
First and Second Generation Laughter: Diasporic Maghrebi Irony in Memmi, Khatibi and Guène

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Résumé

Among the Francophone African writers, the Maghrebis have produced several literary texts which often include ambivalent elements of humour. Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian authors have written in French on the issues associated with the colonial oppression and the mass migration from the ex-colonies to the colonial centre. While France has often been depicted as an ‘El Dorado’ for the Maghrebi diaspora the so-called *littérature beur* of the second-generation has also given voice to a variety of diasporic literary forms of expression. Often labelled as mere sociological documents, the texts of the early Beur generation tell the challenges that the Maghrebi diaspora is facing while attempting to integrate into the French society and offer a space where children of the Maghrebi migrants experiment their counter-discourse. The uprootedness of the first generation of Maghrebi migrants and the unsuccessful assimilation of masses of second-generation population is at the core of several literary texts produced in the Maghrebi francophone literature as well as the *littérature de banlieue*. However, among the texts that reflect on the trauma of exile and the memory of the homeland several writers have produced literary texts which offer an original perspective on the resistance strategies of the marginalized Maghrebi populations.

While the autobiographical genre of Maghrebi and Beur texts often recount the traumatizing experiences of a peripheral existence, one way to facilitate an inquiry into the limits of present understanding would be to look at points where Maghrebi diasporic writers, in their struggle for control of the means of representation, use humour as resistance tactics to ‘write back’.

Therefore, my paper aims at studying how humour is crafted and the implication of such humour in the works of three Francophone writers. I shall confront the novels of Albert Memmi *La Statue de sel* (1953) and Abdelkebir Khatibi’s *La Mémoire tatouée* (1971) with Fa’iza Guène’s *Kiffe Kiffe demain* (2004) with a focus on the literary depictions of laughter.

Mots-Clés: Diaspora, Migration, Trauma, Memory, Humour, Irony, Postcolonial, Maghreb, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Beur, Banlieue

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