhaps . . . Her mind drifted. Her gaze turned toward the doorway where she saw him come in, surrounded by the halo of his new status of Hajj, the dust of the holy lands still clinging to his white robe. She was going to run to him and breathe the heady perfume of the chosen land mixed with his breath and scent in a pious kiss.

This idea brought an ecstatic smile to her face, a smile the deceased man's sons could not understand.

He was happy, proud, and noble. She would be alone with him. She would take him away from all these people who wanted to welcome him back. Soon he would open the hand that had touched the sacred black stone and the wall of the Ka'bah and the fence around the Tomb. He would hold her, pressing firmly with his fingers. She was like a jewel in his hands. He opened his hand and looked at her in his palm, sparkling, vibrant and magical.

She burned the skin of his palm like a coal and blinded his eyes that were fixed on her. He even forgot his pilgrimage and the holy places he had been. He followed her wake of ambergris and melted in it.

Then she remembered... he was dead, absolutely dead. She had been the one to have him bathed in the sacred water of Zamzam and sprinkled with orange blossom scent. She had had his hair, feet and hands anointed. When the bathers of the dead had left, she had closed the door to be alone with him. She had kissed his forehead and promised to join him soon in that world he had taken such pains to describe to her as their lost Eden rediscovered. Yes, he was dead; she was aware of it, but she could not accept it. She didn't have the strength. When the undertakers had carried away his body in a stretcher covered with the cloth of the Ka'bah, in the thunder of men's voices reciting the profession of faith, her sanity wavered. When the women of the household who were standing in the background turned toward her, they saw an old woman whose face was empty of all signs of life, smiling insanely, adjusting the folds of her mourning caftan as though it were the gown of a young bride. She had kept the same enigmatic pose,

but beneath her nobly arched forehead incoherent thoughts of an indistinguishable past and the present collided in an opaque fog.

Looking at the emptiness before her, behind her, and around her, a woman stared at the nothingness of her past and future life. When she had seen him leave, carried on strong arms to his last resting place, she had felt a shiver run through her entire body. A shiver of cold, or rather of this emptiness that had taken absolute possession of her.

She felt death within her. She was dead, without a doubt, but even worse, she was a thinking corpse. Usually, a person's thoughts leave at the threshold of death. All thought and knowledge end there. All ideas evaporate. All theory confronts a wall of silence. Not even a wall, for thoughts can perceive a wall, a stone and cement reality. Thought confronts nothingness.

Lalla Kenza found herself riding on the highest peak, with half the world on one side and half on the other. Her dilemma was that she had defied death. She was death, cold, nothingness. She was the paralyzing stiffness. She was especially the emptiness. Her heart, mind, and the veins running through her body were empty. Her skin was already crawling with maggots. Her eyes no longer saw the things of this world. Her ears were ringing with subterranean sounds. Her body damned, she was dead among the living. She was an absent presence, life and death combined, a lack of meaning, a work of Satan. And that was the source of her suffering.

Then, in His mercy, God drowned her pain in dementia. She returned to the time when days were satisfactorily full, without question of the past, without concern for the future, nor regret, nor torment, nor desire for better days to come.

An internal light shone from her mind and unraveled into a bright present, into nature, igniting its pores.

Around her people said, "Poor thing, she's lost her mind. May God have mercy on her and us."

This sympathy did not affect her any more than had the slander before.

Why was there such joy visible on her face? How to explain this euphoria, this overabundance of energy, this frightening desire to live, at her age? What to say of this happiness exposed in broad daylight, like the banners of the exultant conquerors?

Perhaps, finally, in her folly, she was living her love to the fullest? Perhaps she had convinced herself that she had posthumously rejoined her beloved and that they had taken up their games interrupted at the height of their passion?

Thus ended Lalla Kenza's life, her sane life, that is.

She left the world and its conflicts as one turns the last page of a history book. It was the end of the Second World War. The victorious allies dictated their conditions to vanquished Germany that was already retreating into the particularities of its culture to begin its rebirth. It was the end of fascism, the deconstruction of the colonial era, the foundation of a new world born from the very ruins of the war. The third world of the poor, weak peoples was nonetheless imbued with that particular essence that constitutes the souls of nations.

And Morocco was drained bloodless, cut to pieces, and deprived of its political leaders, but engaged in the battle, eager to preserve the sunburned authenticity of the land.

Kenza left the world and its conflicts and took revenge on her past misfortune, revenge on this shuffled deck of cards and the repercussions of the hand she had been dealt, from her glowing dawn until this smoky night in which she incinerated her memory...

Then she died triumphant, the Fighter.

Casablanca, January 11, 1994

half a century later . . .

## Glossary

This glossary includes Arabic and Moroccan items that appear in the final version of the translation. Many words that appear in *The American Heritage College Dictionary (AHCD)* and other modern English dictionaries are included for readers' convenience.

**Abbassid** “An Arabic dynasty (750-1258) named for al-Abbass (566?-652), paternal uncle of Muhammad.”<sup>54</sup>

**afreet** “A powerful evil spirit or monstrous demon in Arabic mythology” (*AHCD*).

**Ashura** The tenth day of the month of Ramadan. “Among the Shiites it is the terrible anniversary of the murder of Husayn by the troops of the Caliph Yazid” at Karbala in 680 CE.<sup>55</sup>

**burnoose** “A hooded cloak worn especially by Arabs and Berbers” (*AHCD*).

**caftan** “A full-length garment with elbow-length or long sleeves, worn chiefly in eastern Mediterranean countries” (*AHCD*). In Morocco, a traditional, formal robe for a woman.

**couscous** “A North African dish consisting of pasta steamed with meat and vegetables” (*AHCD*).

**dada** Nurse, nanny.<sup>56</sup>

**djellaba** “A long, loose, hooded garment with full sleeves, worn esp. in Muslim countries” (*AHCD*).

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<sup>54</sup> *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, revised edition of the *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001).

<sup>56</sup> Richard S. Harrell, ed., *A Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Arabic-English* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 1966) 18.

**Fassi** Native of Fez.

**Filali** A family name.

**Hajj** “**Hajji** Pilgrim. Often adopted as an honorific title preceding the name of Muslims who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajji for men, hajjah for women). In some Muslim communities the title confers honor, respect and special status.”<sup>57</sup> The final vowel sound of the masculine form of this word is typically elided in the Moroccan dialect.

**hantuze** A padded velvet crown used in a traditional headdress.

**Harun al-Rashid** “763?-809. Caliph of Baghdad (786-809) noted for the splendor of his court” (*AHCD*).

**henna** “A tree or shrub (*Lawsonia inermis*) of the Middle East having fragrant white or reddish flowers. A reddish-orange dyestuff prepared from the leaves of this plant” (*AHCD*). This dyestuff is often used to tint hair and create designs on hands and feet.

**Idris** “Mulay Idris b. 'Abdallah, a descendent of the Prophet, founded the city of Fez in 789 CE.”<sup>58</sup>

**imam** A “leader, a model, an authority, or an example” (Martin). The “leader of prayer, for a particular occasion or as a regular function” (Glassé).

**jihad** Derived from an Arabic verb meaning “to strive” or “to exert oneself” toward some goal, Richard Martin writes that this word is used to refer to the “struggle of the Muslims to attain and maintain their faith.” Cyril Glassé defines this word to mean “‘Holy War’, a Divine institution of warfare to extend Islam to the *dar al-harb* (the non-Islamic territories which are described as the ‘abode of struggle,’ or disbelief) or to defend Islam from danger.”

**jinn** Plural of **jinni**. “In Muslim legend, a spirit often capable of assuming human or animal form and exercising supernatural influence over people” (*AHCD*).

**Ka'bah** “The large cubic stone structure, covered with a black cloth, which stands in the center of the Grand Mosque of Mecca” (Glassé). Listed in *The*

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<sup>57</sup> John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> Richard C. Martin, ed., *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* V.2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004) 2588.

*American Heritage College Dictionary* as **Kaaba**, “a Muslim shrine in Mecca toward which the faithful pray.”

**kohl** “A cosmetic preparation, such as powdered antimony sulfide, used esp. in the Middle East to darken the rims of the eyelids” (*AHCD*).

**Lalla** “Used in addressing a lady.” “Madam (or Miss).” (Harrell 68)

**medina** “The old section of an Arab city in North Africa” (*AHCD*).

**muezzin** “The crier who calls the faithful to prayer five times a day” (*AHCD*).

**negafats** Women “hired to attend the bride during the wedding ceremony” (Harrell 101).

**pouf** “A rounded ottoman” (*AHCD*).

**Qarawiyin** The name of a mosque, university, and area of Fez. Esposito notes that the Qarawiyin University is a “celebrated university associated with the mosque of the same name at Fez, Morocco, built by a pious woman, Fatimah bin Muhammad al-Fihri, in 859, as a center for Islamic education.”

**rial** “Variant of **riyal**,” from the Spanish *real*, “a silver coin formerly used in Spain and Latin America” and “a monetary unit formerly used in Portugal” (*AHCD*). In Morocco, “a coin of five francs (also the amount)” (Harrell 130).

**Salafi** “Name (derived from *salaf*, ‘pious ancestors’) given to a reform movement” that “emphasized restoration of Islamic doctrines to pure form, adherence to the Quran and Sunnah [established custom], rejection of the authority of later interpretations, and maintenance of the unity of ummah [Muslim community]” (Esposito).

**sharif** “Variant of **sherif**. A descendant of Muhammad through Fatima and her son Hussein (629?-680)” (*AHCD*).

**sidi** “Master, lord; mister” (Harrell 135).

**tahlil** From a verb meaning to untie, unbind, unfasten.<sup>59</sup> See pages 46 and 47 for a discussion of the problematic meaning of this word in context.

**Tetuani** Native of Tetuan, a town in the north of Morocco.

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<sup>59</sup> Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed., ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, New York, 1976) 198.

**Traditions of the Prophet** Refers to **Hadith**, “report of the words and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims; considered an authoritative source of revelation, second only to the Quran (sometimes referred to as sayings of the Prophet)” (Esposito).

**wadi** “A valley, gully, or streambed in northern Africa and southwest Asia that remains dry except during the rainy season. A stream that flows through such a channel” (*AHCD*).

**Ya Lateef** “O my God! good heavens! for goodness sake!” (Wehr 868).

**Zamzam** “The name of the well near the Ka’bah” (Glassé).

## **Appendix A: Interview with Nouzha Fassi Fihri**

*Vous êtes interprète, n'est-ce pas?*

Je suis interprète assermentée. J'exerce à Casablanca. J'ai un cabinet. Je fais de la traduction officielle. Je suis agréée par la Cour d'appel de Casablanca.

*Est-ce que les dossiers officiels que vous traduisez alimentent votre littérature?*  
Vous savez, c'est normale. Je suis tout le long du jour en train de jongler avec les deux langues, l'arabe et le français. Donc, automatiquement, je suis dans les dictionnaires. Ça facilite aussi la tâche.

*Est-ce que vous avez l'intention de continuer à écrire des romans?*

Oui, je suis en train d'écrire en ce moment. Mon troisième roman. J'espère que ça aboutira. Je n'ai pas tellement de temps pour l'écriture, malheureusement, mais j'essaie de prendre quelques heures pour travailler. . . .

*Pour La Baroudeuse, avez-vous puisé dans votre expérience personnelle, ou écrivez-vous de vos connaissances d'autres personnes?*

Disons que je me suis basée sur une histoire vraie, très romancée, mais le fond de l'histoire est vrai. Il ne s'agit pas de moi, puisqu'il s'agit de deux générations en arrière, mais il s'agit de quelqu'un que j'ai connu, une vieille dame que j'ai connue, et c'est son histoire. Elle s'était mariée avec un cousin qui a été appelé à partir ailleurs, et son père a refusé de la laisser partir. Il a demandé le divorce et le divorce a été prononcé.

*Vous êtes interprète assermentée, vous avez un très haut niveau d'études et de connaissances littéraires en français.*

Dès le début, j'étais très portée sur le français, autant que sur l'arabe. Tout ce qui est littéraire m'a toujours passionnée depuis le lycée. Et j'écrivais toujours pas mal. Donc, mes rédactions, mes dissertations étaient lues en classe et puis dans d'autres classes. Chaque fois que j'ai voulu m'exprimer, c'était mon moyen. Chaque fois que je suis heureuse ou triste ou n'importe quoi, je me rejette sur l'écriture, quitte à déchirer le papier après. C'est une passion chez moi. J'aime beaucoup lire et j'ai toujours beaucoup lu. Et puis, j'aime écrire.

*Vous écoutant, je me rappelle de votre personnage dans Le Ressac, Soraya. Êtes-vous de Fès?*

Je suis de Fès; je suis d'une famille d'intellectuels. Donc, l'écriture ce n'est pas une première chez nous dans la famille parce que depuis l'Andalousie musulmane, d'où ma famille est venue, il y a toujours eu des savants, des intellectuels, des théologiens, des gens de lettres, etc. Donc, c'est dans la famille. Mon père écrit, mes oncles, mon frère écrit. Donc, c'est un peu de famille.

*Quels sont les autres faits ou événements qui vous ont amenée à écrire?*

Oui, l'histoire de *Le Ressac*, l'histoire de Soraya, n'est pas une histoire isolée. Disons que les filles de ma génération, beaucoup de filles ont été mariées jeunes, très jeunes, et puis c'étaient des mariages arrangés entre familles. Alors, je suis parmi ces jeunes filles. Je me suis mariée à quinze ans. Donc, j'ai dû quitter mes études que j'adorait d'ailleurs, et je me suis mariée. J'étais encore très jeune. J'étais très brillante en classe. Donc ça a été en quelque sorte un arrachement. Et ça m'est toujours resté sur [le cœur], le fait de me marier comme ça, de cette façon, même si c'était dans les moeurs. Je n'ai jamais accepté, vous voyez? Donc, j'ai repris mes études par la suite, étant mariée avec des enfants. J'ai poursuivi mes études, mais le fait de les avoir quittées comme ça, d'un coup, de m'être mariée de cette façon... Heureusement, Dieu merci, j'ai été heureuse avec mon mari et tout, mais c'est la façon qui je n'ai jamais... Mais le cas de Soraya, comme je vous ai dit n'est pas un cas isolé. Il y avait beaucoup, beaucoup de jeunes filles qui se mariaient de la même façon, et j'avais envie d'en parler. J'avais envie de le dire, pour dépasser la chose. C'est-à-dire, en écrivant ce que j'ai écrit, j'ai dépassé cette frustration que j'ai vécue de devoir me marier très, très jeune alors que... .

*Dans votre premier roman, Le Ressac, vous avez adressé ce regret, et en écrivant La Baroudeuse, vous traitez un autre problème, mais aussi la situation de la femme qui vit selon le gré de sa famille traditionnelle.*

Exactement, et c'est-à-dire que dans *La Baroudeuse*, il y a beaucoup de choses qui me tenaient à cœur. D'abord, même dans *Le Ressac*, il y a ce côté-là de dire ce que vivaient les jeunes filles à l'époque, d'un côté, mais aussi toute la beauté des traditions, des coutumes, toute la poésie des maisons marocaines. Je ne sais pas si vous avez lu *Le Ressac*. Est-ce que ça vous est ressorti cette poésie? De vivre dans ces maisons marocaines, les jardins, tout ce bonheur de mon enfance? Et puis, la Dada, qui est un personnage très important dans la vie de la maisonnée. C'est une deuxième maman, mais avec son exotisme, avec tout ce qu'elle apporte, parce que généralement elle vient des montagnes, elle vient de contrées assez éloignées. Fès, c'est la vie citadine. Elle rapporte cette liberté des hauteurs, elle reste gaie, elle est joyeuse, elle chante. Pour les enfants, elle raconte des histoires, elle est très, très importante dans la vie des enfants, et ça aussi, j'ai voulu le dire.

*Tout en étant esclave.*

Tout en étant esclave.

*Avec l'histoire qu'elle raconte de son esclavage.*

C'est-à-dire, elle raconte sa propre histoire, mais aussi d'autres histoires, vous voyez? Elle a toujours en elle cette nostalgie. Ça n'empêche pas d'aimer la vie. Vous comprenez? Elle a gardé cet amour de la vie qu'elle avait, petite fille, dans son 'douar' lointain, et elle communique cette joie, ce bonheur, cette liberté. Donc, il y a ce côté-là, les traditions, les coutumes, une règle de vie qui n'est écrite nulle part mais qui est suivie à la lettre par tous. Un raffinement dans les manières, un raffinement dans la vie quotidienne, un tas de coutumes, de traditions qui disparaissent malheureusement, mais qui enrichissaient la vie quotidienne. *Le Ressac* contient un peu de tout ça. Et puis, à *La Baroudeuse*,

j'avais plusieurs thèmes. Il y avait le thème ethnographique, quand je dis maintenant tout ce que la vie à Fès comporte de coutumes et de traditions. Et puis il y a aussi le côté historique, l'histoire récente, que j'ai voulu raconter. Moi même, j'étais jeune, je n'ai pas pu saisir toutes les nuances, mais mon mari m'a raconté beaucoup de choses, mes parents, des membres de la famille. Puis, j'ai lu des livres en arabe, et puis j'ai voulu transmettre tout ça aux autres. C'est-à-dire, si j'écrivais en français, c'est d'abord pour une génération qui a une formation occidentale, c'est-à-dire les enfants qui ont étudié à la Mission Culturelle Française. Donc, les enfants qui ne connaissaient pas tout ça. Si j'avais écrit en arabe, ils n'auraient pas pu avoir accès à cette histoire récente qu'ils connaissaient mal. Et puis aussi aux étrangers, j'ai voulu donner ma propre des choses, d'une Marocaine. Donc, il y a beaucoup d'ethnologie, il y a le côté historique, il y a l'histoire d'amour, elle aussi. Il y a le côté de la femme, l'émancipation de la femme. Disons que La Baroudeuse était porteuse de modernité. Elle était parmi les premières femmes qui se sont révoltées contre une situation déterminée, où le père était le patriarche. Il avait le destin de... et comme vous avez dû vous en rendre compte, ce n'était pas seulement la femme dont on décidait de l'avenir, mais c'était aussi les garçons. Il y avait le patriarche, il y avait la famille qui décidait le destin des jeunes, garçons ou filles. Rares ceux qui avaient leur mot à dire. C'était le mariage de la raison. Ils ne les mariaient pas à la légère. Ils essayaient, bien sûr, de leur donner le meilleur parti possible, mais c'étaient eux qui prenaient la décision, non pas les enfants, les principaux intéressés.

*Donc, vous écrivez principalement pour vos enfants?*

J'ai parlé de mes enfants, mais ce n'est pas seulement pour mes enfants que j'écris, loin de là. J'écris pour toute la génération nouvelle qui doit connaître son histoire proche. Donc, moi, j'en parle, d'autres en parleront. C'est plus facile pour eux d'apprendre cette histoire à travers des romans parce que c'est plus agréable que de se référer aux livres d'histoire. Et puis, bien sûr, on me pose toujours cette question, 'pourquoi vous écrivez en français et non pas en arabe?', mais comme m'a dit je ne sais plus qui, je me considère comme des passeurs, des gens qui embarquent et qui transportent des passagers d'une rive à l'autre. C'est-à-dire qu'on essaie de raconter un peu ce que nous sommes réellement, et non pas ce visage un peu erroné que les autres voient en nous. Remarquez, mon voeu le plus cher c'est d'écrire aussi en arabe un jour. Ça, c'est certain, parce que l'arabe, c'est ma langue de prédilection. C'est une langue extrêmement belle et extrêmement riche. J'adore lire les poésies arabes, les textes littéraires arabes qui sont d'une extrême beauté, mais jusqu'à maintenant, je ne suis pas encore prête pour le faire. J'ai, Dieu merci, un niveau en arabe qui n'est pas mauvais, parce que nous sommes parfaitement bilingues. Notre génération a étudié l'arabe et le français exactement de la même façon. Nous possédons l'arabe. Mon père était un arabisant. Il était le conservateur de la bibliothèque de la Karaouine à Fès, et il parlait pratiquement l'arabe classique dans son langage quotidien et nous avons un contact permanent avec l'arabe. Disons que notre relation avec l'arabe est différente de notre relation avec le français. Le français, nous pouvons l'agresser un petit peu. Il y a certaines choses qu'on peut dire en français qu'on ne peut pas dire en arabe, parce qu'on a une sorte de respect pour cette langue. L'arabe de la

littérature et de la poésie en pays islamique, c'est une langue très pure, très belle. La langue du Coran, donc, ce ne sont pas les mêmes relations qu'avec le français. Il y a beaucoup de choses que je peux dire en français mais que je ne pourrais pas dire en arabe.

*Donc, il est question de sujet à transmettre. Vous traitez maintenant des sujets qui se traitent mieux en français.*

Voila, pour le moment.

*Est-ce que vous pensez que les thèmes de vos récits seront traités souvent par d'autres femmes écrivains?*

Oui, bien sûr, parce que comme dans toute société qui change, se transforme, la femme s'émancipe. Donc, automatiquement, il y a des choses qui étaient acceptées par nos aînées et qui ne sont plus acceptées actuellement, qu'on remet en question. Et puis, écrire, c'est une façon de les remettre en question, d'en parler. Ça nous tient à cœur, c'est comme ça que le changement peut s'opérer. Il y a une grande émancipation de la femme depuis quelques décennies. Ça a complètement changé. La fille actuellement travaille, elle fait des études supérieures, elle se marie à son gré, elle s'est émancipée, enfin. Disons, le plus grand nombre. Il y a certaines filles qui sont encore sous l'égide du père, mais ça devient de plus en plus rare.

*Est-ce que vous pensez que votre écriture joue même un rôle catalyseur, pour aider ce changement?*

Je l'espère. À ma modeste portée. Ça fait un petit [?] en plus, parmi tout ce qui se fait actuellement, tout ce qui a été fait, parce que nous devons beaucoup aux nationalistes. Ce sont les premiers qui ont pensé à la femme, qui ont pensé à ouvrir des écoles pour des filles. Ils ont beaucoup fait pour la femme, d'abord les écoles primaires, ensuite les écoles secondaires. Et je crois que l'instruction est le meilleur moyen de se libérer, de s'émanciper. On en parle, donc, c'est une prise de conscience, qui peut encore étendre son effet, c'est certain.

*You are an interpreter?*

I am a certified interpreter. I have an office in Casablanca. I do official translations. I am certified by the Casablanca Court of Appeal.

*Do the legal cases you translate inspire your writing?*

Yes, of course. All day long I juggle two languages, Arabic and French. So naturally, I am always referring to dictionaries. That makes my job easier.

*Do you plan to write more novels?* Yes, I am in the process of writing my third novel now. I hope I'll be able to finish it. Unfortunately, I don't have much time for writing, but I try to take a few hours to work on it . . .

*When you were writing La Baroudeuse, did you call on personal experience, or were you writing about people you knew?*

The story is built on real events, fictionalized, but basically true. It's not about me--as you know the story was set two generations ago--but it is about someone I knew, an old lady. It is her story. She married her cousin who was assigned elsewhere, and her father refused to let her go with him. He called for their divorce, and they were divorced.

*You are a certified interpreter and you have a very high level of language studies and literary knowledge in French.*

From the beginning, I felt a strong affinity with French, as well as with Arabic. Since high school, I have been intrigued with all kinds of literature. And I have always had a facility for writing. My essays were read in class, and in other classes. Whenever I had anything to say, I wrote. Whenever I am happy or sad or feel any emotion, I let it out in writing, even if I have to tear up the paper afterwards. I am passionate about writing. I love to read and I have always read a lot. And I also love to write.

*Listening to you, I am reminded of the character in Le Ressac, Soraya. Are you from Fez?*

I am from Fez. I am from a family of intellectuals. I am not the first one to write in my family; from the time of Muslim Andalusia where my family originated, we have always had sages, intellectuals, theologians, writers, etc. So it's in the family. My father writes, and so do my uncles and my brother. So it's something of a family trait.

*What are some of the other situations or events that led you to write?*

Yes, the story of *Le Ressac*, the story of Soraya is not an isolated case. Many girls of my generation were married young, very young, and their marriages were arranged by their families. I was one of them. I married at fifteen. So I had to stop school--and I loved my studies--and I got married. I was still very young. I had been an excellent student. So I felt as if I had been torn away, uprooted. And I have always felt bad about that, about being married like that, even if it was the tradition. You see, I have never accepted it. So, I went back to school after my children were born. I have continued my studies, but the fact that I had to stop so suddenly, to be married in that way. . . . Luckily, thank God, I have been happy with my husband, but I have never accepted the way. . . . But Soraya's situation is not an isolated case. Many, many girls were married this way, and I wanted to talk about it. I wanted to say it to get past it. Writing this story I worked through my own frustration at having to get married so very young even though . . .

*In your first novel, Le Ressac, you dealt with this regret, and in La Baroudeuse, you treat another problem, but also the situation of a woman who must respect family tradition.* Exactly, and in *La Baroudeuse*, there are many notions that are important to me. First, as in *Le Ressac*, I wanted to show what girls had to go through at the time, but also the beauty of the traditional customs and clothes, all the poetry of Moroccan homes. I don't know if you read *Le Ressac*. Did you sense the poetry of living in these Moroccan homes, the gardens, all the joy of my childhood? And then, the Dada who is a very important personage in the life of

the household. She is a second mother, but with her exotic ways, with all that she brings, because generally she comes from the mountains, from far away places. Life in Fez is urbane. She brings the liberty of the mountains. She is gay and she sings. She tells the children stories and she is very, very important in their lives. I wanted to say this as well.

*Even though she was a slave.*  
Even though she was a slave.

*And the story she tells of her enslavement.*

Yes, she tells her own story, but other stories as well. She is nostalgic, but that does not keep her from loving life. She still loves the life she had in her far away village, and she communicates this joy, this happiness, this liberty. So [in *La Baroudeuse*] there is the theme of traditional customs and clothes, of unwritten rules of behavior that all strictly obey. A refinement in manners and in daily life, a great many traditions that are unfortunately disappearing, traditions that enrich daily life. There is some of this in *Le Ressac*. And in *La Baroudeuse*, I had many themes. There was the ethnographic theme, talking about all the traditions and customs of life in Fez. And I wanted to tell of recent history. I was young [during the struggle for Moroccan independence], but my husband, my parents and other members of the family told me many things, and then I also read books in Arabic. I wanted to tell all this to others. I chose to write in French to reach a generation who had studied in French, the children who had gone to French Mission schools, and therefore did not know all of this. If I had written in Arabic, they would not have had access to this recent history of which they had little knowledge. And I wanted to share my perspective with foreigners, the perspective of a Moroccan woman. You might say that *La Baroudeuse* was a harbinger of modernity. She was one of the first women to revolt against a given situation, where the father is the patriarch. He determined the destiny of . . . and as you certainly understood, he decided the future not only of the young women, but also of the young men. The patriarch and the family decided the destiny of the young people, boys and girls. Rarely did they have any choice in the matter. Families arranged marriages on the basis of logic and convenience, but not carelessly. Of course they tried to make the best possible choice, but the parents chose, not the children, the ones most directly concerned.

*So you write mainly for your children?*

I spoke of my children, but I write not only for my children, far from it. I write for the whole generation of young people who need to know their recent history. I write about it, and so will others. It's easier for the young people to learn about their history from novels because it's more pleasant than reading history books. And of course, people are always asking me, 'Why do you write in French instead of Arabic?' As someone once told me, I don't remember who, we are like ferry boat operators who take people from one side of the river to the other. In other words, we try to tell a bit of who we really are, not the somewhat erroneous image that others have of us. However, my dearest wish is to also write in Arabic someday. Arabic is the language I prefer. It is an extremely beautiful and rich

language. I love to read Arabic poetry, and literary Arabic texts are absolutely beautiful, but I'm not ready to write in Arabic yet. Thank God, we are bilingual and my Arabic is good. Our generation knows Arabic because we studied Arabic as well as French. My father studied Arabic. He was the director of the Qarawiyin Library in Fez, and he spoke mainly Classical Arabic every day, and we maintain permanent contact with Arabic. Our relationship with Arabic is different from the one we have with French. We can treat French more aggressively. There are some things we can say in French that we can't say in Arabic because we have a sort of respect for Arabic. The literary and poetic Arabic of Islamic countries is a very pure, very beautiful language. It is the language of the Koran. So the relationship is different from the one we have with French. There are many things I can say in French that I wouldn't say in Arabic.

*It is a question of the kinds of ideas you wish to convey. Now you are writing about subjects that are easier to write about in French.*

Yes, for the moment.

*Do you think other women writers will deal with the same themes?*

Yes, of course, because, as in every evolving society, women are emancipating themselves. So, automatically, earlier generations accepted things that we no longer accept, notions that we question. Writing is a way of raising questions, of discussing things that bother us. That's the way we can bring about change. Women have greatly emancipated themselves over the last few decades. Things have completely changed. These days a girl can work, go to university, marry whom she pleases. She can enjoy complete emancipation. That is to say, most girls. Some girls are under the control of their fathers, but that is increasingly rare.

*Do you think your writing might even play the role of catalyst, to contribute to this change?*

I hope so. I hope that it might play a modest role. One more [?] in the midst of all that is happening now, all that has been done. We owe much to the nationalists. They were the first ones to think of women, to open first primary and then secondary schools for girls. They did a lot for women. And I believe that education is the best way to liberate oneself, to gain emancipation. So we speak of all these things. It's a way to raise awareness, and will certainly have an effect.

## **Appendix B: Marjolijn de Jager's e-mail response to the questionnaire**

*When you were translating An Algerian Childhood, did you have an audience in mind?*

Not a specific one, really. I have in mind people who love to read, who are curious about cultures and worlds other than the one they know, but rarely did I or do I think in more specific terms than that.

*What individuals might you list as belonging to this audience?*

The author (if she or he reads English, that is) Always! The publisher/editor, certainly: after all they are the ones who will decide on the quality of the book in English and who come to me in the first place.

*How strong was your awareness of this audience?*

Ever-present but in the background.

*How would you characterize your attitude toward the original audience and cultural context?*

As close as it can be as a non-member of that culture. Prepared to do all the 'research' needed to have it feel and sound authentic.

*How would you characterize your attitude toward the audience and cultural context of the translation?*

One of wanting to share my enthusiasm, love, passion for the work in question, in the hope of piquing its interest and have it want to continue further reading in that area.

*How would you characterize the general tone and purpose of your translation?*

This is hard to answer. I am hardly objective. I do the very best I can with each new text I encounter. I try to inhabit characters, feel the music, understand events, and then put it into the new language relating it in atmosphere and feeling as closely as I can. It will be different every time with every text.

*How would you characterize what you imagined would be your audience's attitude toward the text and the cultural context it conveys?*

I do not give that much thought other than what I stated above.

*Describe some of the decisions you made while translating in which you felt the influence of, sought to impose your influence on, or otherwise anticipated the responses of your audience.*

I do not feel the influence of an audience nor do I anticipate its responses, as I don't often know who they will be. I do not seek to impose any influence, rather I seek to inspire or enchant perhaps, by providing the best possible and most faithful translation of the original I can.

## **Appendix C: Personal interview with Barbara Parmenter**

*(I explained my project to Barbara Parmenter and told her that I was also sending these questions to other translators including, among others, Marilyn Booth.)*

I know Marilyn Booth very well, and once when we were talking about translating, she said that she would read the text all the way through to try to understand the voice of the author, and then start translating it, and I said "Wow!, I just sit down and try to figure it out." I feel like I take a much more journeyman's approach to translating, especially at the beginning when I was in graduate school and fresh out of graduate school.

*When you translated Year of the Elephant, did you have an audience in mind?*  
I'm trying to think back to when I [translated *Year of the Elephant*]. It's probably pretty generic. I certainly imagined Americans. I don't think I imagined them as a particular group. I think I imagined them as people who are interested in learning more about North Africa. My training is in geography, so when I look at it, it's like being a geographical explorer, only I'm doing it through literature instead of traveling in Morocco. So I guess I probably imagined people like me, Americans like me who were really curious to learn about North Africa . . . Other than that I don't think I was very specific. If I were doing it now that I am older have more experience, I would probably do it fairly differently, but at that point, it's like, O.K., I'm going to translate this, and I sit down and start doing it sentence by sentence. Then I go back and read it and try to put it in a way that makes sense to people who are going to read it. I had a friend who looked at it once, and he was all confused by one sentence, and finally he understood what it meant and just switched it around, and I said, "Oh, of course!" And it actually meant the original meaning much better. Another thing that I tend to do is leave certain words transliterated in Arabic, and I just put down in a note what they mean. Some of those are just things that would be hard to translate, like *djellabah*. And sometimes I don't actually put down what they mean because I think the meaning is clear enough from the context. And to me... I don't know why I make those choices, but they seem to work a lot better to me that way. And I guess they are words that--I lived in Egypt for a few years and even speaking to English-speaking friends, they are the kind of words we say in Arabic anyway because they just make more sense in Arabic. To me it was very important to leave those words in Arabic to give that sense of place.

*If so, what individuals might you list as belonging to this audience? (yourself? the author? your publisher? a professor you had? classmates in one of your courses? professional readers? non-professional readers?)*

Probably myself, and I think again that since I am so interested in geography, I probably spent the most time doing the descriptions of the place. I wanted to get

that right. I wanted it to be a kind of miniature world that somebody can read and understand.

*How strong was your awareness of this audience?*

So my awareness of all this was not very strong. I think about it now more than I did then.

*How would you characterize your attitude toward the audience and cultural context of the translation?*

I don't know that I thought much about that. That's an interesting question. But the cultural context, certainly, in general, I wanted to, again since I'm a geographer and I love traveling and I've been to Morocco, I wanted to present a true image of Morocco. And I want that to be a good presentation, not in the sense of pick all good things, but real and truthful as much as the author makes it truthful, and I think Leila did a really good job of that. But I don't think I had an idea of the original audience. I actually got to understand, I think, her perspective more in that I didn't really know that much about her at the time.

*How would you characterize the general tone and purpose of your translation?*

I didn't do it as deliberately as say, Marilyn, in terms of trying to get the author's voice, but I realize I had no experience in translating. Before this I had translated an appendix to a book on Lebanese politics (...) but I had no creative writing experience and I had never translated anything else, so I didn't really understand a lot about it and that's why talking about it is so interesting. But I certainly ran into that as I was doing the translation, and I struggled with that, because, if I was writing a story, it's not the way I would write it. It was a complicated struggle. I wanted to re-write parts, but of course, that's not my job. I think that's what Marilyn Booth was saying. She tried to figure it out ahead of time, and I just, as a young, inexperienced translator, I sort of ran straight into that wall while I was doing it. It wasn't a wall, really, but simply that issue. So my awareness of it came from doing it, and I don't feel like I came to a good way of dealing with it. I think I struggled with it all the way through. Trying to be true to the how she wrote it even though I'm a completely different person. I didn't solve that riddle. The other thing you have in Arabic a lot . . . in Arabic there can be very long sentences. There's no issue about that in Arabic writing, but in English there is a big issue about that. Trying to figure that out without it being too clunky and also not too long.

*So did you feel that Leila's general tone or focus was more political than yours?*

Yes, she's definitely more political than I am. I'm much more interested in Morocco as a place, geography, and she had a political agenda, and I found it interesting that I was translating it, but it wasn't my agenda.

*How would you characterize what you imagined would be your audience's attitude toward the text and the cultural context it conveys, especially since you were conveying a strong political current?*

First of all, I think that the cultural geographical context would be very interesting because it's a view of Morocco and Moroccans that we don't usually see and there's a lot of cold, rain, and stormy nights that Abouzeid does very well. And in terms of the story line itself, I was impressed by it, and I would assume that it was a surprising story line to Americans in the sense that there is a woman who is so active and at the same time, what's the right word, deeply religious and politically active. I just thought it was something American stereotypes don't show. So I liked that it ran against stereotypes of a Muslim woman. Certainly, I was happy to do it. ( . . ) I thought it was useful to show the viewpoint of an Islamic feminist.

## **Appendix D: Catherine Cobham's e-mail response to the questionnaire**

*Did you imagine the audience in your translations of Hanan Al-Shaykh's narratives, and if so, how did you imagine them, and how did your concept of audience influence your translation?*

I have to tell you that I'm not a translation theorist and would be answering on the basis of my experiences in practical translation. In answer to your question . . . I wasn't consciously imagining an audience for my translation of Hanan's novels, but my concept of audience must have been involved subconsciously in my choice of language up to a point. Since I was always very concerned to try and convey the feeling and atmosphere of individual sentences as well as of larger portions of the text, this might have implied a desire to communicate with a certain category of readers, even though I probably imagined I was just being a vehicle for the original writer! I certainly hoped—and therefore was aiming at in a way—that the audience would be general readers rather than people with a specific interest in the Arab world . . .

*When you were translating Hanan Al Shaykh's narratives, what audience did you have in mind?*

Fairly cosmopolitan mother tongue English reading public; people who don't habitually read novels but are curious to know more about the Arab world; Arabs who prefer/find it easier to read novels in English.

*What individuals might you list as belonging to this audience? (yourself? the author? Your publisher? A professor you had? Classmates in one of your courses? Professional readers? Non-professional readers?)*

Some friends and colleagues, but not others, as people who read a lot of fiction in English—rightly or wrongly—find Hanan's fiction a bit light or feminist or quasi-journalistic. Students in courses I taught—when teaching Arabic novels in English translation, I was often disappointed in the quality of the translations. Many of them had unjustifiable omissions, mistakes and perhaps more importantly seemed to lack the depth of the Arabic originals. (I'm not sure what you mean by professional and non-professional readers.)

*How strong was your awareness of this audience?*

Not very, when it came down to it. Without wanting to sound pretentious, I was always trying to reproduce the particular poetry and tone of the novel for its own sake, and for my own creative satisfaction, although I suppose I must have had the idea of pleasing a hypothetical reader aesthetically and imaginatively.

*Did you aim to accommodate or to challenge the expectations of your audience? How would you characterize your attitude toward the original audience and cultural context?*

Challenge, mainly . . . I suppose I felt an extremely strong proselytizing urge to counter people's preconceptions, prejudices and ignorance about many aspects of the Arab world, through imaginative rather than polemical channels.

*Describe some of the decisions you made while translating in which you felt the influence of, sought to impose your influence on, or otherwise anticipated the responses of your audience.*

Often these had to do with different concepts of e.g. what was vulgar obscene and what wasn't, and how far to impose this on audiences. English-speaking audiences are continually surprised to find so much sex in Arabic novels, which says more about their preconceptions than the Arabic novels. I tried to avoid inappropriate archaisms or over rhetorical language. I've noticed that some translations of Arabic into English seem to slip into a semi-Biblical or Thousand and One Nights kind of tone, and when you look back at the original Arabic you find it's really simple style.

## **Appendix E: Marilyn Booth's e-mail response to the questionnaire**

*When you were translating "My Grandmother's Cactus," did you have an audience in mind?*

Yes, but vaguely so. At the time, I was living in England (and then in Cairo when I did the final editing/page proofs etc.). I was a bit "spoiled" in that the UK audience is more sophisticated than the US one in terms of translated literatures, so in some ways I probably subconsciously took audience for granted, didn't think about it as much or as specifically as I might now, depending on the project. Let me describe briefly how the Cactus project came about. I was in London seeing my friend Zelfa Hourani, at Quartet Books, and she asked if I'd thought about putting a short story collection together. I hadn't, but we talked and I got very enthusiastic. I had a couple of specific motivations: I wanted English speakers to recognize female Arab writers who were not Nawal el-Saadawi (for whom I have a lot of respect as an activist--after all, I did translate her prison memoirs! but at the time, it seemed like she was the only female Arab writer that one saw in bookstores). I have to really put myself back into my thinking at that time: it has been quite a while and I've done a lot of translating since, so I am trying very hard here to not let later experience shape what I am saying. Anyway, and this is connected to your next question, I thought first in terms of a fairly "conventional" anthology--that is, a more or less historically organized collection, one story per author, probably starting with Suhayr Qalamawi (some of whose work I would still like to translate!), and so forth. However, when I started to read, things changed. I'll put hat off until your "audience question" below where it more properly belongs. Anyway, so this idea that was genuinely mutual, formulated with Zelfa, had behind it a vague sense of audience, but I had a lot to learn!

*If so, what individuals might you list as belonging to this audience? (yourself? the author? your publisher? a professor you had? classmates in one of your courses? professional readers? non-professional readers?).*

Definitely, at the time, nonprofessional readers. I felt (and feel) strongly about the political responsibility of translators--or at least of me as a translator--in trying to complicate a nonacademic (as well as academic) audience's understandings of and/or reactions to Arab and Muslim-majority societies and histories and to what is going on now culturally in terms of contemporary Arabic literature. Since, at the time, I wasn't teaching and really wasn't even thinking much about teaching, an audience of students was not foremost in my mind. But inevitably, I'm my own first audience. That is, I have learned the hard way (about a year after I finished Cactus) that I should not translate something I don't like--it is excruciating. And being my own first audience is certainly pertinent to the way Cactus evolved. Here, I take up the story I started in the previous answer. When I began to read stories (before this, what I had read by Egyptian women was mostly novels), and to collect more in Cairo once I was there, I started to feel a bit panicked. I recognized the historical importance and "employment" of women's stories from the 1930s on, but did not feel that my audience--however vaguely imagined--

would get excited about these stories--and I was not excited. This makes it pretty clear that my "agenda" really was to turn on an English speaking audience (one that would be as broad and unprofessional as possible) to contemporary Arabic literature and to what women were writing and saying. I think this needs also to be put in a "nonliterary" context. That is, I was already sick at the time of people asking me: (1), oh, is there an Arabic literature? and (2) you mean, Arab women are allowed to write? yuck. Most upsetting was when white American feminists would ask these questions. So I felt somewhat militant about it all. At the same time, I have also always felt strongly about not reducing literary works to sociological panoramas. I wanted readers first and foremost to feel transported (and not geographically!) by these works; to feel the literary excellence, to love the stories. But--back to my story--I wasn't loving the stories. The moment when I felt I had something--and knew I had to do that collection--was when I read Radwa Ashur's "Ra'aytu al-nakhl" (the story, in Adab wa-naqd I believe--not her collection by that name which came out much later). I loved it. This is also why I was delighted that the title I finally came up with referred to her story. That story (still my favorite, one of my most favorite short stories in the world) gave me the shape of a collection. But what would go with it? I gradually found other stories by relatively new writers. Remember, this wasn't now, when there is wonderful stuff coming out at Dar Mirit and elsewhere--it was really hard to find these things. But I also went through a process of worrying about and doubting my own literary judgement. Was I being fair to these authors I was rejecting? What was wrong with my reading? A crucial day was when I went, in despair, to Idwar al-Kharrat, such a wonderfully supportive and fantastic and humorous individual of whom I am very fond--and I said to him, I recall, Ustadh Idwar, ana khayfa... and went on to say that I was finding almost nothing and was really starting to doubt my own soundness as a reader and as presumably a literary scholar. He asked me, who have you found? I told him, he laughed and said you are totally on the right track, you have found the right people. That day, as I said, was crucial to the collection and to my sense of myself as a reader! (and audience).

*How strong was your awareness of this audience?*

I hope I have answered this, though perhaps not so directly. I can say that if I had had in mind an audience of students, I might have chosen (and it would have been a mistake) stories with more obvious closure. I have taught this collection, once, and students are frustrated with it because it doesn't give them answers--but that is a good thing.

*How would you characterize your attitude toward the original Egyptian and Arabic audience and cultural context?*

This is a tough question because I can never know--I don't think anyone can--exactly who that audience is or was. But what I do recall is finding out gradually, through my own digging for stories and then their authors, that the writers I finally chose felt somewhat alienated from their supposed, "natural" audiences--as I felt alienated from mine, in the sense of a broadly conceived English-speaking non-scholarly "intended audience" most of whom, I know, couldn't care less about Arabic literature. So, there was a sort of bond there. I want to say at this point that

the most important aspect or result of this collection for me has been the friendships that developed from it. And those friendships resulted because my way of working was NOT to go to the authors and ask for stories but rather to find stories on my own and then, for the few authors I really liked to find them (the authors). Jean, you might want to read my introduction to the short story collection I translated of Sahar Tawfiq's stories--I describe there how I went looking for her, and that was back when I was working on Cactus, because Sahar was one of the authors I thought amazing. (And when I mentioned her name to Idwar, hers and Ibthil Salim's, I remember he really raised his eyebrows and looked impressed--neither one was easy to find then, their stories I mean, but these were stories, like Radwa's, that gave my project meaning). In terms of history as a translator--Cactus being pretty near the start of it--I feel both in terms of negotiating a cultural context and specifically negotiating it as text, in my translation process, that I am far more comfortable with the urban Egyptian context (in which I've lived, though obviously my lived experience there can't claim to give me "knowledge" broadly of the place) than of others--since then, I've translated two Lebanese novels and I am now working on a Palestinian one, and as delighted as I am to immerse myself in these, I worry, because I don't have the same deep sense of my own history being involved as I do with Cairene material specifically.) I returned to Cairo (where I'd been as a grad student) after finishing my Ph.D. and lived there for another 5 plus years, and I've been back since then as often as I possibly could. Cairo is part of my life and very very much a part of my presumed maturation as an adult. So my own history is entangled in the history at least generally of those I've translated, and also very specifically in that several of them (Sahar, Ibthil, Radwa, I'tidal, Siham, and Ni'mat) have all continued to be friends. In fact, I've introduced some of them to each other!

*How would you characterize your attitude toward the American and English audiences and cultural context of the translation?*

I've probably answered this. Somewhere between hope and alienation. And, at the time I was translating, I hadn't lived in the US for quite a while.

*How would you characterize the general tone and purpose of your translation?*

I don't know how to answer this, other than what I've said above. In terms of "tone," I would say that the hardest aspect of that project was the struggle to present different voices--textually. My big moan about a lot of translations of Arabic texts (though there are huge exceptions) is that too often there is no obvious attempt to somehow convey a particular literary voice.

*How would you characterize what you imagined would be your audience's attitude toward the text and the cultural context it conveys?*

Again, I think I've answered this above. I think probably I was more worried in that translation than have been in later translations about "explaining" things, giving context. Now, my attitude toward the reader is, get off your butt and work. Treat Arabic literature as you would treat, say, Irish literature. Look up things you don't know. Guess at words you don't know. Don't expect spoonfeeding. I still do "explanations" but not as directly, and I work harder now not to make them

invade the text in nonliterary ways. You can also probably tell my attitude from the introduction. I felt it was really important to talk about the history of Egyptian women writing short stories. That introduction was really a short research paper (not one I had done, but one I did specially for the collection!). I felt it was important to document a prehistory, to tell people both that these writers felt they were working alone and that there was/is a history to what they were doing.

*Describe some of the decisions you made in which you felt the influence of, sought to impose your influence on or otherwise anticipated the responses of your audience.*

Jean, I want to go back to the text for this one (I haven't read it since I taught it years ago--it is always excruciating to reread a translation!) I will print it out to remind myself to think about it and respond in the next few days. [ . . . ] Definitely in writing the introduction--providing a historical background that people seem to lack, and trying to link Arab female writers' historical memory and sense of situation to that of other female writers in other societies. Perhaps in providing fuller notes than I might now--I really dislike having 'notes' to fictional texts, but felt there was a lot to explain in some of these stories, and though I wanted the readers to "work" I thought it fair to explain certain colloquial usages, place names, etc. Leafing through the book now, though, I don't really feel that I made particular compromises or was influenced by a sense of audience in terms of the language I chose to use. I think I was trying hardest to satisfy myself. I worked very hard to convey individual literary voices, but again, I felt that was an imperative for myself and as a matter of sincerity toward the authors. And, as I said earlier, in terms of choosing stories, I really chose the ones that I liked best and felt were literally the finest.

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## **Vita**

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