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Teaching Methods, Theories, Themes and Texts

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LESSONS FROM THE MAGHREB

Hoda El Shakry

In his groundbreaking 1983 work *Maghreb Pluriel*,[1] the late Moroccan novelist and literary critic Abdelkebir Khatibi (1938–2009) theorizes the Maghreb as geopoliti cally, linguistically and culturally *pluralistic*.[2] He writes, that the "Maghreb should be thought of as a topographic site between the Orient, Occident and Africa that can globalize on its own behalf" (Khatibi 1983, 38–9). He further posits that it is from within this very ontological instability that Maghrebi intellectuals may gen erate radically new modalities of thinking, being and writing. Khatibi's sentiments are by no means rare in the context of twentieth century literary and critical thought in the broader region of the Maghreb, which is most commonly understood to include the countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, and by some accounts, Libya and Mauritania. Thinkers such as ʻAbdullah al ʻArwī (Abdallah Laroui), ʻAli al Duʻaji, Aḥmad al Madīnī, Maḥmud al Masʻadī, Muḥammad Amanṣur, Tawfiq Bakkar, Muḥammad Barradah, ʻAbdelfattah Kilito, Abdellatif Lâabi, Abdelwahab Meddeb and Saʻīd Yaqṭīne were equally preoccupied with theorizing the *aesthetic* as well as *ethical* dimensions of Maghrebi ethno linguistic and cultural plurality. Their investi gations were both in dialogue with and against the grain of canonical narratives of cultural production in the Arab world. Such accounts either document the unidirec tional flow of knowledge from the imperial centers of Western Europe, or they pri vilege the countries of the Middle East, as is evidenced by the adage: *Cairo writes; Beirut publishes; and Baghdad reads*. While the Cairo Beirut Baghdad trajectory cer tainly resonates with some of the material realities of publishing in the region, it notably elides the Maghreb's extensive theoretical and literary contributions to Arab cultural capital. In so doing, it also neglects to account for many of the subversive networks of intellectual or political exchange staged outside the traditional "East–West" and "North–South" axes.[3] Consequently, the Maghreb and its cultural mate rials – at once grounded in Arabic, indigenous and vernacular traditions – offer a rich repository of resources for instructors and scholars of Arab/ic literatures.

This essay, on the one hand, critically interrogates the omission of the Maghreb's cultural production and reading publics from the grand narratives of Arab literary history. On the other, it proposes that the ethno linguistic diversity and unique geopolitics of the Maghreb – situated on the threshold between Europe, sub Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East – translate into an aesthetic lexicon that is both intellectually and pedagogically germane to the study of Arab/ic literatures. Theoretical as well as literary conceptualizations of a pluralistic or supranational Maghrebi cultural patrimony destabilize orientalist, (neo)colonial and Eurocentric assumptions that continue to haunt the field of Arab/ic literary studies. In what follows, I address these concerns in order to ask: what lessons can the scholar of Arab/ic, comparative, or world literatures learn from the cultural and intellectual history of the Maghreb? Such a question provokes further reflection upon the pedagogical need to address the Maghreb from within its own archives, without circumventing its dynamic historical presence across Arab/ic intellectual traditions. I begin by examining the Maghreb as both an imagined and geopolitical site. I then turn to the disciplinary and institutional problematics that impact the field of Maghrebi Studies. Finally, I address the question of language history, usage and politics in the Maghreb, as well as its significance to the study of comparative and world literatures. Throughout the chapter, I suggest specific authors and texts that may be employed in the classroom for introducing Maghrebi literature and the unique theoretical concerns that it provokes. Following my concluding remarks, I have included an Appendix of Arabophone and Francophone literary and critical works from the Maghreb as a resource for scholars, educators and students of the region.

The other "west"

This investigation contributes to a growing body of work within the field of Arab/ic literary and cultural studies – by such scholars as Michael Allan, Muhsin al Musawi, Tarek El Ariss, Elizabeth Holt, Boutheina Khaldi, Mohamed Salah Omri, Jeffrey Sacks, Samah Selim, Stephen Sheehi and Shaden Tageldin, among others – which seeks to problematize canonical intellectual histories and genealogies of modern Arab/ic cultural production.[4] It is primarily concerned with how the archive of Maghrebi literature and criticism can constructively contribute to the ways in which we define, theorize and most importantly teach Arab/ic literatures. The conceptualization of our field – particularly its linguistic, cultural and geopo litical parameters – fundamentally shapes the choices available to us as scholars and teachers of Arab/ic literature in the United States. This influences not only the regions, historical narratives and texts that become canonized within our discipline, but more crucially, how the corpus of Arab/ic literature and criticism fits within and contributes to the broader theorization and study of comparative or world literatures.

I employ the term Maghreb to designate the countries of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, but also to invoke the idea of the Maghreb as an imagined topography.

The "Maghreb" is a site framed by its relational geography vis à vis the Arab East or "Mashriq." Etymologically it denotes "the place where the sun sets," from the Arabic root *gh r b*, or "to set," while "al Mashriq" refers to "the place where the sun rises," from the root *sh r q*, or "to rise." The term emerged around the seventh century to indicate the western most territories to be occupied as part of the expansion of the Arabo Islamic empire, but continues to be used to distinguish the "Middle East" from "North Africa." Its adoption in the French imperial context signals the infamous *TAM* tripartite, employed to codify the countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco under a monolithic colonial entity that sublimated all forms of cultural, ethnic or linguistic difference – not unlike the term *Indochine* in Southeast Asia.[5] The "Maghreb" thus embodies an attempt to unify the region under the rubric of imperial expansion. It also, however, signals a rallying cry against these very hegemonic forces. Calls for unity among the countries of the Maghreb were issued throughout the twentieth century in an attempt to eradicate the French, Italian and Spanish presence in the region. In addition, the Arab Maghreb Union (*Ittiḥad al Maghrib al ʿArabī*) was created and ratified by the coun tries of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania in 1989 as a forum for post independence economic and political alliance.[6] The anti imperial rhetoric of Maghrebi unity was often mobilized alongside supranational ideologies that relied upon ethno linguistic, geopolitical or religious forms of identification, such as Pan Arabism, Pan Africanism, Pan Islamism or Third Worldism. These discourses prompted and were promoted by an ethos of intellectual exchange and political affinity not only among the countries of the Maghreb, but also with allies in Sub Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

The relationship between the intellectual history of the "Arab East" and Wes tern thought – particularly with respect to the nineteenth century cultural renais sance known as the *nahḍah* – is a subject that has received significant and thoughtful critical attention in recent years (see Chapter 1 in this volume).[7] How ever, what happens when we turn to a different "west" – namely the Maghreb? Certainly this would complicate the geopolitical topographies and teleological timelines that undergird such discussions. Maghrebi intellectuals of the early twen tieth century engaged with, contested and adapted the ideas that have come to define the Arab *nahḍah* in fascinating and often unacknowledged ways. Moreover, they consciously read themselves as an extension of, and essential to, the creative drive for innovation that marked *nahḍah* discourse.[8] However, beyond a handful of Francophone writers who have been inducted into the French literary annals, there is a palpable absence of cultural artifacts from the contemporary Maghreb featured in canonical Arab/ic literary criticism, intellectual histories, anthologies, and most importantly curricula. This is particularly the case with respect to Arabophone lit erature and criticism from the region, which is less readily available in English translation.

As I demonstrate in the coming pages, there are a number of lessons that can be gleaned from Maghrebi cultural and intellectual history. Implementing these les sons in our classrooms, however, invites a host of pragmatic concerns – such as

which texts are available in the United States, which have been translated into English, and how many remain in print – questions in part addressed by this chapter's Appendix. I am nonetheless concerned with what I believe to be the more critical questions of why it is important to teach Maghrebi literature and criticism in courses on Arab/ic, comparative or world literatures, how we should introduce the intellectual milieu and theoretical preoccupations of modern Maghrebi thinkers, what reading practices texts from the Maghreb foster, and how these practices can contribute to making our students more attentive readers of literature as a medium for refashioning the world. By approaching the Maghreb as a *productively unstable* site, our students can witness complex negotiations of cultural identity being staged alongside dynamic and innovative explorations of literary theory as well as praxis. Tracing this intellectual genealogy across Maghrebi works of fiction and theory reveals how Maghrebi intellectuals continue to challenge monolingual and monolithic conceptualizations of national identity. By this, I mean the geopolitical and institutional attempts to subsume various ethno linguistic traditions under a singular "national language," in addition to the idea that languages – and their attendant ideological, social and cultural inflections – operate within a closed rather than open semiotic system.

Definitions, demarcations and disciplinarity

One of the challenges within the field of Maghrebi studies emerges from the manner with which departments tend to be structured in the United States and Europe. The "area studies" model – itself emblematic of the orientalist underpinnings of regional scholarship on the Middle East and North Africa – relies upon a regional and/or linguistic orientation that often leaves the Maghreb in a somewhat precarious position.[9] This is especially the case for *Near Eastern* or *Middle Eastern Studies* departments from which North Africa is technically elided.[10] Even if in name only, this exclusion is symptomatic of larger ideological and geopolitical concerns. The term "Near East" itself emerges from the partitioning of Asia and Africa under British and French imperial expansion – from the name *Proche Orient* – begging the question, near to whom? While a handful of departments and programs focused on the *Middle East and North Africa* (MENA) have emerged over the years, this has notably been a more common trend amongst nongovernmental organizations and government agencies, rather than academic institutions.[11]

Outside comparative or world literature programs, Francophone literature of the Maghreb is often taught separately from its Arabophone counterparts – a phenomenon not only in universities in the United States and Europe, but also in the Maghreb (Ellis 2007, 6). Similarly, many of the leading professional associations and academic journals in the field highlight the Arabic language or the region of the Middle East in their titles.[12] While this has resulted in a handful of specialized journals and professional associations for the Maghreb and North Africa – such as the *Journal of North African Studies* or the *American Institute for Maghrib Studies* – recent years have also witnessed an increasing crossover between these fields. While

a number of departments, professional associations and academic journals have not changed their names, their editorial statements and descriptions indicate more comprehensive coverage of the MENA region. The question remains, however, of how to inclusively structure programs, departments, professional associations and academic periodicals, when nation states and the discourses and institutions reliant upon them do not adequately account for ethno linguistic or cultural heterogeneity. These geopolitical realities ultimately impact the kinds of courses that come to meet departmental or general education requirements, subsequently shaping the regions and texts that become canonized in our research and undergraduate teaching, not to mention the training of graduate students.

Exploring precisely how and why the Maghreb does not fit so neatly into existing institutional, disciplinary and professional paradigms, complicates how Arab/ic literature is studied both in our scholarship and our classrooms. It compels us to ask what happens when we displace the Arabic language, or Arab ethnic identity, as primary signifiers for the Middle East and North Africa. To do so alters the parameters of what constitutes the "Arab world," and its shifting topographies of linguistic, religious and ethno national identity. It calls attention to the designation of Modern Standard Arabic as the official currency of Arab/ic literature, despite the region's historically diverse cultural production in Phoenician, Latin, Turkish, Kabyle, Tamazight, various national and regional dialects, as well as French, Spanish, and English.[13] This is further complicated by the latest trends in diaspora and migrant literature which add Swedish, Portuguese, Italian and German, among other languages, to the list.[14] The corpus of literary and critical works emerging from the Maghreb – particularly across the twentieth century – has already implicitly or explicitly problematized the legitimacy of Arabic as the *lingua franca* of the region. Such texts trouble modern Arab nationhood and identity politics in ways that are theoretically relevant to how we teach, study and conceptualize the field of Arab/ic literature. Moreover, in a political climate in which the signifiers "Arab" and "Islam" have lost any historical or ideological nuance, these distinctions are increasingly important to illustrate in our classrooms.

My own use of the term "Arabophone" as a counterpart to "Francophone" in the context of the Maghreb speaks to these very problematics. It exposes the multitude of languages at play in the region and decenters Arabic as the sole vehicle of Arab ethno national identity. The term thus renders Arabic a contested locus of identity politics. This opens a window onto other routes and affiliations staged in the region which can be introduced in courses not only on Arab/ic, comparative and world literatures, but also those in the social sciences. This includes the link between North and Sub Saharan Africa – both of which were subject to Islamic expansion and Anglo French imperialism – as well as along the Mediterranean coast connecting North Africa with Southern Europe and the Middle East.[15] Third World, anti colonial, South South, and internationalist alliances forged with the Maghreb across the twentieth and twenty first centuries add another supranational dimension to these discussions. The context of the Maghreb further invites us to examine the relationship of different models of colonial

occupation to language policy, education, public welfare and civic reform, in addition to various iterations of post independence national identity. To teach the Maghreb as both a geopolitical entity and an imagined space – what Khatibi describes as "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée" (the Maghreb as a horizon of thought) – inevitably destabilizes many of the ethno national and linguistic cate gories grafted onto "the Arab world" as a geopolitical and ideological construct.[16] Exposing our students to the complex relations of exchange that exist within neocolonial and neoliberal contexts reveals the subtle ways in which asymmetries of power are confronted, contested and reshaped by cultural materials and their attendant systems of knowledge production, distribution and circulation.

Decolonizing the language question

Borrowing from the critical lexicon of the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, I propose that the *polyphonic* and *heteroglossic/heterologic* dimensions of Maghrebi cultural produc tion can radically transform how literary scholars conceive of the national as well as epistemological boundaries of languages, texts and their reading practices.[17] Bakh tin invokes the musical concept of *polyphony* to discuss the presence of multiple autonomous voices within a text, while the theories of *heteroglossia* and *heterology* refer to the multiplicity of national languages within one culture, and "the internal heterogeneity of one single natural language," respectively (Zbinden 2006, 69). Bakhtin's theorization of the dialogic coexistence of multiple social voices and types within a given semiotic community – each with their own distinct cultural and ideological inflections – aptly applies to the context of the Maghreb.

If we understand the field of Arab/ic literary studies to be haunted by the specter of imperialism, then one must wonder how the complex colonial dynamics that have marked the region of the Maghreb for centuries have shaped its literary pro duction and reception (Tageldin 2010, 424). In particular, the ambivalent rela tionship of the indigenous peoples of the Maghreb to Arabic *as a colonial language* in many ways undermines the privileging of European geopolitical as well as cultural imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa. The stringent French colonial policies restricting the use of Arabic in education, government and policy fractured a linguistic landscape where Modern Standard Arabic, in contrast to local dialects, Kabyle and Tamazight, had little traction due to low literacy rates – particularly among women and rural populations. While colonial educational policies varied among the countries of the Maghreb as much as economic and political strategies, Arabic language instruction largely fell under the jurisdiction of Islamic schools. Algeria, as the longest occupied and only settler colony in the region, had the most severe language reforms, with a centralized educational system administered by the Jesuit missionaries *Pères Blancs* and *Soeurs Blanches*.[18] In this context, writing in French was a material reality, rather than a "choice," for most Maghrebi intellectuals who had access to public or private education.

Many authors who emerged from the machinery of French colonial education better equipped to pen their works in French, attempted later in life – largely

unsuccessfully – to transition to Arabic. The gifted Algerian novelist and poet Malek Haddad (1927–78), for example, wrote in French until Algeria won its independence. He then infamously took an oath never to write in a language not his own, only to die "by the might of his silence to become a martyr of the Arabic language" (Mosteghanemi 2000: n.p.). Assia Djebar (b. Fatma Zohra Imalayen 1936–2015), who had a prolific career writing Francophone literature and was the first writer from North Africa to be inducted into the illustrious ranks of the *Aca démie française* as one of their 40 *immortels*, shared a somewhat similar trajectory. After publishing a series of successful novels in French during the 1950s and 1960s, Djebar took a decade long literary hiatus during which she studied classical Arabic while teaching history, film and literature at the University of Algiers. Her 1985 magnum opus *L'Amour la fantasia* was the belabored product of this period of lin guistic reckoning from which French emerged the triumphant language. Other writers were more successful in transitioning from French to Arabic, some even producing bilingual editions or translations of their own work. Mauritanian nove list Moussa Ould Ebnou, for example, published his second novel in both French and Arabic under different titles: *Barzakh* and *Madīnat al Riyaḥ* (The Windy City), leaving critics baffled as to which edition was the original.[19] The Algerian novelist Rachid Boudjedjra (Rashīd Abu Jadra) similarly switched from French to Arabic in 1981, although he later returned to writing in French. Finally, Kateb Yacine, who wrote his novels in French, was renowned for blending French, Modern Standard Arabic, Algerian dialect, as well as Kabyle and Tamazight in the productions of his popular theater troupe that toured Algeria to an audience of students, workers and farmers.[20]

Writers from the Maghreb, however, have long been navigating this diverse linguistic topography in creative and highly conceptual ways. Francophone nove lists, in particular, often negotiate their linguistic ambivalence by adopting a playful approach in their writing. Their works tend to be punctuated by self conscious meditations on their relationship to French, manipulations of its grammatical dic tates, the use of Franco Arabic neologisms, the mapping of Arabic sentence struc ture and word order onto French, or simply the inclusion of transliterated words from Arabic without an equivalent translation. This is usually coupled with dense intertextual references that engage the broader Arab/ic canon of classic through modern history, literature, philosophy and the arts. Examples of this writing style can be found across the Maghreb, but particularly in the fiction of Rachid Boud jedra, Driss Chraïbi, Tahar Djaout, Assia Djebar, Malek Haddad, Abdelkebir Kha tibi, Abdelwahab Meddeb, Abdelhak Serhane and Kateb Yacine, in addition to the avant garde poetry of Abdellatif Laâbi, Mohammed Khaïr Eddine and Mostafa Nissaboury. Most of these authors have been translated into English, and their works provide a productively challenging introduction to Maghrebi literature for students of Arab/ic, comparative and world literatures.

While the colonial context of the French language's imposition onto the Maghreb rendered it a fraught vehicle for cultural production, Arabic was by no means neutral. This reality was further exacerbated by French imperial divide and

conquer strategies that fueled tensions between Francophone, Arabophone and Berberophone populations. Many intellectuals took a staunch stance against the use of the "colonial language" of French in Maghrebi literature. This was particularly the case in Algeria, a settler colony that suffered the region's most aggressive occu pation, harshest colonial and cultural assimilationist policies, as well as a protracted and violent eight year war for independence. Currents of Arab ethno nationalism subsequently emerged in much of the anti colonial and decolonizing rhetoric within Algeria.[21] This nationalism relied heavily upon Arabic and Islam as the torchbearers of the nascent post independence state, as is evidenced by the populist slogan, "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my homeland." By way of example, when the Arabophone Algerian novelist al Ṭahir Waṭṭar was asked by an interviewer whether the murder of the Francophone novelist Tahar Djaout in 1993 was a loss for Algeria, he infamously replied that it was "a loss for his children, a loss for his wife, and a loss for France" (Waṭṭar n.d.).[22] He further ela borated that "Tahar Djaout was mistaken when he considered the French language to be an Algerian and national language. French, in Algeria, is the language of the administration, the language of the elite [...] This is one form through which French colonialism continues and it is our right to refuse this. It is [in fact] our responsibility to refuse it" (ibid.). Djaout was one of many victims claimed during a targeted attack on Francophone and Berberophone intellectuals and journalists that took place during Algeria's civil war of the 1990s.[23] Waṭṭar's comments thus reveal the deeply entrenched ideological and political stakes of these linguistic, literary and aesthetic questions in the Maghreb – even decades after independence.

While some Maghrebi intellectuals have agreed with Waṭṭar's arguably myopic views on Francophone writing, most Arabophone writers have engaged inter textually with the region's various ethno linguistic traditions. In addition to French, a number of Arabophone authors integrate Kabyle, Tamazight or local dialects into their poetry, theater and fiction. For example, the novels of the Amazigh Moroccan writer Driss Mesnaoui, who founded the Moroccan Associa tion for Popular Poetry, are formally hybridized in their invocation of the tradition of *Zajal* – oral strophic poetry often delivered in dialect – as well as linguistically in their use of *darija* (Moroccan dialect).[24] While these literary choices might ulti mately restrict the readership of these works to a national or in some cases even local audience, they reflect a desire to preserve cultural patrimony while demo cratizing access to knowledge outside traditional bourgeois literate circles. Pierre Joris and Habib Tengour's recently published anthology *Poems for the Millennium*, is an invaluable resource for the classroom in this regard. Providing commentary alongside original translations into English, it anthologizes 27 centuries of oral and written poetic traditions from Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia – spanning early pictograms and rock paintings, through contemporary Maghrebi and diasporic writing. The volume highlights the diverse influences and voices that mark Maghrebi literature by bringing together various languages – such as Tama zight, Phoenician, Latin, Turkish, French and Arabic – in addition to literary, anthropological and historical sources.

The breadth and diversity of Maghrebi literature certainly explains why not only scholars and instructors, but also translators and publishers might shy away from it – as heavily annotated translations are not particularly marketable. Marilyn Booth, one of the most prolific translators of Arabic fiction, has commented on the power lessness of Arabic translators in the face of commercialized publishing – particularly in the wake of 11 September 2001. In a recent interview she remarked:

> I'm delighted that Arabic literature is more on the international map now, but distressed that what can get published in translation is in some ways more constrained. Publishers want BLING! What many of us want to translate are the intense and beautifully written and consummately constructed but not always easy novels of many writers throughout the Arab world. It is a bit frustrating that certain rather narrow conceptions of "market" – and holdovers of Orientalist concepts of what writers from Arabic speaking societies should be saying – govern what gets taken.
>
> *(Booth 2016)*[25]

Thus, while Maghrebi literature is not necessarily written with a global or transla tion audience in mind – as some critics have argued about the work of Orhan Pamuk or Haruki Murakami for example – they are symptomatic of a cultural consciousness that is not bound within a singular ethno linguistic tradition (Hijiya Kirschnereit n.d.). Maghrebi literature and criticism should consequently be trans lated and taught not in spite of, but rather *because of* its supposed recalcitrance. In my experience, while students are certainly challenged by these works, they pro vide an introduction to the culturally and linguistically heterogeneous world of the Maghreb, while teaching an invaluable lesson in the kinds of reading practices fostered by the discipline of comparative literature.

Algerian novelist Assia Djebar's 1985 *L'Amour la fantasia* (translated into English as *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*) is an exemplary novel to teach the Maghreb's fraught colonial history and its relationship to language.[26] The work is a poly phonic assemblage that weaves together French archival records and eyewitness accounts of the occupation of Algeria in the 1830s, oral histories recorded in Algerian dialect and Tamazight of women involved in the war of independence from 1954 through 1962, alongside Djebar's personal memories and reflections. Blurring the lines between history and memory, the text's structural creativity troubles students' understandings of the formal category of the novel. It further draws analogies between the violence of Arabization during the Islamic conquest of the seventh century, and the French occupation of the 1830s that decimated approximately one third of Algeria's population. It does so through references to the indigenous Tuareg, the imposition of the Arabic language by the Banu Hilal tribes, and Ibn Khaldun's graphic accounts of the forced assimilation of the Ima zighen (Djebar 1993, 69, 71, 301).[27] Moreover, as a Francophone writer of Ama zigh descent, Djebar self consciously reveals her own personal ambivalences towards both Arabic and French as "colonial languages." I have taught the novel

with immense success in general education as well as specialized courses on Arab/ic, Francophone, Maghrebi and comparative literature.

As Djebar's work demonstrates, the ethno linguistic diversity of the Maghreb has contributed to the production of an intellectually (although not always politically) pluralistic culture. Similarly, Maghrebi supranational rhetoric often invokes both imagined as well as historical models of ethnic, linguistic or religious affiliation. A number of literary invocations of the Ottoman Empire and medieval al Andalus, for example, have relied upon a nostalgic reimagining of the concept of empire.[28] Arabic literary scholar William Granara argues that Andalusia as a literary topos or chronotope appears across the history of the Arabic novel more than simply as "an 'interfaith utopia,' a cosmopolitan of high culture, religious tolerance, and political ascendency" (Granara 2005, 58). He adds, "the historical consciousness of the 'Andalusian' novel reflects on, explains, and critiques the current state of affairs in the Arab world" (ibid., 57). Similarly, Maghrebi literature and criticism under colonial rule and during decolonization often treated al Andalus as an alternative to the *mission civilisatrice* underlying French imperial rhetoric. The first Arabophone periodicals in Morocco, for example, emphasized the positive influence that Islamic art, architecture, literature, music, science and philosophy had on Europeans of the Iberian Peninsula (Ellis 2007, 195). Similarly, a number of Tunisian writers and scholars have theorized a transhistorical trans Mediterranean genealogy, in order to decenter French colonial history (Omri 2005, 288–291).

A fascinating and prolific writer to teach in this regard is Bensalem Himmich, a Moroccan novelist and Islamic philosophy professor at Rabat's Mohammed V University. Himmich's historical novels, which have recently begun to appear in English translation, reanimate early figures of Islamic history in a manner that is socially, culturally and politically prescient to the contemporary Maghreb – not unlike the work of the Lebanese intellectual Jurji Zaydan. His novels: *al 'Allamah* (translated as *The Polymath*) on the fourteenth century North African historio grapher and philosopher Ibn Khaldun; *Majnun al Ḥukm* (translated as *The Theo crat*) on the Fatimid caliph Abu 'Ali Mansur Tariq al Ḥakim who ruled Egypt during the tenth century under the adopted name of al Ḥakim bi 'Amr Allah (Ruler by God's command); and *Hadha al Andalusī* (translated as *A Muslim Suicide*) on the thirteenth century Sufi philosopher Ibn Sab'īn from Murcia in al Andalus, offer a critical introduction to contemporary Arabophone historical fiction from the region.

Lessons in reading

As the above discussion of literary and theoretical materials reveals, Maghrebi intellectual production of the twentieth century offers a diverse cultural tapestry that can be mobilized in the classroom in a variety of fashions. Troubling the categories of form and content, structure and style, as well as language and ideol ogy, these thinkers strove to generate conceptual frameworks for Maghrebi mod ernity that were part of a supranational community of ideas and imagined

geographies encapsulating the Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe. Moreover, their reflections on and use of the Maghreb's various ethno linguistic traditions challenge not only the teleology of pre/post/neo colonial, but more crucially, how we conceive of the relationship between language and national identity. The "lesson" here is thus largely a theoretical one, which seeks to open up avenues of critical inquiry that can be engaged in classrooms of both undergraduate and graduate instruction. Debunking the idea that national literature must be grounded in a singular ethno linguistic tradition, the introduction of Maghrebi literature and its criticism promotes a pluralistic and polyphonic cultural hermeneutics.

To explore Arab/ic literary pedagogy is to introduce a host of other considera tions: from the institutional structuring of academic disciplines and departments, to US geopolitical interests and policies. It invites us to examine how the manner in which we periodize, taxonomize and structure our discipline delimits the formation of literary canons – namely, which texts are read, translated, anthologized and consequently taught. This might cause us to pause on our intellectual, ethical or political obligations as scholars and teachers in a field whose recent growth in the United States is for better or worse bookended by 9/11 and the "Arab Spring." What I hope to highlight here are the questions that many of us in the field should be, and often are, continually asking ourselves about our research, teaching, as well as institutional personas and practices.

In the spirit of offering new pedagogical points of entry into Maghrebi literature and criticism, this chapter has attempted to reroute modern Arab/ic literary history via intellectual discourses and geopolitical networks emerging from the Maghreb. It did so by examining: the Maghreb as a socially imagined space; the influence of (neo)colonial and orientalist epistemologies on the Maghreb's elision from intellectual or cultural histories of the Middle East; and finally, the relationship between ethno linguistic diversity and Maghrebi conceptualizations of national and supranational identity. I propose that introducing these inquiries into our class rooms – in tandem with the close reading of primary and secondary materials from the Maghreb – exposes our students to a more nuanced understanding of Arab intellectual and cultural history. By approaching works from the Maghreb as semiotically and culturally unstable texts – even in the monolingual context of teaching in translation – one must partake in the kinds of decentered thinking and reading practices invoked by Abdelkebir Khatibi and other Maghrebi intellectuals. The corpus of Maghrebi literature and criticism thus necessitates that students approach it as a perpetually shifting site of confluence, translation, and hetero geneity – an invaluable lesson for the critical reframing of Arab/ic, comparative and world literatures.

Appendix of literary and critical sources of the Maghreb

Arabophone Maghrebi literature

Algeria

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Morocco

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Choukri, Mohammed. *For Bread Alone*. Trans. Paul Bowles. London: Telegram Books, 2006.

Tunisia

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Nasr, Hassan. *Return to Dar Al Basha*. Trans. William Hutchins. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

Francophone Maghrebi literature

Algeria

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Online resources:

The Maghrebi Studies site: http://maghrebs.ipower.com/newmaghrebistudies.nitle.org/index.php/maghrebi.html
Arabic Literature (in translation): http://arablit.wordpress.com/
LIMAG: Littérature du Maghreb: www.limag.com
Souffles Anfas: http://bnm.bnrm.ma:86/ListeVol.aspx?IDC=3 [French] http://bnm.bnrm.ma:86/ListeVol.aspx?IDC=4 [Arabic]

Notes

1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
2 For the names of Maghrebi intellectuals I have opted to use the standardized transli terations common within the Maghreb. Otherwise, I will be employing a modified version of the *IJMES* system of transliteration.
3 On how Maghrebi cultural production complicates teleological narratives of decoloni zation, nationalism, and acculturation within cultural histories of the Middle East and North Africa, see: El Shakry 2017.
4 I am referring in particular to: Allan 2012; al Musawi 1999, 2002, 2007, 2010, 2015; El Ariss 2013; Holt 2009; Khaldi 2012; Omri 2006, 2005, 2008; Sacks 2007; Selim 2004a, 2004b, 2011; Sheehi 2000, 2004, 2012; and Tageldin 2011, 2012.
5 Marie Therèse Ellis makes a parallel point by applying Panivong Norindr's deconstruc tion of French Indochina as "an elaborate fiction, a modern phantasmatic assemblage" to the use of the term *L'Afrique du Nord* in French colonial periodicals (Ellis 2007, 33).
6 The official website is www.maghrebarabe.org/en/.
7 The *nahḍah* refers to a period of intellectual "awakening," "renewal" or "revival" in Arab cultural production from the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, which is said to have followed a long phase of intellectual *inḥiṭaṭ* (decline or degenera tion). Recent scholarship has problematized the orientalist epistemologies underlying much of the discourse on the *nahḍah*.
8 Ellis points to the unique topography of cultural exchange in Arabophone periodicals of colonial Morocco, whereby the *Mashriq* was the means through which many intellec tuals mediated European thought while circumventing the colonial agent (Ellis 2007, 29).
9 In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that the creation of the Orient as an object of analysis and scholarship was part and parcel of broader geopolitical attempts to understand the region in order to control it.
10 A quick survey reveals that the majority of departments in the United States continue to abide by a "Near East" or "Middle East" paradigm. These include: Princeton, Colum bia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, NYU, Berkeley, UCLA, University of Michigan, Yale, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington, Indiana University Bloomington, University of Texas, Harvard and Dartmouth, among others.
11 Consider the World Bank, US Department of State, UN Office of the High Commis sioner for Human Rights, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development (OECD), the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and Fulbright.
12 Examples include: the *Middle East Studies Association*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, *Middle Eastern Studies* and the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, among others.
13 The Kabyle (Iqvayliyen) are a Berberophone ethnic group native to Kabylie in northern Algeria who speak Kabyle. The Imazighen (singular: Amazigh) or "Berbers" are the indigenous populations that inhabited North Africa prior to the Arabo Islamic conquests of the seventh century. They speak a variety of dialects from the Afro Asiatic language family including Tamazight. Between the seventh and twelfth centuries, the Imazighen were compelled to disperse throughout various parts of the Sahara. It is estimated that Morocco's Berberophone community is approximately 40% of the population, with Algeria at about 25% (Chaker 2001). In 2001, one study claimed that there were 20,000,000 Tamazight speakers throughout Morocco and Algeria alone (El Aissati). On the history of the Imazighen, particularly in relation to colonial and state attempts to assimilate them, see McDougall 2003.
14 On Arab Brazilian literature, see Hassan 2011, and Amar 2014. On Swedish Arab/ic literary exchanges, see the scholarship of Johanna Sellman. Examples of Italian Arab migrant literature include: Mohamed Bouchane (for a translation of his story "Call Me Ali," see Parati 1999, 43 57), as well as Aziz Bouzidy and Nassera Chohra (see

Lammendola 2013). For an interview with the German Iraqi writer Abbas Khider on his use of German, see: Khider 2016. Also see: Khalil and Iocca 1995.

15 Mohamed Salah Omri thoughtfully discusses the Mediterranean as a geopolitical and imagined space in his essay "History, Literature, and Settler Colonialism in North Africa." Also see Clancy Smith 2012.

16 An earlier version of Khatibi's essay "Pensée autre," which appears in his collection *Maghreb Pluriel*, was titled "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée." For a detailed discussion of this metaphor in Khatibi's work, see Harrison 2013, 365 6.

17 See Bakhtin 1981, 1984. On the translational and theoretical significance of Bakhtin's critical work in the Maghreb, see: El Shakry, 2016.

18 For an overview of French colonial education and language policies, see: Heggoy and Zingg 1976; and Aitsiselmi and Marley 2008. The data referenced by Aitsiselmi and Marley is from Benrabah 1999: 79. On Algeria, see: McDougall 2011; as well as Clancy Smith 1994. On Morocco, see: Segalla 2009. On Tunisia, see: Anderson 1986.

19 While the French edition was published earlier, it is unclear which was written first. For an analysis of the novel and its linguistic ambiguity, see: Qader 2002.

20 On the different linguistic registers in Kateb Yacine's corpus, see: Salhi 1999.

21 On Arabism in Algeria, see: McDougall 2011, 266.

22 This comment is from an interview that aired in Arabic on the Franco German station *Arte* in 1994 and over the BBC in the UK. For a more in depth discussion of al Ṭahir Waṭṭar and his views on Arabism and Islamism, please see: El Shakry 2011.

23 Assia Djebar offers a poetic testimony of mourning in her book *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* that recounts the loss of her compatriots during the Algerian civil war. On Djaout, see: Šukys 2007.

24 Alexander E. Elinson's work on Moroccan literature traces the blending of novelistic and poetic genres with the *Maqama* and *Zajal* forms, as well as the use of storytelling, orality and dialect in medieval Andalusian through modern Moroccan literature. See Elinson 2009a, 2013a. Elinson also delivered a paper at the 2013 American Comparative Literature Association's annual meeting in Toronto entitled "Re telling the Story of Moroccan Resistance in the Novels of Driss Mesnaoui."

25 Arabic scholar and translator Elliot Colla explains that: "About 2 percent of the titles published in the US are translated from other languages. And only 2 percent of this tiny number come from Arabic. Which is to say, for every ten thousand books published in English, about four were translated from Arabic" (Colla n.d.).

26 Moroccan novelist Driss Chraïbi also published a trilogy on the Imazighen that creatively explores the Arabo Islamic conquest. See: *Une enquête au pays* (Flutes of Death, 1981), *La Mère du Printemps* (Mother Spring, 1982), and *Naissance à l'aube* (Birth at Dawn, 1986).

27 The Tuareg are a nomadic Berberophone population inhabiting the North African Sahara of Niger, Mali, Libya, Algeria and Burkina Faso. As French forces expanded into the central Sahara, a number of violent clashes with the Tuareg resulted in the continued annexation of their territories. On the Tuareg see McDougall 2006, 186 188.

28 See Elinson 2009b.

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