

*Review*

# Self-writing in postcolonial criticism: A survey of some fundamental problems (II)

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This paper surveys a few fundamental problems that relate to postcolonial self-writing in the context of global capitalism. It advances the claim that self-writing in Anglophone Postcolonial Criticism discloses an obsessive, reductionist tenet when addressing the gaps in imperial ideology, especially with the existence of an engrafted, ubiquitous protectionism from the part of the postcolonial intellectual. This obscures the postcolonial self, for it neither pinpoints the real postcolonial hurdles nor the true merits of modernity as a philosophical outlook on the world. These two directions cling to a stratagem that imperialism has made ubiquitous, not to mention the postcolonial intellectual's focus on the 'what' rather than the 'how' in matters of self-representation. The protectionist moralist, the intellectual who obviously does not recognize the merits of other trends of thought, is, for us, as the brutish capitalist or orientalist. Each one of them delimits the freedom available to the self through their resort to what appears to us as a very dangerous syncretism. Questions of the "how" (precisely how to approach the self and the Other) have become an urgent demand today. The beginning of a cogent theory of the self in the age of global capitalism has, in an experimental stage, to be descriptive, contrapuntal, and symptomatic, thus unearthing the a priori axioms that shackle the postcolonial mind. Postcolonial self-writing, thus, has to strive to shield the self against atavism, protectionism, justificationism, monism and the like.

**Key words:** The Maghreb, postcolonial criticism, self-writing, problems, diagnosis.

## INTRODUCTION

The limitations of the postcolonial lens are very evident today, especially with its resort to what appears to us as a justificationist tendency that often falls in an endless chase of imperialism, sacrificing a very rich ground for the realm of conspiracy theories. The negative manifestations of psychologism as in obscurantism, protectionism, atavism, and the like to write the Maghrebi self are ubiquitous in the texts under scrutiny. This initial statement of mine conjectures the existence of a problem in terms of self-

representation in Postcolonial Criticism, especially with the existence of a beguiling capitalist universality and with the existence of an engrafted postcolonial protectionism, which is to us more of a defense mechanism.

Substantiation for these claims is provided, and we hope that this will happen without the mishaps of imposture or radical perspectivism. In "Preliminary Notes on the Moroccan Self and Imperial Heritage" and "Alienation in the Maghreb: Obscurantism and Acquiescence"<sup>1</sup> we

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<sup>1</sup> Readers with interest will find this paper published in my edited book *Maghrebi Encounters: Rethinking Representation in Postcolonial Criticism*. My

introduction to this same book (from page 1 to page 5) also address more or less the same problematic issues of lens.

attempt to implicitly urge the reader of Postcolonial Criticism to switch the lens to psychology and epistemology, and this paper will be a contribution to this same endeavor. The pronouncements made in this paper will be directed against obscurantist and 'justificationist' thinking in the realm of postcolonial self-writing. Karl Popper sees obscurantism as an "uncontrolled wish to impose regularities: a manifest pleasure in rites and in repetition as such, [which] are characteristic of primitives and children; [when in fact] increasing experience and maturity create an attitude of caution and criticism rather than dogmatism" (Popper, 1961). This obscurantism and protectionism in the realm of self-writing stem, as shall be demonstrated, from another mistaken doctrine, namely the intellectual's biased belief that s/he can define terms accurately and so impose them on the world or the self, which is often a mishap. According to Dr. Karl Popper:

*Methodological essentialists are inclined to formulate scientific questions in such terms as 'what is matter?'... 'what is justice?' and they believe that a penetrating answer to such questions, revealing the real or essential meaning of these terms and thereby the real or true nature of the essences denoted by them, is at least a necessary prerequisite of scientific research, if not its main task. Methodological nominalists, as opposed to this, would put their problems in such terms as 'how does this piece of matter behave?' or 'how does it move in the presence of other bodies?' For methodological nominalists hold that the task of science is only to describe how things behave, and suggest that this is to be done by freely introducing new terms wherever necessary, or by re-defining old terms wherever convenient while cheerfully neglecting their original meaning. For they regard words merely as useful instruments of description (Popper, 1957, p. 29).*

It is worthwhile to mention that this paper demarcates its field of inquiry from the very beginning. It will examine problems of lens in specific Maghrebi texts, assuming that, unless the lens is symptomatic and contrapuntal, any examination of the postcolonial Maghrebi self solely in relation to the metropolitan center might result either in blind blame, blind mimicry, or blind compromise, pulling the examiner to the same ills we warned against in the previous pages (that is, justificationism, protectionism, atavism and the like). The strategy is thus pinned from the very beginning; it is a critical reading of the postcolonial self that is descriptive, symptomatic and contrapuntal.

We assume that a metonymy of the self that is found in Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*, Anouar Majid's *Si Yussef*, or Mohamed Choukri's *Street Wise* could unveil broader ideological structures as to how the self-screens the information it receives from the world for relevance.

We also particularly write the postcolonial Maghrebi self for we think that it is generally obscured in Postcolonial Criticism, especially with the existence of obscurantist and

generalizing postcolonial accounts that represent the postcolonial self with a diction that often clings to obscurantism, protectionism and reductionism. Obscurantism, for instance, stems from generalizations and from a certain lack of clarity in terms of representation (We already examined this claim in "Alienation in the Maghreb: Obscurantism and acquiescence"). In *Conjectures and Refutations*, Karl Popper concludes that "[It must be] clear to anybody wishing to further truth and enlightenment that it is a necessity and even a duty to train him/herself in the art of expressing things clearly and unambiguously—even if this means giving up some niceties of metaphor and double meanings" (Popper, 1957). We ascertain that the postcolonial self, of course after it severs obscurantism and blame to imperialism, is a different self with a different formation, and it would be understood only with the existence of a theory that would unfold after sifting the information the self receives from its own enlightening sources and from those of others for relevance. I will examine these claims one by one in the following subsections.

## **PREDATING IMPERIALISM: SELF-DISPLACEMENT**

As it issues what we see as a necessary U-turn, *The Moor's Account* takes the self back to the pre-colonial era, to a period that predates the official emergence of global capitalism. As it displaces the Maghrebi self, the novel questions Western brutality but rarely disproves enclosed locality, as manifested in Estebanico's psyche. Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud (also named Estebanico) abandons categorical misconceptions about the world the moment the Portuguese seized the city of Azemmur and the moment he ends his trek in the land of Indians in search of gold (and himself) in the company of Dorantes and Narvaez, his brutish masters. The time is the year 903 of the Hegira and Mustapha reminisces the plural city of Azemmur where he was born: "The city is over-run with refugees from Andalusia, Muslims and Jews who had fled the forced conversions" (Lalami, 2014). The father, the well-versed scholar in Sharia<sup>ii</sup>, had to move the family back to Azemmur with the fall of Mellila to the crown of Castile in 1497. The family is yet to deal with the brutal Portuguese intrusion whose stab has taken the father to the grave before it also allows the whole Moroccan city of Azemmur an unpeaceful fall into bondage, and it is not any colonizer this time:

*Our ill fortune did not afflict the Portuguese in our town. They still shipped gold and wool to Porto and still sent handballs, Kiswas, and other woven goods to Guinea. If anything, the draught and famine we were experiencing had only made their trade more profitable, because the price of wool had fallen so low that they could purchase a large quantity of it. That year, a strange thing happened. The farmers who had neither the funds to pay the Portuguese Tax nor grain to sell at market had to give their*

*children as payment. Girls of marriageable age were worth two Arrabas of wheat; boys twice that. (Lalami, 2014, p.75)*

This ubiquitous status which begins with a runaway from one colonizer (that is The Portuguese in 1513) to meet another at the end of the road (that is the French in 1912) casts: (1) a certain protectionist examination on postcolonial self-writing, thus directing blame almost pathologically to imperialism; it evidences certain symptomatic neglect of negative pre-colonial influences that are to us more powerful in terms of influence to the extent that they have become independent of the self's will; and (2) an epistemological postcolonial theory that functions as a watch-word, accompanying this self-writing, while taking from the best epistemological theories is lacking in the sense we see fit, but this last claim will be left for a subsequent research.

Now that capitalism is ubiquitous in the metropolitan center does not necessarily mean that the postcolonial Maghrebi self-secures its conditions, or that it is itself one of its major productive forces. It is thus worth noting that Karl Marx's statement that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1979) is not helpful in this context, for Mustapha's story predates capitalism and it is, therefore, not in the realm of a pure capitalist society to be entangled in such a spectrum. It is true that capitalist Surplus Value has rationed greed all over the globe, but the utopia of Marxism might be beguiling only in a full-fledged European capitalist society with its high surge of industrialism, which we know is not yet the case in the postcolonial society of today, not to mention the unscientific base of the Marxist theory; a detailed discussion of such unscientific base could be found in Dr. Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

We take this self-displacement that is found in *The Moor's Account* as a significant metonymy for a cogent perspective. We said that the Moroccan self in *The Moor's Account* is set in a time that predates the official material emergence of capitalism. We take it for a valid perspective that the manner in which one can speak of Liberal, Salafist, or Marxist ideologies if there are really any, is through the utterances that the Maghrebi self makes in description of its own being in the world, and not through Marxist, Liberal or Salafist ideologies being attributed to the postcolonial Moroccan self by an act of ideological imposition or whim.

In *The Moor's Account*, the self (Mustapha/Estebanico) utters descriptions of its being in moments of freedom and bondage. These descriptions, if carefully gathered, might form a theory of the self, for it is only in the mo of these moments of freedom and bondage that a statement counts as a symptomatic metonymy for analysis. Louis Althusser offers what we see as a relevant expression for this initial descriptive phase. Louis Althusser describes this descriptive lens in concrete terms:

*One might - and in my opinion one must - envisage this phase as a transitional one, necessary to the development of the theory. That it is transitional is inscribed in my expression: 'descriptive theory', which reveals in its conjunction of terms the equivalent of a kind of 'contradiction'. In fact, the term theory 'clashes' to some extent with the adjective 'descriptive' which I have attached to it. This means quite precisely: (1) that the 'descriptive theory' really is, without a shadow of a doubt, the irreversible beginning of the theory; but (2) that the 'descriptive' form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely as an effect of this 'contradiction', a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of 'description' (Althusser, 1994, p. 107).*

We will, first of all, gather the descriptions that the postcolonial Moroccan self makes in the description of its being in relation to the many cultural structures that shape its immediate existence. We will, however, try to maintain our neutrality (as much as we can) as we examine the self. This rule is important to this quest, at least now, for if we suppose that the Moroccan self is "this and that", inflicting a definition that we think is cogent, we risk imposition in the sense that we make the Moroccan self bear the weight of an ideology or a worldview that it does not itself allow or assimilate in the first place. This should be the case simply because Mustapha in *The Moor's Account* or Si Yussef in *Si Yussef* are not reliable sources. Mustapha is a survivor with many blind presuppositions about the Maghreb, the Spanish, the Indians and the world in general, much less his fallacious claims and his drawing on orality in times of whim and fear.

It is equally important in this regard to note that the postcolonial self, Estebanico being its microcosm, cannot recover from the colonial trauma if (1) it has not freely described that which happened in the pre-colonial era in simple terms, for the colonial trauma is an effect that has a cause in the Maghrebi self's past and in its management after all. (2) The postcolonial Moroccan self seems to know little or nothing about the many trends of thought that claim to represent its existence, let alone the enlightening trends that come from overseas. (3) There is often a gap between the postcolonial self in its real conditions of existence and the theories produced about it in the books that single out the self as a subject of study.<sup>iii</sup> This is probably why by the very end of *The Concept of Reason* [مفهوم العقل], Abdullah Laroui's conclusion is that "That which is too obvious, and even undeniable, is that 'the reason' we all the time speak about explicitly or implicitly, is only a theoretical term, and this is also the case when we strive to apply it to daily behavior (translation mine)" (Laroui, 1977). The self, as we will reveal by the end, dwells in the realm of certain existential alienation that is the result of an historical formation that is independent of its will and whose roots come from the imperial spectrum from beyond the seas and most importantly from the self's immediate sources and social conditions of existence.

In *The Moor's Account*, Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud (also named Estebanico) is revealed as a self that has often “maintained its silence. But silence taught [him] to observe. Silence made [him] observe, but it also made [him] invisible to those who speak” (Lalami, 2014). While in Appalachia, Estebanico “noticed that none of the black people in the marketplace had been marked with the brand (...) the color of their skin—the color of Estebanico’s skin—was a sign in itself” (Lalami, 2014). Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud’s trek brings him to a significant realization. It is specifically that the writing of the self is by necessity the way out of such a condition of alienation and dependence. One’s consciousness cannot just acquiesce; it has obviously to be ‘consciousness of something’. Mustapha describes his new consciousness of purpose:

*I had put myself in the hands of others and now here I was, at the edge of the unknown world, lost and afraid. All along, I had told myself that I did not have a choice, that I had been the one to put myself into bondage and I had to accept this fate. Somehow I had convinced myself that my redemption could only come from some fore outside of me—that if I were useful to others, they would save me. I had to stop to be a part in my own misery. I had to save my own life. (Lalami, 2014, p. 127)*

Blame to an alien force is a defense mechanism that takes the form of projection, displacement or sublimation, especially when the solution to one’s problems is unattainable on the ground due to the lack of resources or remedy. While in torment, Mustapha has no foreseeable consequence to aspire for in the near future; he even lost his sense of cause and effect in times of turmoil and turned to consoling syncretism in the form of proverbs taken from oral tradition to account for very vexing material problems.

The reader should notice that Mustapha rarely dares to utter a word while in the company of Dorantes. He, as in a neurosis, becomes helpless with himself but helpful with the masters and he discloses doubt and a very odd obsessive recalling of ‘El Moro, ‘El negro’, and every negative word uttered by Dorantes while keeping his indifference as to where Dorantes’s superiority comes from. Blame and doubt are the very first serious challenges to every examiner of the disintegrative effects introduced by colonialism and the limbo that predates its arrival. In this regard, Karl Popper urges us to not fall into the trap of counter-conspiracy theories in matters of the self, for it amounts “to getting involved in a counter-conspiracy against (probably) non-existing conspirators. For [our] only explanation of [our] failure to produce [our] heaven is the evil intention of the devil (conspirators), who has invested interest in hell” (Popper, 1945). Unfortunately, many postcolonial accounts have taken this direction falling into a dogma and into the same hole dug by the imperial ideologue. In *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Gayatri Spivak, for example, boils down the whole achievements of European enlightenment to mere

doubt: “At this point, some of us remind ourselves that the legacy of the European Enlightenment is doubt” (Spivak, 2012). This is more of a flamboyant claim if we examine it carefully. It is also cogent to claim that Estebanico’s silence is the result of brutish imperial torment that he unfortunately has become too doubtful of himself and so obsessed with every denigrating gaze, thus losing sight of better paths. Dorantes and Narvaez, being the representatives of this Western pseudo-enlightenment, have rarely disclosed any positive traits or treatment of Mustapha unless for profit. Is not it this obsessive-with-the-gaze-psyche that the imperialist craves? It is a direction that is too observant of the imperial gaze that it lost sight of itself and its other valuable horizons.

The imperialist’s denigration found in Western anthropology, travel literature and fiction often reveal much about the imperialist and not the postcolonial self, especially that the Anglophone postcolonial intellectual cares less about the immediate stimuli that made the self what it is today. One cannot of course retrieve merits for the postcolonial self in an imperial heritage that is now coming face to face with its own contradictions, unless one sifts such heritage (and others) for monads of merit (that is modernity’s relevant philosophical base). The hooking of the negative thus is a vicious circle. Estebanico, for instance, observes that raw materials are transported to Porto by the Portuguese, but in the meanwhile, Azemmour is struck with ravaging famine; “The city was quiet—dogs and cats had long ago been caught and shamelessly eaten. Even vermin was a rare sight inside the city walls” (Lalami, 2014). The presence of such a state could have reminded Estebanico that resistance is to be activated in relation to the brutish imperial ideologue, but not in relation to the philosophical and material merits of modernism.

We herein suggest impetus for what we think is a much more cogent outlook as to this self-writing. My initial aspiration is that meanings will unfold once we examine Laila Laalami’s *The Moor’s Account*, Anouar Majid’s *Si Yussef*, Mohamed Choukri’s *Street Wise*, or Abdelkader Benali’s *Wedding by the Sea*. To attempt to write these narratives as a microcosm of the Maghrebi self-amounts to retrieving enlightening local and global sources, for, as we have seen, in the Orientalist accounts, which are often put at the crux of Postcolonial Criticism, absence, aporia and misrepresentation seem to be the norm. One, however, cannot candidly presume that Moroccan texts are not as well coercive or deterrent or that they would allow us Alladin’s lamp.

Without further ado, this quest for the Maghrebi self might initially call for numerous theoretical problems. For now, we believe that this writing of what might appear at first glance as regional consciousness, in Mustapha’s story for instance, might be a brick in the service of the imperial ideologue’s beguilement and divide-and-rule tactic without us being aware of the fact. For Mustapha, it has always been physical and psychological torment that brought him to the realm of negative syncretism and consoling moralist

monologue: “I had convinced myself that my redemption could only come from some force outside of me—that if I were useful to others, they would save me. I had to stop to be a part of my own misery. I had to save my own life” (Lalami, 2014). That he blindly believes in his presuppositions, this alone makes Mustapha’s doctrine true *ad infinitum*, which is somehow destructive to his intelligence and his journey in the world.

It is not without interest to also note that an accurate understanding of the self lies in relating it to the much longer history which precedes the coming of the colons and even independence, for so many colonizers came in and so many had left. And that we oftentimes use ‘post’ as in post-colonialism or allude to the colonial and postcolonial period does not mean that we have to (consciously or unconsciously) erase the very histories that precede the self. It is quintessential for the inquisitive postcolonial scholar of the Maghrebi self to come to terms with the many influences that the Moroccan self had also received before the coming of the colons. These particularly deserve our attention; the Phoenician invasion in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC along the North African coast, the Carthaginian invasion of the Phoenician colonies, the Roman government of North Africa in the second century BC (when Romans governed North Africa for almost six hundred years), the coming of the Vandals in 429 AD, the coming of Byzantium in 533 AD, the coming of Arab-Muslims who ended the Byzantine dominance in 682 AD, the end of Abbasid dominance with Idris Ben Salih, who we know established the Idrisid Dynasty, the Almoravids who later came in the period between 1062 and 1147 and whose reign was said to establish North Africa as a center of learning and power, the coming of Almohads in the period between 1147 and 1258 to rule most of North Africa and parts of Spain, the coming of Almarinids after Almohads in the period between 1258 and 1420, the coming of the Wattasids in the period between 1420 and 1547, the coming of the Saadis who ruled Morocco in the period between 1554 and 1659, and finally the coming of the Alaouite dynasty which has been ruling Morocco ever since. This timeline should get the attention of any scholar

<sup>2</sup> Laila Laalami, *The Moor’s Account* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 248.

<sup>3</sup> At this very stage, our reader must notice that we go against the use of blame, conspiracy or division fallacies in compensation for the decadent postcolonial condition of today. The imperial West, though, is to blame for the decadence of the postcolonial world, namely the Arab world and Africa. Dr. Frantz Fanon, not to mention Walter Rodney, saw it as a fact that Europe is literally an African invention. The postcolonial researcher should also understand that this condition could be cured by acts of self-education. Colonialism took the best minds to the grave and robbed the postcolonial world of wealth. Sykes Picot divided the region into pieces that made it almost impossible to unite for its own common good. In 1917, Balfour declaration allowed Zionists (not Jews of course) to establish a settlement on the Palestinian land—but to us this is a also a symptom of an existing illness and not its primary cause. It is also true that before the Balfour declaration, Jews represented only 10% of the Palestinian population to reach 27% after the declaration. Their number grew even worse as years went by (Balfour declaration was supported by the United Nations in 1922) and it was a response to a wish made by the Zionist Jews and was not based on reliable evidence. This particularly occurs on its initial letter (declaration). Egyptian

who has an interest in understanding the postcolonial Maghrebi self, for full understanding of the formations of a coherent texture of self and probably also involves the meticulous examination of these continuous historical processes and not definite ends.

Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud, the protagonist in *The Moor’s Account*, while describing the imperial perspective, brings things in good order. In “The Story of Culiacan”, as Dorantes answers Accaraz’s question as to who the el-negro (Mustapha) is, Mustapha notices that “Nothing in their gaze suggested that [he] was a man like them rather than some exotic beast or Other. It was only decorum that prevented them from reaching out to see if [he] was real.”<sup>2</sup> This imperial lens, which was uttered in a period that had preceded other colonial missions, testifies to a state of misrecognition that had by then been worsened by the remnants of the Christian Crusades and of the bias inherent to Eurocentrism. This state of misrecognition cannot by any means be blamed on colonialism or imperialism alone which we know only worsened a condition that has already been there in the first place. It cannot as well be cured by counter-Afrocentrism or Arabism, for it is a clash that feeds the same binaries that are inherent to imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

## FEW FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

The genuine European intellectual is generally known for “his open-mindedness, his sense of facts, his distrust of verbiage, and especially of moralizing verbiage, which makes him one of the world’s most influential fighters against hypocrisy and phrasiasm” (Popper, 1945). Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud’s pronouncements in *The Moor’s Account* disclose dissonance as to this outlook owing to the existence of a web of fear, and to a social reality that is still reluctant as to its usage of reason. From a sociological perspective, Mustapha’s outlook on the world fits Will Durant’s labeling of ‘primitives’: “Almost all ‘primitive’ people believed in the efficacy of curses and the destructiveness of the evil eye” (Durant, 1942). This is why

unity—Syria and Egypt—had been destroyed before it even started. The imperial powers implanted civil wars here and there (Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq) separatist groups are introduced to the Arab world and Africa (South of Sudan, South of Morocco, North of Iraq, north of Syria). The Veto is used for encroachment and for negative intervention with any attempt to establish peace in the Arab world or African. Britain, France and the USA cannot but find ways to intervene in the region for it is rich in minerals and oil. It is as well a very strategic trade road. Israel is protected by the USA and by France for in 1956 they intervened militarily in the Suisse Canal against Egypt to secure Israeli existence—we also remember that in 1976 the USA supported Israel with jets from the air). In 1991, the Iraqi industry which showed signs of growth was attacked and destroyed. In 2001, thousands of people were killed in Iraq for no good reason. We also heard of the killing of Iraqi scientists and experts. By the turn of the nineteenth century—that is long before the start of colonialism—Ibrahim Pasha’s ambitious program to unite Syria and Egypt was destroyed by Britain. Mohamed Ali’s attempt to modernize Egypt was destroyed by the London Treaty. These are the facts, but still the postcolonial self should take its share of blame for what happens on its soil.

Estebanico's wonder as to how he is made decorum while serving Narvaez and Dorantes should not call for protectionism on the part of the reader, for with his acquiescence he does not meet the least of expectations. To face rifles and bullets, Mustapha often grounds himself in proverbs and generally in an oral tradition that are often fallacious.

This misrecognition occurs to us in European books of philosophy, but its subversion is obviously led astray by the postcolonial intellectual by the existence of a decreed-like psychologism, especially in the postcolonial English department. The hooking of the negative or culture as folklore at the expense of the enlightening tenets (this will be true if we share the view that knowledge is that which enlightens the self) could cease as a subject of investigation, for it has become a very deadening norm and it could be replaced with examples of thinkers that would enlighten the self. We will herein state a few neglected examples with counter-examples and our reader could think of others. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, one proponent of the totalitarian state, as we are told by Karl Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies*, has often insisted on the African mind's incapability of civilization. Conversely, Al-Jahed, who died in the year 886, obviously long before Hegel and Descartes, had already plainly positioned himself in relation to human freedom and free will; he also declared that humans are all equally gifted in terms of reason, and that "this reason will not achieve its full natural potential without serious, dedicated contemplation and extensive research that would later sharpen such potential, of course with further experimentation that will by the end bestow more acquisitiveness (translation mine)" (Boumalhim, 1988). An appealing critique of the self from within comes from Al-Mutazila Trend to which Al-Jahed belongs. Al-Mutazila sees that the postcolonial society is merely boiled down to blind preaching of predestination, which bestows stillness. This comes from the story of Al-Jahed in *Al-Hidqy* [الحذقي] where such predestination is put under scrutiny by Al-Mutazila:

*People's deeds cannot go beyond three facets. First, it might be claimed that people's deeds are predestined by the will of God and that people have nothing to do with them and thus people's deeds are predestined by the will of God alone, and by this token (God's control) people should deserve neither praise nor punishment (assuming that that their deeds are something they are not in control of and thus not responsible for). Second, People's deeds spring from themselves and from God, and so praise and punishment must go to God and to people, to them both. Finally, people's deeds spring from themselves and from their will alone, and so punishment and praise must go to them alone. People are thus free (Translation mine). (Weld-Eddine, 2018, p. 336).*

Our proposition, as mentioned before, is that difference cannot all the time be grounded in binaries or in race as in

the intellectual impulsive hooking of the negative, but rather in a philosophy of excellence that questions such fundamental concepts: Reason and freedom of will as mentioned earlier, for example. Hamid Dabbashi's *Can Non-Europeans Think?* evidences that, in Europe, the general tendency is that philosophy is celebrated as a sole European act and that the philosophy that exists outside the European pedigree often takes the 'ethno' root, as in 'ethno-philosophy' or 'ethno-music'. Abdullah Laaroui, Mohamed Abed El Jabberi, Mohamed Arkoun, Hassan Hanafi, Hichem Djaït, Fathi El Meskini, Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi, Taha Abderahman, and Mohammed Sabila, to mention but a few, deserve tribute as leading thinkers in the Maghreb. This is also list of unexamined promising Postcolonial philosophies for the inquisitive intellectual: Al Madrahiya [المدرحية] by Antouan Saada, Al-aqlaniya al-mutadila [العقلانية المعتدلة] by Yussef Karam, AL-taabiriya [التعبيرية] by Nadmi Luqa, AL-Nasraniya [النصرانية] by Kamal Al-Haj, Al-kiyaniya [الكيانية] by Malek, al-chakhsaniya [الشخصانية] by Al-hbbabi, and Al-tadawuliya [التداولية] by Taha Abderahman.

We see this turn to 'local' philosophies as an important shift. Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, if one were to seek Eastern Philosophies in his books, yields serious contradictions. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell urges his reader to assimilate the idea that one's judgment, what resembles Immanuel Kant's subjective judgment, must not obscure facts as they are in the world of matter. Russell, however, while freely jotting down one last piece of advice to his readers, contradicts his own thesis, and it must appear odd to any student of philosophy who does not happen to be originally European. He particularly states the following:

*The student who wishes to acquire an elementary knowledge of philosophy will find it both easier and more profitable to read some of the works of the great philosophers than to attempt to derive an all-round view from handbooks. The following are specially recommended: PLATO: Republic, especially Books VI and VII. DESCARTES: Meditations. SPINOZA: Ethics. LEIBNIZ: The Monadology. BERKELEY: Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous. HUME: Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. KANT: Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic. (Russell, 1912, p. 118)*

Averroes, Avicenna, Al-Ghazzali, Al-Jahed and Ibn-Khaldoun, to mention but a few, came after Plato, were translated to European languages, and happened to be giant translators and critics of Aristotelian logic. It is known to every neutral historian that early Muslim translations of logic paved the way for European philosophy and science. In *A History of Western Philosophy*, Russell further regarded Arabs (one more generalization on his part because the Arab world is not only made of Arabs) as mere commentators on philosophy and not philosophers. Unfortunately, Russell's judgment in *The Problems of*

*Philosophy*, just as in *A History of Western Philosophy*, brought him to serious exclusions, as if there never was a mind capable of philosophy outside the European pedigree. The progressive ideas coming from the Far East and Asia (China, Japan, Turkey, and India) again reveal that progress can take any form with dedication and work. Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud for whom the application of this exclusion is a matter of fact secures syncretism as a solution. In the “The Story of Aute”, this exclusion casts important inquiries especially that Mustapha has but to murmur in the dark Indian huts; Mustapha knows that he can but kiss the hands he cannot bite:

*I wondered what would happen to me if I was infected with fever and perished in this land. Who would wash my body for burial? (...) I whispered ayat-al-kursi to myself, over and over, the way I had as a child, whenever I had been scared or worried (...) So accustomed are the Castilians to my silence—one or two of the lieutenants might even have thought me deaf and dumb—that only shock greeted my pronouncement. (Lalami, 2014, p. 122)*

Exclusion is the norm then and now in the context of imperialism, but it has to be neglected as a subject of inquiry, for it very much resembles one’s dedication to nothing but the task of mosquito-killing when other valuable quests are made forlorn.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017, we learnt about the racist inclination of Pierre Mendès France’s high school students who refused to study Akil Tadjer’s novel *le porteur de cartable* whose topic was the Algerian War of Liberation, and their evidence as to why it should be banned is that it contains Arabic words and that it is not written by a French writer of origin. The postcolonial subjects, the likes of Mustapha and Ramatulai<sup>4</sup>, cannot keep on this apologetic behavior over every deed or statement of disdain that is uttered to deal with their made-hard postcolonial existence. But, violence is not as well a solution, as in Dr. F. Fanon or A. Cabral’s pronouncements, nor must a solution be sought in the ideas of a negative moralist who “preaches water but drinks wine”. It is the self’s “consciousness of something”, of productivity and of the ideal of a healthy outlook on the world that are to be chased on end, looking into that which could sustain the self’s potential as it evolves on the stage of history. Karl Popper sees it as an intelligence-destroying-pseudo approach to fall into the trap of the likes of Mustapha’s

sentimental outlook. It is a mission that calls for the freeing of the self from “this sentimental, moralist (negative, and protectionist), and visionary background” (Popper, 1945).

## MYTH, BEGUELEMENT, AND ALIENATION

The vivid image of Estebanico being owned by Dorantes and his later separation from Ramatulai (a self whose company Estebanico admires after he distinguished the enemy from the foe), sailing for La Florida can hardly be a coincidence. They are metonymies that suggest a few essential assumptions about the postcolonial Maghrebi self. Dr. Frantz Fanon took it for a fact<sup>5</sup> that the postcolonial world has obviously fallen into imperial hands, thus becoming a caricature of a self especially that misery and deterrent structures of thought barricade it from within. At present, it is our estimation that, though imperialism is still looming on the postcolonial horizon, very few dedicated postcolonial scholars will from now on believe that which it pronounces via discourse, nor will they concern themselves with revealing its schemes, for they are plainly repetitive and it is probably the job of much more sophisticated systems, namely brainy economic prodigies and military intelligence. Also only those thinkers who cultivate progress and enlightenment will matter for the reader who fully understood the tactics of imperialism.

In addition to his syncretic resort to myth as a means of affective regulation and refuge (and not constructive action), especially in times of pure material problems, Mustapha seems to also feed on Dorantes’ odd beguilement, which discloses his inner alienation. The likes of Dorantes, he claims, are “blessed with a natural authority [that] it would not have crossed anyone’s mind to defy him” (Lalami, 2014). Mustapha finds it difficult to set himself at equilibrium. “The Story of the Avavers” accounts for the cause behind Mustapha’s alienation, namely while recounting the story of Tahacha and the Kingdom of Gold. Tahacha has beguilement for Mustapha, but it is unfortunately that of a false paragon that is often persuasive but not convincing. Mustapha, every time he and his friends received the sting of the imperial master, also revealed how his comrades easily followed the illusions of others without the least scrutiny; we know that claims from *Appeal to Authority* often fade by the falsifying experience. For Mustapha, “It seemed that Tahacha spoke from experience. His words struck with the force of a revelation. Everyone in the expedition had believed

<sup>4</sup> She is the companion of Estebano while in Aute. He had to give up her company for he has to head to La Florida.

<sup>5</sup> In 2002, Time Magazine made a survey whose participants are by majority considering the USA as the leading country to threaten worldly peace. Participants were 710723. 7% think that South Korea is a threat to worldly peace, 8% say it is Iraq and 48% say it is the USA. On its first pages, Time Magazine announces the following; “EUROBSERVER / BRUSSELS - Over half of Europeans think that Israel now presents the biggest threat to world peace according to a controversial poll requested by the European Commission. According to the same survey, Europeans believe the United States contributes the most to world instability along with Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

The European Commission is coming under fire for publishing the results of a number of questions - relating to Iraqi reconstruction - while failing to publish the results which revealed the extent of mistrust of Israel and the United States in Europe, according to Spanish Daily El Pais. The poll, conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres/ EOS Gallup Europe, was conducted between 8 and 16 of October, 2002.” The postcolonial self is still up to this moment subject to constant misrepresentation and exploitation and thus occupies a position that is not all the time well-heeled. In 2016, we all also learnt about the shocking death of Jo Cox; a crime which was believed to be a hate-crime; J. Cox spoke to the advantage of the Arab refugees who did run from war in Syria seeking asylum in Britain.



Narvaez's story about the kingdom and had eagerly followed him there" (Laalami, 2014). Mustapha's overall alienation is due to such beguilement, to claims coming from false *Appeal to Authorities*.

Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud is strangely hollow throughout the trek. This hollowness discloses a Maghrebi self that does not take its words from enlightened (reasonable) cultural sources, but rather from an oral tradition that circulates in society by word of mouth, but with so many fallacious, deterrent thoughts seeding in its base. Mustapha, for instance, has often declared that stories heal people in Azemmur: "This is something [he] had learned in the markets of Azemmur: a good story can heal" (Lalami, 2014). Azemmur is a Maghrebi city that received the colonial fist but unfortunately could not, at a later stage, organize itself the way it should in terms of economy, education, healthcare and production. This state leads to less and less self-appreciation, which of course will not allow us much in the realm of self-representation (in media, the Maghrebi self's conceptions of its conditions of existence is characterized by immense negativity). What follows is that the Moroccan self, Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud being its microcosm, needs to be introduced to the fallacious culture it circulates but still cannot conceive of about itself and that which it refuses to embrace (the assimilation of the merits of modernity as a philosophical core, and not as appearance). In Anouar Majid's *Si Yussef*, Si Yussef observes how the People in the Nejma cafe appreciate the blender, but rarely inquire as to the great mindset that made the product possible to occur in the world of matter.

While describing his mother, Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud often makes reference to the mythical rituals he witnesses in the company of his mother back in Azemmur: "The women gathered around my mother, painted her hands with henna, and brought her amulets to protect her against evil and injury" (Lalami, 2014). With all due respect, since when do amulets protect from evil and injury? The introduction of modern reason, of course, after being distilled into critical rationalism (not naïve realism), is probably the cure for such mythical practices as it secures the abandonment of blind habits.

It is true that all cultures have an element of myth to their being, but to us, it is only when the self is ahead of every fallacious base that its folkloric culture would make more sense. Abdullah Laroui secures one reason behind such an alienating local belief system. For Laaroui, "Throughout the Maghreb, the policy was to make the old local elites collaborators in the work of colonization by transforming them into a parasitic class" (Laroui, 1977). The goal behind such an enterprise, of which the state is also a part, is to confine the Moroccan self to a limited repertoire and worldview (that is, the scattering of Negative Salafism and Pseudo-liberalism are good cases in point).

One urgent demand of postcolonial historiography is gearing the self towards debunking its self-myths, thus embracing the merits of modernity, which, for us, involve a very basic distinction between culture, civilization, reason, myth, and the context for each. However, the inflexible importation and consumption of plans and gadgets, as they occur in the metropolitan center, to a context that we know is different in essence, demands appropriations as well.

The circulation of dogma blurs reason. Mustapha often claims that "Nothing new has ever happened to the son of Adam (...) everything has already been lived, and everything has already been told. If only we listened to the stories" (Lalami, 2014). With these prophecies, logic and freedom, the core of every rational, productive social act, are put on hold. In "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," Max Weber roots most of the merits of productive capitalism in the freedom brought by ascetic Protestantism, mainly in its respect for time and work. Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud, rather beguiled by myth, recalls the myths his mother tells in search of therapy on a Moroccan land that offers little or nothing. Back in Azemmur, "[his mother] went to Moulay Abu Shuaib's tomb every week to ask for the saint's intercession, but [his] father only regressed with each passing day" (Lalami, 2014). Another odd procedure that is followed by Mustapha while curing his patients is that he "calls the name of God upon the patient before [him], asks for a cup, heating it over the fire and applied it upon the [patient's] back" (Lalami, 2014). Criticism of the remnants of Al-Jabriya<sup>6</sup> trend for the sake of enlightenment is probably still essential to postcolonial self-writing.

These practices were implanted long before the arrival of the colonizers, and they still persist. However, one cannot reduce the history of the postcolonial Moroccan self to merely pinpointing myths, as that was partially the task of the orientalist. Yet, one can identify their negative influence on the self. Clifford Geertz makes a similar assertion in *Islam Observed*, where he dares to describe Morocco as a distinct civilization despite what he perceives as a religious double-mindedness replacing religiousness among Moroccans, with them "celebrating belief rather [than applying] what belief asserts [with] a dislocation of the force of classical symbols" (Geertz, 1971). According to Clifford Geertz, Morocco is the site of great changes and great dilemmas.

## MODERNITY AND IMPERIALISM: A DIFFERENT APPROACH FOR A DIFFERENT CONTEXT

We observed that the presence of one disinterested European throughout the journey might not be evident in Mustapha's statements. He is treated harshly, admitting

few actions being in God's control—one's color, place of birth and death are good cases in point.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Jabriya is a trend of thought that was in total opposition to Al-Qadariya and Al-Mutazila trend. The former believes in the whole of destiny being in the hands of God, and the latter believes in total freedom being granted to humans with



that he only received payment for his cures (and not for his own wounds) while serving his masters or delivering treatments as a herbalist to the Avavers. Mustapha's dispiriting perspective, though seemingly true, might still blind him to many merits. It's as if the peculiarities of colonial violence are blurring Mustapha's perception, dragging him into a traumatic state. Modernism, as the result of enlightenment, is not wholly synonymous with imperialism, which is a brutish extension of capitalism, recalling Lenin's conclusions in *Capitalism: The Supreme Stage of Capitalism*. Thus, every context must suggest a different outlook. Dr. Karl Popper imparts one more important lesson in this regard. The premise that "something must be done to bring the law of increasing misery to a stop; for instance, colonial unrest [or cultural deterrence] must be stirred up even where there is no chance of a successful revolution" (Popper, 1945). It is that one cannot demand radical changes in the realm of culture in a space that does not fully secure its conditions, where the self is still deterrent, in brief.

As our reader concludes the claims we have just presented, they might reasonably assert that we have not introduced them to what a self is. After all, one cannot strive to trace that which they did not initially conjecture. Just as a carpenter cannot make a table without mental images of it in the mind, the need for a table in the world is essential for the task, serving as the general incentive behind theory and practice. Therefore, to avoid mystifying our reader, it is crucial at this stage to clarify what we initially mean by 'self'. For a person to claim that they are 'a self,' Jan Westerhoff teaches us, it essentially means they can recognize peril and misfortune. A fully-fledged self, exemplified by Ahku in *The Moor's Account*, is one that screens incoming information from the world of matter for relevance. This screening of incoming information serves a purpose:

*[It is done] for relevance very quickly; the roar of the tiger behind us has to be attended to more quickly than the chirping of the bird in front of us. At the same time, thoughts and memories have to be processed. In this sense, a coherent, unified world emerges from this mess of data almost all of the time. [And] this only seems to break down consistently in the case of certain psychiatric disorders or when using hallucinogenic drugs. (Westerhoff, 2011, p. 67)*

The roaring tigers behind the self are imperial ideology and the absence of a philosophical self-writing that doesn't restrict the self, as seen in the cases of deterrence, atavism, monism, justificationism, and the like. This is essentially what we refer to as a 'self':

*First, of all, our self is inside our body, yet it is distinct from it. It owns the body that supports its existence. Second, we*

*regard ourselves as unchanging and continuous. This is not to say that we remain forever the same, and never change our desires, inclinations, or fundamental outlook on the world. Yet, among all these changes, there is something that remains constant and that makes me now the same me as me five years ago and five years into the future. Third, the self is the unifier that brings it all together. The world presents itself to us as a disconcertingly diverse cacophony of sights, sounds, smells, mental images, recollections, deliberations and so forth. In the self, these are all integrated and an image of a single, unified world emerges. Finally, the self is an agent. It is the thinker of our thoughts and the doer of our deeds. It is where the representation of the world unified into one coherent whole and is used in order to act [actively] in this very world. (Westerhoff, 2011, p. 58)*

The roaring tigers seem to come from many directions on the postcolonial soil. Mustapha's last examined statements reveal how this cacophony of myths<sup>7</sup> still entangles the Maghrebi self. Mustapha, while still a merchant in the streets of Azemmur, has rarely spoken of a witty orator like the well-known ones in Delphi or of a reasonable Maghrebi philosopher reaching out to the people in the Markets of Azemmur, nor does he mention the teachings of a modern school the way he mentions the tombs and the clichéd-sayings from tradition (tradition is so rich to be reduced by Mustapha to proverbs and myths). Common sense enjoins the enlightened self to exalt enlightening philosophers and so does Fanon. As he searches for a reason for such absence, Fanon condemns the nature of the penurious postcolonial national middle class. It is for him the same class that is supposed to enlighten the self and distance it from myth. For Fanon, "The national middle class that takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case, it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace" (Fanon, 1961).

It is *Si Youssef's* claim that one ought to "Always remember that it is good to study because a good education makes a decent person" (Majid, 2005). This education, though it is not made precise by *Si Youssef*, ought to respect nothing but constructive rationalism; it is the call of 'a reason' that prefers possibilities to prohibitions, desolating blind authority and habit. We learned how Western philosophy always looks at itself in the mirror every now and then. That is what we basically discover with Kant's *A Critique of Pure Reason*, Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*, Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Marx's *Capital*, Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*, and Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge*, to mention but a few.

The context in which change is sought is one in which

<sup>7</sup> Myth in the sense we propose refers to a clear misinterpretation of the religion of Islam. It does not refer to the religion of Islam per se. It is also that which is

misinterpreted, made sacred and then misused by the means of repetition, thus becoming a false 'fact'.

the self is put at the crux, but not as in monist solipsism. After the postcolonial self severs the roaring tigers behind its back, it then turns to sifting the ills in its head. It all begins with a pinpointing of 'the how' paths. How did Europe endure Dark Ages to embrace enlightenment? How can it distinguish modernity from imperialism? How did cultures such as China and Turkey manage to rear nations of real workaholics that made China and Turkey what they are today? A different context seems to suggest a different approach. I will now turn to other problems.

## OTHER PROBLEMS

It is crucial not to overlook an essential dimension in the writing of the postcolonial self—the examination of what it has made of itself after the physical departure of the colonizers. (1) It could have asked simple questions related to knowledge, such as "What is knowledge? And how could it be applied to reality?" or questions related to how it perceives the nature of the world and experience, including epistemology, psychology, and ontology, as there could always be a problem with the lens or with unnoticed breaks in the productivity of the social chain. To claim that "all is good under the postcolonial sun" amounts to nothing but a dogma or a denial of plain facts; it is a delay of pain. (2) The postcolonial self could have asked questions about how this extremely advanced other made itself what it is today. And (3) it could have revisited its tools of analysis and strategies with a critical eye, as in basic updates. (4) It could have looked at other worldly experiences that made advancements on a global scale without necessarily having gone through the experience of colonialism. In a nutshell, it is the continuous re-examination of the misuse of its own cultural sources and learning from those of others, with no defense mechanisms involved. On many occasions, Fathi El Maskini states that "the Muslim self is only a few words when juxtaposed with the ocean of enlightening terms that are available to its worldview in its heritage" (El Maskini, 2019). El Maskini's lecture on "The Self in Islam" is essential for any student who happens to exhibit interest in the postcolonial self.

Edward Said is unfortunately known to many postcolonial students only in the realm of cultural stereotypes, which are inherent to the people residing in the same city, not to mention transnational representations. Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud insists almost obsessively that we "should learn not to put our lives in the hands of another man" (Lalami, 2014), which is a serious questioning of blind adherence to false authority. In addition to their strange focus on misrepresentation, postcolonial students

who develop an interest in the postcolonial Moroccan self, for example, often fall into a dangerous trap.<sup>8</sup> They basically snaffle flamboyant (not to say obscurantist) Euro-American accounts for self-definition; the likes of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Michel Foucault are good cases in point, and so they probably unconsciously neglect native intellectuals; this is also probably due to the ubiquitous lack of epistemology in postcolonial universities. In *The Concept of Ideology* [مفهوم الإيديولوجيا]<sup>9</sup> Abdullah Laroui, for instance, acknowledges that his initial readings were of European philosophy. It should not be surprising, therefore, that he once considered advocating for a radical epistemological break, wanting to sever the postcolonial Muslim self from its roots altogether. This inclination, however, he later reconsidered in *استبانة [Istibana]*, a much simpler, cogent book. It is worth noting that postcolonial intellectuals writing in English often prioritize readings of figures like F. Nietzsche before Ali Al Ouardi, or R. Descartes before Averroes or Avicenna, and Machiavelli before Al-Qawakibi, among others.

Lacking this contrapuntal stand, what probably follows is that images of the self are sought beginning with foreign theories, which often produce generalizations about the Arab or African world. This is problematic as foreign interpretive tools are applied to situations and peoples that are challenging to comprehend using such analytical frameworks. In its quest for a voice that opens new horizons, the self encounters the other to add to and strengthen the existing values in its immediate culture, rather than becoming a caricature of another culture, as the doors of assimilation are already closed or partially closed. In *Culture and Imperialism*, on many occasions, Edward Said reminds us that it is always a prerequisite for any generation to read its national accounts first before reading those of others, and it is fair enough.

In *The Moor's Account*, there are systematic overgeneralizations. Though Moroccan, Mustapha is approached by Dorantes through very general terms, seeing in him a servant whose difference is rarely accepted. Mustapha has never been appreciated for who he is, nor lifted to the status of a friend. For him to face the greed and exclusion of Cortés and Dorantes, Mustapha has but to keep silent and serve his superiors to compromise for such disturbing difference. In "The Story of Compostela", Estebanico discovers that his attempt at assimilation is rejected. The encounter taught him that "No bondsman would have been given a room in the sergeant's own home" (Lalami, 2014). The postcolonial subjects must write their own history from below, even if it starts with a basic theorizing of the merits that this subaltern position allows, such as its reason and wisdom. Delaying such a

<sup>8</sup> Why would one strive to examine a western stereotype? Terms like terrorist, fanatic and fundamentalist are used often to describe Muslims and Arabs. One could read any of Bernard Lewis's books or articles to learn about 'Muslim rage'. In Gustave Flaubert's literary terms, Kuchuck Hanem is an over-generalized representation of the Arab female. Such infliction of negative images does not allow *excellence* amidst Arab and African nations to be

noticed, and the examination of such images distorts valuable intellectual inquiries. Every acre in the region is shaped by a different history, yet the Arab world is all seen as one 'decadent' entity in the eyes of the imperial historian (Bernard Lewis) and politicians alike (many American and European heads of state introduced harm to the postcolonial soil) Writing difference, as excellence, cannot and should not presuppose hate or blind opposition.

path only postpones quests that should have started long ago.

We asserted that enlightening ideas about the Maghrebi self cannot be accessible to us in Orientalist writings, as we have now come to the realization that every discourse, be it imperialism, pseudo-liberalism, or negative Salafism, only safeguards its own 'truth.' Any discourse with a claim to truth and not to reason, equity, and justice cannot engage the postcolonial observer. For instance, as we read Cunningham Graham's *Mogreb el-Acksa*, we discover this sympathetic yet divisive tendency inherent to imperialism. In this instance, Cunningham Graham, while in Morocco, reveals himself as anti-imperialist but then celebrates radical difference all along:

*Example certainly they do set, for ask a native what he thinks of us, and if he has the chance to answer without fear, this ten to one he says, Christians and cheat are terms synonymous (...) Christ and Mohamed never will be friends; their teaching, lives and the condition of different peoples amongst whom they preached makes it impossible. (Graham, 1898, p. 25)*

This suggests that an antidote to imperialism cannot be found in its blind binarism. Such daring statements are usually found in European books about 'the East.' Cunningham Graham claims that "Christ and Mohamed cannot be friends" (Graham, 1898). Graham belongs to a culture that has made up its mind long before any cultural encounter; little or nothing will be gained by chasing this ubiquitous binarism.

What if the projective lens the West is believed to bring to the postcolonial self is not purely a projection that springs from superiority complexes but rather from a certain omnipresent lack inherent in the modern European self? Lawrence, we know, rejected materialist Europe, beseeching 'sense awareness' in the East. What if the East represented to Europe innate beauty and sublimity? Is not the East the origin of its science and philosophy? We also know that De Lacroix and Gerome's best paintings are by the end representative of Andalusian and Maghrebi beauty and not oriental decay if we assume that they represent the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment.

What if Graham Green's description of Africa as dark in *Journey without Map* represents a defect in Graham's perception and not in the object represented? What about the subject represented's outlook on the world? What are its mishaps and merits? Is not Africa too rich to be canvassed by one or two negative statements? What if the logic of the African self is not decipherable for the Orientalist one-dimensional ideology and so all he had at his disposal was to use his ready-made preconceived notions?

The postcolonial examiner cannot make the Orientalist's biased, subjective judgment the basis of an intellectual quest for the self, for the Orientalist judgment happens to be that of his own taste, which he is free to utter as much

as we are free to neglect. In the end, obsessive focus on negative only informs the orientalist about his mishaps, but it rarely teaches the postcolonial self about that which is valuable in its immediate conditions of existence.

## CONCLUSION

As the Portuguese besiege Azemmur<sup>iv</sup>, Estebanico introduces an accurate description of his hollow father. This description elucidates what the postcolonial subject has become due to the constant harshness of the imperial machine and the challenging immediate social conditions of existence in Azemmur. On one social occasion, Estebanico describes his father, stating that he "[received his] guests with cakes and sweets, and danced when the guembri played, but a part of him, a part more vibrant and more vital than a limb, seemed to me to be absent, as clearly as if it had been severed by a knife" (Lalami, 2014). What precedes this hollow feeling in the father is an attack by the Portuguese and another one by the Moroccan Sultan's army. The postcolonial subject's curse is specifically the social structure of which s/he is a part and the imperial hammer whose wand s/he has to bear on end. It is a state that Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud tries to abandon in his slave journey--"Tell them that Estebanico is dead, Mustapha will remain free" (Lalami, 2014), he states.

Among the many ways Mustapha employs to deal with misfortune is his negative syncretism, navigating between two worlds. From the imperialist, he receives hypnotizing beguilement for which he responds with subaltern compromise or mythical stories. From his memories of the Maghreb, he retrieves nothing but misery and stories of beggars, herbalists, and fortunetellers, for which he cannot supply any progressive intellectual epicenter. Mustapha is often lost and hollow, just like his father; his "heart is filled with longing mixed with a simultaneous and contradictory feeling of belonging" (Lalami, 2014). Fanon reminds us that the self we are supposed to bring to life dwells in ubiquitous trauma; it "is trapped between five glasses of [tea], the curse of his/her nation, and the racial hatred of the white man" (Fanon, 1961). The cause behind such a state is twofold. (1) There is a defect in the imperial ideologue's perception, which comes in the form of hypocritical speech, blind greed, and torment on the ground. (2) Another defect manifests itself with the postcolonial self, namely with its somehow 'defeatist' inability to sift itself against an all-containing center and against an existing 'muffling' tradition whose merits are sacrificed for linguistic obscurantism and hedging. The task, ostensibly, involves a double critique and demands effort. The question of tradition is problematic in nature as it involves different interpretations with many trends in play.

For Mustapha Ibn Mahmoud, the Moroccan traveler who had the chance to encounter other worldviews, tradition designates these consoling words that one mutters to

oneself in times of dire wretchedness. This is what we learn as we accompany him on his slave journey to the land of the Indians. Tradition is often desecrated and made shallow, as it is only brought in times of danger or to substitute for compulsive thoughts and behavior—it only shelters the self from newness, as in the beliefs of members of cults. Lamart Minar in Abdelkader Benali's *Wedding by the Sea* sees in the use of religion nothing but a neurotic, self-imposed urge to remember and retrieve the past, as if the Moroccan self is 'cursed' to always regress to old days. In Mohamed Choukri's *Street Wise*, tradition is synonymous with abandonment. For Choukri, one has to overthrow the many imposed cultural illusions and start to learn anew like a 'monkey'. Oddly enough, Mohamed Choukri abases tradition to abeyance, claiming that "The prophets were pretty lucky. They did not need anyone to teach them. Everything came to them in a revelation, ready-packaged. The rest of us are not so lucky. We have to learn like monkeys" (Choukri, 2007). Choukri's outlook resembles that of Hafid Bouazza in Abdullah's Feet, where abstruse religious practices bring Abdullah (the protagonist) to total abandonment. For him, "Religion evidently represents a step backward in evolutionary terms: to convert is to ape" (Bouazza, 1996).

The Moroccan self-reveals morbid perspectives every time it comes face to face with its own immediate sources. Yet, for one to hope that it would carry the trace of one particular source, this would accouter its perception with blind ideology *ad libitum*. Neither Neo-Worfianism, understood as the imposition of dialects that beseech standardization on the self, nor the radical interpretations of religious scripts, would secure much for the postcolonial self today, especially in a world that suggests the constant free movement of people, goods, and information. In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon acknowledges that it is not specifically religion but rather dissonance that makes the postcolonial self-unable to accept the introduction of new ideas. We saw how Mustapha is obsessed with his master Dorantes and how he rarely looks somewhere else for salvation in a world that is obviously vast and rich. It is a psychological barrier that results from a conditioned postcolonial self that cannot abandon that which is deterrent in its tradition along with an imperialist ideologue that it has been taught to hold in high regard with the least critical questioning. Fanon, issuing a psychiatric standpoint, states, for instance, that "Before 1954, in the psychological realm, the radio was an evil object, anxiogenic and accursed" (Fanon, 1965). What could be said of the radio could be said of many other modern interlocutors, stratagems, and thoughts.

The postcolonial self cannot make progress if it disdains

<sup>i</sup> It refers to ideologies that hook evidence or confirmation to justify their claims or whims while ignoring other important isms or facets that are of equal importance.

<sup>ii</sup> It refers to 'Muslim law'.

newness even when it comes from those who made it once suffer; a reasonable enemy is often better than an ignorant friend. Modernity, thus, should not be made synonymous with imperialism. Anouar Majid, for instance, notes that Sayed Qutb's famous negative description of America generated disapproval. Qutb "would have been happier visiting early Puritans of the Seventeenth century than he did the Americans of the twentieth century" (Majid, 2012). The problems that hinder the sight of valuable horizons, as far as self-representation is concerned, are many, and one paper is obviously not enough.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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<sup>iii</sup> The likes of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak use a diction that obscures the self. The inquisitive reader can read my paper "Alienation in the Maghreb: Obscurantism and Acquiescence" in this regard for further insight.

<sup>iv</sup> It is a Moroccan city, lying on the Atlantic Ocean coast.