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Workshop Report

Trauma, Memory and History: A Comparative Reflection between Morocco and Lebanon

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In a significant moment of intellectual exchange, a closed workshop on the theme of *Trauma, Memory and History: A Comparative Reflection between Morocco and Lebanon* was held on April 18-20, 2013 at the Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat (FLSHR) of the University of Mohamed V-Agdal. The workshop was organized by Prof Jillali el-Adnani (FLSHR) and Dr Sonja Hegasy as well as Dr Laura Menin from the ZMO/UMAM research project “Transforming Memories: Cultural production and Personal/Public Memory in Lebanon and Morocco”. Over three days the university hosted a number of researchers from different disciplines, former political prisoners, human right activists, and filmmakers—all with an interest in exploring traumatic experiences in the political and social history of the “Years of Lead” in Morocco, as well as sites of personal and public memory, and initiatives for the construction of a collective past.

After three decades of political repression in Morocco under the reign of Hassan II (1961-1999), in 2004 Mohammed VI set up the *Instance Equité et Réconciliation* (IER) to investigate and compensate the victims of past state violations of human rights (1956-1999). Since then, the memory and the history of the “Years of Lead” have become the centre of an institutional process to promote the reconciliation of Moroccans with their violent past and prevent the repetition of state violations. This process includes the creation of national archives, the promotion and support of academic research on the post-colonial history, and in general both the “preservation of memory” and a renewal of Moroccan historiography.

Drawing upon the on-going debate on the “Years of Lead” in Moroccan society, the workshop intended to continue a comparative reflection on memory and cultural production in Morocco and Lebanon initiated during the research group’s first workshop organized by Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim of UMAM Documentation & Research (D&R) in Beirut on 10-17 March, 2012. Cognizant of the respective contextual specificities of Morocco and Lebanon, the participants evoked the question of the legitimacy of comparing the two distinct historical, political, social and cultural situations. Unanimous agreement underlined that such a comparison was not only possible but in fact necessary, considering the scholarly motivations for the workshop: namely, reclaiming a critical view of history and memory, in respect to their transformative power in reconciliatory and reparatory efforts. Specifically, the workshop was organized around three main issues, which opened up a broader discussion: relations between 1) trauma and memory; 2) memory and history; and 3) trauma and recovery.

In his opening address, **Jillali El Adnani**, Professor of History at the FLSHR, provided a brief overview of research on history and memory in Morocco. El Adnani stopped at the 1990s as an era that marked the economic and socio-political evolution of the Moroccan scene with the establishment of a number of institutions and political activities. These include the Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l’Homme (CCDH), which later became the Conseil National des Droits de l’Homme (CNDH); the Instance Equité et Réconciliation; the liberation of political

detainees in 1991; a flow of literary production and prison writings; and finally the on-going project of establishing the Archives Nationales du Maroc. El Adnani went on to speak about how his faculty is increasingly concerned with research into the production and reproduction of history and memory, and taking the initiative to create a Master's Program focusing specifically on contemporary Moroccan history. The faculty also set up a research group and organized a number of conferences and colloquia on "L'Histoire du Temps present," to better address the question of trauma, memory and history in the "Years of Lead." El Adnani also mentioned the question of gender and history. Comparing the legendary figures of Shahrazad and Fatima Fihria with female prisoners and activists, he noted that they were able to create a "feminine space" for articulation that challenged patriarchal powers and authorities. A gendered approach, in other words, allows for the rewriting of history to include female agency and voice. Another consideration is to connect the historian to the victims as a moral pact. This involves a project to collect testimonies from victims of years of incarceration as "revenants," as a source of written and physical evidence.

While truth-telling has gained momentum in the post-Hassan II Morocco, **Sonja Hegasy** from the ZMO talked about *The ambiguities of speaking out. Trauma and truth telling in the Middle East*. Opening mass graves, telling the truth, filing for reparation, giving oral testimony—all this is today heavily loaded with teleological perspectives by countries in transition. Museums, memorials, truth commissions, oral history projects, memory tourism and memory places are at the centre of many, mostly non-state activities. We are accustomed to regard these practices as necessary to bring about a sense and form of closure. But is it necessarily the way to overcome individual trauma and to achieve societal reconciliation? The positive connotation of 'remembering' has not always been a given, but has rather evolved over the last 30 years. Historically, the accepted general credo was to *forget*, in order for wounds to heal. The ambiguity between 'speaking out' and 'keeping it to oneself' comes out very clearly in the documentary by Leila Kilani, *Our Forbidden Places* (2009), on the Moroccan IER. Whereas some of the older generations—the parents and partners of the disappeared or murdered—are not seeking to know with absolute certainty what happened to their loved ones, and prefer the indeterminacy of the situation, their children and grandchildren are demanding detailed clarification of the fate of their (grand)mothers and fathers. Hegasy stressed that the idea to 'tell one's own story' in order to defuse political conflicts and reconcile societies—an idea strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud and concepts of the early twentieth century—should be subjected to critical scrutiny. Using examples from four countries (Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and Morocco), she examined the political use of oral history, historiography and the value hierarchy of 'giving testimony' vs. 'silence/not testifying' in post-conflict societies. She demonstrated how, in all four countries, testimonies by victims were being instrumentalized by politicians.

In the following presentation **Ahmad Mroueh**, Senior Program Manager at UMAM, presented UMAM's database *Memory at Work* (www.memoryatwork.org), which is an on-going effort to document the events of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and other key events that are important in jumpstarting and achieving the level of dialogue needed to foster a post-conflict progressive environment for state building.

According to Mroueh, *Memory at Work* stands alone, perhaps in the region and beyond. Trained staff members at UMAM handle the scanning process and archive material which ranges from books, periodicals, posters, movies, etc., allowing the general public as well as interested researchers easy access to the collection. Mroueh also added that UMAM has been part of a regional network of NGO's and institutions teaching the *Memory at Work* model to other countries. This was the case in a recent conference organized by UMAM, which witnessed organizations from across the Arab world exchanging ideas and establishing a mechanism for future cooperation. In relation to Morocco, Mroueh underscored UMAM's long involvement with Moroccan civil society activists and associations trying to draw parallels, as well as help in documenting and publishing items related directly or indirectly to the turbulent times known as "Years of Lead."

The morning session was concluded by **Saadi Nikro**. Nikro gave a presentation from his research project *Sites of ReMemory: Violence, Trauma and Cultural Production in Lebanon*,

which is part of the ZMO project “Transforming memories: Cultural production and Personal/Public in Lebanon and Morocco.” Speaking about the Lebanese documentary film *Chou Sar? (What Happened?)*, and two youth projects in Lebanon, *War Stories* and UMAM’s *Badna Naaref (We Want to Know)*, he first discussed memory as a social phenomenon. Towards this he employed a critical reading of Pierre Nora’s famous essay “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire” to argue for a focus on *milieu de mémoire*, or the initiation of memory as sites of emerging social practices. He discussed this according to memory as an inter-generational dynamic, in respect to the youth projects’ work in interviewing the older generation’s experience of the civil war in Lebanon, 1975-1990.

In the second part of the day, the participants heard about the NGO *Association médicale de réhabilitation des victimes de la torture* (the Medical Association for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture) founded in 2001. **Abdelkrim El Manouzi**, director of the association and a former political detainee himself, explained the underlying premise of establishing the association. In a climate of pervasive fear and human rights abuses during the post-independence years (particularly between the 1960s and the 1980s), tens of thousands of Moroccans with different political positions were subjected to arbitrary arrests, forcible disappearance and torture. The idea of establishing an association emerged as an urgent need to attend to the physical and psychological sufferance of the victims and their relatives. In 2001, a group of volunteer doctors availed their expertise in the first operational medical centre of the association at the headquarters of the *Forum Marocain pour la Vérité et la Justice* (Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice), in Casablanca. In 2005, the association relocated upon reception of official authorization from the government. The association counts among its units general medical care, primary diagnosis, and a psychiatric unit. In addition, it has a statistics department, which prides itself in having conducted multiple surveys and studies on the situation of victims and the residues of the detention experience. To date, the association has counselled more than 3000 beneficiaries with its medical services, which also include, besides the ex-political detainees, the Tindouf prisoners, Guantanamo detainees, and the victims of current state repression, like the activists of the 20th February movement), and the Salafist prisoners.

Other spheres of action concern the organization of medical caravans in detention centres and marginalized regions of Morocco; sensitization campaigns for children of detainees; and study days for women victims of imprisonment. Linked to rehabilitation and prevention endeavours, El Manouzi stressed the work of the association in preserving the memory of the victims insofar as key information about each case, their health condition and means of torture, are carefully documented and archived. El Manouzi shared with the audience the difficulties the association tries to navigate: the development of outreach activities and volunteering; openness to different types of victims; inauguration of new medical centres, so as to address issues relating to the growing number of victims; and lack of proximity to rural areas and limited means.

The last two presentations of this section explored, from different perspectives, the issue of memory and cultural production emerging from the “Years of Lead.” Whereas the first presenter, **Ahmad Bouhasane**, focused on prison literature, the second one, El Adnani, investigated the ways in which a gender approach shed further light on the historical study of political violence and cultural production.

“Talking about Moroccan prison literature denotes talking about a literary genre which was produced by writers who experienced imprisonment and torture during the ‘Years of Lead’,” declared Ahmad Bouhsane, Professor of Arabic literature at the FLSHR. He went on to say that this literature could only be analysed and understood in the light of social and political post-independence dynamics. Animated by an ardent belief in the “l’*esprit d’état*” (spirit of the nation), the Moroccan regime violently repressed political opposition and used multiple strategies to silence oppositional voices, which later manifested themselves in written expression. Story telling on incarceration and torture experiences continuously gained ground after the death of Hassan II. An analysis of Moroccan prison writings reveals a number of characteristics, diversity being key: diversity of writing and narration; diversity of writers, such as real writers, literate and illiterate, men and women, civil and military persons; diversity of

writing languages: standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, Tamazight and French; diversity of prison places: Tazmamart, Moulay Ali Sherif, Dar al Moukri, Central prison of Kenitra, Agdaz, Al-korbes, etc. The corpus of prison writings constitutes an integral part of Moroccan literature and documents an important historical period of political activism and state repression. Hence, the necessity of introducing it in school and university curricula.

In his presentation **Jillali El Adnani**, highlighted what is commonly referred to in Morocco as “the Years of Lead.” According to El Adnani the violence that was carried out during that period was both calculated and intentional, and not random as some might claim. Moreover, El Adnani traced the evolution of violence, which went from individual and tribal forms into state sponsored violence. He also highlighted the gendered subjectivities of activists during that time, based on prison literature produced after their release. Examples of these publications include the works of Fatna El Bouih and Latifa Jbabdi. El Adnani also spoke of the dichotomy and the rivalry between the different factions (tribes) of Moroccan society, and how these elements are still visible today. He underlined the particular ways in which the state used violence against women in the Rif (a region of historical dissidence), not only as a form of violation, but also of “insemination” and “fertilization” of women in order to prevent them from giving birth to rebel generations.

In El-Adanani’s view, the question posed by the prison literature regarding the pair masculinity-feminization date back to when the majdûbâtes (eighteen century unorthodox female saints) invaded the public space and began behave like men and have male attitudes. As for the dilemma of the masculinization of women prisoners posed by El Bouih and Jbabdi, El Adnani suggested that on the one hand there was an intention to harm the prisoners. On the other hand, there was also the looming shadow of the taboo on this issue, since women and children were considered sacred and in the past were used during political tensions to get peace. In contrast, women imprisoned and especially beaten risk undermining the image of man and the norms of the entire society.

On the second day, three presentations based on original research opened the discussion. Two of these (Menin and Rabah) are part of the ZMO-UMAM project.

In her presentation, *Enforced disappearance in Morocco: dealing with suffering and lack of truth*, **Laura Menin** looked at the on-going institutional process of reconciliation initiated since the late 1990s through the eyes of families for whom the fate of their relatives remains unknown. Drawing on her ethnographic research (2012-2013), Menin focused on the case of Omar el-Ouassouli (1955-?), a left-wing political activist whose traces have been lost since 1984, and on his family’s struggle to know the fate of their beloved one. Notwithstanding the state’s attempts to close the dossier of Omar El Ouassouli by offering indemnity to his family, they have continued to wait. Only in 2010 did the IER eventually classify Omar El Ouassouli as an “unresolved case” of forcibly disappearance. Drawing on the words and writing of El Ouassouli’s brothers, Menin intended to raise the following questions: How do people whose family members are still missing come to terms with the past when a narrative on “what happened” cannot be articulated? What does it mean to inhabit the ambiguous and painful space between presence and absence, between past and present? Trying to answer these questions, Menin focused on the multifaceted temporality of “waiting,” intended as the everyday space of loss and trauma, as well as the determination to pursue the truth vis-à-vis the Moroccan bureaucratic apparatus. As a conclusion, Menin argued that, in spite of the significance of the creation of the IER, the oral and written testimonies of the families of the disappeared compels a reflection on the continuity of institutional violence in the present, and on the limits of transitional justice in Morocco.

Then, **Makram Rabah** talked about his on-going research on the *War of the Mountains in Lebanon between the Druze and the Maronites in 1982-1984*. The War of the Mountains, put these two communities of Mount Lebanon at odds and led to the destruction and displacement of many people. During his presentation Rabah introduced these two communities by focusing in particular on their collective identities and contrasting claims over Lebanese identification. Then, he explained the difficulties of doing research within these communities as well as to some of the aspects he intends to develop further, such as the issue of gender and generational identities within each community. Furthermore, Rabah highlighted the sources he is utilizing

to understand and dissect the collective memory formation as well as the active agents, which are at play. In studying the strophic poetry of the Druze as well as a series of Maronites cartoons, Rabah explained how his project hopes to capture the process of collective memory formation, which is carried out by competing centres of influence (clerics, political parties, family and so forth).

Finally, **Nils Riecken** gave a presentation entitled *Experiences of violence, tajāwuz/dépassement and universalism, Abdallah Laroui and the dialectic of memory and critique*. **Riecken** analysed the relation between experiences of violence, notions of the self and universalist and rationalist perspective on human action in some of Abdallah Laroui's (1933) works. He discussed this relation against the background of Laroui's analysis of dialectic between memory and critique, tracing his historical texts, his critical texts on the theory and the concept of history, and his autobiographical novel "*Awraq. Sīra Idrīs al-dihniya—Les Carnets d'Idris*." The rationale was to show that Laroui's universalism is a response to the experience of violence and dislocation in colonial and post-colonial Moroccan, Maghrebi and Mashreqi history. Riecken looked at this issue from four different angles. First, he briefly considered Laroui's view of Arab discourses on reform and his observation of the experience of a double break (*qaṭī'a*) with the "old self" and the categories for interpreting the world. He then commented on the anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo's analysis of modernity and the melancholic in Laroui's works. While she describes Laroui's view of the modernist, rationalist self as excluding other memories and histories and views of the present, he showed, with regard to Laroui's autobiographical novel, that he conceives the self within a continuing dialectic of memory and critique instead. This is embodied by the two different dialogical voices in the novel. Riecken related this to his epistemology of history that focuses on this very dialectic of memory and critique and breaks up representations of unified time into multiple temporalities. He finally put Laroui's outlook on human action and modernization within a universalist framework in relation to the critiques of his universalist perspective.

In the afternoon session, the workshop participants discussed the intricate relationships between trauma, memory and history with **Nour-Eddine Saoudi**, former political prisoner (1974-1984), journalist, professor and translator. In his presentation, *L'écriture, une sorte de survie*, Saoudi interwove a theoretical reflection on these topics with personal memories published in his prison memoir *Voyage au-delà des nuits de plombs* (2007). He started by providing a definition of trauma as an experience of violence, which deeply affects a person's physical and psychological integrity by engendering sentiments of terror, distress and fear. Quoting from his prison memoir, Saoudi delved into the embodied memories of torture, when on 27 December 1974 he was kidnapped for his membership in the "23 Mars" Marxist-Leninist movement, and for several months arbitrarily detained and tortured in the Derb Moulay Cherif secret detention place in Casablanca. Saoudi explained that self-writing was a painful experience of re-traumatization and re-victimization, but it also had therapeutic and cathartic effects.

In Morocco, the multiplication of prison memoirs and memories have become part of what Saoudi defined as "plural memory" (*memoire plurielle*), a term that he prefers to "collective memory" because the former tends to emphasize common and indistinct features as well as the subjective experiences of violence and repression. In his view, prison memoirs opened up a space for other memories on the "Years of Lead," which have long been manipulated and silenced by the Moroccan regime, interested in maintaining historical amnesia. Drawing on the works of Paul Ricoeur, Saoudi further developed his argument on the intertwining of memory and history, which he intended as the reflection on the relationship that a society entertains with time. As he emphasized, the deep relationship bonding memory and history is often dialectical and conflicting. Given the impressive cultural production on the "Years of Lead" in Morocco, however, he called on historians to critically engage prison memoirs as an essential source for the writing of the history of Morocco's violent past. For Saoudi, writing the history of the "Years of Lead," as well as its "plural memory," can contribute to formation of critical citizens as well.

With **Abdelhak Andalibe**, leftist former political prisoner and active member of the *Forum Marocain pour la Vérité et la Justice* (FMVJ), the discussion moved in the direction of a

collective reflection on memory and recovery. In his presentation, *Pour la préservation de la mémoire des victimes de violations flagrantes des droits de l'Homme au Maroc*, Andalibe raised the issues of how trauma can be overcome and how memory can be preserved. Tracing the history of more than forty years of violations of human rights in Morocco, Andalibe emphasized the traumatic consequences for the victims. The direct victims of political repression have been violated in their physical and psychological integrity, and in basic human and civil rights, such as the right to juridical protection, personal security, education, work, medical care and propriety. In addition, political repression has had important consequences on Moroccan society as a whole, whose population has been denied the right to participate actively in social and political life, and was forced to live in a climate of terror. Andalibe identified the responsibility of these violations in both institutional (monarchy, the government, the parliament, the justice system, the army and the police, and public media) and individual (the king, the members of the government responsible for the national security, army and justice) terms. To reconcile Moroccan people with the past, the regime created institutional bodies, promoted constitutional and juridical reforms, favoured political openness after 1998, instituted indemnities for the victims of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention through the Commission d'Arbitrage in 1999 (Indemnity Commission), investigated past violations and worked towards the non-repetition of such abuses through the follow-up of the IER. For Andalibe, though, there are important limits and shortcomings: some cases of enforced disappearance have not yet been elucidated; individual responsibility has not been identified; delays in implementation of the IER's recommendations. As far as the programs of reparation are concerned, he underlined the uneven distribution of indemnity and projects of rehabilitation throughout the population and different areas of Morocco. He also called for the state to actively engage in "preserving the memory" of the violent past and pointed out that violations of human rights have occurred even after 1999.

The FVJ calls for historical truth, justice, the guarantee of non-repetition of such abuses, and the official and public apology by the state, as essential to the process of reconciliation. Andalibe underlined that there is a need to create sites of memory, archives, excavation of mass graves, commemorate martyrs, and establish an independent centre for the memory of the victims of state violation in order to preserve the memory of the "Years of Lead."

Filmic production and memory was yet another subject for exchange in the workshop. Addressing contemporary issues concerning trauma, memory and history, **Yasminie Hadhoumi** and **Chadwane Bensalmia** gave a presentation on their documentary film *Ana l'Hay: Memoire du Hay Mohammadi*, which focuses on one of the most popular Casablanca neighborhoods, Hay Mohammadi. The documentary project had been proposed by the Moroccan association Casamemoire, as part of the IER's community reparations programme in favour of regions affected by human right abuses. With close collaboration with **Fatna El Bouih**, ex-political detainee and human rights activist, the documentary narrates the history of this neighbourhood by means of the oral testimonies of its inhabitants. The screening and the discussion that followed opened up a reflection on the ways in which visual art can preserve memory and, in turn, on the ways in which memory can be visualized, and in this very process also become part of a project of reconciliation. Tapping into a very rich and solid oral tradition, the filmmakers Hadhoumi and Bensalmia emphasized the essential role that storytelling and oral testimony can play in preserving individual and collective memory of the "Years of Lead."

On the third day of the workshop, the research group and workshop participants met **Ahmed Ghazali**, who presented the project of the *Rif Museum*. The museum is part of the IER's recommendations for the Rif region, which was deeply affected by human rights violations and marginalization. This project is an example of the complexities surrounding the community and institutional efforts to preserve memory. Developing from a colloquium on "cultural heritage of the Rif: What Museography?," organized in Al-Hoceima on July 15-16, 2011, the approach adopted for the museum project was to go beyond the period of human rights violations and integrate different historical periods of the Rif, to include its material and immaterial heritage. Ghazali's argument was that in the Rif events that took place during the "Years of Lead" were intricately linked to those at the end of the 1950s, which were, in turn, related to the Rif war. Accordingly, he argued that community reparation can only be carried out through actions that

approach “collective memory” as a whole. This, however, presents a challenge in writing a museographical narrative, which tackles multiple discourses while meeting the exigencies of narrative coherence and efficacy. In considering similar museographical narratives around the world, Ghazali observed two trends in museum narratives. First, the narrative on history and heritage has been generally applied in regional museums and history museums, as is the case of the History Museum of Catalonia, the Museum of Civilization in Quebec, the British Museum, or the National Museum of Scotland. Second, narratives dealing with recent traumatic events have given shape to another museum model, such as the “peace museums” (Caen and Hiroshima), the “museums of memory” (Auschwitz), or “consciousness sites” (Gulag Museum and House of Slaves in Senegal).

These two types of narratives have different discursive objectives. The first one seeks to value the region and its culture and to trigger the visitor’s interest in a perspective of regional development (touristic and urban etc.), while the second aims to pedagogically inform, sensitize, and create empathy in attendees towards the perspective of citizenship. The project of the Rif Museum transcends this binary perspective by adopting an interpretation-centred theory, whereby communication of a phenomenon is not an object but rather a reality.

The workshop ended in the late afternoon with a presentation by **Maâti Monjib**, Professor of Political History at the University of Rabat, and contributor to the francophone magazine *Zamane*. Monjib presented the main features of this magazine, which has been publishing articles on the history of Morocco since November 2010. *Zamane* is an intellectual project animated by the desire to render the history of Morocco knowledgeable and accessible to the Moroccan public. The magazine addresses a large variety of historical issues spanning the Moroccan nationalist movement and post-colonial history, to Islam and religiosity, as well as the history of the occupation of Western Sahara. The magazine also includes current socio-political topics and discussion of current events, such as the “Arab Spring.” Notwithstanding the low level of literacy and limited press circulation in Morocco, in a few years *Zamane* was able to build up a robust francophone readership (with a printing run of 15,000), which testifies to the growing interest of a Moroccan public in the recent history of their country. According to Monjib, this may be related to the new politics of memory in Morocco and its focus on the traumatic events that have characterized post-colonial history.

By enriching the academic debate through discussion with former political prisoners, activists and filmmakers, this workshop provided important insights on the intricate relationships between trauma, memory, and history in Morocco. Not only did it stimulate a reflection on the processes through which personal memory has been mediated through cultural production and social knowledge, but more recently as an object of academic enquiry. It also confirmed our interest in comparing and contrasting Morocco and Lebanon. Over the last twenty years both countries have been characterized by vibrant practices of cultural production addressing their respective violent pasts, though are also characterized by different trajectories of political culture and state policies. Taking into account both similarities and specificities compelled a reflection on the relation between personal and public memories, remembering and forgetting, people and state. In what ways does amnesty, as a formal policy (Lebanon), and institutional processes of reconciliation and collective reparation (Morocco), work to recover memory, rework it into history, and contribute to transformative practices?