

Against the Homeland: Popular exilic antagonism through “Azzouz is Mad”

Contra la Patria: Antagonismo exílico popular a través de “Azzouz is Mad”

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ABSTRACT

The Moroccan Diasporic Youtubers are silenced or neglected because they use vulgar language, and although they are becoming part of the Moroccan popular culture, researchers seem to overlook their socio-political views on Morocco. Thus, the article would investigate how Richard Azzouz, the most famous Moroccan Diasporic Youtuber, views Morocco and its citizens. Azzouz views Morocco as a place of slavery and oppression because Morocco is a kingdom with its own Monarchy. Azzouz represents Stephane Dufoix’s “Antagonistic Mode” since he is against the nation-state and resents the ‘Arab’ culture it promotes. He tries to value the Amazigh identity over the Arab one by valuing the American identity. Yet, his attempt to value Amazigh identity becomes a devaluation of his own identity because his ‘Americanness’ is better than all other identities.

The use of the video “Azzouz is Mad” through careful reading uncovers his claims of ‘superiority’ and ‘freedom’ since he associates himself with the United States. The contextual approach moves outside the text to trace how Azzouz and the Moroccan youth perceive Morocco as a prison. Then, the paper argues that the vision of Morocco as a place of slavery is shared by the Moroccan diasporas and Moroccan youth. Azzouz, similar to other diasporic YouTubers, associates himself with the host land for legitimacy, yet Azzouz falls in a paradox: the position that grants him legitimacy negates his views of valorization. Thus, the paper gives voice to the socio-political views of Azzouz and, through him, all the Moroccan Antagonist exiles; while, also, it traces the slippages in his discourse.

Keywords: Homeland; Exile; Diaspora; Identity; Popular Culture

RESUMEN

Los YouTubers marroquíes de la diáspora son silenciados o descuidados porque usan un lenguaje vulgar y aunque se están convirtiendo en parte de la cultura popular marroquí, los investigadores parecen pasar por alto sus opiniones sociopolíticas sobre Marruecos. Por lo tanto, el artículo investigará cómo Richard Azzouz, el más famoso Youtuber de la diáspora marroquí, ve a Marruecos y a sus ciudadanos. Azzouz ve a Marruecos como un lugar de esclavitud y opresión porque Marruecos es un reino con su propia monarquía. Azzouz representa el “Modo Antagónico” de Stéphane Dufoix ya que está en contra del estado-nación y resiente la cultura “árabe” que promueve. Intenta valorizar la identidad amazigh sobre la árabe mediante la valorización de la identidad americana. Sin embargo, su intento de valorar la identidad amazigh se convierte en una devaluación de su propia identidad porque su “americanidad” es mejor que todas las demás identidades. El uso del vídeo “Azzouz is Mad” a través de una lectura atenta pone al descubierto sus reivindicaciones de “superioridad” y “libertad” ya que se asocia a los Estados Unidos. Luego, el documento argumenta que la visión de Marruecos como un sitio de esclavitud es compartida por las diásporas marroquíes y la juventud marroquí. Azzouz, al igual que otros YouTubers de la diáspora, se asocia con la hostilidad por la legitimidad, pero Azzouz cae en la paradoja de que la posición que le otorga la legitimidad niega su visión de la valorización. Así pues, el documento da voz a las opiniones sociopolíticas de Azzouz y, a través de él, a todos los exiliados antagonistas marroquíes; mientras que, también, traza los deslices de su discurso.

Palabras clave: Patria; Exilio; Diáspora; Identidad; Cultura popular

1. INTRODUCTION

Moroccan Internet users are immersed in the virtual space of YouTube and Facebook, especially because they can create their own media. Mohammed Ibahrine says:

[y]oung people started to generate their own media contents, practice new kinds of journalism and become 'citizen amateurish journalists.' ...Also, dissidents and activists are capitalizing on these new digital media.... Civil society groups and new social movements, including feminists, are using social media to inform, mobilize, campaign, recruit, and build coalitions (2013, pp. 119-120).

The use of social media is dominating the Moroccan youth's everyday life because of the easiness and accessibility of having a Facebook page or a YouTube channel. As a result, YouTubers emerged/ing in the Moroccan context as figures to be 'followed'. For Koen Leurs, "[m]edia users share their audience hood with an 'imagined community' of fellow members of the audience, and this relation may span wide geographical distances" (2014, p. 4). These YouTubers have a large base of followers who support and watch the Youtuber figure. This is due to the significance that social media and networking have accumulated in Morocco. Brittany Landorf asserts "[s]ocial media and social networking sites have made substantial inroads in Morocco. Young Moroccans use them for everything from finding romantic partners without parental supervision to political activism" (2014, p. 135); then, social networks, especially Facebook, are a Moroccan refuge from the harsh reality.

YouTubers claim that people follow them because of their 'authenticity' and 'ordinariness'. Yet, these characteristics are not solely associated with YouTubers, but also with traditional celebrities that are more associated with TV-shows and movies. According to David C. Giles, "YouTube stars are no more authentic than television stars or Hollywood icons, but they perform authenticity better" (2018, p. 132). The audiences of a certain celebrity become fans, which are ardent followers and admirers of a one-person because they relate, admire, and idolize him or her ways of life. The audiences do not follow or watch the official channels, but rather they prefer the Youtubers. Zakia Acharoui et al., argues "Moroccan official broadcast media that have a YouTube channel were absent on the 21- top list, except for Medii TV that was ranked 33 in-degree centralities, according to the study's result" (2020, p. 1107). The youth audience seems to be detached from the officials because of their authenticity while watching Youtubers. Celebrities of social media seem to be a continuation of this social phenomenon in the digital age due to the dominance of technology and globalization. The 'ordinariness' and 'authenticity' of traditional celebrities are what made them celebrities in the first instance. Thus, one cannot speak of those two traits only in relation to YouTubers because it would become a paradox. Because they are 'ordinary' and 'authentic,' they should not be labeled or called as celebrities, yet they are those two traits which have made YouTubers or traditional celebrities, celebrities. The Moroccan context proves to be no different than any other: YouTubers claim authenticity and ordinariness over traditional celebrities while they are no different.

The Moroccan diaspora YouTubers are dominating the social media space through sharing their everyday life, which grounds their 'authenticity' and 'ordinariness'. These people who are dispersed throughout the globe necessarily have a certain stance towards the homeland and its politics. Most of them rely on their constant uploads to affirm their presence in social media and never fade away; the most notable are Tachfine Belkezize, Najib, Mustapha, Malika, Sari Cool, gamama, and others. Yet, for Richard Azzouz, this does not apply because his emergence as a Moroccan YouTuber and celebrity has been for almost ten years now. When King Mohamed VI met with the then U.S President Barack Obama on 20-23 September 2013, a group of Moroccan migrants gathered in front of the white house to greet the king (2013). In this event, Richard Azzouz came to speak against the king and the Moroccans who support him while cursing and swearing. Youth has shared this video (2013) widely and is still sharing it through famous Facebook meme groups and pages. The title of the video could be translated as "A person protest against the Moroccan regime in front of the White House".

Richard Azzouz, or Rehal El Haouari, was born on 24 November 1950 in the district of Houara or Ouled Teima near Taroudant. He was raised in the city of Casablanca where he worked as a tax assessor. He was found guilty of bribery and blackmail. He was fired, which propelled him to travel to the U.S in 1972. Recently, he became part of an anti-establishment organization called the Organization of Moroccan Republicans Movement (MRM) whose founder is Ahmed Tachfine Belkezize on 7 May 2012. Thus, after 2013, Azzouz became a well-known YouTuber because his anti-monarchy and anti-Moroccanness views

seem to have spoken about the concerns and the disillusionment of the Moroccan youth after the reforms of the 20th February Movement had a minor impact. In this movement, Adria Lawrence gave evidence, “[o]n 20 February 2011, Moroccans took to the streets in over fifty towns. The protests grew for several months, peaking in April 2011 when 110 towns experienced mass protests (2016, p. 702). As such, the youth started quoting, sharing, and implementing Azzouz as a means of satire. The series ‘Azzouz is mad’ (2018) became dominant among the Moroccan social media users. Yet, although Richard Azzouz is a dominant figure in the Moroccan virtual space because of his anti-establishment views, little research has been conducted on his person or on the aforementioned YouTubers. This paper attempts to bridge that gap and provide an understanding of the manner in which the Moroccan anti-establishment exiled YouTubers disseminate their antagonistic ideology.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper implements the Close Reading approach which scrutinizes the inner workings of discourses and significations that make any certain text function the way it does. Close reading means a detailed analytic interpretation, which implies that the previous schools of thought, whose focus is on the author, or the director, did not analyze the text based on the text itself but based on its author’s intentions. According to Terry Eagleton,

...to call for close reading, in fact, is to do more than insist on due attentiveness to the text. It inescapably suggests an attention to *this* rather than to something else.... It implies a limiting as well as a focusing of concern – a limiting badly needed by literary talk (2008, p. 38).

Although close reading utterly focuses on and limits itself to the text itself, the context is also scrutinized to reinforce the text’s antagonistic discourse. Through close reading the importance of this video materializes in two levels: on the visual level, it exemplifies the technical establishment of the ‘ordinariness’ and ‘authenticity’ of Azzouz as a subject to whom the audience should listen; on the verbal level, Azzouz illustrates the inherent inferiority of the Moroccan internationally, to other countries and especially to the U.S, and nationally, to the King. Through agreeing with Azzouz, one can become free of his or her inferiority.

The move from the textual to the contextual is needed because the ellipsis within the video presents the mannerism through which he valorizes the west. The contextualization of this video scrutinizes the manner in which the video’s antagonistic discourse is being reinforced. Azzouz changes his name from Rehal el Haouari to Richard Azzouz because valorizes the west and the U.S. Because of his imagined superiority of the West, and because he reinforces it on a verbal level and his renaming, Azzouz proves to be no different than the Moroccan youth who dreams of migration. Azzouz legitimizes his antagonistic discourse through identifying himself as not a Moroccan, but an American, then Amazigh and through appealing to the Moroccan imagined inferiority. However, he himself falls into that inferiority and subverts his discourse of valuing the Amazigh identity.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The Diasporic Re-approached

William Safran perceptive and ingenious claim surrounding the acquired polysemanticity of the diaspora articulated is thus:

Today, “diaspora” and, more specifically, “diaspora community” seem increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of people— expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities tout court—in much the same way that “ghetto” has come to designate all kinds of crowded, constricted, and disprivileged urban environments, and “holocaust” has come to be applied to all kinds of mass murder (1991, p. 83).

Safran recognizes that the diaspora was limited to the Jewish exile from their historical homeland in approximately 586 BC with the destruction of Solomon's temple, yet the term 'diaspora' has gained so much popularity that its meaning started to include all those that live outside their homeland. Hence, the dominant importance of the homeland for Safran emerged from his interest in the Jewish exile from their historic homeland. The collective memories of a certain diasporic community continue to relate, idealize, and commit to the ancestral homeland. Safran categorizes certain characteristics and features that a community should have, for it to be called diasporic. These 6 features, which he traces throughout his article, are paraphrased thus: they have been dispersed from an original center; they have a collective memory about the history and location of the original homeland; they believe that their host-land do not accept them, so they should separate themselves; they idealize their ancestral homeland and believe that their descendants would return to it; they believe that they should maintain and restore the original homeland; their solidarity and community is defined by their relation to the homeland. Safran, then, provided diaspora studies with primary conceptualization through which their most important debates have begun.

Responding to and criticizing Safran's categorization of the diaspora, Robin Cohen argues that there was a repetition in the first and second features, so they should be 'tweaked' and merged. He adds four categories to which, he thinks, Safran has been oblivious because his categories were influenced and slightly limited, as aforementioned, to the Jewish diaspora. Hence, his four categories: "groups that disperse for colonial or voluntarist reasons"; "[the] recognition of the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity"; "diasporas often mobilize a collective identity... In solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries"; "the term 'diaspora' can be used to describe transnational bonds of co-responsibility even where historically exclusive territorial claims are not strongly articulated" (Cohen, 2008, p. 6-8). In the first category, he talks about three subcategories in relation to labor, trade, and the imperial diaspora, each signifying its name. He argues in the second one that because of Jews' dispersion, for instance, the Jews are creative people with a huge number of Nobel prizes in the arts, medicine, and science. The third recognizes the transnational bond of language, tradition, and culture between members of a diasporic community. The fourth and last depart totally from Safran and argues for a diasporic community whose origin in the homeland is not historically articulated, and so he uses the expression deterritorialized diaspora to describe this kind of diaspora.

Yet, the popularity of the diaspora made many critics and researchers use it and apply it to certain communities outside of the abovementioned categorization. The infringement on the term and on the field of diaspora studies made many diaspora theorists criticize labeling almost any community as diasporic. Rogers Brubaker, similar to Cohen, argues "If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminating power – its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of the diaspora" (2005, p. 3). Therefore, the diaspora became a loose concept that is readily applied to every community, and because of this popularity; the diaspora would become fragmented and lose its significance. The categorization of what is supposed to be diasporic would be blurred, especially since Safran and Cohen made what constitutes a diasporic community obvious and clear. Of course, they are not trying to stop the popularity of the concept, for they cannot, but they are attempting to maintain significance with their categories and features.

3.2 Azzouz between Antagonism and Valorization

The 'authenticity' of the Youtubers materializes in the Azzouz's late channel; he now posts under a new channel since the other one was deleted and is no longer accessible. Anas Sedrati claims "[a]s of May 14th, 2017, his channel had 40.000 subscribers, and his videos were watched 13 million times in total. This considerable number can allow us to conclude that it is a popular channel within a country of 34 million people" (2017, p. 28). Azzouz's importance finds itself not only in his popularity among young people but also in his discourse against the nation-state and in Darija. Moroccan Arabic which is known in Morocco as Darija is not used in the official discourse or in politics. Abdelmjid Kettioui contends that . 2). Thus, when Azzouz utilized this vernacular to curse King Mohammed IV and the late King Hassan II, he attracted the youth to his oppositional videos.

The "Azzouz is Mad" video promotes antagonistic mode through the visual level. It opens with an interesting zoom, a panoramic shot, and then the camera is set to a medium shot throughout the video. The latter idea is reinforced through centralizing Azzouz at an Eye Level shot. While the voice of

Azzouz dominates the entire video, still the anonymous interviewer asks questions and comments while continuously zooming in and out to signify the importance of Azzouz's answer. The interviewer, seemingly, does not question Azzouz or his views, but rather aids and furthers his claims through examples and comments. The apparel of Azzouz is casual, promoting the everydayness and normality of this encounter. Thus, the video seems to construct two main ideas in the audience's mind. First, Azzouz is an expert on the matter on which he speaks. The Medium shot and the dominance of his voice throughout the video aids in the establishment of the significance of his claim. Second, Azzouz is an 'ordinary' Moroccan exile who had enough of the corruption and the monarchy like most of the Moroccan youth. The Eye Level shot mirrors a real conversation between the audience and Azzouz, which further establishes his 'ordinariness' and the legitimacy of his views.

The video of 'Azzouz is Mad' promotes the antagonistic mode through the visual level. It opens with an interesting Zoom in, Panorama shot, and, then, the camera is fixated on a Medium shot throughout the video. The latter idea is reinforced through centralizing Azzouz at an Eye Level shot. While the voice of Azzouz dominates the entire video, still the anonymous interviewer asks questions and comments while continuously zooming in and out to signify the importance of Azzouz's answer. The interviewer, seemingly, does not question Azzouz or his views, but rather aids and furthers his claims through examples and comments. The apparel of Azzouz is casual, promoting the everydayness and normality of this encounter. Thus, the video seems to construct two main ideas in the audience's mind. First, Azzouz is an expert on the matter on which he speaks. The Medium shot and the dominance of his voice throughout the video aids in the establishment of the significance of his claim. Second, Azzouz is an 'ordinary' Moroccan exile who had enough of the corruption and the monarchy like most of the Moroccan youth. The Eye Level shot mirrors a real conversation between the audience and Azzouz, which further establishes his 'ordinariness' and the legitimacy of his views.

Consistent with the visual level of the video, Azzouz's words and speech, or the verbal level, implies the Moroccan as an inherently a slave to the monarch Mohammed VI. Thus, if the viewer does not comply and agree to Azzouz's antagonistic views, he or she is inferior to him and are slaves of the 'inferior' Moroccan country. The interviewer articulates that the interview takes place in Los Angeles, United States. Azzouz associates himself with the 'superior' west because he is 'enlightened and is not a slave of the king Mohammed VI'. Their inferiority is not only national and to King, but also internationally to most of the countries in the world. The country of 'Aaribouch' is an inferior country to the U.S particularly because of the latter 'respects' human rights and favors citizenship over slavery. Thus, Azzouz draws his authenticity through the affiliation and residence in the U.S. while those that oppose his claims are slaves to the monarch's colony. The reoccurrence of treason, slavery, totalitarianism, injustice, torture, torment, and curse words establishes the idea that Morocco is a settlement of Aaribouch on the expense of the lands and lives of the Amazigh people. Through this, Azzouz claims an Amazigh state in the country that only the Amazigh can govern. The 'legitimacy' of his argument persists through the ethnic division: the Arabs, or 'Aaribouch,' are slaves to their Arab monarch; the Amazigh who are not slaves, but free people must govern themselves by themselves. Azzouz associates the Amazigh and the American identities to hierarchize the Amazigh over the Arab and prove the superiority of the Amazigh ethnicity. Through this hierarchy and association, the Moroccan can be 'cured only' of the inherent slavery if they denounce the king and champion Azzouz's views.

Azzouz seems to be constructing a discourse of the Antagonistic mode through the hierarchy that values the Amazigh. According to Stephen Dufoix, the Antagonistic mode is "formed by groups who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current regime in their country of origin, or who consider the country to be under foreign occupation" (2004, p. 6). In the video, he views the Kingdom of Morocco as an Arab settlement and refuses to recognize Mohammed V, Hassan II, or Mohammed VI reigns. Azzouz as an example of the Moroccan Antagonistic mode calls for another 20th February movement in 2015, the year in which the video was created. He tells his audience to prepare clubs, stones, and everything they can use as a weapon to fight and wage war against the Makhzan and the king. Then, to liberate the Amazigh land and people from the Arab tyranny, and to re-establish the historical, and imaginary, homeland, Azzouz reinforces his antagonistic rhetoric through, first, identifying himself with America, the 'leader of the new world,' and, second, appealing to the Moroccan audience's imagined inferiority in relation to the west.

The first exemplifies the abandonment of the Moroccan and the adoption of the American identity. Thus, he changes his name from Rehal El Haouari to Richard Azzouz to emphasize this westernization and neglect of Moroccaness. In his first video, the aforementioned above, the journalists, who were criticizing his views, were constantly referring to him as Rehal. Until the video became viral on social media, Rehal was promoting his antagonist views using his real name. Yet, in the video 'Azzouz is mad' which is this paper's

case study, one notices the name shifts to Richard Azzouz who lives in Los Anglos and is against everything that is Moroccan. The renaming is significant because of his westernization and championing America as the country in which he is treated as a citizen, not a slave. The latter video in which he appears as Richard Azzouz even becomes more circulated among the youth on social media, especially on Facebook. Through his new name, Azzouz identifies with the U.S which is represented as ‘far superior and developed than Morocco ever will be’. He is also unequal to those that live in Morocco because he is in America, a citizen, and an Amazigh; that is, the Moroccan who is a slave and a ‘settler’ should listen and be enlightened by Azzouz who is an American citizen and a ‘native’ of North Africa.

For Azzouz, the homeland, Morocco, ceases to be perceived as such. Jan Penrose argues, “homelands are cemented through processes of birth and nurturing over time”. The relationship between people and place is conceptualized as a symbiotic one” (2002, p. 5). Thus, the homeland as a whole is precisely what makes Azzouz disengaged from Morocco. Although he has been nurtured in a small town in the south of Morocco, and although his relationship with people and place is still part of his identity, he no longer wants to be viewed as a Moroccan. The homeland, for him, signifies oppression and repression. Before he was fired from work in Morocco, Azzouz worked with the nation and for the nation. He was immersed in the imagined community similar to any other Moroccan in the Years of Lead. Benedict Anderson explains “it is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (2006, p. 7). Yet, after his departure to the United States, his imagined community is no longer Morocco but is an ethnic group. In the other videos in which he is featured, Azzouz’s antagonistic view of Morocco changes into a valorization of the ethnic Amazigh community. He does not know how to speak Amazigh, yet since he self-identified as such, he took their cause and became part of their activism. His belonging is not to one imaginary community, but to two communities: the Amazigh and the Americans. These two communities shape his home since he no longer identifies with the homeland. Thus, Azzouz, a diasporic subject who is supposed to long for the homeland, continues to valorize the western and Amazigh identities and affirms the Moroccan’s superiority.

The second is the imagined inferiority that persists in the Moroccan youth’s mind. Azzouz appeals to the imagined inferiority of the Moroccan identity vis a vis the western identity. Azzouz is, or is not, conscious of appealing to the imagined inferiority that the youth hold, especially in social media. Rather, because he also holds the idea of the ‘superior’ west, he associated himself with the west to legitimize his views. The Moroccan youth populaces seem to value the judgment and opinion of the diasporic subject over those who live within the geopolitical borders of Morocco. Azzouz is also a ‘product’ of the Moroccan cultural forms and discursive structures that circulate in the Moroccan imagined community. Thus, he accepts the ‘inferiority’ of his Moroccan identity and abandons it for the American identity. The latter is exemplified in his espousal of Richards over Rehal. The Moroccan represents, talks about, and views themselves as lesser than the European, the Asian or the Westerner in general. Within the Moroccan youth’s discourse, the idea of migration looms large since most compare their corrupted and poor present, with the economically rich present. Tarek Sabry explores the notion of migration beyond its sociological and economic-political dimension towards a view from within the popular culture itself. He specifies his study to popular jokes and talks about and about migration to analyze this phenomenon further. Sabry’s talk about jokes as part of the popular culture’s view on the issue of migration. Migration has invaded many parts of the Moroccan popular culture. Sabry reasons:

One could illustrate in the case of narratives inherent to many Moroccan popular migration-related jokes that the young Moroccan whose prime desire is to flee his country often performs the function of the ‘victim’. Morocco—often described as a big prison, from which many young people are trying to escape, could in turn function as metaphor for the ‘villain’. The West in these narratives often enjoys a double morphological function; it functions as the ‘hero’ and the ‘helper’ concomitantly, thus the drowning young Moroccan’s cry for the English man’s saving rope (2005, p. 8).

That is, in jokes, one can view the way the Moroccan views himself as inferior to the westerner’s superiority. Jokes are part of the popular culture which shapes the discursive structure that influences the Moroccan migrant. He analyzes the lyrics of popular songs and comes to the same conclusion. Even in everyday talk, one can notice that the need to escape from the ‘imprisonment’ of Morocco became part of the Moroccan chit-chat, and talk about migration. So much so that people who had emigrated and

succeeded in their lives became heroes and legends in Morocco. Therefore, the importance of migration is dominant because it becomes a dream within the Moroccan youth's collective memory. The belief that Sabry grounds within popular culture is permeated within different Moroccan cultural forms. Accordingly, because Azzouz is a product of that popular culture, he stresses that one should 'escape the prison called Morocco' to seize being a slave of the monarchy.

Richard Azzouz also represents the Moroccan youth as situated historically within corruption and poverty. He himself is a product of the Moroccan youth who came after Moroccan independence in 1956. With the beginning of independence, young people have been promised a flourishing country full of opportunities. Yet, after the 1980s, the promises were shattered by the harsh reality within which the youth lived. Mounia Benani-Chraïbi has traced the dissatisfaction of the Moroccan youth and the 'elsewhere' which functions as an anchor to their hopes and dreams. She argues "[t]he concept of the 'elsewhere', perceived as the favored location for the full realization of the individual, as a space where all types of participation are possible, constitutes another safety valve, an exit, even if it is only because of how it channels the collective dream... The ambition to break with one's environment reflects above all an attempt to escape a marginal existence and a wish to participate in society" (2000, pp. 147-148). Thus, the 'elsewhere' becomes a haven for the youth's unfulfilled and unachieved dreams. Unemployment increases the frustration of these young people after they have been promised great things, especially the educated who aspire to a better future. This has made certain 'men' still dependent on their families and others drop out of school at a young age. The concept of the 'elsewhere' becomes dominant in the youth's discussion because they perceive the 'elsewhere' as a space in which people from their societies achieve all of their dreams. The images of a certain future are always circulated in café discussions and chit-chat. Hence, the Moroccan youth migrates to live in that 'imagined future' to the Americas or mainly to Western Europe. When a certain person goes there and finds a job for Bennani-Chraïbi, he or she becomes the conversation of all the other young people. This furthers their dissatisfaction and disappointment in supposed postcolonial Morocco since those that had power remained in power while the class division broadened. The Moroccan migrant is, of course, a product of this disappointed environment, and their migration is fueled by/through capitalistic needs similar to other Moroccan migrants.

The Moroccan exiles who are famous on social media from Azzouz till gamama exemplify this tendency of criticizing the homeland while simultaneously identifying with their hostlands. They have felt disassociated from Morocco because of the belief in the superiority of the west which is circulating within popular culture. Also, they become famous because of their residence in the west besides their vulgarity and obscene language. Their perception then is a continuation of the Moroccan popular culture. In this sense, the concept of the 'elsewhere' dominates the imagined community, yet when the person arrives at the elsewhere, he or she disassociates with the homeland. The Moroccan diasporic popular figures and their videos are an adequate example of such abandonment. Azzouz, as the case study in this paper, exemplifies the shared tendencies that are common to all other exilic Moroccan figures.

The mannerism in which the video was/is circulating negates the intentionality of Azzouz. Azzouz identifies with the imagined superiority of America to reinforce his antagonistic mode and its reception by the Moroccan youth. The series of "Azzouz is mad" is used humorously and satirically to laugh at different phenomena in Morocco. Moroccan memes take certain instances from those videos to joke on another topic. According to Limour Shifman,

The term "meme" was coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 to describe small units of culture that spread from person to person by copying or imitation... the tag "Internet meme" is commonly applied to describe the propagation of items such as jokes, rumors, videos, and websites from person to person via the Internet (2014, p. 2).

Azzouz became a dominant figure in Moroccan memes through certain decontextualized clips. Through this decontextualization, the Moroccan youth on Facebook did not take Azzouz seriously; rather, the video became an example of 'stupidity' and 'comedy' for most of the Moroccan youth. The latter constituted the majority of the comments on the meme videos which share Azzouz's clips. The Amazigh people on the Facebook page "Agadir bel Visa" denounced his claims and rejected his representations of their identity. The main audience which Azzouz intended to promote his cause accused him of not being an Amazigh. With the hierarchy which he is implementing, he made the Amazigh identity inferior and not just the Arab Moroccan identity. Richard Azzouz's claims and views never surpassed the comical or the

funny although he never intended for them to be such.

4. CONCLUSION

Richards Azzouz, or Rehal El Houari, has become an important figure on social media. His anti-establishment and antagonistic views did not reach the Moroccan youth, but his fame came through the comical use of decontextualized clips from his videos. Accordingly, his videos, although filled with oppositional ideology, did not have the intended impact. The series Azzouz is Mad attracted much attention because the Moroccan youth laughed at his ideas. Still, this should not be taken for granted because Azzouz does promote and believes in his antagonistic views, but still a question persists: why was he turned to a meme and a joke? This question is posed for future research, which cannot be tackled due to the limitations of this paper, not only in relation to Richards Azzouz but to the entirety of diasporic YouTubers who become memes. Also, a view into the intertextual mannerism in which they tackle certain topics would enrich the literature on these Moroccan figures, but this could not be possible without an in-depth analysis of their videos. Thus, in this paper, the existent gap in the literature on the Moroccan diasporic YouTubers with a focus on the case of Richard Azzouz as an exemplary YouTuber of the antagonistic mode has been filled. The paper, then, becomes an initiation of interest in the Moroccan Antagonistic diasporic YouTubers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the author.

FUNDING

There is no financial assistance in studies from external parties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author appreciates and acknowledges the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center, especially Professor Khalid Bekkaoui whose stress over research has motivated this article. I extend my gratitude to all the professors at the MA of Cultural Studies at the University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah-Dhar El Mehraz, Fez.

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