GENDER AND COMMUNITY IN THE ORAL AND IN THE WRITTEN

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The central question addressed in this paper is how categories of gender and community affect each other (1). This question is looked at in one of the preferred fields for intellectual constructions and interpretations, that of literary narratives. The relationship between gender and community is examined in a corpus of Kabyle oral narratives and in novels written in French by women writers from Kabylia (Algeria). These genres are heterogeneous in mode of production (oral, written) and language (Kabyle, French), but they can be included in what I call a 'Kabyle literary space', which permits a recognition of the interactions and intersections of materials that cannot be understood, interpreted, or even enjoyed were they to belong to two discrete systems.

A glance at the concepts used, which include gender and community as well as oral and written literary genres, reveals that the theoretical framework of this paper crosses at least three large areas of debate. The first area concerns the relationship between orality and literacy. In several studies, criticism of the dichotomy between orality and literacy has turned attention to the interactions between oral and written productions (2). Yet, as Finnegan (1992: 50) writes, even the concept of interactions is tricky if it suggests exchanges between separate systems (3). In this paper, oral and written genres are presented to trace discursive constructions as shaped within the 'Kabyle literary space'. I refer to a 'literary space' to acknowledge a continuum in which oral and written (and audio-visual) media are interconnected.

The second area of debate concerns the concept of community and the famous, notorious for many, opposition between nationalism

and localism. In *Imagined Communities* (1991: 5), Benedict Anderson suggests that nationalism can be understood more easily when it is treated in terms of kinship and religion than when it is viewed as a political theory. The concept of community as an intellectual construction that is set into socio-historical co-ordinates, illuminates continuities between nationalism and localism. It is the conceptualization of the nation that creates the so-called localisms, which are revealed as not being different in essence from nationalism. At the same time, elements of opposition can be framed into those social and cultural processes that, from the late eighteenth century, were related to European expansion which imposed its presence in many lands and among many peoples. Today nations as political entities have entered into a period of crisis and attention is diverted to the recognition of regional autonomies and to federations between nations. Be that as it may, the nation is still the hegemonic model when the different communities tend to restructure themselves on the national form, often implying contradictions that do not promise any short term solutions.

The two areas of discussion on literacy and orality, nationalism and localism tend to overlap. National unity has often been represented by a language with a written tradition that, with the diffusion of print literacy, becomes dominant and devitalizes or assimilates the other dialects and languages. The circle has been rounded off by theories of modernity and, recently, of globalization that implicitly suggest a smooth assimilation of 'traditionalisms', of 'localisms', and of cultures orally oriented. This assimilation would be achieved by the 'shift' from orality to literacy and by the integration of the 'local' into the 'nation', then into the globalized system (4). In the Maghreb, the identification between national unity and print language has stimulated, even in the cases where two or more national languages are recognized, an emphasis on linguistic differences and on oral heritages by those who have seen themselves excluded from the national table. Moreover, schooling has been made available on a wide scale and - although the results of this process are often no more than partial - the written medium has imposed itself in practice and in symbolic representations, even in communities defined as 'local' or 'popular' (i.e. oral) in relation to the model of the nation state (5).

The third and fundamental aspect for the theoretical framework of this research is the field of the gender studies concerning the

social and cultural construction of female/male distinctions. This area of study intersects the other two discussions: communities tend to construct themselves in gender terms, and the female/male distinction interacts with oral and written modes. For example, women are often considered to be the custodians of the oral heritage that guarantees the identity of the community. The vitality of the community, on the other hand, is connected to the acquisition of a written medium and to a written literary creation, produced largely by men since they are, due to their gender, the first to be exposed to schooling. The tropes 'Mother Africa' and 'Nation as Woman' are examples of the gendered representation of the nation by men writers (6). When women acquire literacy, on the other side, their writing problematically treates the nation as 'gendered' in male terms. The conflict between nationalism and women's demands is inherent to the model of the nation. As the editors of *Nationalism and Sexualities* (1992: 7) write, not only in anticolonial struggles women's demands were always deferred after liberation and denied, but also in the conception of the nation there is a gendered bias. When the nation is conceived as a 'fraternity', this term implies a definite choice in term of gender. Thus, gender should be added to the list of racial, class and regional antagonisms which fracture the society from which such a fraternal community would emerge naturally (7). While 'nation' and 'woman' become objects and aims of a male project in the literary trope above mentioned, the nation conceived as a fraternity silences internal gender inequality: man is the norm for the citizen, eventually women would acquire men's civil rights but without a rediscussion of the constructed 'fraternity'.

The investigation of the relationship between gender and community in Kabyle oral narratives and in novels by Kabyle women writers sheds some light on empirical and theoretical dilemmas in the mentioned fields of studies.

The narration of the Kabyle community: historical context

Kabylia is a mountain area in the north west of Algeria. It is a rather homogeneous area linguistically and culturally: Kabyles are Muslim and they speak *taqbaylit*, a Berber dialect. In Algeria about

20-25% of the population speaks Berber (*Tamazight*), while the majority of the population speaks Arabic, the official language. The Kabyles, about four millions, are the largest Berber-speaking con munity of Algeria. Berber is not officially recognized in Algeria, but in 1995 the government has opened to a more flexible language policy.

The linguistic situation of Algeria, as well as of the other Maghrebian countries, is characterized by a power relationship which has developed between Classic Arabic, Dialectal Arabic and Berber (Boukous 1985). Before colonialism, the relationships between these languages were principally ruled by the prestige of literacy and of religion: Berber was subordinate to Arabic that was the language of Islam; both Berber and Dialectal Arabic were subordinate to Classic Arabic that was the written language of the Koran, of the 'high' culture, and of the central government. During colonization, French was super-imposed on the previous polyglossic context. School and administration asserted the prestige of the dominant language. Moreover, a central issue in the project of the colonial conquest was the emphasis on the linguistic differentiation between Arabs and Berbers in order to oppose the two groups (*divide et impera* policy). This colonial project failed since the Berber speaking groups fully participated in the fight against France (Ageron 1972; Chaker 1989: 83-91) (8). Yet, the model of the nation imposed by France stimulated the urge to change the subordination of Berber to Arabic as well as a 'search for identity' in a number of Berber intellectuals and in a large part of Berber speaking people. In Algeria this 'search for Berber identity' took place particularly in Kabylia (see Chaker 1989: 20).

The practice of writing down oral productions is part and parcel of the social and cultural changes that stimulated the change in the subordination of Berber to Arabic and nurtured the growth of the community feeling in Kabylia (9). Collecting and transcribing oral genres, in synergy with the overall social changes, constituted a productive framework for the renewal of the community. This practice stimulated on the one hand the creation of a written literary production in Berber and, on the other hand, revolutionized the 'low' status of Berber and was a decisive factor in self-valorization: Berber had finally become a member of the group of the prestigious 'written languages' (Chaker 1989: 22; Merolla 1996: 26-29).

After the colonization period, the linguistic policy in the Maghreb centred on the re-adoption of Arabic. With the Arabization, as affirmation of the Self against the Colonizer, the subordination of Berber to Arabic has acquired a political connotation. The requests of official recognition for Kabyle-Berber was interpreted as a risk for the Algerian National Self, which was represented by Arabic, and the Kabyles were accused of 'localism' and of French 'acculturation'. Due to the Arabization policy, the languages studied at school in Algeria have been Classic Arabic and French which has been progressively withdrawn. Dialectal Arabic and Berber have not found an institutional place in school education (cf.Kaye and Zoubir 1990). Consequently, the development of a literary production written in Berber has been difficult and a limited number of literary works by Kabyle-Berber authors are written in their mother tongue (10). Still today most of the literary works by authors with Kabyle-Berber as their mother tongue is written in French. However, the symbolic importance attributed to writing in Berber has grown even stronger since the intensification of the policy of Arabization in the eighties. An enormous effort has been made by associations and individuals to publish newspapers, reviews, and literary works in Berber (11).

The Kabyle literary space

'What is it that discriminates a literary corpus?' is a problem often faced by those who approach oral and written literatures. Moreover, inclusion into or exclusion from a distinctive literary corpus is not only a theoretical problem but is embedded in a socio-political discourse. Definitional problems are even more likely to arise when literature is thought of as a polysystem in which different genres and traditions cross cut and exert influence on each other. Whatever criterion is chosen, it intermingles with other criteria leading to a multiplicity of overlapping inclusions more than to distinct literary corpora.

Under these aspects, the language as exclusive criterion in defining Kabyle literature risks being deceptive since it does not take into account the following aspects: a) the specific relationships

between languages and modes of production (oral, written, and audio-visual ones) in the Kabyle context; b) the relationship between literary production and the 'renewing' of the Kabyle community since the nineteenth century. In particular, common features can be recognized in the productions by Kabyle authors usually included in the two corpora 'Kabyle literature' and 'literatures in French'.(12) These features are: the central importance attributed to *taqbaylit* (the Kabyle-Berber language), the linguistic interactions between Kabyle and French, and the choice of Kabyle settings and characters. The linguistic interactions between Kabyle and French are found in written productions in French, in recorded and written productions in Kabyle and, to a much more limited extent, in the lexicon of oral narratives. The choice of Kabyle settings and characters is a pivotal qualification in written and recorded productions, and a distinctive element of the oral productions although worked out differently in each specific genre. The mentioned features point to a literary continuum, and the enthusiastic reactions of the public, in Kabylia and in emigration, makes this continuum explicit.

I suggest designating Kabyle literary space the continuum constituted by the productions of Kabyle authors, including a series of partially overlapping literary corpora defined respectively by different criteria (13). Giving this literary space a name recognizes that the Kabyle community is central to such a continuum and the Kabyle Berber problematic is a pivotal reading whatever language is used in these productions.

When works by Kabyle women writers are examined, a socio-historical trend within the Kabyle literary space takes shape (14). The works by the Kabyle women writers outline a passage from a woman's search in individual terms to a socially enlarged search. In the works by Fadhma and Taos Amrouche, published between 1947 and 1975, women's roles and female/male relationships are seen mostly as a consequence of individual life-stories and personalities. On the other hand, the contemporary works by women writers from Kabylia show that the community and female gender dramatically enters in conflict. A number of elements recognized in these works are also typical of Algerian and Maghrebian women's writing as a whole. For example, the first person narrator as a woman and female characters as heroines in opposition to the norm of female silence; the reference to the heroic period of the war of Independence; the search for a relationship between partners based on 'love'; women's

revindications alongside and not against men, although violence and female subordination are denounced; and the experience of emigration that questions individual and collective identity (15). This can be seen as an instantation of a more general situation where women's demands and communal or national identity enter in conflict. In the framework of Maghrebian women's writing, however, the works by Kabyle women authors shows the development of a discourse focused on the specific interaction between Kabyle identity and women's identity. The centrality of Kabyleness in the texts by Fadhma and Taos Amrouche, Djura, Mouzaia, and Touati, mirrors inversely the definition of the community in terms of 'Algerian Arabity' in most women's writing in Algeria, in the Maghreb, and in the Maghrebian emigration (cf. Accad 1977). Under this aspect, texts by Kabyle women and men writers merge into a collective narration of the Kabyle community (17). In contrast, the labels 'ethnography' or 'auto-ethnography' often applied to the written texts by Kabyle authors do not acknowledge their 'need for a narrative of identity', as Anderson puts it (1983: 205).

Gender and community in the oral narratives

How do the Kabyle oral narratives organize the categorization and construction of gender within the community?

The oral narratives (18) express and construct the identity of the group immediately at the level of language that delimits the boundaries of narration and comprehension, namely the Kabyle dialect and local village variant. The community of Kabyle speakers is also implicitly inferred in the differentiation between rural setting, which corresponds to the community of speakers, and the urban setting, which corresponds to the world that is beyond the Kabyle-speaking region. Yet, this differentiation does not indicate two closed worlds. Continuity is based on Islam. The communal identity was represented as consubstantial with the Islamic community, the *Umma*. With regard to gender and community, a first orientation is given by the symbolic system where space and activities are organized around the male/female distinction. In the house, the main beam represents the man and the central pillar is the woman; in the

village, the men's word and world is the village assembly, while the women's word and world is the house, the garden, and the fountain connected by the *abrid*, the footpath. Accordingly, men's activities take place in the external world (the field, the forest, or faraway countries), while women's activities take place in the internal world (the house, the garden, the village area) and fecundity is generated by the correct handling of the female/male dichotomy (19).

Another orientation can be retraced in the narrative pattern and the narrative models, which delineate a system of roles and qualifications that women and men should or should not have (20). In the narrative pattern, the numerical prevalence of heroes over heroines points to the centrality assigned to male characters. Likewise, there is a preference for sons over daughters, and the male hegemony and the agnatic unity in the family are generally asserted. As is to be expected of narratives created in a patrilineal society, the preference for masculinity is further demonstrated in the system of names and appellations, in literary devices, in narrative structures, and by comments. However, there is also a relative balance between masculinity and femininity in the studied corpus of oral narratives. This relative balance is expressed in qualitative terms more than in quantitative terms (21). With regard to female models, age is the first criterion to determine whether a female character is positive (young) or negative (adult/old). The status of the female character specifies this categorization by age. A well-defined class of 'girl' is assigned the role of Subject: the *yelli-s wwergaz*, the daughter of a man. This is a rural heroine who has to be young, clever, productive and fertile. She is assertive, but she is expected to control her words because speaking freely could affect her fertility and it might establish a man/woman relationship that goes beyond mere speaking. The aim of the rural heroine is to acquire a house and a husband. Once this need is fulfilled a new problem arises: how to remain in the house and (or) married. This second problem is solved by having children or thanks to the woman's intelligence. Four heroines assert female autonomy. The girl Fadma is not only a cultural heroine but also a social heroine. She is opposed to the ogress and to her father. Fadma's father fails to handle culture and society because he is unable to deal with the negative femininity represented by the ogress and he allows his own interest to prevail over the collective interest. Where the father fails, the daughter succeeds: she founds a village as in other narratives does Mqidec, the hero *par excellence* in Kabyle

oral narratives. In the story of the Kabyle Cindarella, there is recognition of the female manipulation of the public sphere and of the superior intelligence of the girl, who surpasses her husband. Specific female interests, such as assertion of monogamy and of the privileges attributed to one's own child, are legalized by the actions of other two heroines, respectively *Lalla Lehkima* and the intelligent widow (22).

When we take into consideration narratives told by three male storytellers, a radical view of female characters can be discovered (23). Particularly in one narrative a very form of 'misogyny' takes place: the infidelity of all women is asserted through the sequences of actions and is overly manifested in the final moral of a narrative declaiming that women are worse that demons (24). In narratives recounted by women storytellers, on the other hand, the narrator tends to moderate the principle of male superiority and unity of the agnates. The mechanism at work is the positive emphasization of female qualifications (i.e. intelligence) already present in the narrative pattern and models.

The oral narratives outline a gender dialectic within the framework of a definite division of social roles. Negativity or positivity in female characters is linked mainly to age but no anathema is pronounced on femininity. Female characters are connoted as ambivalent but they are allowed a certain autonomy: they have their own goals and these goals are recognized within the cultural logic. In the oral narratives there is space for female characters to express and represent collective as well as individual interests, though this space is certainly limited by the paradigm of the ideological preference for masculinity. At the same time, gender-related views of the storytellers emerge. These views lean on the shared narrative models and are connected to the complementary perspectives of men and women with respect to their positions in their culture. Nevertheless, patrilineal logic as the fundamental principle of the community is not open to discussion.

Gender and community in novels by Kabyle women writers

Two novels are presented here, *Le printemps désespéré* (Desperate spring) by Fettouma Touati (1984) and *Illis u meksa* (The daughter of the sheepard) by Laura Mouzaia (1990). The Kabyle community is central in these two novels, as it is shown in the wording and in the narrative qualifications of setting, characters and style of life.

At the level of the wording, the centrality of the Kabyle community is stressed by the use of Kabyle words, sayings and proverbs. Most of the terms and sentences in Kabyle are translated directly in the text (25). These linguistic interactions also achieve a distance from standard French. The definition of the community as 'Kabyle' can be inferred from qualifications of settings and characters and from references to oral production. Both *Le printemps désespéré* and *Illis u meksa* present a family in a specific historical and geographical context: Kabylia during the Independence War. Kabylia always remains the centre of these novels, a point of comparison with the city of Algiers and France (26). The interaction between French and Kabyle at the level of wording corresponds to the qualification of the characters in terms of the languages spoken, that is Kabyle and French. Kabyle is the language of the community, while French is said to be used by girls who attend school or university in *Le printemps désespéré*. Both Arabic and French are connoted as prestigious languages in *Illis u meksa*. In *Le printemps désespéré*, characters and style of life are qualified as 'Kabyle' in generalizing phrases (27) or by the use of specifical Kabyle names such as Sekoura and Faroudja, deriving from the Kabyle *tasekkurt* and *taferrujt*. In *Illis u meksa*, a 'Kabyle' qualification of characters and life style is not confined only to generalizing sentences but, since the novel by Mouzaia is a 'first person' narrative, can also be inferred from the recurrent expression *chez nous*, in the use of the possessive adjective in the first plural form, *nos,* and in the use of the expression *ma tribu* (28). The heroine is qualified as daughter of a shepherd, i.e. *illis u meksa*, but she is not described physically in any detail nor is she given a name. Place of birth, female gender, and status are the fundamental qualifications of this character.

In both the novels the spatial dichotomy in gender terms organizes urban and rural spaces as it occurs in the oral narratives. However, in the novels the spatial dichotomy - simplified in an

opposition of 'house' versus 'street' - concerns only women, since men have a right to the outdoor space and dominate indoors. That is, in the novels the spatial and social dichotomy of the oral narratives is radicalized, i.e. is presented in an absolute form, then it is stigmatized. The necessity of renewing the community is thus strengthened. On this point, one open question is whether this interpretation in the novels is due to the present hardening of what is defined as a conventional 'spatial dichotomy' (29).

The adjective 'Kabyle' is synonymous with traditionalism when it is used in descriptions, events, and comments concerning women's condition. In Touati's novel, 'Kabyle' refers to the traditionalism of old women and young men who interpret norms, values, and power relationships rigidly. In *Illis u meksa* the criticism of 'Kabyle' focuses on the community that is seen as masculine in its ideology (30). Kabyle men, *les hommes de chez nous*, are qualified ironically by a physical and intellectual prudery that requires silence from women. They putatively impose silence and seclusion for the sake of their honour but they are said to desire, actually, the annihilation of women's existence (31).

The dilemma of being a woman and being a Kabyle is felt exclusively by the 'young women'. The other characters neither question nor do they assert their Kabyleness: men and old women are presented as simply 'being' Kabyle. Fathers, brothers, and husbands are often presented as making violent use of their privileges, while a generation gap raises questions about the older women who, in their roles as mothers and mothers-in-law, impose on girls the respect for those norms of subordination based on gender, age, and status to which they themselves have submitted (32).

The issue of Kabyle identity is raised by girls in relation to emigration. Being an emigrant involves a crisis in the definition of the Self and exacerbates the difficulty all young Kabyle women encounter. However, both novels are adamants, the 'Other' cannot and should not represent a workable cultural alternative. The identity dilemma does not lead young women to deny Kabyle identity but, paradoxically, to assert it fully.

The alternative female model envisaged by the young women pivots on breaking the spatial dichotomy in gender terms and on speaking up in favour of school education and against arranged marriages. The alternative model represented by these young women is meant to stimulate the women of the community. On its own, this

is not sufficient to overcome the dilemma of being a woman and being a Kabyle, a dilemma that can be overcome only through mediation with the men of the community. Different narrative strategies in the two novels reach this same aim. In Touati's novel, a solution for the dilemma of being a woman and being a Kabyle is made feasible by a differentiation between a 'good Kabyle tradition' and a 'bad Kabyle tradition'. The division between the younger generation of brothers and husbands and the older generation of fathers and grandfathers delineates a division between a conventional and mysoginist Kabyle tradition, violently criticized, and a tolerant and open Kabyle tradition, strongly appreciated. 'Respect for others' is the element that is associated with 'honour and dignity' in the (good) Kabyle 'old school'. 'Tolerance' in this novel seems to be a fundamental element in the construction of Kabyle identity. The 'good' tradition, on which also the young men can finally rely, allows the possibility of a reconciliation between gender identity and Kabyle identity. Yet, the problematic match between 'being a Kabyle' and 'being a woman' is not totally resolved in the mediation offered by the reference to a 'good' tradition: the last character who speaks in the novel is an emigrant girl, Malika, who defines such a match a 'compromise' and keeps on hoping to obtain 'everything' (33). In Mouzaia's novel, the emigrant girl does not solve the contradiction between being a woman and being a Kabyle by denying the community, but she delines a project for a new community. The alternative definition of 'being a Kabyle' has to be sought in both change within the community and persistence of the feminine aspects of the cultural heritage (34). Male domination is personified by the father, the referential *homme de ma tribu*, in negative terms. The 'I' narrator asserts her desire to kill her father and her refusal to share her life with a man of her culture since this would mean 'marrying' patriarchy and female subordination. Yet, the mediation with the men in the community is suggested through a direct address to the father and through a differentiation of those characters who use their masculine power moderately from those who use it immoderately, and through the appeal to change addressed to fathers and brothers, the 'men of the tribe'. Reconciliation between change and historico-cultural continuity, and a new horizon for women will characterize a new community (35).

In search of a new definition for 'Kabyle woman', the young heroines propose an alternative identity for the whole community.

Although ambiguities and contradictions between 'being a woman' and 'being a Kabyle' are not fully solved in the novels by Mouzaia and Touati, their common discourse reveals a preliminary delineation of a feminine project for the construction of a renewed Kabyle community.

Conclusions

The way the categories of gender and community are articulated in the oral narratives and in the novels by Kabyle women writers questions current interpretation of gender relationship in Kabylia and in the Maghreb. In contrast to an 'Orientalist' perception of male domination and female passivity, the oral narratives allot an autonomous space to femininity which is not reduced to procreation exclusively. Individual female aims are pursued and sanctioned. However, this autonomy does not include rebelling against the patrilineal order. Even the gender-related view in female terms finds its limit in the acceptance of the encompassing patrilineal logic which the social organization of the community emphasizes. Once male primacy is brought under discussion, the male/female dialectic in the world of the oral narratives is inevitably interpreted as a lessened and unsatisfactory possibility of gender relationship. This is what happens in the novels which delineate other horizons for women and a project of a renewed - in gender terms - Kabyle community. It is not possible to foresee what is the actual chance for the female project envisaged in the recent works by Kabyle women writers. In the dramatic situation of present Algeria not only the Kabyles but also most Algerian people are caught between the violence of a totalitarian government and the violence of a 'fundamentalist' opposition. In this context, the construction of gender is related, more than ever, to the imagined community for which women and men are fighting today.

Notes

1. This paper is based on Merolla 1996.

2. Mutual influences have been looked at in contexts where oral and written modes have coexisted for a very long time, as well as in those where written and audio-visual media have been diffused more recently. See Finnegan 1992a: 160-169, 246-262,272; 1992:178-179. See also Goody 1986, 1987; Barber and de Moraes-Farias 1989. On the 'oral' in the background of written genres, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989; Dieng 1993; Dramé 1990; Julien 1992; Objechina 1993; Okpewho 1983; Schipper 1983, 1984, 1989; Vivan 1978. On Algerian and Maghrebian novels with reference to oral genres, see for example Arnaud 1973, 1986; Breteau and Roth 1987; Itineraires et Contacts de Cultures (review), 15/16, 1993; Perrot 1995.

3. Interactions between oral and written modes can also be thought of as a more general process considering that a graphical component is present even in contexts where a 'script' (literacy) has not been used or developed (Cardona 1990:189). Cf. Calame-Griaule 1965:105; Lévi-Strauss 1979.

4. On modernity, see Habermas 1987. On modernity, nationalism and globalization see Turner 1990.

5. This explains my interest in the two genres chosen: the novel that has grown since the model of the nation has been asserted in Algeria, and an oral genre (narratives timucuha) which, from expression of an autonomous 'centre' - for the producers at least, has been reduced to a local or popular expression within a nation.

6. By these tropes, nation and woman become objects in a male project. See Stratton 1994.

7. Anderson 1983:203; Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger 1992:6.

8. Along with the linguistic differentiation, the colonial policy made also use of the trope nation-as-woman: the second major difference between 'Arabs' and 'Berbers' was found in the condition of women. The condition of women as metaphor for the condition of the community became a standard issue in the fight.

9. The collection of Maghrebian oral productions by Europeans stimulated a small number of Berber intellectuals, educated in French schools, to take up the challenge of studying Berber dialects and collecting Berber oral poems, proverbs and narratives. Writing down oral genres was linked, in this context, to literacy in French.

10. Kabyle-Berber has been written in Latin script since the beginning of this century in Algeria, while both Latin and Arabic scripts are used in Morocco.

11. See reviews such as Amazigh (Rabat), The Amazigh Voice (Bedminster, USA), Amaynut (Tizi-Ouzou), Imazighen Ass-a (Paris), Imazighene (Paris), Issalan n Temoust (Lyon), Izen Amazigh (Tizi-Ouzou), Tafsut (Tizi-Ouzou), Tamurt (Paris; Tizi-Ouzou), Tiddukla (Paris), Tifawt (Meknès), Tilelli (Paris; Tizi-Ouzou), Tisuraf (Paris).

12. On 'Kabyle authors' and the common features in their works, see bibliographical references in Merolla 1995.

13. In particular, the linguistic, thematic, and geo-political criteria.

14. Works by Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche 1968, by Taos Amrouche 1947, 1960, 1975, 1995 posthumous, Touati 1984, Djura 1990, 1993, and Mouzaia 1990. The autobiography of Louisa Azzizen, narrated in Kabyle, and written down and translated by Nedjima Plantade (1993) is also considered.

15. See Accad 1978; Achour and Rezzoug 1991:4-14; Achour 1991:293-339. Cf. Déjeux 1987, 1993.

16. Referring to Kabyle identity I use the term 'community' since Kabylia and Kabyles belong to the Algerian nation. However, also the communal identities inside an official nation - often labelled as 'ethnicity', 'localism', 'parochialism', 'regionalism' - reorganized themselves on the national model since its affirmation in the ninenteenth century.

17. Yet, the literary works by most Kabyle writers do not assert a community parted from the Algerian nation. Since a pragmatic difficulty is not an obstacle to nationalist imagination, this discourse appears to be related to a rooted sense of solidarity, constructed during the de-

colonizing war, but with unresolved contradictions since this binding has not been cultivated during Independence.

18. Oral narratives timucuha (Dallet corpus 1963-1970, and personal collection 1992). These productions were analysed according to a narratological approach.

19. Cf. Lacoste-Dujardin 1970:482-483.

20. The framework constituted by the regular relationships between roles and characters is defined here as a 'narrative pattern'. The whole of the qualifications attribuited to a certain class of characters is defined here as a 'narrative model'.

21. In the corpus collected by Dallet, the ratio is about 3:1 heroes/heroines. This numerical prevalence of male characters is however modest when the Dallet corpus is compared to the Mouliéras corpus, collected in the nineteenth century, in which the ratio is about 7:1 heroes/heroines. The Mouliéras corpus shows a lack of autonomy of female characters, and a literary influence of the Thousand and One Nights narratives. This raises questions concerning place and gender: the storyteller(s) of the Mouliéras corpus were Kabyle men emigrates in the town of Oran, outside the Kabyle-speaking area.

22. Exceptionally, a widow is assigned the functional role of Subject in one narrative, where she assumes the role of an 'asocial' heroine: she defends her own son against the interest of the village, but her actions result sanctioned in the narrative structure.

23. For example, the negativity culturally attributed to the incapacity of girls to remain silent is stressed by the narrators' comments. See qualifications of female characters given in Ali Ousdidène-Ouhdidène (Dallet 1967, nr.10) and Les deux frères (1963, nr.9), and in the narratives Celui qui épousa sa cousine paternelle (Dallet 1970, nr.8) and Fiez-vous aux femmes! (Dallet 1970, nr.9).

24. Yet, narratives told by male storytellers can express a re-evaluation of women when individual logic is asserted. This is even found in narratives by the same three male storytellers previously mentioned: when in a narrative individual interest succesfully contrasts the unity of the agnates, the relationships between male characters and their daughters or mothers may be re-evaluated.

25. Glossing is one of the most common techniques to signify 'difference' from the referential language, French in this case, but translations and notes have been interpreted as a an indication of 'auto-ethnography'. In the Kabyle situation, it should be borne in mind that Kabyle had only recently acquired a written form. This means that the implied reader is certainly a literate in French but, even when Algerian and Kabylophone, he/she may have not acquired literacy in Kabyle. Moreover, in the discussion on the 'implied reader' due consideration should be given to the fact that the editorial market and the literary tradition of the referential language orientate writers in the use of translations and notes.

26. In both novels, the definition of the community as 'Kabyle' includes a continuity between Kabylia and Algeria. Nevertheless, there is a striking 'silence' about Arabic in Touati's novel while in Mouzaia's novel an association of Algerian and Berber history omits problematic issues within the established continuity.

27. For example, such as pour une vieille femme kabyle, comme toute femme kabyle, les femmes kabyles, or pour les critères de beauté kabyles, la mentalité d'un Kabyle, la société kabyle.

28. See for example pp. 15, 16, 20, 24, 33, 34, 48, 69, 72, 74, 124, 160, 165. As to the few cases in which the first plural form refers to Berber or Algerian identities, see following section.

29. As to oral elements and their function in the narrative strategy, which are not presented here, see Merolla 1996:236-245.

30. See: Et l'honneur kabyle qui se conjugue au masculin... (p.40). 'Other horizons' are desired by the heroine but they are 'doubly locked out'.

31. Kabyle and Algerian life styles are united in this criticism.

32. In Le printemps désespéré, the functional role of Subject is attributed to girls, while the external narrator is usually associated with the external focalizer. In a number of cases, however, focalization lies with a girl. This means that the perspective of the girls is privileged above those of the other characters (Bal.1985:110). Illis u meksa is a frame-narrative in which

the are three levels of narration that correspond to three separate texts. In the largest text, the functional role of Subject is initially attributed to the unity 'little girl and mother'. Then the role of Subject is constantly assigned to the girl. As a whole, the girl's aim overwhelms that of the 'little girl and mother' unity. The agent of narration and focalization is consistently 'adult I' and dominance is thus given to the view and voice of the (young/adult) girl.

33. Yet, Malika herself remains caught between Algeria and France: she looks back with regret to the blue sea and pleasant climate of Algeria, so that this land is objectified as 'nature' and is not longer seen as 'culture'.

34. For example, the beauty of oral narratives and of the traditional colours and designs in the weaving and pottery

35. The necessity for a reconciliation between continuity and change is also pointed out in the appeal to God. The Divine Truth is said not to change and is defined as unique, authentic, antique, and beautiful; but it is also said that it should be adapted to the present time because only the times are changing (pp.130, 166, 167).

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Sommario

La questione centrale di questo saggio riguarda come le categorie di "gender" e di "comunità" si influenzano l'un l'altra. Tale questione è analizzata in uno dei campi preferiti delle costruzioni intellettuali e delle interpretazioni: quello della narrativa letterari. La relazione tra gender e comunità è esaminata in un *corpus* di narrativa orale kabila (Algeria) ed in romanzi scritti in francese da scrittrici kabile. Tali generi sono eterogenei nel modo della produzione e nel linguaggio, ma essi possono essere inclusi in ciò che l'A. individua come "spazio letterario kabilo".

Summary

The central question addressed in this paper is how categories of gender and community affect each other. This question is looked at in one of the preferred fields for intellectual constructions and interpretations, that of literary narratives. The relationship between gender and community is examined in a corpus of Kabyle oral narratives and in novels written in French by women writers from Kabylia (Algeria). These genres are heterogeneous in mode of production (oral, written) and language (Kabyle, French), but they can be included in what the A. calls a "Kabyle literary space".