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Moroccan Other Archives, Memory, & Methodology

Introduction

Brahim El Guabli's *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* is an example of how memory studies can improve our understanding of Moroccan history and historiography. As a child of the Years of Lead, Brahim El Guabli has both present and missing memories that influenced why he chose to write about this period of state violence under King Hassan II.¹ Tamazight was his only language until the age of seven when he learned that his own language "was not welcome in school, the first space in which rural children encounter political authority."² Growing up outside the city of Ouarzazate in the 1980s, his house looked over the Jewish holy site of Aït Baroukh; he noticed that Jews came through his village and left, but he never understood who or why they were.³ Only in the decade following the death of King Hassan II did he first learn about Moroccan Jews, not from school or history books, but from elders who "taught [him] the history they carried in their memories and entrusted it to [him] in the hope that it would not fall into oblivion."⁴ This early exposure to what he later would call "other-archives" made him aware of the lost and recovered memories that surrounded him.

¹ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ / سنوات الرصاص / **The Years of Lead** refer to a period of state violence, loss, and repression in Morocco, spanning roughly from the early 1960s to the late 1980s or early 1990s. This era, under the reign of King Hassan II, was marked by widespread human rights abuses, including political imprisonments, forced disappearances, torture, and crackdowns on dissent.

² □□□□□□□□ / تامازيغت / Tamazight is the name of the language (more accurately, a family of languages) spoken by the Amazigh/Imazighen. It encompasses a variety of dialects, including Tarifit, Tashelhit, and Kabyle, among others. Tamazight was traditionally an oral language but also has a script, Tifinagh, which has gained recognition and is now taught in schools in some North African countries. ; El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, x.

³ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, xi.

⁴ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, xii.

El Guabli wrote about the Years of Lead and historical methods to help Moroccan historians rewrite the past for a democratic future without state-violence.⁵ In 1999, El Guabli was teaching in the High Atlas when a daily newspaper began publishing the prison memoirs of Mohamed Raïss at Tazmamart.⁶ He came to realize that the secret prisons in Raïss' memoirs, *From Skhirāt to Tazmamart: A Roundtrip Ticket to Hell* (*Škhirāt ilā Tāzmāmārt: tadhkiratu dhahāb wa iyyāb ilā aljaḥīm*), were located less than an hour away from his childhood home.⁷ In the latter years of the 2000s, he found out that some of his teachers were imprisoned at the prisons of Agdz, Kelâat M'Gouna, and Tamddākht: "Retrospectively, I can still visualize the bodily effects torture had on some of them. This was a transformative realization, prompting major questions that became central to my academic work in the years that followed."⁸

He revealed these traumatic memories and feelings of loss in the preface of his 2023 monograph, *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence*. El Guabli realizes that this trauma is collective, and that history is as personal as it is emotional. Yet, this was not the common view of the Moroccan historians who came before him, where censorship and/or self-censorship caused them to overvalue archives' "objectivity" and undervalue memory's innate subjectivity. *Moroccan Other-Archives* is fundamentally a historiographical text that advocates for a memory studies approach towards the research and writing of modern Moroccan history.

⁵ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 22.

⁶ □□□□□□□□ / تزممارت / **Tazmamart** was a secret prison in southeastern Morocco, notorious for its extreme conditions and the harsh treatment of prisoners during the Years of Lead under King Hassan II. Established in the early 1970s, Tazmamart held political prisoners and military officers involved in attempted coups against the monarchy.

⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, xi.

⁸ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, xi.

Historiography, Truth, & Reconciliation

Brahim El Guabli theorizes about “other-archives,” which are in opposition to state-sponsored, brick-and-mortar archives that previous generations of Moroccan historians held as sacred above all other sources. Unlike traditional archives that are “detained, consigned, housed, house-arrested, and confined to a closed, heavily guarded space,” other-archives are powerful because they encompass all cultural production from daily life within a society.⁹ As El Guabli demonstrated by dedicating Chapter Five of *MOA* to Moroccan historiography, historians from the Kingdom traditionally ignored other-archives in favor of working alongside the *makhzan* to uphold a limited historical method that valued “objectivity” over pluralistic truths.¹⁰ Before uncovering other-archives’ power and potential, Moroccan historians limited their own discipline by squandering the opportunity to write “Histories of the Present” in the interests of the state. The state continues to hold a monopoly over history, but it does not have to be that way; therefore, other-archives give voice to those marginalized voices.

After Morocco decolonized in 1956, post-colonial nationalism took shape within the writing of history. El Guabli calls this history Morocco’s “master commemorative narrative” that excludes all fixtures of the country’s identities that were not Arab, Islamic, or monarchical.¹¹ This master commemorative narrative was an effect of the post-colonial transition of power from the French Protectorate to the *makhzan*. In 1930, the French tried to divide Arabs and the Imazighen in a similar fashion to the “Kabyle myth” in Algeria, where the French considered the “Berbers” to be capable of assimilating, while Arabs were not. French policies towards Arabs reflected this myth.¹² The master commemorative narrative was an effect of French colonial

⁹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 1.

¹⁰ □□□□□□ / المخبزن / **Makhzan** historically and contemporarily refers to the governing elite or centralized power structure in Morocco, traditionally associated with the monarchy and its extended network of authorities, including wealthy families, military leaders, and local administrators.

¹¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 35.

¹² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 28.

“divide-and-conquer” tactics, and Arab nationalists took the bait, excluding the Imazighen from society. Even worse for the Imazighen’s position in post-colonial Morocco (and its history) were the crackdowns that followed two failed *coup d’états* against King Hassan II in 1971 and 1972.¹³ Since the *makhzan* believed that the Imazighen were both colonial collaborators and a threat to the stability of the post-colonial state, then it makes sense that Moroccan historiography after Independence and during the Years of Lead was rife with nationalism and pride that excluded the Imazighen.

El Guabli was not the first Moroccan historian to make this historiographical argument. He cited a 2010 historiographical analysis “The Economic and Social History in Morocco: From Monograph to Synthesis” (*al-Tārīkh al-iqtisādī wa-al-ijtimā’ī fi-al-maghrib, min al-mūnūghrāfia ilā al-tarkīb*) by Mohammed Houbaida, a historian positioned at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra. Houbaida called Moroccan historians “prisoners of [archival] texts,” siloed into a discipline that refuses to collaborate with other humanists and social scientists.¹⁴ In El Guabli’s eyes, Moroccan historians believed themselves to be social scientists entrenched in nationalism, proving that “the discipline itself could not instantaneously shed the flaws inherent to its nationalist foundation under colonialism.”¹⁵

The death of King Hassan II in 1999 and the aftermath caused history to become more central to a reignited debate over pluralism, reconciliation, and citizenship within Moroccan civil society. In 2004 and 2005, King Mohammed VI established the Equity and Reconciliation Commission [ERC] (*hay’at al-inṣāf wa-al-muṣālaḥa*) following the failure of the “Arbitration

¹³ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 28.

¹⁴ Mohammed Houbaida, “al-Tārīkh al-iqtisādī wa-al-ijtimā’ī fi-al-maghrib, min al-mūnūghrāfia ilā al-tarkīb,” *al-Baḥṭ al-Tārīkhī* 7-8: (2009-10): 16. In El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 153.

¹⁵ Jamaâ Baïda, “Historiographie marocaine: De l’histoire contemporaine à l’histoire du temps présent,” in *Temps présent et fonctions de l’historien*, ed. Mohammed Kenbib (Rabat: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 2009): 14-16. In El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 153.

Commission” in 1999.¹⁶ Brahim El Guabli argued that the Arbitration Commission was a major failure because it sought to protect torturers and pay off victims, about \$100,000,000 for 5,300 claimants, a fraction of those deeply affected by The Years of Lead.¹⁷ The creation of the ERC as the state’s reaction to the public’s demands for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission more in line with a South African model.¹⁸ El Guabli cited the preamble of the ERC’s final report and its fourth volume, *The Components of Reform and Reconciliation*, to demonstrate how the Moroccan state saw that rewriting history was an obligatory step towards creating a more pluralistic society, “forged by the convergence of its Arab-Islamist, Berber [amazighe], and Saharan-Hassanic [saharo-hassanie] components, nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean influences [affluents].”¹⁹ These changes were incorporated, verbatim, into the 2011 Moroccan Constitution.²⁰ In this sense, a pluralistic conception of citizenship became official state policy, and history became a means to reach this end.

Despite the ERC’s assertions that “the history that was written in the past was the history of the center,” coupled with its prescriptions to change that, academic historians in Morocco were too often unconcerned with how “these margins have become a partner in the rewriting of this history.”²¹ How Moroccan historians overvalued traditional archives, as El Guabli argues, was the reason for their nonconcern for, if not total dismissal of, other-archives. In Chapter Five,

¹⁶ The Arbitration Commission is short for: *The Independent Arbitration Commission for the Compensation of Moral and Material Harm Suffered by Victims of Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention, and by their Beneficiaries*. El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 3.

¹⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 3.

¹⁸ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 3.

¹⁹ □□□□□□ / أمازيغ / **Amazigh** (singular) and □□□□□□□□ / إمازيغين / **Imazighen** (plural) refer to the indigenous people(s) of North Africa, primarily spread across modern-day Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mali, Niger, and parts of Egypt. “Amazigh” translates to “free people” in Tamazight. ; El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 22.

²⁰ Ruchti, Jefri J., trans. “Morocco 2011 Constitution.” Constitute.
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011.

²¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 22.

“Other-Archives Transform Moroccan Historiography,” Brahim El Guabli focuses on the historiographical debates immediately following the ERC’s recommendations, showing missed opportunities within the “disciplinary crisis” of writing the History of the Present (*tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin*). At a time when the Moroccan public was consuming and expressing more interest in other-archives than ever before, academic historians made a clear distinction between history and memory, fumbling much needed discourse that the public demanded.

Ever since 1999, when daily newspapers serialized Mohammed Raïss’ prison memoirs, the Moroccan public’s hunger for other-archival literature and historical materials increased. El Guabli uncovered publishing statistics to illustrate other-archives’ popularity: *Tazmamart: Cellule 10*, the memoirs of Raïss’ cellmate Ahmed Marzouki, sold over 35,000 copies shortly after its release in 2001 and nearly 100,000 copies by 2017.²² Other prison memoirs like Jaouad Mdidech *La Chambre Noire ou Derb Moulay Chérif*, selling over 8,000 copies, took other forms, this one becoming a successful film.²³ Traditional, transnational media giants like *Al-Jazeera* even invited former prisoners of Tazmamart while making documentaries like *Witness of an Era (Shāhid ‘alā al-‘aṣr)*.²⁴ El Guabli praised these creators as a “brave brand of whistleblowers who do not cherish anonymity because their very understanding of citizenship hinges upon reclaiming history.”²⁵ Through bearing witness, the creators and consumers of other-archives fed a civil hunger for truth and reconciliation. The methodological framework of memory studies, as El Guabli argues, feeds this hunger, but Morocco’s historians have ignored memory for far too long.

²² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 155.

²³ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 155.

²⁴ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 155.

²⁵ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 152.

History & Memory

Memories do not just exist in our heads; instead, we store and transmit them to make them collectively remembered.²⁶ Brahim El Guabli relies on Memory Studies and its methodologies in order to connect three seemingly different stories of the Imazighen, Moroccan Jews, and political prisoners. El Guabli transforms abstract concepts of memory into tangible historical research methods in different ways in the body sections of *Moroccan Other-Archives*. In all four chapters, memories are stored, transmitted, and forgotten in **physical space, mnemonic literature, intimacy, and trauma**. In tandem, these four chapters indicate that memory and amnesia have potential to change Moroccan historiography, as well as all other historiographies that deal with loss and trauma, in ways that have not been done before.

Brahim El Guabli's approach mirrors that of Peter Burke's in "History as Social Memory," where the latter outlines how memories can be transmitted through: (1) oral traditions, (2) memoirs and other written records, (3) images, (4) actions, and (5) space.²⁷ Burke clarifies historian Eric Hobsbawm's argument about the *Invention of Tradition* in order to show how the storage of memories helps nation-states justify or legitimize their existence.²⁸ Brahim El Guabli takes this one step further, arguing that tradition can be invented by groups like the Imazighen, marginalized by the nation-state and desiring to legitimize their own existence. In chapter one, "(Re)Invented Tradition and the Performance of Amazigh Other-Archives in Public Life," El Guabli claims that the transmission of the *Tifinagh* script fought against "Acts of Oblivion."²⁹ A

²⁶ Burke, Peter. "History as Social Memory." In *Varieties of Cultural History*, 43–59. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997: 47-48.

²⁷ Burke, "History as Social Memory," 47-48.

²⁸ Hobsbawm, Eric J., and T. O. Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Canto Classics. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 2012. ; Burke, "History as Social Memory," 55.

²⁹ Burke, "History as Social Memory," 56.

surge of Amazigh symbols defied the state’s repression and distrust of the Imazighen, and Tifinagh became an Other-Archive of an invented tradition.

The Battle over the Alphabet (*ma ‘rakat al-ḥarf*) followed the two aforementioned coups of 1971 and 1972, as well as the legacy of the Berber Dahir, which sought to “divide Arabs and Imazighen in Morocco, prevent[ing] Moroccan leaders from seeing the benefits of cultural and linguistic pluralism.”³⁰ This battle was really a contest over an invented linguistic tradition. Between 1956 and 2001, the Tifinagh script found a greater presence in public space.³¹ New Amazigh symbols came to represent an indigenous tradition, but the Tifinagh script only emerged in the 1960s when adopted by Paris’ *Académie Berbère*. Similarly, the Amazigh flag debuted on August 30, 1997, that date becoming Amazigh Flag Day.³² In Burkian terms, the state could “afford to forget” the Imazighen and place their language into oblivion, but the Imazighen felt “the need to search for [their symbols].”³³ Eventually, the state could no longer afford to forget while facing symbols that represent 15 to 20 million speakers of Tamazight within the country.³⁴



³⁰ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 28.

³¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 27.

³² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 38, 50.

³³ Burke, “History as Social Memory,” 54.

³⁴ *BBC News Afrique*. “Le berbère enseigné dans les écoles marocaines.” Accessed December 25, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/48604266>.

El Guabli demonstrated how the Moroccan state reversed its longstanding policies of “social amnesia” and “organized oblivion,” an effect of the Amazighitude movement, to create a more pluralistic society and conception of citizenship during regular regime change.³⁵ In this sense, re-invented Amazigh tradition became official policy of the state, as evidenced by the now official status of Standard Moroccan Tamazight and the Tifinagh script’s apparition in public space. The Moroccan Amazigh Cultural Movement (MACM) saw massive success with the creation of The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (RIAC) in 2001. Referencing King Mohammed VI Throne Day speech on July 30, 2001, both the preamble of the RIAC’s foundation and the revised 2011 Constitution highlights a pluralistic identity, “built around diverse confluences: Amazigh, Sub-Saharan African, Andalusian.”³⁶ The MACM’s founding motto, “Unity in Diversity” (*Al-wahada fi al-tanawwu*), in 1981 became official policy with the revised 2011 Constitution.³⁷

Tamazight became an official language of the Moroccan nation-state peacefully in 2011, yet other North African states were undergoing violent regime change during the Arab Spring. In Burke’s work, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements invent traditions through acts like changing the names of streets.³⁸ However, in El Guabli’s work, the inclusion of Tifinagh was the effect of a regular regime change. El Guabli applies Hobsbawm’s conception of “invented tradition” to show how Tifinagh and Tamazight “require repetition, ritualization, and formalization in order for the link between the past and the present to be entrenched and for a repurposing of the past to serve the goals of the present.”³⁹ All of the efforts by the MACM, the RIAC, and the Moroccan state placed the “embarrassing memories” of Amazigh marginalization

³⁵ Burke, “History as Social Memory,” 56-57.

³⁶ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 30.

³⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 31.

³⁸ Burke, “History as Social Memory,” 57.

³⁹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 34.

into a new “organized oblivion,” repurposing that past to serve a more pluralistic present. El Guabli was only able to make this argument through the framework of memory studies, for he looked at the storage of identity and transmission of memory to reveal how Moroccan Other-Archives moved the needle to favor unity in diversity over unity in singularity.

El Guabli also draws significantly from Pierre Nora’s historiographical work on Memory Studies. Nora is an historian of France who theorized about *Les Lieux des Mémoires* (Sites of Memory).⁴⁰ These *Lieux* are material or immaterial “sites” that make us remember ideas that groups find significant: “*lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it.”⁴¹ History and memory play together to create *les lieux des mémoire*, and history and memory are two different things.⁴² Memory is always evolving, kneaded by forgetting and revival. Memory is plural and collective, yet also deeply individual.⁴³ History, on the other hand, is the study of the past, “always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.”⁴⁴ We combine history and memory to consecrate and store them in a variety of places, mnemonic literature being one of these *lieux* in *Moroccan Other-Archives*.

In El Guabli’s second chapter, “Emplaced Memories of Jewish-Muslim Morocco.” *Al-kitāba al-dākhirātiyya* (mnemonic literature) becomes useful for researching the history of

⁴⁰ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” Translated by Marc Roudebush. *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 7–24, 7.

⁴¹ Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 8, 12.

⁴² Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 19.

⁴³ Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 8.

⁴⁴ Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 8.

Moroccan Jews.⁴⁵ Unlike many Moroccan Historians, El Guabli treats mnemonic literature differently than historical fiction because it “addresses loss and creates conditions for the recovery of insufficiently documented pasts and to account for severed relationships.”⁴⁶ Jews and Muslims lived together in Morocco for a long time, but Jewish emigration to Israel saw numbers of Moroccan Jews take a silencing hit, from 240,000 in the 1940s to about 3,000 today. Brahim El Guabli argued that Muslim Moroccans *felt* the impact of this emigration, especially in local *places* where Muslims and Jews cohabitated.⁴⁷ When historians remained disinterested in studying Moroccan Jews, creators of Other-Archives uncovered this past.⁴⁸ El Guabli argues that mnemonic literature is a useful *lieu* which “reinvents a history that, in the context of generalized fear during the Years of Lead, was considered taboo and too dangerous to uncover.”⁴⁹ When archives are not accessible, this other-archival source can help us understand Jewish-Muslim relationships.

Four texts represent mnemonic literature in El Guabli’s analysis: El Hassane Aït Moh’s *Le Captif de Mabrouka* (*Mabrouka’s Captive*), Mohamed Ezzeddine Tazi’s *Anā al-mansī* (*I Am the Forgotten*), Driss Miliani’s *Casanfa*, and Hassan Aourid’s *Cintra*.⁵⁰ Not only are the novels *lieux des mémoires* in themselves, but they “draw on emplaced memories to bring back to existence the sounds, voices, smells, and broken connections that have yet to interest Moroccan academic history.”⁵¹ Place is essential to these “fictionalized microhistories” and the memories they recover. *Le Captif de Mabrouka* (2010) takes place in an Ouarzazate home oozing with memories of the people who came and disappeared.⁵² Other stories like *Anā al-mansī* (2015) take

⁴⁵ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 63.

⁴⁶ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 63.

⁴⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 64.

⁴⁸ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 65.

⁴⁹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 64.

⁵⁰ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 65.

⁵¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 66.

⁵² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 69.

place in a bar inside the *mellah*, a historically Jewish quarter of Fes, which the narrator describes as:

Having a complete social life. Stores, butcher's shops, and grocery shops as well as bars and brothels were opened. A pharmacy came later. There was security. The inhabitants of the Mellah included the noble and evil, the happy and miserable, the satisfied and greedy, the patient and complainers, the sick and healthy, the serious and nonchalant, the lovers of the soul and of the body, the usurers and indebted, those who frequent bars and those who frequent their [spiritual] inside, the employed and jobless, the crazy and sane, barren and fertile women, the sick and healthy, the old and fit. All this is normal. But urban life has also infused the quarter, and in every aspect it has achieved distinction among all the neighborhoods in Fez.⁵³

Brahim El Guabli selected this passage to highlight mnemonic literature as having the ability to depict the *mellah* as vibrant and lifelike in ways that official archives can not. The bars in *Anā al-mansī* and *Casanfa* (2016) are places open to all, Muslims and Jews.

In these novels, place and memory are deeply tethered, for landscape is a rich historical archive that only Other-Archivists can evoke. *Casanfa*'s 30-year old Jewish character Ishāq Abitbol describes Casablanca's bars in terms of a *lieu des mémoires*: "Not only did these bars witness the formation of the most beautiful memories as well as the penning of these pages of memory, but it is also there that this amnesic narrator regained his consciousness."⁵⁴ The authors of and narrators within mnemonic literature become historians when societal demand for history is not met by historians. Intimate relations and memories that take place in bars and other *lieux* are buried, so historians can not speak for the past. Instead, Other-Archive creators like authors of mnemonic literature are "ready to confess the intimate relation he maintains to his subject. Better still, he is ready to proclaim it, deepen it, make of it not the obstacle but the means of his

⁵³ Mohamed Ezzeddine Tazi, *Anā al-mansī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2015. ; El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 72.

⁵⁴ Driss Miliani, *Casanfa*. Al-Iskandarīyya: Dār al-'Ayn li-al-Nashr, 2016. ; El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 77.

understanding.”⁵⁵ Mnemonic literature, as El Guabli emphasizes, confronts taboos and silences, making everyone their own historian whose memories are emplaced.⁵⁶

Memories can also be emplaced within us via emotions and trauma, so those who experienced the Years of Lead became *lieux des mémoires*, as well as embodied archives.⁵⁷ Trauma-informed approaches to history, such as Dian Million’s “Felt Theory,” claim that knowledge can be *felt*.⁵⁸ With felt trauma comes silence, and “ending the silence in the communities [constitutes] a significant political action.”⁵⁹ Silence always followed the mention of Tazmamart, a secret prison where the state forcibly disappeared and tortured 62 military prisoners in 1973 following the 1971 & 1972 coup attempts. Only 28 survivors of Tazmamart reappeared in 1991.⁶⁰ El Guabli applies anthropologist Michael Taussig’s conception of a “public secret,” something that people know but must pretend they do not.⁶¹ With Tazmamart, “those who were in a position to know were silenced by what they knew. Knowledge in this case is a deterrent rather than a motivation to action.”⁶² The silence and trauma present in prison testimonial literature compose another Other-Archive that holds the Years of Lead in memory.

In Chapter Four, “Making Tazmamart a Transnational Other-Archive,” Brahim El Guabli analyses three categories of Other-Archives that exposed King Hassan II’s secret prison. These

⁵⁵ Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 18.

⁵⁶ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 66. ; Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” 18.

⁵⁷ El Guabli references the following works in trauma-informed history: (1) Atkinson, Meera. *The Poetics of Transgenerational Traumas*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. (2) Boulter, Jonathan. *Melancholy and the Archive: Trauma, History and Memory in the Contemporary Novel*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011. (3) Edelman, Lucila, Diana Kordon, and Darío Lagos. “Transmission of Trauma: The Argentine Case.” In *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, edited by Yael Danieli, 447-63. Boston, MA: Springer, 1998. (4) Hegasy, Sonja. “Transforming Memories: Media and Historiography in the Aftermath of the Moroccan Equity and Reconciliation Commission.” In *The Social Life of Memory: Violence, Trauma, and Testimony in Lebanon and Morocco*, edited by Norman Saadi Nikro and Sonja Hegasy, 83-112. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

⁵⁸ Dian Million, “Felt Theory.” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 2008): 267–72, 268.

⁵⁹ Million, “Felt Theory,” 272.

⁶⁰ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 119.

⁶¹ Michael T. Taussig, *Defacement, Public Secrecy, and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 6.

⁶² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 119.

three other-archives of scandal, embodiment, and fictionalization became anecdotes to the silences discussed in the preceding paragraph. Various Paris-based activists and whistleblowers acquired smuggled letters from disappeared prisoners at Tazmamart, letters “which the prisoners had consigned to bits of cigarette wrappers, handkerchiefs, and match boxes.”⁶³ This other-archive augmented itself when authors turned them into real and fictionalized testimonies of political imprisonment in Morocco.⁶⁴ All of these testimonies contain felt memories of trauma.

Moroccan historians have not tapped into either prison testimonial literature or trauma-informed historical research methods. In 2007, the RIRHM held conference *Al-Maghrib wa-al-zaman al-rāhin: Mu‘ṭayāt wa-muqārabāt (Morocco and History of the Present: Data and Approaches)*, this conference failed because the organizers invited nationalist leaders who self-censored and feared history.⁶⁵ Brahim El Guabli called this conference an “elitist endeavor,” for victims were not invited to bear witness: “had former state victims, such as the prisoners of Tazmamart, Marxist-Leninist detainees, or Amazigh activists, been invited instead of nationalist leaders, historians would not have had a shortage of testimonies.”⁶⁶ Moroccan historians ignored Other-Archives to create a more prestigious event at the expense of the event's original goals to collect testimony for the history of the present.

This methodological approach is new for Moroccan historians who have for too long rejected memory studies in favor of positivist, social-scientific, and nationalist historical methods. Brahim El Guabli is not the first to point out this criticism: historian Mohammed Houbaida called Moroccan and historians “prisoners of [archival] texts [who] have no dialogue with other social sciences.”⁶⁷ After independence, Moroccan historiography shifted from colonial

⁶³ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 121.

⁶⁴ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 123.

⁶⁵ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 157.

⁶⁶ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 158.

⁶⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 153. ; M'barek Bouderkha and Ahmed Chouki Benyoub, *Kadhālika kān: Mudhakkirāt min tajribat hay'at al-inṣāf wa-al-muṣālaḥa* (Casablanca: Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyya, 2017).

justifications to nationalist pride, and historians were censored or self-censored themselves by focusing almost exclusively on the pre-Protectorate period.⁶⁸ Moroccan historians saw archival documents as sacred; El Guabli gives the example of an historian who trained history students to view “official documents as the most valid source for history writing, [which] became an obstacle to the future evolution of Moroccan historiography.”⁶⁹ While historians outside of Morocco’s borders innovated their methods to encompass oral history, history from below, and trauma-informed history, Moroccan historians were late, beaten by the creators of Other-Archives who exposed state violence during the Years of Lead.⁷⁰ In fact, “Moroccan historians’ initial reaction to the proliferation of other-archives was an outright dismissal and rejection of their historiographical value,” but this was not the same for historians trained or researching in foreign countries.⁷¹

Censorship and self-censorship bisected historiography in accordance with a historian’s “Moroccanness” or “foreignness.” Moroccan historians censored and self-censored because of their citizenship, nation, and state. Historian Mohammed Houbaia calls this a “psychological barrier,” for authorship came with increased risks during the Years of Lead.⁷² Moroccan historians theorized much more about “how to do history” than actually doing history, much less risky.⁷³ When the state exerts its power through long periods of censorship, citizens learn to censor themselves. In effect, censorship limited Moroccan historians to theorizing and doing history before 1912, while foreign historians wrote more comprehensive histories after 1956.

Without Moroccan historians focusing on the recent past, the state drove the historical narratives, but Other-Archives have the potential to help historians counter the dominant,

⁶⁸ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 153-154.

⁶⁹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 154.

⁷⁰ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 154.

⁷¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 155.

⁷² El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 162.

⁷³ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 162.

pro-*makhzan* discourse. According to El Guabli, “the official state position is that the past and its uses are too significant and too sensitive to be left entirely to academic historians and other-archives’ creators.”⁷⁴ The state would rather negotiate dissenting histories through official channels, as state-run institutions like The Royal Institute for Research on the History of Morocco (RIRHM) center norms about what can and can not be said in Moroccan historiography.⁷⁵ In 2012, the RIRHM released a massive national history titled *Histoire du Maroc: de Moulay Idrîs à Mohammed VI* after six years of collaboration between 51 academic historians.⁷⁶ *Histoire du Maroc* aimed to be comprehensive, adding chapters on the pre-Islamic period and after independence, and covering topics like the Amazigh language, feminism, the Years of Lead, and immigration. However, El Guabli and other historians have criticised the selectiveness and omissive treatment of political prisoners, Jewish emigrants, and Amazigh activists.⁷⁷ The state rewrites about its “embarrassing memories” to position “itself as a defender of democracy, human rights, and citizenship, thus co-opting the demands of its opposition to consider knowledge of the country’s plural histories as a human right.”⁷⁸ When creators of Moroccan Other Archives demanded history, the state swiftly and slickly gave it to them, able to address opposition and present itself as legitimate.

Foreign historians are not limited by a psychological barrier, so they were able to better capture and write more comprehensive histories of Morocco in the periods during colonization and after independence. El Guabli calls the works of American historian Susan Gillson Miller and French historians Pierre Vermeren and Daniel Rivet “the most up-to-date, comprehensive histories of contemporary Morocco[, as] their work combines theoretical awareness of the fact

⁷⁴ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 167.

⁷⁵ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 167, 169.

⁷⁶ Rivet, Daniel. *Histoire du Maroc*. Paris: Fayard, 2012; El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 167.

⁷⁷ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 172.

⁷⁸ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 168.

that memory ‘can be treated as any other historical source by using methods of comparison, fact-checking, and common sense’.”⁷⁹ Gilson Miller also recognized that Other-Archives have replaced academic history by feeding the public demand for recent history.⁸⁰ Moreover, Moroccan historians were not trained in gender studies or other critical theories, nor did they bring up ethics or trauma at their conferences which were often funded by the state.⁸¹ Brahim El Guabli fairly criticizes Moroccan historiography, which did not have the advantages that foreign historians had in writing about memory.

Brahim El Guabli’s *Moroccan Other-Archives* bridges memory studies and Moroccan historiography, using memory as a tool to uncover marginalized histories. Through analyzing Amazigh symbols, mnemonic literature, and prison testimonies, he demonstrates how memories—stored in spaces, texts, and emotions—challenge dominant state narratives. By drawing on thinkers like Pierre Nora and Eric Hobsbawm, El Guabli reveals how “invented traditions” and lieux de mémoire like Tifinagh or the Mellah preserve forgotten pasts. His critique of Moroccan historians’ reliance on state-controlled archives highlights how Other-Archives provide alternative sources to document trauma, exclusion, and plural identities, ultimately reshaping the historical narrative of Morocco.

Conclusion

Memory studies provide a powerful way to explore how history is remembered, shared, and contested. By focusing on marginalized voices, such as the Amazigh, Moroccan Jews, and political prisoners, scholars like Brahim El Guabli reveal how alternative sources—like personal

⁷⁹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 162.

⁸⁰ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 162. ; Simon Lévy, “Professor Simon Lévy,” in al-Maghrib wa-al-zaman al-rāhin, ed. Mohammed Kably and Abderrahmane El Moudden (Rabat: Manshūrāt alMa‘had al-Malakī li-al-Baḥth fī Tārīkh al-Maghrib, 2013), 50.

⁸¹ El Guabli, *Moroccan Other Archives*, 160.

testimonies, literature, and cultural symbols—challenge official state narratives. These "other-archives" recover forgotten stories and offer new perspectives on identity, loss, and resilience. Emphasizing memory's role in shaping pluralistic histories allows us to move beyond state-centered accounts, creating a more inclusive understanding of the past and its impact on society today.

Reese: thank you for your work. As you know from your final score in the course, this essay satisfies the requirements set out in the assignment. I don't offer line-by-line edits on final papers, so please accept this summary of my evaluation of the paper overall:

You've chosen an important text and placed it in appropriate historiographical context, while paying close attention to the historical context (and the biographical background of the author) that produced it. The result is an essay that is nuanced and, for the most part, very well written. Nice work overall. Because of your focus on MOA and memory studies, the essay at times tends more to methodology and sources than to a broader historiographical context. This, however, is also where you do some of your most important analysis and it produces a holistic picture of the text and its influence on the broader scholarly landscape. I'll point out that, again, your essay's content is shaped by the subject matter in that your conclusions are not just about historiographical impact but also about real political implications as well. This essay has developed in impressive ways from your initial proposal, and I appreciate the attention to detail and the strong research skills you demonstrate throughout. I look forward to seeing how this project develops over the course of your studies. Good luck in 598!

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